

Waverley Borough Council

Report to: Executive

Date: 28 November 2023

Ward(s) affected: All.

Report of Director: Annie Righton: Community Wellbeing

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Report Status: Open

Key Decision: No

Safeguarding Operational Lead

1. Executive Summary

Safeguarding is a legal responsibility for any local authority to undertake so that we exercise due care and diligence to our most vulnerable residents in collaboration with our statutory county council partners.

We comply with a variety of legislation and statutory guidance to ensure our responsibilities to our communities are met and to ensure correct governance we have an [internal policy](#) around safeguarding and have commissioned an internal audit of our current work practice.

The internal audit identified key areas for development that we want to implement especially in light of all local authorities in Surrey seeing a significant increase in safeguarding concerns presenting amongst communities. This is a result of a number of factors that include

- The covid 19 pandemic and its aftermath.
- The cost-of-living crisis.
- Increased pressure on our statutory partners leading to higher thresholds of need to warrant partner involvement.

These factors mean that safeguarding risks are held at local borough level without statutory intervention.

To help the council with this increased pressure, a safeguarding coordinator role is requested to ensure clear reporting lines, governance of care and management of risk to the individual and the council are adequately met.

There is no current budget for this role, but the Executive is asked to support the implementation of this role and request for supplementary budget in 2023/24 that will become part of the establishment budget from 2024/25.

2. Recommendation to Executive

That the Executive approves:

1. The establishment a dedicated safeguarding coordinator to act as a safeguarding operational lead to support all officers in the management of safeguarding referrals.
2. The supplementary budget for 2023/24 to recruit to the role in this financial year.
3. Adding the post to the establishment budget from 2024/25 onwards.

3. Reason(s) for the recommendations

Due to the increase in safeguarding concerns for our most vulnerable residents and the and the increased thresholds of need to evoke statutory partner involvement, there is a need for a dedicated resource to help the council manage the associated risk.

The role will support officers in coordinating safeguarding concerns and enquiries to ensure that there is a clear audit trail of key decisions and actions that demonstrates sound management at local level and referral of cases with increasing complexity for multi-agency intervention.

The role will help reinforce and embed our safeguarding culture to be at the heart of all that we do when working with our communities.

4. Exemption from publication

This report is not exempt from publication.

5. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to inform the Executive of the need for a growth item to the establishment so that a safeguarding coordinator can be recruited to support the increasing safeguarding demands placed on the council.

6. Priorities

Safeguarding of our most vulnerable and at-risk residents is key to the council's commitment to tackle inequality and support those in need.

As a local authority we also have a duty to ensure we safeguard children and adults including those with care and support needs.

7. Background

Waverley Borough Council has a legal responsibility to fulfil its statutory duties set out in the legislation and statutory guidance below.

- [The Childrens Act 1984](#)
- [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018](#)
- [The Care Act 2014 to safeguard children, and adults with care and support needs.](#)

Additionally, the Council's roles and responsibilities are articulated through the [Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk Policy 2020](#) where the aims and objectives for safeguarding for Waverley is set in the context of both the Surrey Children and Adult Safeguarding Boards to increase awareness, provide clarity on roles and responsibilities and support decision making within our safeguarding framework.

The Policy also sets out how our staff will contribute to delivering our safeguarding duties and is reviewed six monthly to ensure it is compliant with changes in legislation and regional policies.

The policy is due a refresh in 2024 and will come to the Executive and Full Council for approval.

To comply with best practice under the framework for the Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 and The Care Act 2014, the council reports annually through a Section 11 audit and Quality Assurance Questionnaire which is reviewed by the Surrey Safeguarding Children's Partnership and Surrey Safeguarding Adults Board.

As part of the council's Internal Audit Plan, we also commission Southern Internal Audit Partnership to undertake a review of the council's safeguarding policy and practice. This happens in alternate years to ensure there are robust processes and procedures in place to manage safeguarding and the risk to the council. The audit recommended that the Internal Safeguarding Board take an Annual Safeguarding Report to Corporate Management Board (CMB)

A report for April 2021 to October 2022 was submitted to CMB that highlighted 3 key areas of potential risk to the council.

7.1 Area 1 - Safeguarding referrals and monitoring

During this period there were some anomalies in relation to the monitoring information we hold. Our central referral and monitoring data did not include every safeguarding case that frontline services are managing due to certain teams noting their safeguarding concerns as part of business as usual within their case management systems Orchard or Jigsaw.

It was highlighted that some officers have struggled to understand the need for a central record of safeguarding referrals and hence the council's data is not complete.

This presents a risk to the council acutely demonstrated through the numerous Summary of Involvement requests received from the Surrey Safeguarding Adult Board regarding possible Safeguarding Case Reviews and the current Safer Waverley Partnership joint Domestic Homicide / Adult Safeguarding Case review workstream.

7.2 Area 2 - Responding to increasing demand.

Following the first internal safeguarding audit in 2018, the role of the Safeguarding Champion was introduced. The purpose of the role was to provide a consistent approach to safeguarding concerns raised by staff across all service areas. Safeguarding Champions were recruited across council services where there are safeguarding responsibilities.

Initially the safeguarding champions worked well, however there were discrepancies in reporting standards and risk management, hence the role was not working as well as it should.

The audit report highlighted that since the pandemic, the pressure around safeguarding vulnerable children and adults has increased. This combined with stretched services at Surrey County Council has resulted in many cases no longer meeting their adopted threshold of intervention. We are seeing many level 4 cases now being deemed level

3 cases and therefore left with the local authority to manage and hold the risk.

The report also found that due to the increased complexity of safeguarding cases it had not been realistic to ensure all Safeguarding Champions were trained to the appropriate level to deal with these cases therefore this function was perceived to be the responsibility of the Community Services Team - which is not sustainable, nor correct.

7.3 Area 3 - Develop safeguarding knowledge, expertise and risk management.

Evaluating the council's safeguarding protocol and practice within a specific period identified the need for a dedicated officer who can lead and focus on developing officers to understand the changing approach to safeguarding thresholds at Surrey County Council and

- support officers in coordinating safeguarding concerns and enquiries to ensure that there is a clear audit trail of key decisions and actions that demonstrates sound management and referral of cases with increasing complexity.
- identify the skills gaps, knowledge and expertise within services and work with the Training and Development Manager to provide an annual learning and development programme in relation to safeguarding.
- ensure front line officers have safeguarding at the heart of their role and are supported in coordinating multi-agency interventions where necessary.

8. Consultations

There are no consultations associated to this report.

9. Key Risks

As a council it is vital we improve our culture around safeguarding. Recent DHRs and SARs have highlighted a lack of ownership around safeguarding within the organisation.

This role will help support officers in managing safeguarding responsibilities through accurate record keeping, audit trails and instigating case conferences when other agencies feel they do not have the lead role. If we do not agree this proposal or defer it there is a risk of:

- Failure to recognise individuals / families with safeguarding concerns and failure to take appropriate action that results in a serious incident or death.
- Reputational harm to the council if a Safeguarding Case Review occurs following a serious incident or death of a resident who has established safeguarding concerns.
- Reputational risk to the council if there is not a clear audit trail of key decisions and actions in response to safeguarding concerns.
- Inability to deliver Outcome 8 of the Community Service rolling Service Plan 2023-26 - Waverley Borough Council fulfils its safeguarding responsibilities.

10. Financial Implications

There are financial implications associated with this report as it is requesting a growth item through the implementation of a Safeguarding Coordinator Post to the establishment.

Proposal - grade 7

Post	Grade	Hours	Cost
Operational Safeguarding Coordinator	07D	37	44,187

This can be funded from vacancy savings within the team; and, approval to add the post to the establishment budget will need to be included in the budget setting process for from 2024/25. Over the next two years there is an available budget of £22.5k for Health and Wellbeing resources which is backfilling the Leisure Manager whilst the work on Cranleigh Leisure Centre. This can be used to offset the above cost which brings the growth requirement for 24/25 down to £21,687. From 26/27 the full growth of £44,187 will be required.

This growth request needs to be considered against the growing pressures facing the General Fun MTFP over the next 4 years. The forecast budget gap for 2024/25 is £1.7m and a number of growth items have already been approved which is going to inflate this number. At the current time savings have not been identified to cover the budget gap, this will be done as part of the 2024/25 budget setting process.

11. Legal Implications

The Council has statutory duties in relation to safeguarding. This post seeks to ensure adequate resource to sufficiently discharge that duty.

Approval of the Council's budget is reserved to Full Council.

12. Human Resource Implications

The post would be job evaluated and advertised in accordance with our Job Evaluation and Recruitment policies.

There are no other HR implications.

13. Equality and Diversity Implications

Safeguarding is an essential component on ensuring our responsibilities to those who may be less advantaged or vulnerable are met and that we work to ensure our communities have equal access to services, care and wider opportunities regardless of any financial status or protected characteristic.

14. Climate Change/Sustainability Implications

There are no climate implications associated to this report.

15. Conclusion

Many of our communities are facing greater challenges to their wellbeing than ever before.

The landscape for safeguarding has changed particularly since the pandemic and the challenges faced with Surrey County Council adult and children's services.

The pressure for this council around safeguarding vulnerable children and adults has increased due to increased thresholds of intervention adopted by our statutory partners and we are seeing many more complex cases including level 4 cases that are now deemed level 3 cases and therefore with the council to manage and hold the risk.

The recommendations of the internal audit alongside the changing landscape means we must improve our culture around safeguarding and ensure it is the focus of our front-line services.

The establishment of a Safeguarding Coordinator is essential to ensure the council delivers its safeguarding duties and will help address the wider need for a change in culture towards safeguarding concerns.

16. Appendices

Appendix A - Annual Safeguarding Report 2021 to October 2022

Please ensure the following service areas have signed off your report.
Please complete this box, and do not delete.

Service	Sign off date
Finance / S.151 Officer	1 November 23
Legal / Governance	6 November 23
HR	18 October 23
Equalities	2 November 23
Lead Councillor	3 November 23
CMB	19 September 23
Executive Briefing/Liaison	14 November 23
Committee Services	15 November 23