

Safeguarding

Annual Report 2024/2025



**SOUTH KESTEVEN
DISTRICT COUNCIL**

1. Introduction

This report provides an overview of the Council'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 safeguarding services are predominantly provided for adults and those who are vulnerable so must be protected from harm. This does not mean however that the Council does 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.

The Council's 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 the adults wellbeing is promoted including, where

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.

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 referred 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.

2.2 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, The Council is 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.

The Council is 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 acknowledge 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 achieves 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 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 Strategic Risk Register for Prevent. In person training in Prevent is offered to officers on the three-year cycle eLearning modules are available to ensure new starters and those unable to attend in person receive training. Further eLearning is also available through the learner management system of the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership. A total of 330 modules of Prevent Training have been completed by officers.

Prevent training is also mandatory for elected Members and all 56 members completed this training in 2024/2025. There were 3 sessions were offered and, members who did not attend the in-person sessions were then asked to complete the Home Office training and send a copy of the certificate to prove completion. Those members that are school teachers or NHS staff were not expected to attend the Council training session if they were able to provide proof of recent completion of training in their work environment.

Information requests are received from Police colleagues when an individual is identified in the District as a possible Prevent referral. Across 2024/25, seven requests for information were received. None of the individuals 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 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 does not meet the threshold to ensure there is no evidence of change within the individuals situation that would require intervention from Prevent. Two 6-month reviews were carried out during this reporting period.

3. Training and Development

At South Kesteven District Council, safeguarding training is mandatory for all staff. The level of training required is dependent upon 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 eLearning, 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 May 2024 Full Council agreed an amendment to the Constitution which made Safeguarding and Prevent training **mandatory** for all Elected Members.

Full 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 50 Members completed safeguarding training during 2024/25.

380 safeguarding training modules were completed by officers in 2024/25. 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	Child Sexual Abuse	Child Exploitation
Child Poverty	Domestic Abuse - MARAC and MOP	Children Who Experience Domestic Abuse
Domestic Abuse - DASH	Domestic Abuse in Practice	Domestic Abuse – Short Course
Domestic Abuse - The Importance of Language	Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)	e Safety
Mental Health Awareness	Making Safeguarding Personal	Friends Against Scams
Radicalisation and Extremism	Missing Children	Mental Capacity Act
Safeguarding Everyone in Lincolnshire	Safeguarding Adults	Modern Slavery and Trafficking
Self-Neglect	Safer Recruitment	Safeguarding Children
Tackling Exploitation and Modern Slavery	Understanding the Trio of Vulnerabilities	Suicide Awareness (Zero Suicide Alliance)

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 Council have the knowledge, skills 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 the Council's 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 which they think 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. In 2024/25 a total of 37 referrals were made, relating to 31 adults and 6 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. 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).

5. Partnership working

During 2024/25, strong partnership working continued with Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) and the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Adults Board (LSAB), both of which have continued to drive multi-agency improvement and strengthen governance across the safeguarding landscape.

The LSCP has undertaken a series of multi-agency audits, including a review of responses to Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) and Neglect. These have promoted more effective information sharing, clearer accountability, and improved recording of decisions and outcomes. Learning from these audits has been cascaded to all partners, with a particular focus on early intervention and the quality of initial responses to children at risk. The LSCP has also embedded its revised Thresholds of Need document, ensuring greater consistency and confidence among practitioners in identifying and responding to levels of risk.

The LSAB continues to focus on safeguarding adults with complex needs, such as those affected by self-neglect and domestic abuse. Case reviews and Safeguarding Adult Reviews have

reinforced the importance of professional curiosity and multi-agency coordination in complex adult cases. The Board remains committed to embedding shared learning across agencies and tracking improvements in practice to ensure long-term impact.

SKDC safeguarding leads continue to play an active role in both partnerships, attending LSCP and LSAB meetings and contributing to task and finish groups, audits, and policy reviews. This ongoing engagement ensures that district-level perspectives are reflected in countywide safeguarding priorities and that local practice aligns with emerging learning and strategic developments from both boards.

Both partnerships have strengthened joint working arrangements, enhancing how children's and adults' safeguarding issues are escalated, reviewed, and learned from. Their combined work continues to emphasise prevention, data-informed decision-making, and a consistent multi-agency response to safeguarding themes across Lincolnshire.