

North East Derbyshire District Council

Audit Committee

30 September 2024

Safeguarding Update

Report of the Managing Director

Classification: This report is public

Report By: **Lee Hickin, Managing Director**

Contact Officer: **Lee Hickin, Managing Director**

PURPOSE / SUMMARY

- To update Members of the Audit Committee regarding safeguarding arrangements/referrals.
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RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Audit Committee notes the report.

IMPLICATIONS

Finance and Risk: Yes No

Details:

There are no additional financial implications arising out of this report.

On Behalf of the Section 151 Officer

Legal (including Data Protection): Yes No

Details:

There are no legal or data protection issues arising out of this report.

On Behalf of the Solicitor to the Council

Staffing: Yes No

Details:

No direct issues outside already recognised budgets and resources.

On behalf of the Head of Paid Service

DECISION INFORMATION

Decision Information	
<p>Is the decision a Key Decision? A Key Decision is an executive decision which has a significant impact on two or more District wards or which results in income or expenditure to the Council above the following thresholds:</p> <p>NEDDC: Revenue - £125,000 <input type="checkbox"/> Capital - £310,000 <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Please indicate which threshold applies</i></p>	No
<p>Is the decision subject to Call-In? (Only Key Decisions are subject to Call-In)</p>	No
District Wards Significantly Affected	None
Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) details:	
<p>Stage 1 screening undertaken</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed EIA stage 1 to be appended if not required to do a stage 2 	
<p>Stage 2 full assessment undertaken</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed EIA stage 2 needs to be appended to the report 	
<p>Consultation: Leader / Deputy Leader <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cabinet <input type="checkbox"/> SMT <input type="checkbox"/> Relevant Service Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Members <input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/></p>	

Links to Council Plan priorities;

- A great place that cares for the environment
- A great place to live well
- A great place to work
- A great place to access good public services

REPORT DETAILS

1 Background (reasons for bringing the report)

1.1 Safeguarding Referrals.

Safeguarding means protecting people's health, well-being and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect.

Derbyshire County Council (DCC) is the statutory lead for safeguarding in Derbyshire as they have responsibility for adult care and children's services. However, there is a requirement that North East Derbyshire District Council (NEDDC) must work in partnership with DCC to protect adults and children who are most at risk.

The table below shows trend information from the centrally recorded safeguarding referrals to DCC, from 2016/17 up to 18 September 2024.

Year	Total Number of referrals	Split between adult / children		Department/Organisation Referring to Link Officer	Number of referrals
		Adult	Children		
2016/17	18	12	6	Housing Options	3
		(66%)	(33%)	Environmental Health	6
				*Contact Centre	8
				Leisure	1
2017/18	24	16	8	Housing Options	2
		(66%)	(33%)	Environmental Health	4
				*Contact Centre	17
				Leisure	1
2018/19	28	19	9	Housing Options	3
		(68%)	(32%)	Environmental Health	2
				*Contact Centre	13
				Leisure	1
				Revenues and Benefits	6

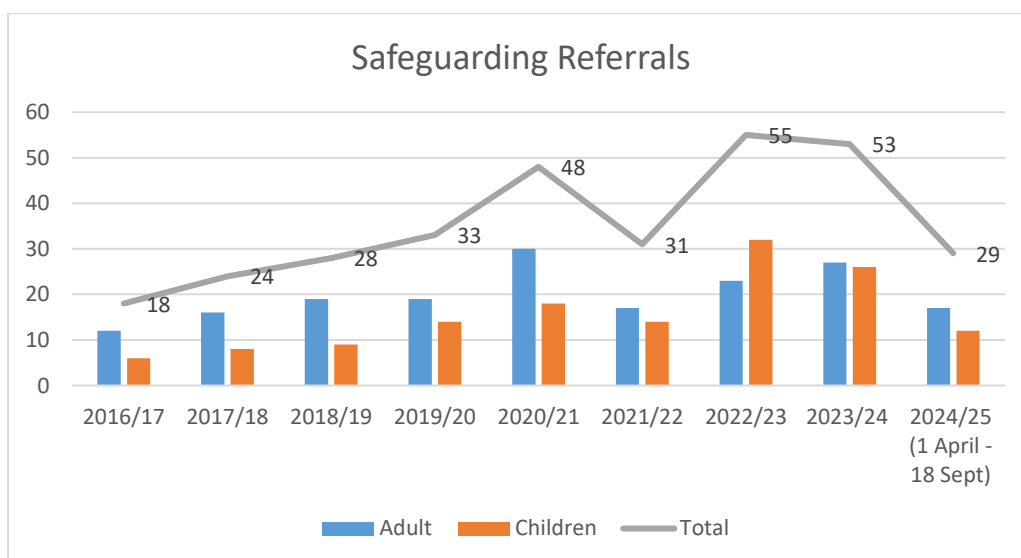
				Street Scene	1
				Community Development Worker	1
				Elections	1
2019/20	33	19 (58%)	14 (42%)	Housing Options	5
				Environmental Health	2
				*Contact Centre	14
				Leisure	2
				Revenues and Benefits	4
				Legal	2
				Councillor	1
				Partnership Team	1
				DCC's Tell us Once Scheme	1
				Planning	1
2020/21	48	30 (62%)	18 (38%)	Housing Options	7
				Environmental Health	2
				*Contact Centre	32
				Revenues and Benefits	4
				Home Start at Derby	1
				Partnership Team	1
				Dental Practice	1
2021/22	31	17 (55%)	14 (45%)	Housing Options	12
				Environmental Health	1
				*Contact Centre	17
				Covid Test Centre	1
2022/23	55	23	32	Housing Options	10

		(42%)	(58%)	Environmental Health	3
				*Contact Centre	24
				Revenues and Benefits	4
				Leisure	2
				Street Scene	1
				Housing Strategy	1
				Human Resources	1
				Learning Disability Centre	1
				North Derbyshire Newmedica Ltd	1
				NHS Ambulance	1
				Health Assured	1
				Ukrainian Host	1
				Probation Service	2
				Family Court	1
				Counselling Advice	1
2023/24	53	27	26	Housing Options	11
		(51%)	(49%)	Environmental Health	1
				*Contact Centre	34
				Revenues and Benefits	3
				Sheffield CAMHS	1
				P3	1
				Sheffield Teaching Hospital	1
				Sheffield Social Care Practitioner	1
2024/25	29	17	12	Housing Options	4
From 1 April 2024		(59%)	(41%)	Environmental Health	1

to date (18 Sept 2024)				*Contact Centre	16
				Revenues and Benefits	1
				South Yorkshire Housing	1
				Bank	1
				Guinness Partnership	1
				Adult Care Sheffield City	2
				Probation	2

*NOTE: The Contact Centre receives the most cases for Safeguarding Referrals, this will be due to their role as the first point of contact for the Council. Referrals are identified from tenants and residents who mostly report concerns about their family, friends, and neighbours. On some occasions external organizations report Safeguarding Concerns to the Contact Centre, these are monitored and have been shown in the table.

The Chart shows the number of Safeguarding referrals over time for Adults, Children and overall total per year up to 18th September 2024.



Since 2016/17 the number of referrals has increased over the reporting period, with a noticeable spike during the years 2020/21 and 2022/23. This is especially true for Child referrals which significantly increased during 2022/23.

Factors that could have influenced the referral increases are:

- Covid 19 pandemic – “lockdowns” began 2020, meaning;
 - More people were at home to witness, identify and report adults/children at risk
 - Contact Centre Welfare Checks were identifying adults/children at risk
 - Housing Options team were identifying people that were homeless and at risk of harm to themselves or others
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021 - framework designed to support organisations to identify and respond to domestic abuse and promote best practice. It also recognises children as victims of domestic abuse in their own right which may have led to more referrals.
- Cost of Living Crises – people struggling to pay bills and buy groceries, which can lead to homelessness, mental health illness, neglect and could create hostile environments in the home; this list is not exhaustive.

1.2 Referral Issues Identified

During the year 2022/23 the Council received a number of Safeguarding referrals from external organisations which should have been reported directly to DCC.

This raised a question as to why this was happening. After further investigation, we became aware that DCC’s website could have been misinterpreted. DCC was notified of this and subsequently amended their website.

In 2023/24 less reports of Safeguarding concerns from external organisations have been sent to the Council in error, however from April 2024 up to September 2024 there has been a noticeable increase.

During this reporting period 10 referrals was sent to the Council in error, including referrals forwarded from Sheffield City Councils Social Care. Investigations into why this is happening is ongoing, however we have learned that organisations are getting NEDDC confused with DCC.

Going forward procedures for dealing with these types of referrals may need to be put in place to ensure the external organisations refer directly to DCC, in accordance with DCC’s preference.

1.3 2024/25 (from 1 April to 18th September)

There were 29 Safeguarding referrals during this reporting period, the majority were reported through the contact centre (16), however 10 (34%) were referrals from external organisation reporting to NEDDC in error.

There are many reasons why a person is at risk and will require a safeguarding referral. The top reasons for Safeguarding Referrals during the reporting period, in simple terms, are, health issues and unable to cope, Domestic Abuse, mental health problems and neglect. Most cases are complex and cannot fit into one category, therefore to give an idea of complexity the reasons for the referrals are as follows:

Adults

- 3 x Health issues and unable to cope
- 1 x DV from partner
- 2 x Mental health issues
- 1 x Financial abuse
- 1 x Coerced to cashing in investments by Financial Advisor
- 1 x Learning disability – sexual assault, cuckooing, emotional and financial abuse
- 1 x Attacked at a friend's property
- 1 x Victim of investment scam
- 1 x Sexual assault at retirement housing complex by another tenant
- 1 x Threat of suicide
- 1 x Physical Health Declining
- 1 x Neglect from a Care company
- 1 x House in state of repair and rats
- 1 x Parkinson disease and needs professional help

Children

- 2 x Witness to DV
- 1 x Homelessness
- 1 x Left TA with Mother – both mother and father claiming DV
- 1 x House in mess and brother smoking Cannabis
- 1 x In temp accommodation B&B, mother not going out all day and child crying on and off all day
- 1 x Noise from property at all hours
- 2 x Neglect
- 1 x Mother moved in with a known perpetrator
- 1 x Father worried about a court supervision order for his child
- 1 x Child being screamed at by parents

Each case is considered on an individual basis with a variety of actions taken which as well as a referral to social care, can include Police, co-operation with social care / Police investigations, safe and well checks, VARM plans (Vulnerable person risk management), monitoring, etc.

When a referral is made to DCC, where relevant and appropriate, council departments may be informed, for example, the Council's Environmental Health,

Housing Options and Community Safety teams. Rykneld Homes Limited will also be informed if the vulnerable person at risk is living in a Council property. This is to ensure a joined-up approach to Safeguarding and the person at risk gets the help required. Any information shared will have due regard to the Safeguarding data protection legislation.

Cases may be brought to the NEDDC safeguarding group to establish lessons learned, key themes and where appropriate discussion. Feedback and escalation via the Derbyshire Districts Safeguarding Lead Sub Group is also an option.

1.4 Safeguarding Policy Update

The Derbyshire wide “Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, Protecting Children and Adults at Risk” has been adopted by the Council and is not due for a review until 2025. The review will be conducted by the Derbyshire District Safeguarding Leads Sub Group with the involvement of the Council’s representative.

1.5 Learning and development

Internal Training Update

Safeguarding training is compulsory for new starters and existing employees as a Safeguarding refresher course.

The training sessions can now be completed online.

Training for Private Landlords

A Private Sector Strategy has been commissioned, consultation of the strategy will be commencing November 2024, with a view to implementation in early 2025. Within the strategy and the Action Plan it is envisioned that Private Landlords receive Safeguarding training, this may be implemented by the Council through the Landlord forum but is yet to be decided how the training will take place.

The training session will help landlords identify vulnerable people at risk in the Private Rented Sector.

1.6 Derbyshire District Safeguarding Leads Sub Group (DDSLSG) Update

The Derbyshire Districts Safeguarding Leads Sub-Group meets on a quarterly basis and all district and borough safeguarding leads are invited. The Group has had a significant impact in improving safeguarding by providing a safe space to discuss safeguarding concerns and enable Derbyshire Districts to have a united, stronger voice at the safeguarding boards.

The DDSLSG works to an Action Plan which is based on current Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership (DDSCP) and Derbyshire Safeguarding Adults Board (DSAB) Strategic Priorities. Specific actions include:

- Training, learning and development.
- Operational safeguarding issues/case studies.
- Policy and procedures.
- Learning from audits and reviews.
- Engagements with DDSCP and DSAB Boards.
- General Resilience to respond to safeguarding issues/concerns.
- S11 Audit – compliance, improvement discussions and consistent approach across all districts.

Key activities include:

- Improved access to joint briefings, training and a range of different safeguarding topics.
- Promotion of wider safeguarding activity.
- Provided opportunities for discussion on shared challenges, concerns and opportunities to escalate issues to statutory partner agencies.
- Discussion and dissemination of learning from local and serious case reviews.
- Development of joint policies and resources.

1.7 Key progress year end 2023/24

- The Derbyshire wide "Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, Protecting Children and Adults at Risk" has been adopted by the Council Derbyshire Wide.
- Online Safeguarding Training implemented.
- Factsheet developed for tradespeople.

1.8 Key activities for 2024/25

The Bolsover District Council Officer, who currently Chair's the DDSLSG and attends/provides reports to DDSCP and DASB, is retiring and stepping down from Safeguarding duties, which includes attending the Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Executive Board Meeting held every 4 months.

An officer from NEDDC will be taking over this role and will be attending the meetings starting from 19th September 2024.

2. Details of Proposal or Information

- 2.1 To update Members of the Audit Committee on safeguarding arrangements.

3 Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 To keep members of the Audit Committee updated and sighted on all arrangements relating to safeguarding as a key element of the overarching risk management framework.

4 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 4.1 This report could be shared and reviewed by a Scrutiny Committee or Council directly. However, it is felt that the Audit Committee is the right place to report back on safeguarding issues as it is a key feature of the overarching framework.

DOCUMENT INFORMATION

Appendix No	Title
Background Papers (These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Cabinet you must provide copies of the background papers)	