

Report to: **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**
Date: **10 November 2020**
Title: **Safeguarding – Annual Update**
Portfolio Area: **Corporate Services**
Wards Affected: **All**
Relevant Scrutiny Committee: N/A

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y / N**

Date next steps can be taken:
(e.g. referral on of recommendation or implementation of substantive decision)

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RECOMMENDATION:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- 1. continue to review safeguarding annually; and**
- 2. RECOMMEND to Council that the revised safeguarding policy (as set out at Appendix A) be adopted.**

1. Executive summary

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with the opportunity to annually scrutinise and review Safeguarding practice and procedure. This followed recommendations from previous Internal Audit recommendations including October 2017 which stated that Safeguarding should be considered a stand-alone subject due to its complexity.

2. Background

Following Overview and Scrutiny recommendations in January 2020, Members agreed to review an annual updated Safeguarding Policy (appendix A) and also to review and scrutinise safeguarding practice and procedures on an annual basis.

The Audit Partnership completed an Internal Audit on Safeguarding in October 2020. The draft Audit Opinion was "Reasonable Assurance – there is a generally sound system of governance, risk management and control in place. Some issues, non-compliance or scope for improvement were identified which may put at risk the achievement of objectives in the area audited."

3. Outcomes/outputs

3.1 The Safeguarding Specialist meets with other District Council Safeguarding Leads on a quarterly basis to share good practice and to represent the Councils with both the Devon Children and Families Partnership and the Adult Safeguarding Board. This ensures ongoing compliance and areas of emerging threat and risk are known, then mitigated, through partnership working.

3.2 In January and February risks were identified around contextual safeguarding of young people in West Devon. This resulted in the Safeguarding Specialist being required to Chair Community meetings under the Social Care framework of the Adolescent Safety Framework. Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to safeguarding that responds to young people's experiences of harm outside of the home, for example with peers, in schools and in the community. There is some overlap with the Safeguarding and Community Safety roles, the current Specialist holds both roles.

3.3 During the lockdown period there were increased safeguarding queries and advice provided as communities rallied together to support those vulnerable in the community. The early lockdown period saw calls from concerned community groups around mainly older people, living alone that were identified as needing help and assistance. As lockdown continued and the weather was warmer, safeguarding queries reflected national concern around domestic abuse and the calls and queries received reflected this. There were also calls during this time from concerned neighbours who could hear situations unravelling in properties where windows were open or where children were outside.

3.4 Following emerging risks and concerns identified in 3.3, it was felt necessary for the organisation to implement a Domestic Abuse Policy for staff and accompanying guidelines for the policy. The guidelines have already proven useful.

3.5 The partnerships that West Devon Borough Council has and continues to develop between other agencies and partnerships are strong. The Safeguarding and Community Safety Specialist regularly attend and engage in these partnerships. They include:

- The **Community Safety Partnership** who work strategically and operationally on themes such as Drug and Alcohol reduction, Vulnerability, Suicide and provide the Council and others with free courses on issues such as Exploitation.
- **The Devon and Torbay Prevent Partnership** (Counter Terrorism) is also a close working partner, the safeguarding specialist is also West Devon Borough Council Prevent Lead and receives regular updates on any terror threats in our area and the latest updates and recommendations for local councils. The work planned in June 2020 with the Senior Leadership Team and the Counter Terrorism Advisor (CTA) for the South West has been placed on hold due to the current pandemic, this will resume as available.
- **Devon and Children's Family Partnership** (previously known as the Safeguarding Children's Board) and the **Devon Safeguarding Adults Board** remain close partners and the safeguarding specialist meets on a quarterly basis with both of these boards as part of the Devon District Safeguarding Officers Network where good practice is developed and shared.
- **MARAC** (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) which risk manages residents who experience Domestic and Sexual Violence, demonstrate how essential partnership working is. A Housing Senior Case Worker shares attendance with the Safeguarding Specialist at MARAC meetings.
- The **Adolescent Safety Framework** as previously identified in item 3.2.
- The **South Devon Sexual Violence and Domestic Violence and Abuse Forum** which the community safety specialist co-chairs with a Manager from Splitz, Devon's commissioned service for domestic abuse.
- The Senior Specialist in Housing (Sophie Cobbledick) attends bi monthly **Devon Homeless Prevention Partnership** meetings where projects and policies are developed to meet and safeguard the needs of vulnerable young people aged 16-18 and care leavers at risk as homelessness. These meetings are attended by Senior Managers in district housing teams and by commissioners and senior managers from DCC Children's Services.
- Joint working protocol developed by Devon County Council in partnership with the districts for the service offer for **Care Leavers**. This is currently in draft form and is being worked on by the Senior Housing Specialist. The document aims to identify the separate elements and skill sets needed for independent living and requires the input of all statutory services to ensure Care leavers are enabled to live safely and independently.
- Following on from the secondment placement into the MASH team with children's services; extensive work has been done to ensure that all young people at risk of homelessness continue to be identified and referred to our Housing Team, including the

development of a Duty to Refer process which is easily accessible to Social Workers. This joint working approach ensures that young people at risk of sexual exploitation, abuse and homelessness are safeguarded and supported to access and maintain accommodation.

- Presentations delivered to Adult Safeguarding Teams across South and West Devon to ensure adults with learning disabilities, at risk of exploitation or abuse and in housing need are referred into Housing Services where appropriate. Housing services have equally received training on referrals to adult services where there are suspected unmet care needs etc. This joint working approach ensures that vulnerable adults are supported to source and maintain accommodation and to live independently.
- **Disabled Adapted Need Panel**, established and chaired by Steph Rixon Senior Housing Specialist, continues to identify and safeguard those at risk in their own homes due to adaptation needs. Working in partnership with Occupational Health, Environmental Health and Housing these needs are identified and a joint working approach is employed to ensure these needs are met.

The breadth and depth of safeguarding awareness amongst staff and Members continues to develop, this was positively highlighted during the lockdown period as previously set out. Offers of regular training, information in staff and member bulletins and briefings and regular attendance at team meetings with Localities and in staff management meetings provide opportunity for question and answer sessions that are reported as helpful. Raising awareness of safeguarding to our staff, supporting vulnerable people in our communities and signposting where appropriate will continue as part of daily business.

4. Options available and consideration of risk

Safeguarding by its very nature carries a degree of risk. The client group is vulnerable and often chaotic.

WDBC minimises these risks by the ongoing training of staff, promotion and awareness of a safeguarding specialist who has expert subject knowledge, close working relationships with agencies such as the police and the council also has robust safeguarding procedures put in place. The safeguarding specialist is supported by safeguarding champions who are identified throughout the breadth of the local authority and who are identified on the intranet, with accompanied contact details.

WDBC is proactive in projects and staff training. At the last Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January 2020, Members requested safeguarding and exploitation briefings on a range of subjects. These were delivered to Members across West Devon and South Hams in February and March 2020 and covered themes such as County Lines, Child Sexual Exploitation, Domestic Violence and Abuse, Modern Slavery and Counter Terrorism and how/who to contact for advice and information on reporting mechanisms.

A recent Internal Audit for Safeguarding stated the draft Audit Opinion as “reasonable assurance” whilst highlighting some areas where there is scope to further embed safeguarding into day to day activities for all staff.

5. Proposed Way Forward

Members are recommended to review the revised safeguarding policy and adopt this as the new policy.

E-learning training packages for safeguarding and for domestic abuse awareness were introduced online this year, following increases as documented during the first COVID lockdown period. Members are recommended to support these training packages as mandatory for all staff and Members to complete.

6. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	To support ongoing training for staff and members to further highlight safeguarding in all its forms.
Legal/Governance		The Care Act 2014, sections 42-46 The Counter Terrorism Act, section 26 The Modern Slavery Act 2015 The Crime and Disorder Act 1998, section 17 The Children Act 2004, section 11 The Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004, section 9 The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime & Policing Act 2014 The Serious Crime Act 2015, particularly Part 5
Financial		Minimal training budget required for safeguarding leads and some specialist housing staff. Safeguarding lead will then train non specialist staff to an appropriate level.
Risk		The report is for information and as such there is no risk associated with decisions to set out.
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity		Safeguarding legislation and WDBC procedures are applied in conjunction with equality and diversity standards.
Safeguarding		Safeguarding standards, information and signposting is open to residents, customers AND staff of WDBC.

Community Safety, Crime and Disorder		Where safeguarding crosses with community safety and crime issues the safeguarding specialist will liaise with the community safety specialist.
Health, Safety and Wellbeing		The safeguarding lead works closely with public health and other partners on health and wellbeing issues including drugs, suicide, trafficking.
Other implications		n/a