

Community & Leisure – Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults update

Report of the Head of Community & Leisure (Portfolio: Leisure & Wellbeing)

Recommended:

That the Committee endorses the progress made with regards safeguarding

- This report is a summary of work undertaken in this area as requested by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as part of a bi-annual review of the safeguarding policy and practices.

Our safeguarding procedures were last reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny in 2018.

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 As a Council providing a large number of public facing services, there are many opportunities for our staff to be made aware of safeguarding concerns; either directly if told by a person or indirectly as a witness when carrying out their role. 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 and systems in place.

The TVBC Safeguarding Lead chairs the Hampshire District Safeguarding Lead Officers group and also represents district councils on the Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnership - Workforce Development Group which identifies training and competencies across the whole wider childrens workforce.

- 1.3 The Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy (2018 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 2020.

2 Background

2.1 Safeguarding Training

- 2.2 Training continues to be a pivotal part of our safeguarding provision. All staff will receive face to face safeguarding training at either induction level or, if their role brings them into contact with vulnerable groups, at a more detailed level. For these Level 2 courses we co-train with Eastleigh BC and Winchester CC meaning that we can deliver the sessions more frequently and share the workload. By ensuring that all staff receive training, and especially those on the front line such as the Environmental Services team, Pest Control Officers, Civil Enforcement Officers, we can ensure that they know how to respond if they encounter a concern and have the confidence to act upon this.
- 2.3 An e-learning refresher course has been implemented, however the roll out was not hugely successful as it was on our old platform which had some technical issues. A new course for the Learning Zone is in its final stages of drafting and will available be for all staff who have already taken the safeguarding training. This will form part of a three year programme of HR-managed refresher training.
- 2.4 As part of the Member Induction programme safeguarding training was offered to all TVBC Members in 2019.
- 2.5 Training courses offered by both HSCP and HASB have been promoted to relevant staff by the Safeguarding Service Contacts to increase their awareness. Most of these courses are free for councils to access.
- 2.6 TVBC have hosted a number of Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) and Hampshire Safeguarding Adult Board (HSAB) training sessions at Beech Hurst. Feedback from the Section 11 Audit in general across all organisations was that people often did not attend courses due to the travel time and location. By hosting courses at our offices, we have increased the number of TVBC staff from all services who have attended. These courses have included: Whole Family Approach Training, Learning Lessons from Serious Case Reviews, Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) workshops and Managing Suicidal Conversations.

2.7 Section 11 Audit

- 2.8 Every two years as a statutory partner of HSCP, the Council is required to complete a Section 11 Audit as a self-assessment tool to indicate levels of compliance with regards our safeguarding duties. This provides a beneficial check on current provision and also helps indicate areas of improvement.
- 2.9 The HSCP have altered their approach to the Section 11 Audit, we now complete a full Audit every two years and an interim audit in between to monitor progress. Our last full audit was carried out in 2018. As well as the self-assessment, a questionnaire was circulated to staff to provide further evidence of our procedures. Overall in the 2018 audit, the HSCP concluded that there is a clear emphasis in our procedures regarding the role of the Council in keeping children safe.
- 2.10 The minor area for development that was identified mainly focused on communication and how we ensured that all staff, not just those front line safeguarding, were aware of their safeguarding role. In order to address this a network of identified Safeguarding Service Contacts has been established. The Safeguarding Lead officer uses these contacts to send out updates about safeguarding practices, training opportunities and emerging issues which they in turn can share within their services and target key staff as appropriate. Prior to this communication took place mainly using channels such as Staff Information Bulletin or emails to individuals. This new system has proven to be beneficial as uptake on external training courses has improved and our response rate to the Section 11 staff survey has increased from 25% in 2018 to 63% in 2019
- 2.11 The Hampshire Safeguarding Adult Board (HSAB) also carried out an audit of safeguarding provision in 2018/19. Although this is not a statutory requirement, TVBC did submit a return. The HSAB have not put in place procedures to enable individual agency feedback and therefore the response received was generic amalgamating feedback for all organisations completing it. The process itself however was beneficial as a self-assessment of our safeguarding role with adults and highlighted a few areas of improvement which we have undertaken, these being:
- Extending the training opportunities provided by the Safeguarding Adult Leads Network to officers across the Council to share learning and best practice.
 - Implemented the Hants Multi Agency Risk Management Framework (MARMF) toolkit to retain an overview of a case which does not achieve Adult Services thresholds for safeguarding but where there is a concern of risk for the individual. This involves multi-agency sharing of information on the person to monitor their situation and put in place actions as required or escalate to Adult Services if necessary. TVBC has instigated two MARMF

- 2.12 The Hampshire Safeguarding Leads group has made a request to the HSAB that to continue to help organisations develop robust procedures, any future audits would provide better opportunities if individual feedback could be provided. We have not had a response to this request as yet.
- 2.13 Emerging safeguarding issues
- 2.14 Under the Working Together 2018 Guidance, in 2019 the Hampshire Safeguarding Children Board became a Partnership and now operate as the Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP). This has not changed the way we in which we interact with them.
- 2.15 Over the course of the last two years and since the last report to Overview & Scrutiny, there have been a number of emerging safeguarding issues that Test Valley BC have taken on board. These include County Lines, Modern Slavery and Corporate Parenting.
- 2.16 County lines
- 2.17 County Lines is where illegal drugs are transported from one area to another, often across police and local authority boundaries (although not exclusively), usually by children or vulnerable people who are coerced into it by gangs.
- 2.18 County Lines is a priority for Police and TVBC, working together through the Community Safety Partnership. As a result a multi-agency partnership has been established to share information and plan a local strategic response in co-ordination with Operation Fortress, which is the Polices frontline action. This process has seen positive results in disrupting the activity and led to a number of arrests.
- 2.19 TVBC has recently shared a national targeted awareness raising campaign with private landlords and licensed drivers who may unwittingly become involved in this activity.
- 2.20 Information on County Lines and encouraging anyone to share intelligence or concerns they may have using the Police Community Information form or 101 is included in all TVBC safeguarding training.
- 2.21 Modern Slavery
- 2.22 Modern slavery is an umbrella term to cover any form of human trafficking, slavery, servitude, forced labour and exploitation and covers people of all ages.
- 2.23 All local authorities have a duty to notify any suspicions of Modern Slavery under s52 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015. The Hampshire Modern Slavery Partnership has approached all local authorities to produce a local Modern Slavery Statement to understand all potential moderns slavery risks related to its business, and put in place steps to ensure there is no modern slavery or human trafficking its supply chains.

2.24 Having initially reviewed the processes and policies in place it is felt that TVBC already has appropriate measures in place to address this. A formal statement which sets out these practices is currently in draft form. This statement sets out Test Valley Borough Council's actions to understand potential modern slavery risks related to its business and to put in place steps that are aimed at ensuring that there is no slavery or human trafficking in its own business and its supply chains. It is currently with HR and Procurement for their input as key services in this process, however progress on this has been delayed by the current Covid-19 situation.

2.25 Modules covering Modern Slavery and trafficked children are included in the TVBC safeguarding training and e-learning refresher.

2.26 The Community Engagement Manager (Community Safety) is the district council representative on the Hampshire Modern Slavery Partnership

2.27 Corporate Parenting

2.28 The Children & Social Work Act places a duty on local authorities to act as a corporate parent to the children and young people who are in care or care leavers (those young people who recently left care up to the age of 25). The main responsibilities to act as the corporate parent lies with Hampshire County Council, Test Valley BC has a supporting role to assist where able to deliver the main aims of the Act these being:

- act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people;
- encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
- take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
- help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;
- promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;
- for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work;
- prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

2.29 Work is underway with HCC Childrens Services to ascertain how TVBC can assist with this function and measures put in place so far are detailed below. As of December 2019 there were 114 children in care and 22 care leavers living in the Test Valley.

- 2.30 Council Tax - In February 2020, Council approved a new scheme for care leavers under the age of 25 whereby they will either be exempted from Council Tax or disregarded. To enable this Childrens Services will provide TVBC with details of eligible care leavers
- 2.31 Housing - Measures were already in place to fulfil our corporate parenting duty. The Housing team have bespoke tailored advice for young people and a specific leaflet for care leavers regarding housing options. TVBC's approach to children in care and care leavers includes:
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- Exempting care leavers from our qualifying criteria associated with local connection (to reflect the challenges this can pose to young people placed out of area by the Children's Services authority).
 - Awarding "additional priority" for foster carers where their current accommodation is not suitable to accommodate a foster child placement.
 - Consider "additional preference" for care leavers as part of the "Health & Welfare Assessment" (which is done on a case by case basis rather than a blanket provision).
- 2.32 Community Engagement - We have established links between Children's Services and the Community Team to enable a case worker to make contact should they require guidance with regards 'community life' that the child or young person could access.

3. Corporate Objectives & Priorities

- 3.1 Many areas of Test Valley Borough Councils work brings officers, Members and volunteers face to face with the public and in situations were 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.

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

TVBC work with key stakeholders and 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

5.0 Options

5.1 The following strategic arrangements are now in place. These are also statutory requirements of The Children Act and The Care Act:

- Organisational commitment to the importance of safeguarding
- A clear statement of commitment which is available for all staff
- Service development takes account of the need to safeguard and promote welfare and is informed, where appropriate, by the views of children and families
- Staff training on safeguarding for all appropriate staff working with children and families.
- Safe recruitment to ensure robust recruitment and vetting procedures are in place to prevent unsuitable people from working with children
- Effective interagency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- Robust serious case reviews and section 11 audits

6. Option Appraisal 6.1

As a statutory partner under The Children Act 2004 and the Care Act 2014 TVBC has a legal duty to comply with the requirements of the Acts

7. Resource Implications

7.1 Membership subscription fees for the Hampshire Safeguarding Children Partnership for 2020/21 is £2,494. This contributes towards the Partnership running costs, resources such as Serious Case Reviews and enables TVBC to access to multi-agency training provided via the Partnership Board at no additional cost.

7.2 Currently there is no subscription fee for 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 inter-agency 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 and 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 to community safety and safeguarding for both children and vulnerable adults.

10.2 Wards/Communities Affected – All

11. Conclusion

11.1 This report sets out progress to date as detailed in the Safeguarding Action Plan following the adoption of the initial Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy in 2011.

<u>Background Papers (Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D)</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:	Updated Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy (2018 update)		
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File Ref:			
Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Date:	20 May 2020