

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL  
SOCIAL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 14 MARCH 2017  
REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR (HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES)

**SAFEGUARDING REPORT 2016-17**

**1 Executive Summary**

- 1.1 The Council is required by law to have a *Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy and Procedure* for any employee, Member or contractor who, in the course of their daily activities, comes into contact with a child or vulnerable adult.
- 1.2 As a local authority with a responsibility for children and vulnerable adults, Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council ('the Council') has both a moral and a legal obligation to ensure the highest possible standard of care for those vulnerable people who use, and have access to, our services as well as those services we commission and contract out to other organisations.
- 1.3 The Council is committed to doing its utmost to provide safe activities and opportunities for its residents by ensuring that it meets its legal obligations in this respect.
- 1.4 The Council takes seriously its duty of care for children and vulnerable adults and has a duty to cooperate with the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (the Children Act 2004), the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board (the Care Act 2014) and other partners.
- 1.5 The Council's aim is to facilitate the best possible professional practice from itself, its employees, elected members, volunteers and those individuals, companies or organisations that provide goods or services, or undertake work for and on behalf of the Council.
- 1.6 The Council has a statement of intent around safeguarding which is:
- "The Council is committed to ensuring that children and vulnerable adults are protected and kept safe from harm whilst they are engaged in any activity associated with the Council. We also have a duty of care to protect those individuals who work with children and vulnerable adults whether paid, full-time, part-time or voluntary."*

**2 Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the content of this report.

**Implications**

**3 Financial Implication(s)**

- 3.1 There are no financial implications directly related to the content of this report.

**4 Link to Corporate Priorities**

- 4.1 The subject of this report is linked to the Council's Corporate Priority '*Maintain a safe and healthy community*', and is linked to a statutory requirement under *The Children Act 1989 & 2004, The Care Act 2014, Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015* and *Modern Slavery Act 2015*.

## **5 Legal Implication(s)**

- 5.1 Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 places a duty on District Councils to safeguard and promote the welfare of children directly, and when contracting out their services.
- 5.2 The Council has a duty through the Care Act 2015 to cooperate with the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board in making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of vulnerable adults.
- 5.3 Section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 places a duty on the Council when it exercises its functions to have 'due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism'.
- 5.4 Modern Slavery Act 2015 places a duty on all local authorities, under section 52 of the Act, to notify the Secretary of State upon developing reasonable grounds to believe that a person may be a victim of slavery or human trafficking.

## **6 Climate Change Implication(s)**

- 6.1 There are no climate change implications directly arising from this report.

## **7 Risk Management Implications**

- 7.1 Safeguarding is listed as a key risk on the council's Strategic Risk Register, and is scored an 8 which is classified as a low risk, due to the risk controls which are in place.

## **8 Explanation**

- 8.1 The Council is committed to ensuring that children and vulnerable adults are protected, and kept safe from harm, whilst they are engaged in any activity associated with the Council. The Council also has a duty of care to protect those individuals who work with children and vulnerable adults whether they are in paid, full-time, part-time or voluntary work.
- 8.2 The Council adopted a new Safeguarding Policy and Procedure in March 2016 however now that the Housing Trust has integrated back into the Council, this Policy will be reviewed, along with the structure and reporting mechanism the Council has with regards to any matters relating to Safeguarding.
- 8.3 The Council's Corporate Governance Group has oversight of the council's safeguarding processes. The Council's Safeguarding legal requirements are also stated within the Council's constitution and all new members and employees are made aware of their safeguarding responsibilities through the induction process. Additional training is made available as and when required to those individuals in addition to the wider Council training that is delivered.
- 8.4 A Safeguarding Action Plan was prepared and delivered throughout 2016, which was monitored by the Designate Safeguarding Officers Group and chaired by the director responsible for safeguarding.

- 8.5 In March 2016, an internal audit was conducted; the audit conclusion was that the council is meeting its legal safeguarding responsibility.
- 8.6 Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is defined within the Council's policy as; 'involving exploitive situations, contexts and relationships where young people receive 'something' as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities.
- 8.7 Perpetrators and victims of CSE come from all age ranges and ethnic groups. It is not exclusive to any single community, race or religion. There is no culture in which sexual exploitation/abuse is not a serious crime.
- 8.8 Recent cases of CSE within England has found that Hackney Carriage services, due to the nature of their work, could come across this illegal activity without realising it. As such Hertfordshire County Council has led on a cross county approach to raising awareness amongst drivers about CSE. Our Council's Hackney Carriage Officers have been recently arranging the delivery of such training to over 40 of its drivers.
- 8.9 The Council's duty around Section 29 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 highlights the requirement to have due regards to its provisions and should place appropriate weight on the need to prevent people being drawn into terrorism when they carry out their other functions.
- 8.10 Within the Government's PREVENT strategy it does place a requirement on the Council to ensure that its forward-facing service attend a WRAP (workshop to raise awareness of prevent) sessions. As such the Council has four fully trained officers who can provide WRAP. This training has been and is still being rolled out to all frontline officers.
- 8.11 The Council's most 'at risk' contracts are reviewed and audited every year by their contract managers/client officers on their commitment and resilience around Safeguarding. These contractors and their clients continue to work together to ensure that contractors (where required) have developed better practices around Safeguarding. This ranges from updating their policies to better reporting structures in their organisations.

It is the responsibility of those Client Officers within the Council to review these audits and ensure that their contractors are consistent with the Council's legal obligations.

- 8.12 For reference, the current director with overall responsibility for safeguarding is Simone Russell (Director, Housing and Communities) and the lead Member for Safeguarding is Councillor Darren Bennett.

## **9 Equality and Diversity**

- 9.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has not been carried out as this report, as it is for information only.

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