

## Part A

**Report to:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
**Date of meeting:** 19 January 2017  
**Report of:** Section Head - culture and play  
**Title:** Watford Borough Council Safeguarding Overview

### 1.0 Summary

- 1.1 It was recommended by (SIAS) Shared Internal Audit Service that the council have greater scrutiny involvement in safeguarding to examine the council's position in relation to safeguarding responsibilities.
- 1.2 This report provides Scrutiny with an overview and understanding of the role of the council with regards to discharging its safeguarding responsibilities.
- 1.3 It illustrates work implemented to date and as part of our own internal review process there will be some planned changes to ensure our policy, procedures and mechanisms continue to be effective and robust to support the current climate.

### 2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the report be noted.

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Report approved by: Head of Community and Customer Services

### 3.0 Background

Under the Children Act 2004 all Local Authorities have a general duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults within their area who are in need.

Watford Borough Council (WBC) has a duty to co-operate with the lead

Authority, in this case Herts County Council (HCC).

HCC has formed a multi - agency group of partners called the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Board [HSCB] to develop procedures and systems to ensure the requirements of the Act are implemented.

The Children Act 2004 also placed a duty on the Safeguarding Children Boards to ensure their partner organisations were meeting their duties under S11 effectively. The HSCB developed a toolkit (Section 11 Audit) for organisations to self-assess their compliance and to suggest further actions in order to improve areas where they were performing less well.

So we co-operate by completing our self-assessment every 3 years and working on any improvements required.

In addition, we co-operate in other ways outlined below;

WBC has a Safeguarding Policy in place and procedures for reporting concerns, this policy is available on the staff intranet and the annual training programme covers the policy, procedures and how to report a concern.

The Section Head of Culture and Play is the designated lead officer for safeguarding and there are other identified support officers available for help and guidance.

WBC as a key employer has recruitment policies and procedures in place to ensure that staff that directly work with children and young people and or vulnerable adults are vetted appropriately. These are monitored centrally by our HR service to ensure these are updated at regular intervals.

WBC has arranged relevant training in safeguarding for those staff that requires it for their job or for their awareness. Some of this training is via an external trainer and there is a module on line.

We attend the District Safeguarding Group; all districts have a representative on this group, which is in response to requirements of HCC and the HSCB. The group shares best practice, knowledge and understanding of any changes or responses that are required.

Each council in Herts has varying degrees of direct services to children and vulnerable adults and resources for safeguarding vary per district. Some councils

have full time dedicated officers focused safeguarding; some have officers who have a safeguarding role as part of other wider job responsibilities. This role can vary in the amount of time spent on safeguarding responsibilities.

Over a number of years naturally the role of Safeguarding in Watford has been the responsibility of the Head of Leisure and or Culture as the majority of direct services were delivered from that section. Whilst currently it is still the responsibility of the Section Head for Culture and Play, we have successfully to varying degrees spread more awareness, training and engagement across the council.

So now colleagues in Environmental Health, Licensing, Community Safety, Housing, and HR are actively engaged either by attending meetings, making referrals, managing the training programme and ensuring our recruitment procedures are robust.

So Safeguarding is no longer just a service issue, it is and has been for some time a corporate responsibility. The Section 11 Audit is shared at Leadership Team and any additional support or resources required are managed via the appropriate Head of Service.

The number of referrals made solely by WBC is relatively small in comparison, in 2015 there were 7 and in 2016 5. There are other agencies and partners who make referrals such as the WCHT, Police, Community Safety Protection Group, Families First Dual District and local schools.

SIAS IN November 2015 gave a moderate assurance for safeguarding for the council and we have made some improvements to date following that which are covered below.

Safeguarding is fast changing with greater emphasis from Government and lead authorities. High profile cases inadvertently have added to increased knowledge, engagement, scrutiny, training, skills and awareness which all will lead to a culture and environment that provides greater protection for all involved.

### **Summary of current strengths identified through the Section 11 Audit**

We have a Safeguarding Policy and supporting procedures (see attached). This is reviewed and updated as appropriate on an annual basis. There are designated senior lead officers and support from leadership team and senior management.

HR learning and development provide an annual programme of safeguarding training for identified officers. The training provided is Level 1 and 2, Child sexual exploitation and adult safeguarding. There is also an e-learning module on safeguarding.

Safeguarding is covered on the induction programme for new starters so awareness is raised at the earliest opportunity.

We have a culture across the council that safeguarding matters and there has been engagement, co-operation at all levels and within departments where appropriate.

With regards to working with clubs or clubs hiring facilities then the following checks are done :

- All coaches are encouraged to have coach mark ( this includes DBS, Coaching qualification, Safeguarding certificate )
- Evidence of a clear enhanced DBS or a DBS is carried out if the individual is working for WBC or Leisure Provider
- Coaches Qualifications are checked
- Details of governing body affiliation provided
- Safeguarding policy in place
- Name of safeguarding welfare officer obtained

Our main leisure provider SLM has a safeguarding Policy and procedures in place and this forms part of the monitoring inspections by the client team.

### **Recent improvements following our Internal Audit**

The overall Safeguarding Policy has been updated to reflect a wider and changing emphasis with regards to other forms of abuse. Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), Forced Marriage (FM), Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), Honour Based abuse are areas covered in the policy. WBC are a partner in the Our Community Safety Partnership where these areas are collectively discussed and monitored

Environmental health and Licensing have made various changes to their Taxi Licensing and Enforcement Policies to reflect changing emphasis with regards to safeguarding.

For example, The convictions policy has been reviewed and passed in September 2016. This policy now includes a specific reference to Child sexual exploitation (CSE).

In addition in September 2016 the Enforcement Policy has been updated and approved which now includes patterns of behaviour/reports alongside convictions. It will include trends for complaints and concerns of particular operators.

### **Future reviews and changes**

To improve and develop Councillor knowledge, awareness on safeguarding training is planned this year via an external training partner and a further roll out of the e-learning programme.

Through our internal staff training programme we have a good number of staff qualified in level 1 and level 2 and it is planned to make greater use of these skills across their organisation when we review future support structures.

Our journey has seen us move from largely directly providing services to commission or more partnership engagement. At HCC and locally there is a vast number of meetings, sub groups set up to manage and co-ordinate safeguarding, we will need to take a look at all of these and ensure we are resourced enough to engage with the most appropriate at a district level and within our remit.

This will provide the resilience to attend feedback and keep pace with change. It will also continue to ensure we are at minimising risk as appropriate.

It is proposed to therefore have a further independent review from April to June of our Safeguarding responsibilities and our support in this area, to identify what further changes we can make to enhance our approach, resilience and improve our support structure.

### **Attachments**

Safeguarding Policy and procedures  
SIAS Report November 2015 and update