

Safeguarding

Annual Report 2020/21



**SOUTH KESTEVEN
DISTRICT COUNCIL**

1. Introduction

This report provides an overview of the Authority's safeguarding responsibilities in relation to children, young people and adults at risk of harm.

The Council's policy sets out its commitment to protect: "*children, young people and adults who need safeguarding, including employees, volunteers, apprentices and students; those who use our services or are cared for by others who use our services; and those with whom our staff, elected members, volunteers and key contractors have contact*".

This document further provides an overview of the impact of Covid19 on safeguarding, outcomes from the internal safeguarding review carried out in 2020/21 and discusses:

- Our responsibilities as a district council in relation to safeguarding and Prevent
- Training and development opportunities and outcomes for officers and elected Members
- Safeguarding Interactions
- The outcome for South Kesteven of the S11 Safeguarding Children Assessment 2020
- The forthcoming Lincolnshire Assessment and Assurance Framework (Safeguarding Adults) in 2022

2. Responsibilities

2.1 Safeguarding Review

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, are trained, are able to recognise signs of safety and, most importantly, act upon concerns.

An internal review of our Safeguarding practice was carried out during 2020/21. The review helped to determine areas of improvement under the headings of:

- Governance and Visibility
- Tools and Training
- Processes and approach

Recommendations from this review highlighted that, whilst the responsibility for safeguarding vulnerable individuals falls to us all, regardless of our individual role or position within the Council, much of the day-to-day responsibility for policy, procedure, ensuring appropriate training, support and advice fell to one person, creating a single point of failure. To support our officers, elected Members, volunteers and contractors the Authority has identified safeguarding officers across a number of teams to assist and advise whenever necessary. The Council's Strategic Lead for Safeguarding is Ken Lyon, Assistant Chief Executive. Our Operational Lead for Safeguarding Carol Drury sits within our Corporate Operations Team and is the Authority's Senior Community Development Officer. This officer represents South Kesteven District Council and the other six district authorities of Lincolnshire at meetings of the Policy, Procedures, Education and Training sub-group of the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership. The Authority also has two Deputy Safeguarding Officers. These officers, like our strategic and operational leads, can support in relation to the safeguarding of both adults and children but each has a specific focus. Kati Conway, Senior Neighbourhoods Officer, is based at Mowbeck House and is deputy safeguarding officer for children. Beth Randall is the Senior Tenancy Support Officer in Housing services and is the deputy safeguarding officer for adults. This group

of officers has met on a monthly basis to continue to review practice, to discuss and agree required attendance at multi-agency meetings and to discuss, as appropriate, cases and the Authority's interactions with vulnerable individuals.

Training, which is discussed in more detail in section four, is generally supplied via Lincolnshire's Safeguarding Children Partnership and Safeguarding Adults Board. The Council's Safeguarding Policy is regularly updated to ensure training requirements are kept up to date and in accordance with the requirements of these bodies. The internal review further highlighted the need to return to face-to-face sessions being delivered in house for those not able to access the internet.

The Safeguarding Policy, support tools, links to contacts, useful information and statutory guidance are available via the Council's intranet. Hard copies of the Safeguarding Policy, guidance documents and credit card-sized information cards are made available to visiting officers and to service areas where officers have limited or no access to the intranet. The information cards are also provided for elected Members.

2.2 Safeguarding

As a district authority our services are predominantly provided for adults and those who are vulnerable must be protected from harm. This does not mean however that we do not have a legal and moral obligation to safeguard children and young people too. The Council has statutory duties under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 and Sections 42-45 of the Care Act 2014 to protect individuals from harm and neglect and to co-operate with other agencies.

Our responsibilities for the protection of both children and adults are, in basic terms, the same – to report incidents or concerns to the responsible authority (Lincolnshire County Council) and to work with other agencies to ensure the welfare of children and vulnerable adults.

Safeguarding is the broader term used for the measures available to protect the health and wellbeing of children, young people and vulnerable adults to live free from abuse, harm and neglect.

In terms of the safeguarding of children and young people¹, Lincolnshire has processes for early help and intervention which allow agencies to work together to support families at the earliest possible time. Through early intervention, children can be the subject of a 'Team Around the Child' in which the additional needs of the child and its family are met, with their consent, through a multi-agency approach. Depending on the needs of the family, officers from this Authority will be invited to attend and participate in Team Around the Child meetings.

The statutory guidance that accompanies the Care Act 2014 (the Act) defines adult safeguarding as "protecting an adult's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect. It is about people and organisations working together to prevent and stop both the risks and experience of abuse or neglect, while at the same time making sure that the adult's wellbeing is promoted including, where appropriate, having regard to their views, wishes, feelings and beliefs in deciding on an action. This must recognise that adults sometimes have complex interpersonal relationships and may be ambivalent, unclear or unrealistic about their personal circumstances"

¹ A 'child' is defined as a person who has not yet reached their 18th birthday (including unborn children). In Lincolnshire this definition extends to the age of 25 for people with disabilities.

It is clear from this definition that adult safeguarding has its challenges. The Act is however clear that:

“A local authority² must act when it has ‘reasonable cause to suspect that an adult in its area (whether or not ordinarily resident there):

- has needs for care and support (whether or not the authority is meeting any of those needs)
- is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect, and
- as a result of those needs is unable to protect himself or herself against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it”

In basic terms adult safeguarding is for people who, because of issues such as dementia, learning disability, mental ill-health or substance abuse have care and support needs that may make them more vulnerable to abuse and neglect.

Safeguarding referrals relating to adults must always be made with the explicit consent of the individual unless gaining consent would put the individual in danger. Referral without consent, in “the best interests” of the individual can also be made if it is assessed that the person lacks the mental capacity (as defined by the Mental Capacity Act 2005) to make an informed decision.

2.2 Prevent

The introduction of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act in 2015 placed a duty on local authorities (County and District in two tier areas) in all our functions to have “due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism”.

In complying with the duty, we are expected to ensure that our venues and resources do not provide a platform for extremists and are not used to disseminate extremist views. This includes considering whether IT equipment available to the general public should use filtering solutions that limit access to terrorist and extremist material.

We are further expected to ensure that organisations that work with us are not engaged in any extremist views and, where appropriate, to take the opportunity when new contracts for the delivery of our services are being made to ensure that the principles of the duty are written in to those contracts in a suitable form.

Prevent falls within the safeguarding arena. The grooming of vulnerable individuals into radicalisation and extreme ideologies is regarded as a safeguarding concern and must be addressed as such. The referral pathways are different, but the principles are the same.

It is essential to know that Prevent operates in the NON-CRIMINAL space. This means working with individuals who have not yet committed a crime but are vulnerable to radicalisation in whatever form that takes. The aim of Prevent is to support such individuals, to divert them away from violent extremism before they commit any criminal acts. Prevent does this through a process called Channel. The process is a multi-agency approach to identify and provide support to individuals who are at risk of being drawn into extremism. Individuals who exhibit concerning behaviour in relation to an extreme ideology can be referred to Channel if they give their explicit consent.

The Strategic Lead for Safeguarding is also the Authority’s Prevent Lead. The Authority is represented on the county’s Prevent Steering Group by its Deputy Prevent Officer, Carol Drury who works in partnership with other agencies represented on the Steering Group to develop the

² The Care Act 2014 and the Statutory Guidance refers throughout to the responsibilities of the Local Authority. In a two-tier county the Local Authority refers to the County Council.

Counter Terrorism Local Profile for Lincolnshire and its accompanying Action Plan. Prevent Leads are also responsible for South Kesteven District Council's contribution to the county's Strategic Risk Register for Prevent. The Deputy Prevent Officer participates in an Engagement sub-group that develops and delivers engagement activity to raise awareness of Prevent and the support available for those groomed into extremist ideology.

SKDC has not been involved in any multi-agency Channel meetings during 2020/21. Individuals have been identified by other agencies that, although not meeting the threshold for a Channel intervention, have been identified as vulnerable. Alternative support was made available to these individuals.

3. Covid19

The Covid19 pandemic, lockdowns and requirements to shield or isolate presented many obstacles to safeguarding during 2020. In pre-pandemic times, safeguarding concerns were generally uncovered during home visits or in face-to-face interactions with our customers. Our primary reasons for any direct interaction with the residents of our district are rarely, initially related to safeguarding. Our officers are, however, trained to spot signs of safety when engaging with both adults and children and so what might start out as a noise complaint, a neighbour dispute or a routine environmental health check at a property could uncover an issue or cause concern to a visiting officer which would need to be explored further under our safeguarding responsibilities. During the Covid19 restrictions we were, for large amounts of time, unable to carry out many of our community facing services in the same way relying heavily on telephone, Skype and email interactions.

Officers are trained to ask questions that are open and leave room for the individual to respond fully. These are referred to as TED questions: **tell** me about, **explain** what happened, **describe** how that made you feel. This type of questioning and the need to be 'professionally curious' (asking the difficult questions to ascertain the reality of a person's situation) were never more important than during the restrictions.

The signs of safety usually spotted were more difficult to identify when officers were not able to make home visits and interact directly with residents. To ensure our staff were equipped to continue to keep our residents free from harm safeguarding officers worked with training colleagues from the Safeguarding partnerships of Lincolnshire to develop and distribute guidance to highlight the differing nuances within speech and behaviour that could be picked up in non-face-to-face conversation. This would help identify warning signs and ensure staff knew when to take action to help support an individual or protect them from harm. These guidance notes were written in a conversational style and not only highlighted what officers needed to be listening for but also acknowledged that interacting in this way, being constantly alert for the things that people said or the way they said it without having the benefit of watching body language, could be emotionally challenging. Increased support was available from the Council's Safeguarding Leads to front-line staff during the periods of time when officers were not able to meet residents face-to-face.

4. Training and Development

4.1 Officers

The Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership and the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Adult's Board requires that partners follow a six-year training pathway that contain training specific to levels of interaction with children, young people and vulnerable adults. The training is provided to partners free of charge and is a mix of e-learning and face-to-face modules. In addition to this training, officers and Elected Members are required to undergo Prevent training to fulfil the requirements of the Local Authority Prevent Duty.

200 e-learning or virtual training modules were completed by officers in 2020/21. All face-to-face training was suspended by the Safeguarding Children Partnership and Safeguarding Adults Board from March 2020 due to COVID-19. Training Officers from the partnerships developed virtual sessions to allow training to continue despite restrictions. Modules relating to Mental Health Awareness and Support were added to the training package during 2020/21. Topics covered are listed in the table below:

Awareness of Domestic Violence and Abuse	Basic Awareness of Child and Adult Exploitation	Awareness of Self Harm
Awareness of Suicidal Thoughts	Friends Against Scams	Hate Crime
Hidden Harm ³	Information Sharing	Inter-agency Safeguarding Children
Introduction to Safeguarding Adults	Introduction to Safeguarding Children	Mental Capacity Act
Mental Health Awareness	Mental Health, Dementia and Learning Disability	Modern Slavery and Trafficking
Parental Mental Health	Radicalisation and Extremism	Safeguarding Everyone in Lincolnshire
Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND)	Supporting Your Staff through Mental Health	Working with Adults who Self Neglect

The level of direct involvement staff have with children, young people or vulnerable adults also determines how often training needs to be undertaken. Community focused staff are required to undertake some form of safeguarding training on an annual basis whilst those without direct involvement need only complete training appropriate to the service area and level of responsibility within that area once within the required cycle unless changes to legislation, statutory guidance or procedures require that an update/refresher be completed.

4.2 Elected Members

Historically a safeguarding briefing has formed part of Members induction training following an election with a follow-up session delivered mid-way through the term of office. Ten Members have participated in safeguarding training this year.

The development and approval of a new Safeguarding Policy provided an opportunity in 2019/20 to review the provision of safeguarding training to Members and the requirement placed upon them to participate. To that end, when the Safeguarding Policy 2020/23 was approved by Cabinet in March 2020 the decision was taken to introduce **mandatory** safeguarding e-learning for Elected Members to be completed across their term of office that would complement the in-house training provided during Member induction.

³ Hidden Harm training looks at the impact of parental drug and alcohol misuse on children and young people

The new requirement from 2020/21 was for Members to complete an e-learning module relating to **Safeguarding Everyone in Lincolnshire** within their first year in office a further requirement for all Members to complete additional safeguarding-related e learning modules during their term of office. Those being:

- Hate Crime and Mate Crime
- Friends Against Scams
- Understanding Pathways to Extremism and the Prevent Agenda
- Trafficking, Exploitation and Modern Slavery

Confirmation of completed training modules has been captured in the Safeguarding central training database. It is important to note, particularly given the mandate to complete this training, that only eight of the Council's fifty-six elected Members have completed any of the required training to date.

A record of the training completed by officers and elected Members is held centrally and reminder e mails are sent to individuals when new training is required or refreshers need to be completed.

5. Safeguarding Interactions and Interventions

Whilst there are requirements on us as a district council to have identified strategic and deputy leads for safeguarding it should be acknowledged that there are no safeguarding-specific roles within the Authority. This does not undermine the importance of the safeguarding of individuals from harm and neglect but seeks to highlight the fact that **safeguarding is everyone's responsibility**. Officers from across the Authority have the knowledge, skill and training to identify the potential for harm and to refer individuals to the appropriate support service when a concern is identified. Support for officers and elected Members is available through our safeguarding leads as detailed in item 2.1 of this report.

Any officer in the course of their duties, or an elected member carrying out their representational role, may witness, or be informed of, an issue that they feel should be referred to Adult or Children's Services. Referrals are made on behalf of the Authority by the Operational Lead for Safeguarding or a Deputy Safeguarding Officer with the exception of those made by colleagues in Housing and Neighbourhoods who refer directly to the responsible authority. All instances are also reported to the Operational Lead for Safeguarding and a central record is held to assist in identifying trends and 'hot spot' locations. During 2020/21 officers made 10 referrals to social care. These referrals related to 9 adults and 4 children.

Designated officers also attend Multi-agency Child Exploitation (MACE) meetings where cases of missing children and those being criminally or sexually exploited are discussed and partner actions agreed. This could be simply providing support to the family to address issues through to agreeing and issuing closure orders on properties to disperse or stop criminal activity from taking place in identified locations. Vetted officers attend Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) in relation to high-level domestic abuse cases and any officer working with a child, family or vulnerable adult will attend Team Around the Child, Child in Need, Child Protection Conferences, Vulnerable Adults Panels, Team Around the Adult and Channel meetings on invitation. Officers can instigate Team Around the Child and Team Around the Adult meetings as early interventions within the safeguarding arena.

As previously highlighted, the Covid19 restrictions meant that officers were not able to carry out home visits for large periods of time during 2020/21. The vigilance of officers working in housing and neighbourhoods teams however was evident in the support given and referrals made during this year. Their tenacity was also evident in cases such as that of an eighty-three-year-old lady with learning disabilities who our officers suspected was being financially abused by those she believed were caring for her. This case was deemed not to meet a safeguarding threshold when it was first referred to Adult Social Care however, further accusations by members of the public and police involvement over a period of two months resulted in the second referral by the housing officer being accepted and a Section 42 (adult safeguarding) enquiry was carried out.

Another concern was raised about a gentleman who had been contacted as part of the befriending service provided by the Council. This gentleman was already socially isolated before the pandemic and the resulting lockdowns and restrictions because he lived alone and his first language was not English. He had no contact with anyone who spoke his language and he had no family living in this country. His mental health was compromised and his evident distress during his weekly befriending calls was a cause of great concern to our officers. The lifting of restrictions, whilst allowing him to get out to the shops and take exercise still left him isolated. This in itself would not have reached a safeguarding threshold (meaning a person needs to be protected from harm) but he clearly needed support. Housing officers carried out a welfare check at his home and subsequently referred him to mental health services for psychological support and Lincolnshire Wellbeing service for practical support around the home.

Hoarding is becoming one of the most common reasons for safeguarding interventions in South Kesteven. During 2020/21 officers worked with residents in relation to ten cases of hoarding.

The Neighbourhoods Team received a report of an untidy garden, which, on the face of it, is anti-social behaviour. As previously stated however, the issue we are initially requested to investigate can hide underlying wellbeing or safeguarding concerns. When the property was visited it became quickly apparent the occupier had not left the house in several years. She suffered with her mental health and was agoraphobic. The property was privately rented but the landlord had not been carrying out annual checks. The property was in a poor condition structurally and was rated 9/10 on the hoarding scale with an infestation of rats.

Neighbourhood's Officers had to gain the occupant's trust to enable us to make the living conditions better. The occupant suffered with physical and mental health problems. With the occupier's permission, officers contacted the GP, made a referral to Adult Social care and Lincs Wellbeing service to ensure the individual had all the support they needed. The officer also worked with the landlord of the property to clear and treat the infestation.

Whilst this work made the property acceptable, its former condition and its location had impacted greatly on the occupier's mental and physical wellbeing so officers continued to work alongside her to make an application for more suitable accommodation.

The individual now lives in suitable accommodation which meets their physical health needs, they are in receipt of the correct benefits and are receiving support for their mental health and physical health conditions.

A further intervention happened whilst the Neighbourhoods Team was dealing with an anti-social behaviour case. The allegation was made in relation to the children and the lone parent (Mum). In this instance the alleged perpetrators were quickly identified to be the victims. Alongside investigating an ongoing case, the officer worked with Mum to gain a rapport. It became evident that many of the issues within the family unit were connect to or a direct result of a previous abusive relationship. The parent eventually consented to help and the officer was able to refer her in to Edan Lincs to get her support for effects of the historic domestic abuse

relationship which had knocked her confidence. Mum also accepted an early help assessment and was offered a parenting course alongside more support from school which has created a positive relationship with the children's home school learning.

It is important to acknowledge that not all referrals to either Adult or Children's Services meet their required threshold. Referrals, particularly for adults, can be made multiple times by this Authority and by other partner agencies before a case is taken and a social worker appointed. In cases where the threshold for intervention by social care is not met, alternative means of support are put in place locally. This support can be by way of a multi-agency approach (health, education, wellbeing, housing for example). The support provided would be based on need. If the case related to a specific issue the most appropriate single agency would provide support.

6. Section 11 Audit

Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 places duties on a range of organisations and individuals to ensure their functions and any services they contract to others are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. As a district authority these duties relate to the delivery of services such as: housing, culture and leisure services and also to our responsibilities as a licensing authority.

Safeguarding Children Partnerships are required to carry out assessments of partner compliance with their duties under Section 11.

The Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership undertakes these audit assessments on a three-yearly cycle. The last Section 11 Audit Assessment was carried out across the Safeguarding Partnership's membership during 2020/21. The self-assessment element was completed between September and December 2020. This was delayed from January – April 2020 because of Covid19 and the increased pressures on partners during the pandemic.

In previous years the Section 11 assessment in Lincolnshire (a multi-agency process consisting of a strategic and case file assessment) has been undertaken in two stages:

1. Self-assessment process – whereby each organisation completes an online assessment tool under 10 headings, which is further broken down into 35 questions. Each organisation is required to provide an explanation of the services or arrangements in place under each of the 35 questions and to provide evidence to prove they fulfill each requirement. Most of this evidence is uploaded onto the online toolkit and some (case file evidence) is viewed on site by a moderator. A self-assessed grading is given for each question of red, amber or green. Red represents no or inadequate arrangements in place and green represents excellent services.
2. Multi-agency peer audit assessment: once each organisation has uploaded its evidence to the online assessment tool it is assigned a moderator from a bank of LSCP partners. Moderators scrutinise the evidence submitted and make an assessment of the score which reflects the quality and relevance of that evidence. In addition, each moderator undertakes a face-to-face review meeting with the organisation and audits three case files and three human resources files to ensure that what happens in practice supports the strategic assessment. Moderation on the 2020 assessment was due to be undertaken in January/February 2021.

In response to Covid19 the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership determined that moderation would only be carried out on the self-assessments produced by the three key safeguarding partners, those being:

- Lincolnshire County Council

- Lincolnshire Clinical Commissioning Group
- Lincolnshire Police

All other agencies were required to submit a self-assessment and a random selection of submissions were dip-tested to provide assurance of compliance. One district council formed part of the dip-test process. The self-assessment from South Kesteven District Council was not dip-tested however its submission was used as a model of good practice on which to measure the submission of others. Based on the outcome of its 2017 submission and the evidence provided in its 2020/21 self-assessment this Council's self-assessed outcome was green (excellent) across all 10 categories. This was agreed by the Strategic Management Group of the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership in September 2021.

7. Going Forward

7.1 Lincolnshire Assurance and Assessment Framework (LAAF)

The Care Act 2014 places duties on a range of organisations and individuals to ensure their functions and any services they contract to others are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of vulnerable adults. As a district authority these duties relate to the delivery of services such as: housing, sport, culture and leisure services and also to our responsibilities as a licensing authority.

The Lincolnshire Safeguarding Adults Board requires its partners to carry out assessments of partner compliance with their duties on a three-yearly cycle. The next assessment will take place in 2022.

The process is actioned through self-assessment – whereby each organisation completes an online assessment tool under seven headings, which is further broken down into 37 questions. Each organisation is required to provide an explanation of the services or arrangements in place under each of the 37 questions that are applicable to their organisation and related responsibilities and to provide evidence to prove they fulfill each requirement. Most of this evidence is uploaded onto the online toolkit and some (case file evidence) is viewed on site by the moderator. A self-assessed grading is given for each question of red, amber, green or blue as follows:

- Red = Not Effective
- Amber = Working Towards
- Green = Effective
- Blue = Excelling

In its last assessment, which took place in 2019, this Council achieved green status (Effective) across the audit. The intention for the 2022 audit is to achieve blue (Excelling).

7.2 Policies, Systems and Tools

Policies and procedures will continue to be reviewed to ensure they remain fit for purpose. Any changes to policy or processes will be carried out with immediate effect if legislation or statutory guidance is updated.

The safeguarding officers group will continue to investigate the use of data management system ECINS to capture safeguarding concerns in a central location that is accessible to all relevant agencies involved in cases.