



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

11 March 2021

Report of: Councillor Annie Mason

Cabinet Member for Communities



Safeguarding Review

The Children Act 2004 and the Care Act 2014 place responsibilities on the Council to safeguard vulnerable people from harm. The Authority is currently undertaking a review of its safeguarding practices to ensure they remain fit for purpose. This report provides an update on progress.

Report Author

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Corporate Priority:	Decision type:	Wards:
Administrative	Administrative	All Wards

Reviewed by:	Paul Stokes, Head of Corporate Operations	5 January 2021
Approved by:	Ken Lyon, Assistant Chief Executive	8 February 2021
Signed off by:	Councillor Annie Mason, Cabinet Member for Communities	11 February 2020

Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s)

- Members of Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to note the contents of this report and offer comment.**

1 The Background to the Report

- 1.1 Safeguarding requires the commitment of the Council as a whole if we are to help to protect children, young people and vulnerable adults from harm. Safeguarding is everyone's business and we must ensure that elected members and staff from all our service areas, particularly the community-focused services, have access to support, are trained, are able to recognise signs of safety and, most importantly, act upon concerns.
- 1.2 In October 2020 the Council identified a new Designated Lead for Safeguarding and, on taking responsibility, the Assistant Chief Executive instigated an internal review of the Council's safeguarding practices.
- 1.3 It was identified that, although the Council has excellent practices and robust policy and procedures in place, the majority of both corporate and operational actions fell to one member of staff (the Deputy Safeguarding Officer). In essence, this created a single point of failure.
- 1.4 Areas for improvement were identified with the review focusing on three key themes:
- Governance and Visibility
 - Tools and Training
 - Processes and Approach
- 1.5 The golden thread linking each of these themes is the challenge to make safeguarding everyone's responsibility. By embedding improved understanding and awareness of the legal and moral responsibilities we are better able to help protect the vulnerable from harm.
- 1.6 The purpose of this report is to update Members on the progress made to date and seek their views on further improvements.

Governance and Visibility

- 1.7 It is a requirement of Lincolnshire's Safeguarding Children Partnership and Safeguarding Adult Board that the Authority has a Designated Lead for Safeguarding. This person should be well known to staff and Members. This role has, historically, been within the remit of a senior officer within Housing Services. The role has become somewhat titular over the years and the initial findings of the review determined that, whilst the designated lead should sit within the Corporate Management Team to ensure good governance and clear lines of accountability, the position should be held by a person who takes an active role in safeguarding and is a visible presence throughout the organisation.

Process and Approach

- 1.8 In support of the Designated Lead the review identified the need to increase the number of deputy safeguarding officers across the Authority. To this end a new deputy has been identified in our Housing Service who will be responsible for operational safeguarding for adults; the existing deputy will become responsible for the safeguarding of children and a new safeguarding champion has been identified to support colleagues at the Mowbeck site.
- 1.9 Easy to follow flowcharts are being developed relating to referral pathways. Although our responsibilities as a District Authority are, in essence, the same for both adults and children the thresholds for referrals are different and the levels of available support, particularly in relation to early help are significantly different for children and adults. These flowcharts will

guide officers and elected Members, prior to making a referral, toward the most appropriate pathway for response.

- 1.10 These changes will ensure all officers and Members have access to advice and support in relation to safeguarding.
- 1.11 Safeguarding policy and practice are tested on a three-year cycle by means of self-assessment/peer moderated audits coordinated by Lincolnshire's Safeguarding Children Partnership and Safeguarding Adults Board. The last audit focused on the safeguarding of adults (the Lincolnshire Assessment and Assurance Framework) and was completed in 2019 with this Council achieving green (effective) status across all relevant categories. When this audit is next carried out in 2022 the intention is to secure blue (excelling) status and the Authority is putting in place the actions required to achieve this.
- 1.12 The Section 11 Safeguarding Children Audit is currently underway. This audit was delayed by the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership in acknowledgement of the demands on partners responding to the Coronavirus pandemic. The audit, which is a statutory requirement under the Children Act is made up of two parts: self-assessment and peer moderation. The self-assessment element of this audit was completed by the end of February 2021 to meet the re-arranged timeframe and awaits moderation.
- 1.13 The final report relating to the outcomes of the audit, compiled by the Children's Partnership, will be published in July 2021. In its Section 11 audit in 2017 South Kesteven District Council was one of only two district council's in Lincolnshire that was rated as having excellent services across all 10 of the assessment headings, achieving green status in all 34 questions.
- 1.14 Results of audits, numbers and types of referrals, progress in training etc are reported yearly by means of an annual report on Safeguarding which is prepared and presented at Governance and Audit Committee.

Tools and Training

- 1.15 There is currently no collective system in place across the Authority for the recording and sharing of safeguarding cases. Individual case files are kept by responsible officers which has the potential for a lack of information sharing and creates limitations for a joined-up approach across teams.
- 1.16 Housing and Neighbourhoods teams currently utilise a system called ECins which is a secure, GDPR compliant, case management system through which information can be stored and shared. Officers have liaised with the operators of ECins to investigate the system's suitability for logging and sharing safeguarding case information.
- 1.17 This system is used for such purposes in other agencies and has proven to be an effective tool. In utilising this system for safeguarding we can collate information relating to early intervention cases (additional support for families) through to protection cases. The system will also allow the identification of themes (types of abuse, locations etc) and provide links to potentially associated cases (e.g. anti-social behaviour, noise complaints) to improve opportunities for contextual safeguarding within the district.
- 1.18 Safeguarding training is available to all officers and elected Members via Lincolnshire's Safeguarding Children Partnership and Safeguarding Adults Board. The requirements for training are set out in the Council's Safeguarding Policy. Training requirements are

determined by the level of direct involvement officers have with vulnerable individuals. The training and development section of the Policy is attached at Appendix A for information.

- 1.19 A register of completed Safeguarding training is maintained by the Deputy Safeguarding Officer for Children and officers are sent reminders when they are required to update their training. These are both manual processes currently. The review team is investigating the viability of building training requirements, reminders and a central record of completed training into the existing iTrent system to fully automate the process across all service areas with Heads of Service being responsible for ensuring all team members have up to date levels of training.
- 1.20 At its meeting of 17th March 2020 Cabinet approved the introduction of mandatory safeguarding e-learning for elected Members to be completed across their term of office and to complement the in-house training provided during Member induction. This requirement has recently been shared with Members as part of their training and development programme which is organised and monitored by Member Services. The review has highlighted the need for Member Services and safeguarding officers to work more collaboratively in relation to safeguarding training requirements.
- 1.21 A new safeguarding newsletter is being developed to keep all staff and Members up to date of safeguarding requirements, legislation, audit outcomes and available training. The newsletter is intended as a source of advice and information that will be disseminated to Members and Heads of Service by e mail. Managers responsible for staff without access to a computer will be required to provide hard copies to ensure messaging gets to everyone across the Authority.
- 1.22 Officers are currently working on an approach to ensure contractors that act on behalf of the Council (in a capacity relevant to safeguarding requirements) comply with safeguarding policy including, where appropriate, having criminal records checks for staff.
- 1.23 Front-line staff working for a contractor delivering services on behalf of the Council will also be required to attend a safeguarding awareness session.

2 Consultation and Feedback Received, Including Overview and Scrutiny

- 2.1 Consultation relating to the review has taken place with the Corporate Management Team and across service areas that have high involvement in safeguarding. Any feedback offered by members of Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be built into the review process.

3 Available Options Considered

- 3.1 The Council could retain the status quo in relation to safeguarding. Whilst we would maintain the high levels achieved in audits referred to above, this would still leave the Authority with a single point of failure.

4 Preferred Option

- 4.1 The preferred option is for the findings of the review to be fully implemented to ensure we achieve the ethos that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

5 Reasons for the Recommendation (s)

- 5.1 To offer opportunity for scrutiny of current and future practice in the delivery of the Council's duty to safeguard.

6 Next Steps – Communication and Implementation of the Decision

- 6.1 Amendments to current functions and procedures will be embedded into existing safeguarding practices. A further update will be provided to this Committee once all actions of this review are completed. All changes will be communicated throughout the Council to ensure awareness of requirements. The outcome of the 2021 Section 11 Safeguarding Children Audit will be reported to officers and elected Members and any actions resulting from that audit will be acted upon within the timescale agreed between safeguarding officers and the audit moderator.

7 Financial Implications

- 7.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

Financial Implications reviewed by: Alison Hall-Wright, Head of Finance

8 Legal and Governance Implications

- 8.1 These changes will improve the council's compliance with its safeguarding responsibilities.

Legal Implications reviewed by: Shahin Ismail, Director of Law and Governance

9 Equality and Safeguarding Implications

- 9.1 Equality considerations that arise from this review will be addressed before any changes to policy or process are introduced. Equality analysis will be carried out as required.

10 Risk and Mitigation

- 10.1 No risks of a significant nature have been identified in relation to this report.

11 Community Safety Implications

- 11.1 No community safety implications arise in relation to this report.

12 How will the recommendations support South Kesteven District Council's declaration of a 'climate emergency'?

- 12.1 Nothing of relevance identified in relation to this report.

13 Other Implications (where significant)

- 13.1 No other significant implications identified

14 Background Papers

- 14.1 [Cabinet Minutes – 17th March 2020](#)

15 Appendices

- 15.1 Appendix A – Training and Development Requirements

Report Timeline:	Date of Publication on Forward Plan (if required) N/A	Not applicable
	Previously Considered by: N/A	Not applicable
	Final Decision date N/A	Not applicable