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A progress report on Safeguarding at Northampton Borough Council 2013/14

Author: Silvina Katz, Corporate Policy and Consultation Manager

Responsible Officer: Suzanne McBride

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Summary

This report will be used to inform Management Board on the progress made by Northampton Borough Council in relation to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults agenda.

Background and Scope

The current Council's Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy was introduced in 2011 and is due to be reviewed in 2014. A safeguarding action plan has been refreshed annually and reported to Management Board.

Northampton Borough Council was last required by the LSCBN to carry out a Section 11 Audit in March 2013.

Weaknesses in existing arrangements for the protection of children resulted in major changes within the leading organization and in revised guidance being produced by the LSCBN for partner agencies requiring them to develop their own processes and encourage stronger reliance on the judgment of professionals.

Structural changes have also taken place within the Council which have resulted in the creation of a new post, Head of Housing and Wellbeing, which will take the organizational lead in the area of Safeguarding.

Findings

Review Safeguarding Action Plan

Actions in the Safeguarding Action Plan for 2013/14 have been reviewed and the findings have been used to produce a draft action plan for 2014/15.

Policy and Best Practice

The Council's revised policy and procedure for Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults were introduced in 2011.

A Guide for Contractors was produced and adapted for use by specific services e.g. Landlord Services, Building Control, Planning, etc.

Designated Safeguarding Officers

Nominated individuals, selected from relevant directorates in the Authority, meet to oversee policy implementation and topical issues on an ad-hoc basis, as appropriate. Training was delivered by NCC in 2011 on Integrated Working Procedures to better understand and improve referral process. An introduction to e-learning is available on the Learning Zone.

DBS/CRB posts

Systems introduced in 2011 are in place to deal with applications and renewals online. Reviews are carried out annually and when new roles are created within the establishment. In 2013/14 the total number of posts which require DBS vetting is 40. The process that we have in place is that we hold this information against the position in our main HR system. When the post is advertised, we ensure that this is notified to the applicants that it is subject to a DBS check. Once the successful applicant is chosen, the manager goes on to the DDC (Due Diligence Checks) website and enters the details and the process is completed. Once it is completed, the disclosure number gets added to the main HR system along with a date. We currently have an alert running in the system for any DBS that are approaching 2 years old.

Referrals

Safeguarding information, guides to referral forms and links signposting to sources of help were published on the intranet. A depository was created for storage of copies of referrals. The purpose of this was to have a central register which would help improve searches and collaboration.

Referrals recorded in the depository: (2011/12) 7; (2012/13) 9; (2013/14) 5

Note that other referrals may have been submitted without reference to Safeguarding Designated Officers and/or the records officer.

Serious Case Reviews

The Council was invited to take part in an investigation which was part of a serious case review during 2013/14. The Council had not had any contact with the case.

Training

An introduction to safeguarding e-learning package was produced and rolled out to all staff in 2011 since joining the LGSS further courses are being made available to staff

via the shared online training platform. The induction programme, essential for all new-starters, includes an introductory module on Safeguarding.

An introduction to Safeguarding for Councillors was delivered in May 2012 as part of the *Councillor Induction and Development Programme*.

Designated Safeguarding Officers received training from NCC on Integrated Working Procedures during 2011. Lead safeguarding officers attended a jointly funded safeguarding training in the Spring 2012 around the Prevention of Violent Extremism agenda.

In 2013/14, the following courses were delivered and attended by NBC staff:

- Corporate Induction (34 people took part)
- CAF-Integrated Working (2)
- careFirst Children's introduction and advanced (2)
- Integrated Working M1 - Early Assessment Process & Common Assessment for Families (CAFF) Form (3)
- Introduction to Dementia - Independent Living Officers (25)
- Parenting assessments (1)
- Person Centred Planning, Thinking and Approaches (35)
- Recording with Care Policy and Guidance (1)
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Level 2 - Recognising and Reporting Safeguarding Concerns (32)
- Making Children Safer - Launch of Revised Working Practices -All managers were invited to a Making Children Safer presentation on 21 Jan 2014. Further sessions were delivered in Northampton on 17 January, 22 January, 18 February, 19 March and 2 April. These were attended by approximately 180 NBC employees.

Safeguarding Action Plan 2014/15

- Review organizational safeguarding arrangements including realignment of Designated Safeguarding Officers across directorates;
- Review Safeguarding policy and procedures;
- Continue to follow Safe Recruitment practices for all appointments;
- Ensure that staff receive appropriate training and refresher e.g. at induction and as identified following training needs analysis and skills audits;
- Follow up on staff feedback received following Making Children Safer sessions
- Actively promote existing e-learning and training on offer from relevant partner organisations;
- Use local depository to store referrals to aid tracking in the event of serious case reviews and evaluate;

- Follow LSCB and SOVA recommendations and review learning following serious case reviews;
- Ensure a communication plan is in place to promote and embed safe and best practice across the organization;
- Monitor contract and commissioning work to ensure compliance with safeguarding policy;
- Ensure contractors and others working with and on behalf of the Council are aware of the Council's Safeguarding Policy to follow safe working practices in accordance to existing legislation;
- Ensure safeguarding clause for ongoing disclosure is included in contracts where contractors come into significant contact with children and vulnerable adults, as appropriate;
- Use service planning and appraisal processes to review safeguarding objectives and actions;
- Ensure views of children and vulnerable adults are taken into account in planning the development of services that directly affect them.

Recommendations and outcome:

Management Board to note report and agree the action plan for 2014/15.