

Safeguarding

Annual Report 2022/2023



**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 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 current position in relation to the Council's submission to the Lincolnshire Assessment and Assurance Framework (Safeguarding Adults audit) 2024
- The updated safeguarding arrangements within South Kesteven District Council

2. Responsibilities

2.1 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,

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.

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”

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.

The parameters under which an adult with safeguarding needs is accepted for intervention by social care are, as illustrated, incredibly tight. This often means that those we work with don’t meet adult services threshold as they don’t have “identified needs of care and support” as defined by the Act. In these instances, officers will look for alternate support through a referral to the Council’s Vulnerable Adults Panel (VAP) or through the instigation of a multi-agency response through Team Around the Adult (TAA). The management, delivery and administration for both the VAP and TAA fall within the remit of our housing team.

2.3 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 the requirement to reduce “permissive environments” in which radicalisation can potentially take place. The Prevent Duty requires specified local authorities to ensure any IT equipment available to the general public should have filtering solutions that limit access to terrorist and extremist material and to develop of a venue hire policy applicable to all council-owned buildings. A policy relating to venue hire and external speakers has been developed in partnership with agencies within the county’s Prevent Steering Group to meet this element of the Duty.

We are further expected to ensure that organisation’s 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.

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.

Prevent falls within the safeguarding arena. The grooming of vulnerable individuals susceptible to 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 susceptible 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 Authority's Prevent Lead is Carol Drury, Community Engagement Manager who represents the Council on the county's Prevent Steering Group. This statutory group is a partnership of agencies including County and District Councils of Lincolnshire, Police, Health, Fire and Rescue, Higher Education, Schools, Third Sector and the Home Office. The Steering Group works collaboratively to develop the Counter Terrorism Local Profile for Lincolnshire and its accompanying Delivery Plan. The Prevent Lead is also responsible for South Kesteven District Council's contribution to the county's Strategic Risk Register for Prevent. During 2022/23 in person Prevent training was provided by a Home Office approved trainer. Officers and Members unable to attend any of the in person sessions can access Home Office Prevent Awareness e learning. A total of 44 Members attended in person sessions and 291 Officers either attended an in person session or completed the Prevent Awareness e learning. Further e learning is also available through the learner management system of the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership.

Information requests are received from Police colleagues when an individual is identified in the District as a possible Prevent referral. In 2022/23, two such requests for information were received. Neither of the individual's identified met the threshold for intervention through Prevent. Whilst these individuals were not referred through to Channel, they obviously had safeguarding needs. In all instances alternative support, through safeguarding processes, was put in place to meet the needs of these two individuals. Prevent colleagues within Lincolnshire Police also carry out follow up checks with partners 6 months and 12 months after any referral to Channel that doesn't meet the threshold to ensure there is no evidence of change within the individual's situation that would require intervention from Prevent.

3. Training and Development

The Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership and the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Adult's Board request that partners (officers) follow a six-year training pathway that contains 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, virtual 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.

In March 2020 Cabinet took the decision to make safeguarding e-learning **mandatory** for Elected Members.

All Members are therefore required to complete an e-learning module relating to **Safeguarding Everyone in Lincolnshire** within their first year in office a further requirement to complete additional safeguarding-related e-learning modules during their term of office. Those being:

- Hate Crime
- Friends Against Scams
- Radicalisation and Extremism

- Tackling Exploitation and Modern Slavery in Lincolnshire

103 training modules were completed by officers in 2022/2023. A record of the training completed by officers is held centrally. Topics covered are listed in the table below:

Awareness of Domestic Violence and Abuse	Child Exploitation	Self Neglect
Awareness of Suicidal Thoughts	Brook Traffic-light Tool*	Controlling, Coercive Behaviour and Stalking
Trafficking, Exploitation and Modern Slavery	Domestic Abuse – Short Course	Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
Friends Against Scams	Hate Crime	Introduction to Safeguarding Adults
Introduction to Safeguarding Children	Introduction to Safeguarding Everyone in Lincolnshire	Mental Capacity Act
Radicalisation and Extremism	Suicide Awareness (Zero Suicide Alliance)	Missing Children

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.

*The Brook Traffic-light Tool is a nationally recognised Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool that provides a highly visible, multi-agency response that helps professionals to identify, understand and respond appropriately to sexual behaviours in young people.

Learning is also essential for the Lead and Deputy Safeguarding Officer from Serious Case Reviews (Children), Adult Safeguarding Reviews and Domestic Homicide Reviews. Whilst these types of review do not make for comfortable reading, it is imperative that we take account of lessons learned and implement, where appropriate to the District Council's responsibilities, the recommendations of these reviews.

4. Safeguarding Interactions and Interventions

Whilst there are requirements on us as a district council to have an identified lead 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 Designated Safeguarding Lead Jodie Archer, Head of Housing Services and Deputy Safeguarding Officer Sarah McQueen, Head of Housing Options.

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 during 2022/23 were made by colleagues in Housing and Neighbourhoods directly to the responsible authority. During 2022/23 referrals related to 10 adults and 2 child.

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. This early intervention is often the level at which officers become involved with individuals thereby allowing for support to be made available in a more preventative manner. These cases rarely require intervention by social workers but could require input from social care (Wellbeing Lincs). To illustrate the types of interventions carried out by officers during 2022/23, their tenacity in gaining the required outcome and their response to the duty of care we have as a District Authority, here is an example of a case:

A young person came to my attention following a pattern of antisocial behaviour in the community observed by SKDC's CCTV Operators. A CCTV Operator approached me raising concerns about the young person as they were also observed in the company of older, known local drug users and street dealers. Following a conversation with a CCTV operator, the young person was identified as a 12 year old boy.

The young person was observed on many occasions with his Dad, a known alcoholic and drug user and his friends who are also drug users and have been known as street dealers. The young person was often seen in public open spaces with the adults whilst they were street drinking and carrying out other suspicious activities. The young person was also observed in the company of Dad's friends when Dad was not there.

I contacted a CE-Missing Co-Ordinator to talk through my concerns, and to see if there were any agencies involved with the young person and their family. From this conversation I learnt the young person was part of a Child In Need plan and had an allocated Social Worker.

I made contact with the allocated Social Worker and was invited to the Child In Need Meeting in August 2022.

The young person lived with Mum, an older sibling (17 years old) and a younger sibling (10 years old).

At the Child In Need Meeting, I learnt the young person did not currently attend school as they had been 'banned' from the school bus due to their behaviour. There was a plan to seek alternative education for the young person but until this happened, they remained registered with that setting. There was no parental encouragement to attend school or seek alternative transport to enable the young person to attend. Due to non-attendance, the school were carrying out regular welfare visits to the home address during the day. These were often unsuccessful, or Mum would shout out to the school staff that the young person was in bed asleep. The younger sibling also did not attend school regularly and the primary school had put in provisions to collect the child from home and take them to school, provide them with breakfast and lunch and take them home after school – again the school attended the home address to collect the child in the mornings as agreed but no one would answer the door.

A report was also received directly from a member of the public in relation to the young person and their friend's behaviour unacceptably outside the home address. The report also disclosed wider issues with other members of the young person's family. Neighbours had reported the smell of cannabis from the property as well as comings and goings at various times of the day from visitors who did not stay for more than a couple of minutes. This information was shared wider with the relevant agencies.

A visit was carried out to the young person's home address, to discuss concerns regarding the young person's behaviour. At the time of the visit, Mum acknowledged that she had 'no control' over the young person and stated both the older sibling and younger sibling were not like that.

The home life was not that of the average family. Although the house was tidy, mum by her own admission said she does not wake the children for school and she allows them to sleep as it gives her 'me time' and she liked a 'quiet life'. Mum is a drug user and stated she attends We Are With You.

In partnership with Children's Services, a CE Toolkit was completed for a referral to MACE following concerns about who the young person was associating with. During the MACE discussion it was agreed new intelligence would be reported via Op Insignia and the appropriate agencies were already involved so the risk could be reduced through effective community disruption and case management. As Dad was a tenant of NACRO accommodation, I carried out a visit the scheme manager to ensure the young person was not entering the accommodation.

This case was quickly escalated to Child Protection following the Child In Need meeting I attended, this was due to Mum's lack of engagement. The worry statement scaling (0 being worst case scenario, 10 being best case scenario) ranged between 0 and 1 for all three statements.

Over the course of 10 months, there were multiple meetings with no improvements to the children's home life. Worry Statement Scales were still scaled between 0-1 for all of the statements. The young person was still prevalent in the community, but the antisocial behaviour had subsided.

The home life of the young person did not improve, Mum started to disengage further with Children's Services, including with We Are With You, she also did not engage with other professionals and did not attend any of the Child Protection meetings. Mum failed to make the application for the younger sibling's secondary school admission and the worry statement scaling as part of the Child Protection Plan did not improve.

The young person's school attendance did not improve, and they had a 0% attendance between September 2022 and June 2023. The younger sibling did attend school sporadically, but this was facilitated by another older sibling who did not live at the home address, a grandparent, and the primary school.

Following several concerns and incidents, in June 2023, the young person and younger sibling became Looked After Children and were placed in the care of a family member. It was reported that the younger sibling was thriving and attending school. The young person also turned a positive corner and started to engage with homeschooling and agreed to attend sporting clubs held in the community by LCC's Positive Futures.

Since the young person has not been in Mum's care, they have not been prevalent in the community. They have not been reported to be involved in antisocial behaviour and they have not been seen to be associating with adults.

This is an example of where an effective multi-agency approach can come together to support the most positive outcome for young people. During this time we were successfully able to disrupt potential child exploitation and remove barriers to enable both children to access education.

5. Lincolnshire Assessment and Assurance Framework (LAAF) – Adult Safeguarding Audit

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 most recent assessment was completed in September 2022.

During the self-assessment process, organisations within the partnership complete an online assessment tool across six categories, further broken down into 35 questions. Partners supply an overview for each question that is applicable to their organisation and are further required to provide evidence to support the narrative to prove arrangements in place. Evidence is uploaded onto the online toolkit. 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

This is the third adult safeguarding audit instigated by the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Adults Board, previous audits being in 2016 and 2019 and, for the first time, moderation of the self-assessment formed part of the process. The moderation is intended as challenge to the Council's self-assessment. It ensures sufficient and appropriate evidence has been provided to ensure compliance with the requirements placed on the District Council in relation to the safeguarding of adults. The self-assessment narrative and supporting evidence was completed by officers from the Council's Housing Service with support from the Community Engagement Manager to meet the required deadline. Moderation (by dip test) has been completed by the Safeguarding Adults Board and fed back. The next step in this process is for officers to address any actions required as a result of the moderation. The moderation challenged two responses made by the Council and made recommendations to address these. The recommendations requirement that we amend the self-assessment relating to question 1.4 of the audit: *"The organisation's strategy and/or safeguarding policy clearly sets out its commitment to its prevention duty under the Care Act 2014"*. Whilst there is content within the policy to reference this commitment, no evidence of

the commitment in practice was provided therefore the moderation recommended that the self-assessed status be changed from blue to green (effective). The moderation also recommended further evidence be provided for question 2.7 “Organisations can demonstrate that any decision in relation to the safeguarding of an adult is driven by the principals of Making Safeguarding Personal” to support the Council’s green status. Once these changes were made the Council’s assessment will show green (effective) status across all 6 categories. The final result of the Lincolnshire Assessment and Assurance Framework audit was published by the Safeguarding Adults Board in summer 2023. The outcome of the audit was that the council is excelling in its response to Adult Safeguarding offering assurance to the Authority.

6. New Safeguarding Arrangements

As previously reported to this committee, an internal review of our Safeguarding practice was carried out during 2021/22. The review helped to determine areas of improvement under the headings of:

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

Part of this review looked at safeguarding from an operational management perspective to determine whether the structure remained fit for purpose. The Strategic Lead for Safeguarding has, since 2011, been the Director for Housing. During this time, operational lead for safeguarding was taken by the Community Engagement Manager.

Recommendations from the 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 the operational lead, creating a single point of failure. It was agreed that central record-keeping relating to referrals and training would still need to be maintained but additional officers were required as deputies to the operational lead to ensure continuity of support. Changes to the structure were put in place to address this, with officers from Neighbourhoods and Housing being identified as safeguarding champions to offer further support to colleagues. Whilst in a practical sense this improved the support on the ground, having officers from several services areas identified for safeguarding led to some confusion around where incidents should be reported. Keeping a central record for incidents and referrals is important in determining potential trends, geographical hot spots and links in cases, so, keeping the process simply is vital.

During the review it was also recognised that, as a housing authority, the majority of interactions with vulnerable people are carried out by housing colleagues. This is not to say that officers from other service areas, particularly Neighbourhoods, Revenues and Benefits, Environmental Health and other front-line colleagues do not encounter and support vulnerable people, nor does it mean that referrals to protect people from harm only come from housing colleagues. Legislative guidance still maintains that safeguarding is everyone’s business. Officers from across the Authority need to be aware of safeguarding practices and know how to respond if concerns are identified.

Most recent changes has led to the Head of Housing Services now being the Designated Safeguarding Lead for South Kesteven District Council. The Deputy Safeguarding Lead is the Head of Housing Options. Safeguarding, including Prevent, remains a corporate responsibility and therefore these officers will continue to support colleagues from across the Council ensuring policy and training requirements remain fit for purpose.

