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**Meeting:** Executive

**Date:** 23 August 2011

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

**Report of:** Cllr Hegley, Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Health

**Summary:** This is the fourth annual report of the Adult Safeguarding Board which covers the second year of operations as two unitary councils for Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire. It outlines the progress made during the year from April 2010 to March 2011 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.

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

**Contact Officer:** Stuart Rees, Assistant Director Adult Social Care

**Wards Affected:** All

**Function of:** Executive

**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.
- 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 collection 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, and 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 safeguard 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, and 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.**

## **Executive Summary**

1. During the past 12 months, a comprehensive improvement plan was pursued to continue the improvement programme initiated in 2009/10 and other learning from practice and audits undertaken throughout the year. Robust strategic leadership and operational arrangements have been implemented providing a basis for more effective safeguarding but we recognise that achieving excellence in this area requires sustained improvement on the part of all partner agencies.
2. During the past 12 months the Council embedded the revised policy and procedures and ensured that all partner agencies prioritised safeguarding and worked to closely monitor and audit practice and learn the lessons from safeguarding investigations. All agencies implemented remedial action plans to address shortcomings, maintained their performance reporting systems to enable reporting against the national minimum data set for safeguarding and carried out extensive staff training. However, much work still remains to be done to take us to our safeguarding goals.
3. Having focused closely on the safeguarding procedures, during the next 12 months it is our intention to focus on the areas of prevention of abuse and significant harm, empowerment and proportionality to ensure improved outcomes for all vulnerable adults involved in a safeguarding incident.

## **Background**

1. 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.
2. 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.

3. Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council operate a joint Safeguarding Board which is chaired by the Directors of 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 2010/11**

4. Central Bedfordshire Council received 1086 alerts during the year. 265 (24% progressed to a referral). This is an increase from the previous year by 112 alerts. The proportion of alerts progressing to referral is the same as last year. The Safeguarding Team receives fewer inappropriate alerts. The figure of one third and one quarter from each Council represents proportionate responses to an alert. For example alerts may reflect unmet need, or increased risks, which require further intervention by the care provider or adult social services.
5. 821 alerts received by Central Bedfordshire Council did not progress to formal investigation. Half of these resulted in information and advice being provided. A further quarter were referred to care management teams for a response.
6. Timescales for completing an investigation have significantly improved, taking on average 34 days. The Safeguarding Team screens each referral/alert, assesses whether 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.
7. 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.
8. 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 was featured in Recovery Phase 2 so as to build on the progress made.

9. In January 2010, an audit of all remaining case files from April – December 2009 was undertaken. The methodology applied was taken from tools and guidance used by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to support practice by CQC inspectors in adult social care inspections. The approach did not set out to provide a qualitative audit of each case but focused on evaluating against a structured checklist:
  - whether the process for recording had been followed;
  - whether the information recorded provided an account of the safeguarding intervention; and
  - what action had been taken.
10. A total of 107 cases were audited and 27% of these gave cause for concern in that there was insufficient information in the file to confirm whether the individual had been safeguarded. However, the Safeguarding Team immediately reviewed the cases and found evidence on the SWIFT electronic database that individuals had been appropriately safeguarded.
11. The Council concluded that there remained a need to focus on the areas identified by CQC in November 2009. In particular, the need to evidence the consistency of local and individual practice, to improve record keeping and quality assurance processes and to develop and embed outcome monitoring processes.

### **Examples of work undertaken during 2010/11**

- Extensive publicity campaign and development of public information materials – safeguarding team presentations, conference October 2010, z cards and leaflets.
- Dignity Campaign has begun and will continue.
- Advocacy support – People in Partnership training for vulnerable people.
- Safeguarding Team links to community safety including the domestic and sexual violence co-ordinators.
- An expert by experience has assisted with the development of a new training course “safeguarding – developing a personalised response”.
- An expert by experience has assisted with the development of safeguarding support worker feedback visits which have recently started.
- Engagement with care providers through regular communications and Providers Forums attended by the Director of Adult Social Services (DASS).
- Use of workbook and safeguarding competency framework in contracts monitoring.
- Clarification of roles of social work and contracts compliance staff through quality and safety monitoring guidance for staff.
- Audits show that information sharing is effective between partners during investigations.
- Audit of case files shows an improvement in the timeliness of investigations and in recording practice.
- The Personalisation Team is developing different approaches to risk management.
- Comprehensive training programme covers staff at all levels. New competency framework is reflected in training and is required to be used during supervision and as part of professional development.

- The safeguarding board is attended by a service user representative supported by Advocacy Alliance. He fed back from a 6 month safeguarding support group to provide service users' views.

## **Developments for 2011/12**

12. Following an extensive review and consultation, the Government has announced that it will introduce legislation in 2012. The statute will reinforce outcome focused interventions and will set out duties and powers of local authorities to safeguard adults from abuse and neglect and emphasise the importance of local partnership working to achieve these principle outcomes. Local authorities will retain duties to investigate adult protection cases or cause an investigation to be made by other agencies. Lead responsibility will be retained by the local authority in maintaining safeguarding boards. Key functions of boards will be:
  - to keep under review the procedures and practices of public bodies which relate to safeguarding
  - to give information or advice or make proposals, to any public body on the exercise of functions which relate to safeguarding
  - to improve the skills and knowledge of professionals who have responsibilities for safeguarding adults and to produce a report every two years on the exercise of the Board's functions.
13. The statute will establish a duty to promote co-operation with other relevant organisations in particular circumstances such as assessment, community care and adult protection investigations.

## **Safeguarding Peer Challenge**

14. During the week 26 June -1 July the Council underwent a peer challenge of its safeguarding service. This was co-ordinated by the Local Government Group and consisted of a group of senior representatives from other local authorities and health bodies. Part of the challenge included preparing a detailed self assessment document, undergoing an independent case file audit, followed by triangulation by the team through a document review and focus groups while they were on site. Initial feedback from the peer challenge was positive in that clear improvements have been made since 2008. The challenge identified that foundations were in place to continue to improve the service. A full report will be received by the DASS within four weeks of the peer challenge.
15. During 2011/12 the Council will:
  - improve people's experiences of safeguarding by ensuring they are involved throughout the process and that it is personalised
  - ensure robust and engaged management and leadership with respect to safeguarding
  - ensure a co-ordinated and inclusive approach to safeguarding through promoting links with partners in the NHS, community safety, and other strategic partnerships

- ensure prevention, dignity and safeguarding objectives are achieved through robust commissioning practices
- continue to improve the standard of service delivery and effective practice (including case file recording) with respect to safeguarding
- continue to monitor performance with respect to safeguarding to enable improvement
- implement the action plan to improve safeguarding service based on the self assessment for the safeguarding peer review
- respond to the outcomes and implement the recommendations of the safeguarding peer review.

**Appendices:**

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

**Background Papers:** None