

CABINET

Agenda Item: 6

Ward: All

Portfolio: Neighbourhood and
Community Health Services

Report Author(s): Nicola Fensham

Meeting Date: 22 May 2017

SUBJECT: Update on Safeguarding Arrangements at Mendip

Internal Use Only: Please complete sign off boxes below prior to submission to Democratic Services			
	Seen by:	Name	Date
Report Sign off	Chief Executive/ Deputy Chief Executive(s)	Tracy Aarons	10/05/2017
	Legal	Tracy Aarons	11/05/17
	Finance	N/A	
	Group Manager	Claire Malcolmson	10/05/2017
	Portfolio Holder	Nigel Taylor	10/05/2017
	Ward Member(s)	N/A	
Summary:	This report is intended to provide an update on the safeguarding arrangements in place at Mendip District Council, post re-structure, and identifies the action plan and activities to take place over the next year to ensure continuity of our safeguarding arrangements.		
Recommendation:	That Cabinet note the report		
Direct and/or indirect impact on service delivery to our customers and communities:	The council's policy ensures that the council addresses and embraces its responsibility to safeguard children and vulnerable adults. Amendments keep the policy up to date with current changes in legislation. The policy itself has no direct impact on service delivery but it is expected that there will be activities developed by teams to meet the new legislation over time.		
Contribution to Corporate Priorities:	The council's policy ensures that the council addresses and embraces its responsibility to safeguard children and vulnerable adults.		

Legal Implications:	There is no legal implication from this report it is just an update of activities over the last year.
Financial Implications:	There are no new financial issues arising from the report.
Impact on Service Plans:	There will be no impact on service plans.
Value for Money:	There are no financial issues arising from the report.
Equalities Implications:	There are no new equality impact implications.
Risk Assessment and Adverse Impact on Corporate Actions:	If the council fails to have a suitable policy in place to address safe guarding then it places itself at risk of failing to meet its duties and failing to protect the community.
Scrutiny Recommendation (if any)	Not applicable. This paper as not been to Scrutiny as it is only an update report.

Update on Safeguarding Arrangements at Mendip

Introduction

This report is intended to provide an update on the safeguarding arrangements in place at Mendip District Council, post re-structure, and identifies the action plan and activities to take place over the next year to ensure continuity of our safeguarding arrangements.

What are the Safeguarding responsibilities of a District Council?

As a District Council we have the duty and responsibility for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults under a range of legislation. We have a statutory 'duty to cooperate' to safeguard children as prescribed in The Children Act (1989). This includes engagement with the Local Safeguarding Children Board. In addition District Councils have a duty 'to make arrangements to ensure that in discharging their functions they have regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children' under Section 11 of The Children Act 2004. Further guidance is contained within Working Together To Safeguard Children (2014). Duties and responsibilities to safeguard vulnerable adults are set out in various pieces of legislation and guidance including The Care Standards Act (2000) and The Care Act (2014).

The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (2006) sets out statutory requirements preventing the employment of 'unsuitable people' to work with children and vulnerable adults. District Councils must ensure they practice safe recruitment and selection and have human resources policies and practice that deal effectively with safeguarding concerns.

As a District Council we have very limited direct responsibility for safeguarding - particularly that we do not have responsibility for (and indeed should not) determine whether abuse has or is taking place nor do we have responsibility for investigating incidents or allegations as to whether abuse has taken place or making judgments about whether abuse has taken place.

Our responsibility as a District Councils is to put in place a safeguarding policy and procedures, ensure that staff, managers and elected members are aware of the policy and procedures, to provide training and development on safeguarding, to know what the signs of abuse are and to know when and how to report concerns. This includes the making of referrals to the statutory agencies including the County Council and the Police.

We must also ensure that children and vulnerable adults are safeguarded within the services that we provide and for those we commission through the provision of safe environments and safe working practices. This includes ensuring safeguarding standards are in place where external organisations use District Council land or premises, whether or not a charge is made to do so.

Finally a District Council must engage with local partnership arrangements including the Local Safeguarding Children Board and the Adult Safeguarding Board.

The Current Position at Mendip

The Council has adopted a safeguarding policy which was amended and re-adopted in May 2016 to take account of the PREVENT agenda and recent Child Sexual Exploitation directives.

The Deputy Chief Executive, Tracy Aarons, holds the corporate lead safeguarding responsibility. She also represents all the districts in Somerset on the Somerset Adults Safeguarding Board. Simon Lewis, from Taunton Deane carries out the same role on behalf of the districts on the Children's Safeguarding Board.

Claire Malcolmson and Nicola Fensham share the role of deputy safeguarding leads representing the council at the quarterly meetings of the district safeguarding board held in Taunton. They also have responsibility for producing and delivering safeguarding training to the champions.

Safeguarding champions have been appointed across the council and each area now has a representative. All existing staff in the organisation have had safeguarding training and have been advised of the process to follow should they have safeguarding concerns. New members of staff are given safeguarding training via a package developed by the deputy safeguarding officer. Application forms have been adapted to account for safeguarding duties and HR have adapted job descriptions to include the duty.

All relevant contractors are required to have appropriate safeguarding measures in place as part of the contracting process with the Council and this is assessed as part of the procurement process.

There is a safeguarding referral process for staff to follow if they have concerns about someone and staff can contact a safeguarding champion to discuss their concerns and get advice on what the next steps should be if required. We have recently developed and introduced a new safeguarding issues log. An area has been developed in Sharepoint where champions can log the details of any referrals or concerns that have been brought to their attention. This can then be monitored for audit purposes.

A quarterly meeting takes place between the safeguarding champions and the lead officers to review activities in the previous quarter, share learning and identify any changes that would improve ways of working.

In May 2016 Ofsted carried out a section 11 audit of Mendips procedures and I can report that we were found to be compliant with the procedures that we currently have in place. There were four areas that were identified as requiring some improvement. All four areas dealt with issues that arise from dealing with children and families directly and weren't relevant to the services that we provide as a district council. An action plan was completed and returned to Ofsted stating this.

Referrals made in the last twelve months

Between 1st April 2016 and 31st March 2017 we recorded a total of fifteen cases. Of the nine adult cases raised we only referred one of these on to S.C.C. In most cases upon further investigation we were able to establish that there was already some form

of support in place. One incident was forwarded to the police as it was considered that the person in question could cause harm to staff. Six cases related to children. 2 of these resulted in referrals, 2 had no further action taken on them and 2 were dealt with by other support services.

Working with the County Council on Safeguarding Matters

Although relations with the county council have been difficult in the last two years due to the continual changes taking place within their children's services and their expectations of partners, matters have now improved.

The referral process where a child may be at risk has been confusing and has altered continually but we are optimistic that a point of stability is now being found with Children and Young Peoples Services (CYPS).

Locally we have built relationships with those staff working from our site (a benefit of the SHAPE Mendip approach) and a monthly meeting takes place between SCC staff, from getset, Early Help and Children's Social Care, and Mendip housing and safeguarding staff. This meeting allows for discussions regarding issues relating to specific cases as well as sharing of learning around referral processes and routes for support.

A major focus in these discussions has been around the clarity of routes for referral where the concerns regarding a child may not breach the threshold of significant harm but early help may be required to stop the matter escalating to that point. A safeguarding referral flow diagram has now been developed for our champions that points staff to points of contact within the SCC system where early help may be required.

Adults safeguarding has been running smoothly as the referral process is currently simpler. The additional implications of the Care Act, around self-neglect and financial exploitation for example, may see the referral become more complex over time but there seems to be a more inclusive approach by partners in this area so it is not anticipated as being as difficult as the children's safeguarding changes have been.

Implications of the Re-Structure

Prior to the re-structure the lead safeguarding officer was supported by a deputy safeguarding officer, who was the housing, health and wellbeing officer, plus five safeguarding champions to cover each of the groups. All these officers had additional safeguarding training over and above the corporate training provided to all staff in the last two years and they acted as the initial point of contact for staff with safeguarding concerns.

Through the re-structure period some staff left the organisation or changed roles meaning that interim arrangements were put in place to support staff. The deputy lead and two champions have left the organisation since the re-structure process began and one other has moved into a Client Unit post as part of the Five Council's Partnership.

There has been some work to bring additional officers up to speed but for a short period the organisation currently had only four champions trained, one of whom is currently acting in the deputy role.

For the organisation this meant that it still had adequate safeguarding arrangements in place, since the referral process was unaffected, and staff were able to refer concerns as necessary. The relatively small number of champions, and lack of deputy, did however mean that the system was only running at a basic level and would not be effective in the longer term. As a consequence there was a need to move the safeguarding framework back to a more robust setting.

To address this situation Group Managers were advised of the reduced number of champions and were asked to update their staff on who could be contacted. They were also asked to review suitable candidates to act as safeguarding champions in their groups and these names have now been provided. They will now all be provided with specific training to allow them to carry out the role effectively.

Actions over the next quarter

The Group Manager for Community Health has safeguarding within her group and is taking on the deputy safeguarding role alongside the newly appointed deputy safeguarding lead. They will both be given tier two training which will include two/three days of external training alongside other professionals across the county. Having two deputies will allow for continuity of support during periods of leave or illness.

All champions, both existing and newly appointed will be given internal training in what their responsibilities are and what procedures they need to follow.

Quarterly meetings will recommence with representation from SCC children's services also joining the meeting to allow for additional sharing and training on children's issues.

Refresher training will also be developed and implemented across all staff, and members, to ensure that our duties in the area of safeguarding are not forgotten.

We are currently working with the licensing team to develop a means of delivering and raising awareness of Child Sexual Exploitation (C.S.E.) amongst taxi drivers and other members of the night time economy to keep in line with nationwide initiative of raising awareness of C.S.E.

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List of background Papers: N/A