
Meeting: Social Care, Health and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 18th October 2010

Subject: Annual Report of Bedford and Central Bedfordshire Adult Safeguarding Board

Report of: Cllr Hegley , Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health

Summary: This is the third annual report of the Adult Safeguarding Board which covers Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire. It outlines the progress made during the year from April 2009 to March 2010 and is provided to inform individuals, their families and carers, who use social care and health services, elected members, those who work in social and health care, all partner agencies, and residents of Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire

Advising Officer: Julie Ogley, Director of Adult Social Care, Health and Housing

Contact Officer: Ed Thompson, Assistant Director Adult Social Care

Wards Affected: All

Function of: Overview & Scrutiny

Key Decision No

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

This report contributes to the achievement of the Council priorities:

- To support and care for an ageing population
- To create safer communities, and
- To promote healthier lifestyles

Financial:

A specialist safeguarding team operates within available resources and by prioritising this area of work over other Adult Social care demands.

Legal:

The statutory basis for the provision of Adult Services by a Local Authority is enshrined in Section 6 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 (as amended) and subsequent guidance documents concerning the role of the Director of Adult Social Services in England issued in May 2006. The law regulating the protection of vulnerable adults from abuse derives from a complex mishmash of legislation, guidance and ad hoc court interventions and the government is still considering the case for specific adult protection legislation.

Risk Management:

The Council's overall reputation and performance assessment is at risk if it is not aware of the challenges presented by the performance of its safeguarding responsibilities and the actions taken by the council to address the areas of concern outlined in this report.

The council's duty is to safeguard the most vulnerable citizens from all forms of abuse. Failure to do so would leave these people at risk of discrimination, neglect, physical, sexual, psychological or institutional harm.

Staffing (including Trades Unions):

None

Equalities/Human Rights:

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by another person or persons. The council's duty is to the safeguarding of all vulnerable citizens from all forms of abuse.

All Local Authorities are required to implement a range of equality legislation which requires the Council to:

- Understand issues relating to disability, gender, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, age, and sexual orientation.
- Engage with service users, local communities, staff, stakeholders and contractors to identify and implement improvements

Abuse of vulnerable adults can include discriminatory abuse, including racist, sexist, that based on a person's disability, and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment.

It is therefore vital that all sections of the community know that they are able to report such types of abuse and the council's staff must be trained to be able to recognise and deal with such issues. Central Bedfordshire Council has recently launched specialist equality training for Adult Services staff to help raise awareness of these issues.

Community Safety:

The Council's duty is to safeguard its most vulnerable citizens from all forms of abuse. Failure to do so would leave these people at risk of discrimination, neglect, physical, sexual, psychological or institutional harm.

Sustainability:

None

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Annual Report of Bedford and Central Bedfordshire Adult Safeguarding Board as attached in appendix A be noted

Reason for Recommendation(s)

There is a national requirement that the Annual Safeguarding Report is presented to Elected Members for information and consideration.

Summary

1. During the past 12 months, a comprehensive improvement plan was introduced to address the findings of the 2008 inspection and other audits undertaken throughout the year and the need to bring about substantial and rapid improvement. Firm foundations have been established and the profile and awareness of safeguarding across the partnership has been raised.

Robust strategic leadership and operational arrangements have been established. This has led to a review of the multi-agency policy and procedures, extensive monitoring and auditing of practice and implemented remedial action plans to address shortcomings, introduced new performance reporting systems to enable reporting against the national minimum data set for safeguarding.

However, much work still remains to be done to achieve the council's goal of achieving excellence in safeguarding. During the next 12 months it is the council's intention to embed the revised policy and procedures and ensure that all partner agencies prioritise safeguarding work and follow the council's lead in closely monitoring and auditing practice and learning the lessons from safeguarding investigations.

Safeguarding adults awareness training has been provided for Elected Members and the Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health has spent time with the Safeguarding Adults team to enhance her understanding of the service. The Portfolio Holder has also attended a number of regional and national safeguarding training events and conferences. An observation within the Joint Improvement Programme Eastern Region report states - 'The Portfolio Holder is very committed and pro-active in relation to the safeguarding agenda and is currently seeking nominations from other Members who may also like to become safeguarding champions'.

Background

2. In May 2008, Commission for Social Care Inspection carried out an Independence, Wellbeing and Choice Inspection in Bedfordshire which concluded that in Bedfordshire safeguarding services were adequate and that capacity to improve was uncertain. On vesting day the Council inherited a situation where there were 361 open safeguarding cases. This required a significant amount of time and resource to audit and review these cases. The findings confirmed that no one had been left at risk, however it highlighted issues with the way in which the process and relevant procedures had been followed.
3. During the first six months of the year the Council along with Bedford Borough Council and partners on the Safeguarding Board focused on establishing an improvement process. A detailed action plan set out priorities for all areas of adult social care, the involvement of the wider Council and its partners. This multi-agency safeguarding action plan, which took account of the 11 recommendations set out in the CSCI Report, set out priorities for 2009/10 and covered the following six themes for improvement: strategic leadership; training and competence; learning lessons from abuse; prevention; communication and performance management. An end of year report was presented and signed off by the Safeguarding Board which showed that 64 of the 70 actions had been completed; four partially completed; and two where there were delays progressing the action.

4. Central Bedfordshire Council shared the concerns and views of the regulator that as good safeguarding is the foundation for all of adult social care that improvements were needed in order to ensure a solid base for other improvement activities. The focus has therefore been on developing safeguarding work across all social care teams and partner organisations to improve and raise awareness of the Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults (SOVA) procedures and processes. A Recovery Programme was established with the Programme Board being chaired by the Chief Executive and reporting to a Member Reference Group. A Recovery Plan was developed which focused on those critical areas or elements of practice that required attention and on which further improvement was dependent.
5. Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council operate a joint Safeguarding Board which is chaired by the Directors for Adult Social care. Senior officers from partner organisations are represented on the Board, for example, the police, NHS, and voluntary agencies, as well as elected members from both councils. Beneath the Safeguarding Board are operational delivery groups which carry out the work identified by the Board. Central Bedfordshire Council has targeted available resources in a specialist safeguarding team. This team consists of senior social workers and support workers and provides support and advice to all staff within the Council, partners, service providers and the public. It is now the single point of contact for all SOVA referrals/alerts, including those relating to mental health services.

Performance in Central Bedfordshire for 2009/10

6. The council received 974 safeguarding alerts (incidents) during the reporting year, a monthly average of 81. The monthly number of alerts has risen during the latter part of the year (Apr – Nov average 75 per month; Dec – Mar average 93 per month). This is partially attributed to increased activities to raise awareness during the year, including a full page article in the Council magazine, presentations to Third Sector and other groups, publishing of the annual report and the availability of increased training both internally and externally.
7. The number of alerts that have progressed to a SOVA investigation is 225, a monthly average of 19 which is 23% of all alerts. The number of investigations completed in less than 35 days has continued to improve in the last 6 months from 56% to 65%.
8. Timescales for completing an investigation have significantly improved from 50 to 38 days, during the last six months due to the SOVA team ensuring that all incidents of abuse are investigated promptly and action taken to prevent further harm. The team screen each referral/alert, assess if it falls within the SOVA threshold, allocates the case to the relevant local team and, in consultation, decides how the case will be investigated. The SOVA team is responsible for monitoring the progress of the investigation and the outcomes achieved.

9. The most common outcome of investigations is unsubstantiated. This is expected given the nature of many allegations as there is frequently a lack of evidence through lack of witnesses and the inability of alleged victims to communicate what has happened. Although outcomes of investigations are frequently unsubstantiated, following every Safeguarding referral work is undertaken to safeguard the alleged victim, providing a protection plan and all support necessary to minimise risks to their safety. The SOVA team are working with practitioners to evidence outcomes of decision making during safeguarding investigations and are considering use of the decision making tool which can be used with people with limited communication ability.
10. There is a lack of referrals relating to younger adults in the community, informal carers and financial abuse. This may increase as personalised budgets increase. The SOVA team is working closely with carers' commissioners in relation to training and awareness raising with informal carers. As the use of personal budgets increases, practitioners are ensuring that any potential safeguarding risks are identified and recorded when the support plan is being developed
11. The Recovery Programme was established in October 2009 to "take Adult Social Care to safe sustainable service delivery in the key areas of concern; from where the improvement journey can begin". Safeguarding Adults was one of the key areas identified and significant progress has been made. Safeguarding Adults is featured in Recovery Phase 2 so as to build on the progress made during the past 6 months to ensure that good practice is embedded and maintained in order to deliver a fit for purpose safeguarding service. The scope of this activity is primarily concerned with the management of the council's response to safeguarding alerts, to ensure people are appropriately safeguarded.

Examples of work undertaken during 2009/10

In response to the audit outcomes, the Assistant Director for Adult Social Care led a series of "recording with care" workshops for front line practitioners. This reinforced a clear message for all staff. Monthly case file audits undertaken in the final quarter of the year showed significant improvements in the quality and detail of case recording.

Following a complaint from a resident about the treatment of his wife in a registered care home, and the subsequent safeguarding investigation, an elected member spent time with the safeguarding manager to enable him to understand the safeguarding process. This provided clarity for him to pass on residents

Joint training on safeguarding with the Police Vulnerable Adult Investigation Unit has been undertaken for a number of care homes in the area which were identified as requiring clarification of the safeguarding process.

42 people with a learning disability have been trained through the People in Partnership (PIP) programme from 5 courses across the year. It is intended that this programme should be rolled out to all adult services in the coming year.

Direct feedback from service users and carers who took part in the PIP course include:

- I now feel safer in my community
- I know what a hate crime is and how to report it
- PIP saved my life and gave me purpose
- I like helping other people to understand how to keep safe
- I am not scared of police officers anymore

A review of the support for a lady living in a nursing home highlighted a fall resulting in hospital admission with a fractured hip. No safeguarding referral form was completed and risks assessments were not up to date. The service user was considered to be at risk. The reviewing officer reported to the contracts compliance team. A contracts monitoring officer carried out a site visit to the home to advise them of required actions and remedies to ensure that the welfare and safety of service users is paramount at all times. A safeguarding alert was made and notification was also made to the neighbouring authorities safeguarding team who also placed within the home, informing them of the poor practices identified and actions being taken to raise the standards. Checks were made to ensure the actions were completed and all residents in the nursing home were safe and well cared for.

An 81 year old lady with Alzheimer's disease who enjoys walking and regularly attempted to leave the residential home where she lives but has no insight to environmental dangers such as traffic and would be unable to return home independently due to her short term memory loss and confusion. Authorisation to restrict her liberty by supplying her with a wrist band that activates an alarm enables her to wander in the safety of the extensive secure grounds to the home, whilst restricting movement out of the front door onto a busy road. Without this technology Mrs C would have to live in a locked door environment for her own safety.

A number of Serious Concerns with registered providers have been identified through closer working between the safeguarding teams, contract and care standards teams and frontline social work teams. Together with our partners in health and the police we have worked closely with these providers to improve their practice and service to vulnerable people.

As result of two serious untoward incidents the council commenced Serious Case Reviews which will be completed and reported on to the Safeguarding Board during 2010/11. The purpose of a Serious Case Review is to establish whether there are lessons to be learnt from a particular case about the way in which local professionals and organisations work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of vulnerable adults. Serious Case Reviews are not inquiries into how a vulnerable adult died or who is culpable. The reviews are undertaken by external consultants who have extensive experience in safeguarding.

Developments for 2010/11

12. In January 2010 the government announced that it was to establish an Inter-Departmental Ministerial Group (IDMG) on Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults to determine policy and work priorities for the forthcoming year; provide a strategic

and co-ordination role; and provide public and parliamentary advocacy for safeguarding adults policy. It announced the intention to introduce new legislation to strengthen the local governance of safeguarding by putting Safeguarding Adults Boards on a statutory footing, and to launch a programme of work with representative agencies and stakeholders to support effective policy and practice in safeguarding vulnerable adults. It is not clear how far the new government will continue with these developments, however the report and ministerial statement served to raise the profile of adult safeguarding and local arrangements and improvement plans incorporate the elements of what is likely to be included in future directions.

13. During 2010/11 the council will embed the revised policy and procedures and ensure that all partner agencies prioritise safeguarding work and follow the councils lead in closely monitoring and auditing practice and learning the lessons from safeguarding investigations. The council will also:
- Implement phase 2 of the Recovery Programme in relation to safeguarding.
 - Work with the Mental Health Trust to improve safeguarding practice.
 - Build increased public awareness regarding safeguarding of vulnerable adults through the Safeguarding Adults Board publicity campaign.
 - Drive up the quality of care within care homes and community-based services.
 - Introduce a Dignity in Care campaign to reflect the national Dignity in Care campaign which aims to change culture and place a greater emphasis on improving the quality of care and the experience of people using care services.
 - Despite the national profile of Adult Safeguarding, comprehensive benchmarking information is not available to allow councils to assess their performance in safeguarding, and is not available for the annual report for 2009-10. Central Bedfordshire has joined a group of CIPFA comparator authorities who have agreed to share their data for national returns which will provide useful comparator data for the coming year.

Appendices:

Appendix A – Annual Report of Bedford and Central Bedfordshire Adult Safeguarding Board