
Meeting: Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date: 22 October 2012
Subject: Annual Report of the Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire Adult Safeguarding Board
Report of: Cllr Hegley, Executive Member for Adult Social Care Health and Housing
Summary: The report informs Members of the annual report of the Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire Adult Safeguarding Board prior to consideration by Executive.

Advising Officer: Julie Ogley, Director of Adult Social Care Health and Housing
Contact Officer: Stuart Rees
Public/Exempt: Public
Wards Affected: All
Function of: Council

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Council Priorities:

1. This report contributes to the achievement of the Council priority 'Promote health and wellbeing and protecting the vulnerable'.

Financial:

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

Legal:

- 3 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 range of legislation, guidance and ad hoc court interventions. The government is currently considering the case for specific adult protection legislation.

Risk Management:

4. 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):

5. Not Applicable.

Equalities/Human Rights:

6. 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.
7. 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
8. 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.

Public Health

9. The work of the Safeguarding Board contributes to the public health agenda through prevention and raising awareness on keeping safe.

Community Safety:

10. The Council's duty is to safeguard its most vulnerable citizens from all forms of abuse which may include anti social behaviour, hate crime and other forms of criminal activity. Failure to do so would leave these people at risk of discrimination, neglect, physical, sexual, psychological or institutional harm.

Sustainability:

11. Not Applicable.

Procurement:

12. Not applicable.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

The Committee is asked to receive the Annual Report of Bedford and Central Bedfordshire Adult Safeguarding Board as attached in appendix A and comment as appropriate.

Executive Summary

13. This annual report covers the third year of operations as two unitary councils for Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire. It outlines the progress made during the year from April 2011 to March 2012.
14. During the past 12 months, all agencies that are signed up as members of the Safeguarding Board continued to deliver their improvement programmes. These programmes are based on the previous years annual report 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.

15. During the past 12 months the Board focussed on the areas of prevention of abuse and significant harm and empowerment and proportionality. The aim was to ensure improved outcomes for all vulnerable adults involved in a safeguarding incident. Strong foundations have been laid in the development of the Board, which through partnership working has developed a strategic approach to safeguarding.
16. Over the coming 12 months the Board will be focussing on:- ,
- improvements in safeguarding practice as a result of independent audit and Peer Review
 - improvements in our approach to learning and development
 - reviewing and addressing the reasons for varying alerting patterns from different sections of the community
 - safeguarding and the role of informal carers
 - the vulnerability of people with disabilities to abuse and harassment; and
 - quality of services for people with learning disabilities.

The Developing Context for Safeguarding

17. The Department of Health released a statement in May 2011 which set out the Government's policy on safeguarding vulnerable adults. It included a statement of principles for use by Local Authority Social Services, housing, health, the police and other agencies for developing and assessing the effectiveness of their local safeguarding arrangements. The policy statement defines a set of principles to benchmark existing adult safeguarding arrangements to see how far they support the government's aim and to measure future improvements: These principles are as follows:-
- (a) **Empowerment** - Person led decisions and informed consent.
 - (b) **Protection** - Support and representation for those in greatest need.
 - (c) **Prevention** - It is better to take action before harm occurs.
 - (d) **Proportionality** – Proportionate and least intrusive response appropriate to the risk
 - (e) **Partnership** - Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse.
 - (f) **Accountability** - Accountability and transparency in delivering safeguarding.
18. During the past 12 months issues in relation to quality of care and safeguarding have been well reported in the public domain. Since May 2011 there has been a raft of guidance documents and reports issued including a focus on safeguarding and carers and disability related harassment.
19. There has been particular focus on quality of care in learning disability services following the BBC Panorama programme exposing abuse at Winterbourne View hospital. The Care Quality Commission has since published a report of 150 inspections of learning disability services and set up a dedicated whistle blowing helpline.

The work of the Adult Safeguarding Board in Central Bedfordshire

20. In June 2011 the Local Government Association undertook a peer challenge of safeguarding arrangements within the Central Bedfordshire Council locality. The review team found that the functioning of the Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire Adult Safeguarding Board demonstrated:
21. (a) All the key partners at a senior level show a high level of commitment
22. (b) The Board has driven and delivered good policies and processes
23. (c) The Board has raised the profile of safeguarding within the services and the wider community
24. (d) The Board has dealt with individual and organisational service failures
25. The Board has continued to work to the six strategic aims identified in 2011, which are broadly aligned to the Government's priorities as follows:-
 - prevention and raising awareness
 - workforce development
 - partnership working
 - quality assurance
 - involving people in the development of safeguarding services; and
 - outcomes and improving people's experiences

Within Central Bedfordshire, examples of developments in these areas during the past year include:

26. (a) Producing a community "keeping safe" handbook that covers safeguarding information as well as community safety, internet safety and other useful contacts. This is designed to raise awareness with those people who may only require adult social care support for a short time such as those who have been through re-ablement services
27. (b) Developing weekly practice surgeries which involve a senior practitioner visiting each team for a day. Feedback from these sessions informs practice development. These have been welcomed by social workers and their team managers in assisting with the improvement of practice.
28. (c) There have been three meetings of the pan-Bedfordshire safeguarding sub groups. This has established stronger links with the Luton Safeguarding Adults Board and has streamlined the work for the benefit of partners who work across Bedfordshire. This sub group continues to look at training and development, quality and activity, and policies and procedures.
29. (d) The Safeguarding team undertake quarterly audits of case files from all teams including the mental health trust and has commissioned three independent external audits during the year. The results of these audits are fed back to managers and staff, and used to inform practice development work and action planning.
30. (e) Developing a method of seeking feedback from people who have undergone safeguarding interventions. This involves visits from safeguarding support workers and involves advocacy services. All feedback from these visits is incorporated in to service development work and action planning.

31. (f) The safeguarding team have received a one off grant from the Social Care Institute for Excellence to become a “social work practice pioneer”. The pilot is developing the practice of “family group conferencing” widely used in children’s services, with the aim of putting the individual at the centre of a safeguarding process and enabling them to define their safeguarding plan with their family or advocates.

Safeguarding Activity April 2011 – March 2012

32. Central Bedfordshire Council received 1348 alerts during the year. 515 (38%) progressed to a referral. This is an increase from the previous year by 262 alerts. This increase has doubled from the year 2009/10, showing an upward trend over three years. The number of alerts progressing to referral has doubled from 265, and represents a greater proportion in percentage terms – from 24% to 38%. This is showing increasing appropriateness of alerts. Higher numbers and higher proportion of alerts progressing to investigation suggests that the significant awareness raising that has been carried out since 2010 is having an effect.
33. Central Bedfordshire received 833 alerts which 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. This is similar in number and pattern to the previous year. The majority, 62% of alerts, do not progress to investigation, and the safeguarding team continues to identify areas where understanding of what constitutes a safeguarding alert could be developed.

Mental Capacity Act (2005) and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards

34. Central Bedfordshire Council received 25 applications for Deprivation of Liberty in 2011-12, compared with 25 in 2010-11 and 42 in 2009-10. Of the 25 applications, 7 were authorised and 18 were not. This compares with 2 authorised and 22 not authorised in 2010-11 and 21 authorised and 21 not authorised in 2009-10.

Conclusion and Next Steps: Learning from Safeguarding Activity

35. The annual report has identified a number of learning points which have generated an action plan for the year:
36. (a) Following independent audit and Peer Review the Board will continue to make improvements in safeguarding practice
37. (b) The approach to learning and development in safeguarding will develop from focusing on the process to a more practice orientated format.
38. (c) There is a high volume of alerts which do not require a formal safeguarding investigation, which requires targeting.
39. (d) There are low numbers of alerts relating to hard to reach communities such as ethnic minority groups and the travelling community, which requires targeting.
40. (e) There are low numbers of alerts from members of the public, which requires targeting.
41. (f) Safeguarding services have improved throughout the year due to the sharing of learning with other organisations and councils, which will continue.

42. (g) Supporting the role of informal carers is a priority in promoting safeguarding awareness to keep both the carer and cared for safe.
43. (h) National reports and analysis of local safeguarding information has shown that people with disabilities remain vulnerable to abuse and harassment, self neglect and financial abuse which may become an increasing issue in relation to safeguarding.
44. (i) Television and national Care Quality Commission reports have shown the need for a renewed focus on the quality of services for people with learning disabilities
45. The draft care and support Bill makes provision for Safeguarding Adults Boards to become statutory from 2013, with the local authority retaining the lead for safeguarding. The Bill also makes provision for a duty for local authorities to make enquiries, and is consulting on whether a specific power of entry is required alongside the duty to make enquiries. The Board is well placed to ensure that these new duties are met within the coming 12 months.

Appendices:

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

Background papers and their location: None