

25th July 2012**Report of the Portfolio Holder for Housing****SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS UPDATE****EXEMPT INFORMATION**

None

PURPOSE

The purpose of the report is to update Members on the number and type of initial safeguarding concerns that the council received between April 2011 and March 2012. The report will also inform members of the current position in relation to our Policy regarding safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

RECOMMENDATIONS**That Members:**

- 1. Endorse the proposal to delay (until the autumn of 2012) the scheduled review of our current Safeguarding policy in order to benefit from the national guidance due to be published in summer 2012.**
- 2. Promote attendance by Tamworth Borough Councillors at all future Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adult awareness training.**

Executive Summary

Tamworth Borough Council has both a legal and moral duty to protect children and vulnerable adults from harm. The Children's Acts 1989 and 2004 along with the associated statutory guidance set out our legal responsibilities for protecting children. As part of our ongoing commitment to these responsibilities the Council will revise the existing Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults policy in line with the recently revised Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance from the government. The current policy was approved in March 2011 and is not deemed to be out of date. Therefore it is prudent to await the national revisions before amending our local policies. The implementation of our existing policy is currently subject to an internal audit inspection as part of our commitment to testing its effectiveness; the findings from the internal audit will also inform any revisions to our safeguarding policy. In addition to this officers also undertake an annual review of our Section 11 responsibilities under the Children's Act.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

There are no immediate financial implications arising from this report. The cost of training and materials will be met from existing budgets.

LEGAL/RISK IMPLICATIONS BACKGROUND

There are no immediate legal/risk implications arising from this report; however the Council has a statutory duty under the Children's Act 1989 and 2004 to ensure appropriate policies and procedures are in place to safeguard children and vulnerable adults.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

There are no sustainability implications arising from this report.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Tamworth Borough Council has a duty to recognise and report any issues that we detect via our contact with customers, visitors and via our partners that identify potential issues of safety, welfare or vulnerability of an individual.

The Council's policy on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults, and the associated training, contains information for staff on how to recognise signs of abuse and how to respond appropriately. The policy and associated training details the procedure on how to report concerns. Concerns are reported by staff on the online reporting form accessed via the Intranet. This information is then recorded on the Customer Recording Management system (CRM). All actions that have been taken in regards to the safeguarding concerns are logged on the system. The CRM system is used widely by various teams. It is also evident that other agencies are advising us of safeguarding issues and these are also being incorporated onto our recording and reporting system. Staff without access to the intranet can use a paper version of the form or phone safeguarding officers for support.

The current online reporting form used by staff will be revised to comply more fully with the County-wide multi agency referral form. Should timescales coincide this will be done to match the introduction of the Council's new Customer Records Management system. The Council's Safeguarding requirements have been built into the specification for the new corporate CRM system.

Between 1 April 2011 until 31 March 2012, 58 initial concerns were reported and logged onto the Council's CRM system. Of the 58 initial concerns 34 were concerns regarding children and the remaining 24 were concerns relating to vulnerable adults. There has been a small decrease in the number of concerns received when compared with the figures from April 2010 - March 2011 where 61 concerns were recorded.

In summary the reports are telling us that –

1. Teams using the CRM to report their initial concerns are – Housing Services (Estate Management, Housing Advice, Cleaning and Caretaking Services, Income Management), CCTV, Street Wardens, Housing Benefits and

Customer Services.

2. Geographically we have received reports that relate to the following areas - Town centre (shopping centre & homeless) (6), Town Centre (residential) (7), Amington (4), Glascoate (8), Dosthill (1), Fazeley (1), Bolehall (1) Leyfields (1), Belgrave (3), Kettlebrook (4), Coton Green (4), Stonydelph (13), Hockley (4), and (1) for Lichfield.
3. Those we have concerns for age between approximately 6 months old to 85 years old.
4. Reports have come in from a variety of sources, staff witnessing issues, neighbours reporting issues, staff hearing concerns when talking to customers over the phone
5. There are significant implications for the Housing Service, with the exception of a few reports – most appear to relate to those in Council accommodation and some are in need of Council assistance in finding accommodation/housing advice.
6. Reports range from verbal abuse to serious sexual abuse to financial abuse.
7. Some reports relate to multiple types of suspected abuse, with this there appears to be a link with substance abuse & sexual abuse.
8. There are several reports linked to alcohol related incidents.
9. It would also appear that most incidents take place at home or very near to the home of the person we have concerns for.
10. All incidents were reported to the Police, Staffordshire County Council Children's Social Care Services First Response Team, or another appropriate agency.

Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults is a demanding area of work. The Council is currently involved in an adult protection investigation as a result of the death of a vulnerable adult in Tamworth. The Council requested the investigation to take place; key learning points from the investigation will be disseminated to all agencies involved in the case when they become available. Council officers have reported their concerns regarding adults in need of support but who don't meet current social work thresholds to the County Council.

Delivery of refresher safeguarding awareness training to all appropriate staff is underway and sessions will continue to run throughout the year. A session for members is scheduled to take place on the evening of the 6th September 2012. Delivery of training to other district council staff and members and voluntary sector organisations is also undertaken by the council's Children & Families Safeguarding Officer.

A draft domestic violence policy is currently being produced by the Community Safety Partnership and will be circulated for consultation in autumn 2012. The Domestic Violence policy will complement our existing safeguarding policy and provide staff with additional information about domestic abuse and how to recognise and respond to any concerns they may have.

Working in partnership with the police we are currently in the process of co-ordinating the delivery of multi-agency training in relation to domestic violence to appropriate staff members. Also in conjunction with the Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board sub-groups we are exploring ways to deliver education to practitioners, young people and the wider community around sexual exploitation.

REPORT AUTHOR

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LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2010 DCSF)
Statutory Guidance Under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004
The Laming Report 2009, The Protection of Children in England
Tamworth Borough Council Cabinet Report 31st August 2011