

Safeguarding

Annual Report 23/24



**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:

1. Our responsibilities as a district council in relation to safeguarding and Prevent
2. Training and development opportunities and outcomes for officers and elected Members
3. Safeguarding Interactions
4. The current position in relation to the Council's submission to the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Section 11 (Children Act 2004) Audit
5. 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”

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 do not meet adult services threshold as they do not 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) to instigate a multi-agency response. If deemed appropriate at the VAP, cases then may be refer through Team Around the Adult (TAA). The management, delivery and administration for the VAP fall within the remit of our housing team, the TAA function is managed by our colleagues at Lincolnshire County Council.

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

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.

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 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 2023/24, 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 50 Members attended in person sessions and 336 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. Across 2023/24, four such requests for information were received. None 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 four 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

In South Kesteven District Council, safeguarding training is mandatory for all staff. The level of training required is dependent on the interaction staff members have with our residents. Staff follow either a three-year or a six-year training pathway that contains training relevant to their levels of interaction with children, young people and vulnerable adults. The training is provided to partners of the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership and the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Adult Board 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.

Although this report relates to 2023/24 it is important to note that in May 2024 Council agreed to an amendment to the Constitution that made safeguarding and Prevent training **mandatory** for all Elected Members.

Council also determined that failure to attend training and development sessions within six months of the Council's Annual Meeting, or six months since election to office, would mean a Member would be unable to act on any committees or bodies to which they had been appointed until they had attended all mandatory training and development sessions. Six training sessions relating to safeguarding have been provided since this decision was made. A total of 51 Members had completed the training at 31 October 2024.

398 training modules were completed by officers in 2023/24. A record of the training completed by officers is held centrally. Topics covered are listed in the table below:

A Rough Guide to Not Putting Your Foot in it	Awareness of Private Fostering	Child Exploitation
Child Poverty	Child to Parent/Carer Abuse	Children Who Experience Domestic Abuse
Domestic Abuse - DASH	Domestic Abuse - MARAC and MOP	Domestic Abuse – Short Course
Domestic Abuse - The Importance of Language	Domestic Abuse in Practice	e Safety
Fabricated or Induced Illness	Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)	Friends Against Scams
LGBTQ+ Awareness	Making Safeguarding Personal	Mental Capacity Act
Mental Health Awareness	Missing Children	Modern Slavery and Trafficking
Radicalisation and Extremism	Safeguarding Adults	Safeguarding Children
Safeguarding Everyone in Lincolnshire	Safer Recruitment	Self-Harm
Self-Neglect	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities	Suicide Awareness (Zero Suicide Alliance)
Tackling Exploitation and Modern Slavery	Transition into Adulthood for Care Leavers	Understanding Domestic Abuse
Understanding Parental Relationships	Understanding the Trio of Vulnerabilities	Valuing Care

Further 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 Sarah McQueen, Prevent Lead and Deputy Safeguarding Lead, Carol Drury and Deputy Safeguarding Officer, Kati Conway.

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 this period were made by colleagues in Housing and Neighbourhoods directly to the responsible authority. For 2023/24 a total of 19 referrals were made, of which 8 related to adults and 11 related to 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 range from 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 this period, 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 the in-depth involvement in a case (taken from a case note by one of our officers):

I carried out a visit to xxxxxxxx, Grantham this evening at approx. 21.00hrs. with PC xx.

xxxxxxx (mum) was at the property and came to the upstairs left-hand window and then came downstairs to the front door. When I introduced myself I stated I was there to carry out a welfare check and mum just let us straight in, no questions.

Mum appeared clean and did not appear to be currently under the influence of drugs or alcohol. However, she did appear like she did use substances but I was unable to ascertain whether this was current.

Xxxxx was sitting on the sofa playing on an iPad. Mum said xxxx was in bed, she shouted him from the bottom of the stairs and said he would be asleep.

Xxxxx looked clean, her hair looked washed and she was wearing an 'oodie' which also looked clean. When I spoke to xxxxxx, she said she was alright and continued playing on her iPad throughout our visit.

The living room wasn't filthy, there were a lot of items but Mum explained she had some new furniture but was getting rid of other furniture and items in the living room as she was 'sorting things out'.

The kitchen was very cluttered and had lots of dirty crockery on the sides including in the sink, on the table and the electric hob of the cooker. I could see there was tinned food and cereal in one of the kitchen cupboards. The children had eaten eggs and sausages for tea (from looking at the leftover food it looked like scrambled egg and hotdog sausages).

There were a couple of bags of domestic waste which contained what looked to be food waste in the kitchen – advice was given regarding keeping waste in wheelie bins outside as it wasn't healthy and would attract flies/pests and the dogs (2 small dogs) would be able to get into the bags.

I asked where xxx was, and Mum said with his dad. She also stated he normally went on the weekends but on Tuesday he wasn't back so she called the social worker. Mum did not appear to know the exact whereabouts of xxxx and did not appear concerned.

Mum also said that she believed that this was the reason we were there because her 'ex' said he would do this as revenge. Mum wouldn't go into detail about why the family had a social worker and said we can talk to them, she also said she attends all the meetings. I asked if the children were part of a Child in Need plan but she didn't know what that was. I didn't continue to ask questions about this as xxx was within hearing distance.

Mum showed me a handwritten note dated 28/11/23 from a social worker who had tried to make contact and visit – xxxxx. Contact number on note xxxxxxxxxx.

Mum said I could contact the social worker.

Talked about the support Mum was receiving and said she knew how to access the food bank (through a work coach and school) I asked if I could make any referrals for support but she didn't want any referrals made for her. She said she had money on her electricity and gas meters and was receiving her universal credit tomorrow (19/01/2024).

Whilst in the kitchen I noticed the ceiling light was rewired to an extension lead, which then connected to another extension lead which went behind the radiator and into a wall socket – photographs taken. Advised she needed to contact her landlord to ensure this was fixed but she said they take a long time to fix things and mentioned another issue in the property which took 6 months to be fixed.

I also advised that I would make contact with the landlord regarding the storage of waste in the property and the light in the kitchen as it was not safe.

From the visit, I did not feel like the children were at imminent risk of harm or danger by being in the property with Mum. The property felt warm and there was some evidence they had eaten and there was other food in the property. I did not go upstairs in the property and I did not think it was proportionate to check on xx as it would be reasonable for a child to be asleep at 9pm on a school night.

I left the property at approx. 21.20hrs

I will attempt to contact the social worker on the number above tomorrow morning and if not successful I will contact the Children's Social Care referral telephone number to provide them with an update.

5. Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Section 11 (Children Act 2004) Audit

Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 places duties on a range of organisations and individuals to ensure their functions, and any services that they contract out to others, are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Section 11 places a duty on local authorities and district councils that provide children's and other types of services, including children's and adult social care services, public health, housing, sport, culture and leisure services, licensing authorities and youth services,

- Each person and body to whom this section applies must make arrangements for ensuring that: their functions are discharged having regard for the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and
- any services provided by another person pursuant to arrangements made by the person or body in the discharge of their functions are provided having regard to that need

Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) currently undertakes Section 11 audits on a three yearly cycle, South Kesteven District Council was required to complete this audit in 2024. The Section 11 audit in Lincolnshire is a multi-agency process and is undertaken in two stages:

- Self-assessment process – whereby each organisation completes an audit tool under 11 headings, which is further broken down into 40 questions. Each organisation provides an explanation of the services or arrangements in place for each of the questions and provides evidence to prove they fulfil each requirement. A self-assessed grading is given for each question of red, amber or green; where red represents no or inadequate arrangements in place and green represents excellent services.
- Multi-agency peer moderation– once each organisation has uploaded their evidence to the SharePoint, they are assigned a moderator from another Section 11 partner. Moderators scrutinise the evidence submitted and make an assessment of the score which reflects the evidence that has been submitted. In addition, each moderator undertakes a face-to-face visit to the organisation to ensure that what happens in practice supports the strategic assessment.

This audit commenced early 2024 and the Council received the result in August 2024.

The Council passed the audit with 100% of the criteria being rated as green, as agreed with our moderators. This shows that SKDC have the required functions to safeguard children as required by Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023.

6. New Safeguarding Arrangements

As reported in the previous annual update, it was recognised that as a housing authority, most interactions with vulnerable people are carried out by housing colleagues so Sarah McQueen, Head of Housing Service has been appointed as the Council's Designated Safeguarding Lead.

However, as acknowledged, officers from other service areas, particularly Neighbourhoods, Environmental Health and other front-line colleagues also encounter and support vulnerable

people. For this reason, deputy responsibility for safeguarding has now been spread across the organisation with Carol Drury, Community Engagement Manager appointed as Prevent Lead and Deputy Safeguarding Lead and Kati Conway, Senior Neighbourhoods Officer appointed as Deputy Safeguarding Officer.