

# Safeguarding Children & Vulnerable Adults

Report of the Head of Community and Leisure (Portfolio: Community, Leisure and Tourism)

## **Recommended:**

**That the ongoing work, as set out in the report, to ensure that the Council is compliant with its safeguarding duties be endorsed.**

### SUMMARY:

- This report is a summary of work undertaken with regards our safeguarding duties as requested by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as part of a bi-annual review of the safeguarding policy and practices of the Council.
- Our safeguarding procedures were last reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny in 2020.
- As a Council we are continually reviewing our practices to ensure that we are compliant with our safeguarding responsibilities and incorporate emerging issues. These will be outlined in this report.

## **1 Introduction**

1.1 The Lead authority for safeguarding our vulnerable groups is Hampshire County Council. At District level, we have legal obligations to ensure that we have safeguarding procedures in place under the following pieces of legislation;

The Children Act 2004

The Care Act 2014

The Counter Terrorism & Security Act 2015

The Modern Slavery Act 2015

The Children & Social Work Act 2017 (Corporate Parenting)

1.2 The Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy (2020 update) along with staff and Member training has ensured the Council remains compliant with the above duties. The next review of the TVBC Safeguarding Policy will take place in September 2022.

## **2 Background**

- 2.1 As a Council providing a large number of public facing services, there are many opportunities to be made aware of safeguarding concerns; either directly if told by a person or indirectly as a witness when carrying out the various functions of the Council. We are often referred to as the 'eyes and ears' of the safeguarding system seeing people in their own environments and as such have an important part to play in ensuring these concerns are correctly dealt with. To enable our staff, volunteers and Members to understand their role, we continue to train and raise awareness of safeguarding and adapt our procedures as necessary to ensure that we have robust and effective systems in place to fulfil both our statutory duties and also our duty of care to those we deliver services to.
- 2.2 External Audits - Both the Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) and Hampshire Safeguarding Adults Board require all statutory partners to complete an audit of their safeguarding procedures to assess them against their duties for the respective cohorts.
- 2.3 The Section 11 Audit covers children and young people and is an annual audit requested by the HSCP. The latest audit was undertaken in December 2021. The feedback we have received from the HSCP is that as a Council we are compliant with the requirements and areas such as our partnership working, training and community support during the pandemic were flagged as examples of good practice. Through this process, the safeguarding Lead Officer has identified a few areas of improvement which form part of the annual review in relation to ensuring our policies and procedures are aligned to the HSCP guidelines.
- 2.4 An Adults Safeguarding Audit was undertaken as requested by the HSAB in January 2022. We are waiting on the feedback from our submission. It is of note however that each partner agency does not receive individual but collective feedback and therefore this is not as beneficial a tool to drive externally identified improvement. However as with the Section 11 audit, a few areas of improvement have been noted which are in hand to address in relation to our policy and procedures review.
- 2.5 The period of the pandemic did have an impact on referrals being made into both Children & Adults Services across all organisations due to the loss of face to face contact and opportunities to visit people in their environments. Both the HSCP and HASB were aware of this impact and to help counter this increased their publicity and awareness campaigns which we pushed out through our social media and other networks to maintain a public awareness of safeguarding. In 2021 we made 42 referrals into Children and Adult Services, of these 9 were with regards children, the remainder adults. The most common reason for a referral for adults was in relation to self-harm and suicide behaviours.

- 2.6 TVBC are supporting the work of the Hampshire Suicide Prevention Strategy and a representative from Revenues & Benefits attends the Money & Mental Health sub-group which is looking at how financial pressures that people are facing links to increased poor mental health and thoughts of suicide.
- 2.7 It has been noted that there has been a considerable increase in the number of contacts Council staff are having with the public where thoughts of self-harm or suicide are disclosed, be this in person, over the phone or in written form. To support staff, the Safeguarding Lead Officer has trained to deliver the City & Guilds Suicide First Aid training which is part of the Hampshire Partnership strategy. Sessions will be rolled out to staff in the coming months, Options to run sessions for Cllrs and other community groups can be considered if needed.
- 2.8 Safeguarding training for staff continued online throughout the pandemic, and now it will now be back in person. Both the HSCP and HASB have increased the type and amount of training that can be accessed by those in the wider safeguarding workforce. This has been helped by changing the delivery method of courses to either on-line or virtual and they have seen higher and more varied attendance so will continue to deliver a mix of both. TVBC has assisted the HSCP and HSAB with the creation and delivery of some tailored training courses for Hampshire these being:
- Safeguarding Awareness for Home Visiting staff – what to look out for e-learning
  - Housing and safeguarding webinars
  - Community Safety and safeguarding webinars
  - Multi-Agency Risk Management training – a Councils perspective as part of a wider training session.
- 2.9 Safeguarding refresher training for new and existing Cllrs will be delivered shortly, date tbc.
- 2.10 The Multi Agency Risk Management Framework (MARM) forms part of the adult safeguarding toolkit as a method to 'hold and support' an adult at risk when the concern does not hit the trigger for Adult Health & Social Care Section 42 intervention. A MARM can be called by any organisation working with an adult and requires all parties working with that person to be involved to look at how each can play a part in safeguarding the person. The number of MARMS that TVBC has either convened or been called to attend has increased. In 2021, we called and therefore chaired five MARMS and attending several others as an interested party.
- 2.12 We ensure that safeguarding is a consideration when working with vulnerable groups such as people living with disabilities, street attached etc.

- 2.13 TVBC continues to take our place within the wider safeguarding arena across Hampshire. The safeguarding lead officer chairs the Hampshire Safeguarding Leads Group and sits on the HSCP Workforce Development Group. Locally we also have representation at the Test Valley MET (Missing Exploited & Trafficked) group which focuses on young people who are at risk of being exploited either criminally or sexually and the Drug Related Harm meetings which focuses on those using/dealing drugs but also vulnerable people who have been cuckooed.

### **3 Corporate Objectives and Priorities**

- 3.1 Many areas of Test Valley Borough Councils work will bring officers, Members and volunteers delivering services on behalf of the Council, face to face with the public and in situations where they may observe or become aware of a safeguarding concern.
- 3.2 Robust safeguarding procedures underpin two of the Councils Corporate priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan, Growing Our Potential 2019-23.
- Communities – Enabling communities to be empowered, connected and build upon their strengths.
  - Live – be able to live well and fulfil their potential.
- 3.3 Safeguarding and ensuring staff, Members and volunteers are aware of their duties is an integral part of ensuring we work effectively and responsibly in these communities

### **4 Consultations/Communications**

- 4.1 TVBC work with key stakeholders and through these are represented on:
- Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnership
  - Hampshire Safeguarding Adult Board
  - Hampshire Safeguarding Lead Officer Group
  - TV Local Families Forum
  - Hampshire Modern Slavery Partnership
  - HSCP Workforce Development Group
  - Missing, Exploited & Trafficked sub-group.

### **5 Options**

- 5.1 The following strategic arrangements are in place and these are also statutory requirements of both the Children Act and The Care Act.
- Organisational commitment to the importance of safeguarding
  - A clear statement of commitment, this being the Children and Vulnerable Adults Safeguarding Policy, which is available for all staff and Members.

- Service development that takes account of the need to safeguard and promote welfare and is informed, where appropriate, by the views of the target group.
- Staff training on safeguarding at the level appropriate for all staff working with vulnerable groups.
- Safe recruitment to ensure robust recruitment and vetting procedures are in place to prevent unsuitable people from working with children.
- Effective inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of vulnerable groups.
- Completion of audits required by both the HSCP and HSAB to assess compliance against statutory requirements.

## **6 Option Appraisal**

- 6.1 As a statutory partner under The Children Act 2004 and The Care Act 2014, the Council has a legal duty to comply with the requirements of the Acts and supplementary guidance.

## **7 Resource Implications** (Note: The resource implications of the recommended option)

- 7.1 The membership subscription fee for the Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnership for 2022/23 is £2,492.00. This contributes towards the Partnership running costs and resources such as overseeing Learning and Enquiry Reviews (formally Serious Case Reviews) and enables TVBC to access the multi-agency safeguarding training provided by the HSCP at no additional cost.

- 7.2 Currently there is no subscription fee towards the Hampshire Safeguarding Adult Board.

## **8 Legal Implications**

- 8.1 Our legal obligations are set out in the following documents:

- The Children Act 2004
- Working Together to Safeguard Children – A guide to interagency working. (HM Government 2018)
- The Care Act 2014
- The Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Counter Terrorism & Security Act 2015
- The Modern Slavery Act 2015
- The Children & Social Work Act 2017

## 9 Equality Issues

- 9.1 An EQIA was carried out in 2011 as part of the policy development process and identified no negative impacts on the community.

## 10 Other Issues

- 10.1 Community Safety – there are strong links between community safety and safeguarding vulnerable groups which are recognised through the work the Council undertakes.
- 10.2 Wards/Communities Affected – All

## 11 Conclusion

- 11.1 This report sets out progress to date with regards our safeguarding duties following the adoption of the initial Safeguarding Children & Vulnerable Adults Policy in 2011.

<u>Background Papers (Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D)</u> None			
<u>Confidentiality</u> It is considered that this report does not contain exempt information within the meaning of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and can be made public.			
No of Annexes:	None		
Author:	Louisa Rice	Ext:	8810
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