

**Agenda Item No: 5**



Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk – annual report**

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**The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked:**

1. Note the information contained within the report
  2. Recommend all Ashford Borough Council elected members complete Level 1 safeguarding training
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**Date of O&S meeting:** March 2019

**Chair of O&S Committee:** Cllr Chilton

**Relevant Portfolio(s):** Cllr G White

**Summary:** Safeguarding is the process of protecting children, young people and adults at risk from abuse or neglect, preventing impairment of their health and development.

This report highlights a number of changes that have occurred to the authorities work towards safeguarding, including the programmed revision of our policy, updating changes to the County's "front door" for access to children's services and the completion of the biannual Section 11.

**Exempt from NO Publication:**

**Background Papers:** **The self-assessment and peer review required under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 is available in the Member Room**

**Contact:** Rebecca.wilcox@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233) 330405

## **Agenda Item No.**

## **Report Title:**

### **Introduction and Background**

1. This report covers the years activities since March 2018;
  - Council's safeguarding policy
  - Accountability and governance
  - Work carried out throughout the year
  - Referral update
  - Training
  - Section 11
  - Communication Plan
2. Safeguarding continues to have a high profile with significant political and media focus nationally as well as locally.
3. The Children Act 1989 states that the child's welfare is paramount and that every child has the right to protection from abuse, neglect and exploitation. Statutory guidance on making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children under Section 10,11,13 of the Children Act 2004 specifies what is required of local authorities.
4. Peer review of key statutory organisations are required every two years, we were required to submit our Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 in June 2018. This submission includes the review of a number of key statements that organisations are expected to meet, providing supporting evidence. This is a substantial piece of work to collate all the required information, feedback and associated requests.
5. The Care Act 2014 codified the principles of wellbeing and placed safeguarding adults' duties on a statutory basis. The council's policies and procedures are governed by this Act, which provides the legal framework of how local authorities (Kent County Council – KCC) and other parts of the public sector, including the borough council, should protect adults at risk of abuse or neglect.
6. The Counter-Terrorism Act 2015 dictates that all local authorities are vital to the Prevent work, which exists to reduce the risk of people being drawn into terrorism, while under the Modern Slavery Act 2015 the council has a statutory duty to report and provide notification to the National Crime Agency about any potential victims of modern slavery or trafficking.
7. All together, these legislative provisions place on the local authorities and their partners' stringent responsibilities regarding the general safeguarding of both children and adults at risk.

### **Ashford Borough Council's Safeguarding Policy**

8. The council's safeguarding policy stipulates that an annual review will be undertaken each September by the Safeguarding Lead Officers Group. Further to the review by the group, the policy was considered by the council's senior managers to sign off the final amendments. This was completed in February 2019.
9. The review addressed the following:
  - Changes to the key lead officers with safeguarding responsibilities. Safeguarding lead officers and their contact details have been updated.
  - Changes to reporting procedures due to a move to using M3 for logging and reporting safeguarding concerns. The reporting procedure has been updated and a flow chart included.
  - The introduction of the Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) guidance. The Policy has been updated to reflect the latest edition.
  - There were no legislative changes introduced that required inclusion in the policy.
  - The amendments listed above also have contributed to addressing some of the queries raised in the Section 11 as reported later in this report.
10. Management Team approved the revised version of our Safeguarding Policy in February 2019 with all associated documents being update on the intranet and internet.
11. In addition to the policy review, safeguarding has now been given its own heading on the front page of the intranet, which allows staff and Members to link directly to the appropriate page for guidance, contact and referral information.
12. The Safeguarding Policy is available at:  
[http://abcinside/images/Safeguarding/Safeguarding\\_2019/Safeguarding\\_Policy\\_FINAL\\_Oct\\_2018.pdf](http://abcinside/images/Safeguarding/Safeguarding_2019/Safeguarding_Policy_FINAL_Oct_2018.pdf)

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## **Accountability and Governance**

14. Ultimately, accountability for safeguarding under the work of Ashford Borough Council falls to the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive and Senior Management Team are responsible for ensuring that the council's responsibilities and procedures are implemented, monitored and consistently reviewed.
15. The Designated Safeguarding Officer is responsible for dealing with reports or concerns about the protection of children, young people and adults at risk appropriately and in accordance with the authorities Safeguarding Policy.

16. All borough councillors, employees and volunteers are responsible for carrying out their duties in a way that actively safeguards and promotes the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk. They must also act in a way that protects them from wrongful allegations of abuse as far as possible. They must bring safeguarding concerns to the attention of the Designated Safeguarding Officer or their Deputy in their absence.
17. A Safeguarding Lead Officers Group was established in 2016 and continues to support the Designated Safeguarding Lead Officer. This is an operational group with representatives across the council with key skills and knowledge that can support the council's responsibilities.

## **Actions Taken**

18. Safeguarding Lead Officers continue to meet bi-monthly along with a representative from Communications to deliver key improvements in the council's safeguarding governance, policymaking, procedures, working practices, training and monitoring.
19. The officers also review recent Domestic Homicide Reviews and Serious Case Reviews to see if any of the lessons learnt or recommendations have an impact on the work of the council.
20. The following provides some of the key achievements over the last year:
  - Management Team received quarterly safeguarding reports for strategic review, operational oversight and cascading information through the organisation.
  - Continuing engagement with the county's Channel panel to assess and support those who may be vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. Channel uses existing collaboration between partners to support individuals and protect them from being drawn into terrorism.
  - Safety in Action took place in June 2018 with almost 1,400 year 6 pupils from 37 out of 39 primary schools across the borough took part in this event, which was held at Ashford Fire Station from 18<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup>. This event aims to empower children with knowledge of, and skills to respond, to some of the hidden dangers and pressures they may encounter as they leave primary school to join secondary school.
  - The One Stop Shop continues to run weekly at the Willow Centre in Brookfield Road, this is a multi-agency provision to support victims of Domestic Abuse.
  - A member of the Neighbourhood Team co-locates with the Police on a weekly basis, allowing for joint working and Intel to support our enforcement and safeguarding concerns.

- Safeguarding Leads meet on a bi-monthly basis to review current practice, activities and complex referrals.
  - Meeting with Kent County Council Service Managers to discuss improvements to communications between the two authorities, further meetings to be held in April to discuss on-going improvements.
  - Community Safety Unit held their annual conference on 28<sup>th</sup> February, the theme for this year was 'Safeguarding and Vulnerabilities'; the conference was attended by over 110 delegates from over 40 organisations.
21. The Designated Safeguarding Officer and Head of Housing have met with a number of Service Managers within Kent County Council regarding safeguarding referrals and improvements to communication between the authorities.

## **Referral Update**

22. In May 2018 the recording mechanism for safeguarding referrals was moved to M3, this has allowed us to control the administration and viewing rights to the Safeguarding Lead Officers and our administration support provided by the Housing Management Support Officers.
23. Kent County Council reviewed their 'front door' procedures and overall guidance concerning support from Children's and Families Services, the new procedures and working practice was implemented in October 2018. Guidance is available for all staff and members via the intranet and key staff who have interaction and contact with children and their families have had access to free training on the new practices facilitated by Kent Children's Safeguarding Board.
24. To date (22 February 2019) we have recorded a total of 47 referrals from officers concerning an adult or child/ren, 64% of our referrals are for vulnerable adults at risk, with the remaining relating to a child or children.

## **Training**

25. Continuing from the on-going emphasis around raising the awareness of safeguarding through training that has been a focus for Lead Officers since March 2017.
26. Safeguarding training is structured on three levels, this is to reflect the different levels of engagement that officers have across the organisation.
27. We are 98% compliant for Category 1 training.
28. We are currently 85% compliant for Category 2 training with 8 two-hour sessions planned across March 2019, for the outstanding officers.

29. Category 2 training is facilitated by the two officers from the Safeguarding Team; our representative from Personnel and one other officer. This continues our work and commitment to train the trainers, allowing the authority to facilitate training as and when identified.
30. Training statistics are reported to Management Team on a quarterly basis and monitored in conjunction with Personnel.
31. A number of officers from the Safeguarding Team and the authority has attended free training session relating to children's safeguarding provided and facilitated by Kent Children's Safeguarding Board. These events are topic based and free to officers to attend.
32. 43% of Members have completed their safeguarding training which is a disappointing figure, however the Members Training Panel in January 2019. have concluded that Safeguarding will form part of the obligatory training courses from May 2019.

## **Section 11**

33. Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 places a statutory duty on key organisations to make arrangements to ensure that in discharging their functions they have regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
34. All agencies are required to complete a S11 Self-evaluation tool kit; this was completed and submitted to Kent Children's Safeguarding Board (KCSB) in June 2018.
35. The Designated Safeguarding Officer was then invited by KCSB to participate in a peer review of submitted Section 11's, this was a useful insight in to how other local authorities are approaching safeguarding children and safeguarding as a whole.
36. Evaluation for our 2016 submission resulted in a 47% met, 50% partially met and 3% not met rating; however our results achieved for 2018 showed a marked improvement with a 65% met and 35% partially met outcome. To date we have internally taken action to increased or met statements to 88% with our target to reach 100% within the year.
37. KCSB provided the following scoring, met, partial met or not met, the board then provide reasoning for the scoring. When a partial met has been given this does not mean the authority is failing to meet the commitment, it means further reassurance is required. The authority needs to be assured that they meet the commitments and HM Government Guidance.

## **Communication Plan – appendix A**

38. A communication plan has been designed to highlighted the changes to the policy, and reinforce where staff can find help, support and guidance.

39. The plan will also support the design and production of a laminated reference card for all officers and Members following on from the Stay Safe card produced at the end of last year.
40. Full implementation is time tabled for end of March 2019.

## **Conclusion**

41. In summary, the safeguarding team have had a productive year with the review of the policy, submission and subsequent feedback on our Section 11 while continuing to monitor our record keeping and communication.
42. The end of the financial year will see the implementation of the communications plan with an expected review of impact to be scheduled, a quick reference guide available for all staff and Members as well as a revamp of the intranet and internet pages relating to safeguarding.
43. I am confident the authority continues to be vigilant around safeguarding; however, an improved uptake in training needs to happen in which myself with the support from Personnel will continue to monitor this with the support from Management Team to ensure all officers complete the mandatory requirements.

## **Contact and Email**

44. [Rebecca.wilcox@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:Rebecca.wilcox@ashford.gov.uk) 01233 330405