

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO AND DECISION OF HOUSING AND WELLBEING SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 8 JUNE 2022

SUBJECT: Safeguarding Review

REPORT AUTHOR: Cathryn French, Safeguarding Officer
DATE: 31/03/2022
EXTN: 01903 737828
AREA: Community Wellbeing, Service Directorate

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Arun District Council is committed to protecting and safeguarding its community, especially Children, Young People and Adults at risk. This report sets out for scrutiny the resources for managing safeguarding and identifies the main categories of harm reported by officers.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

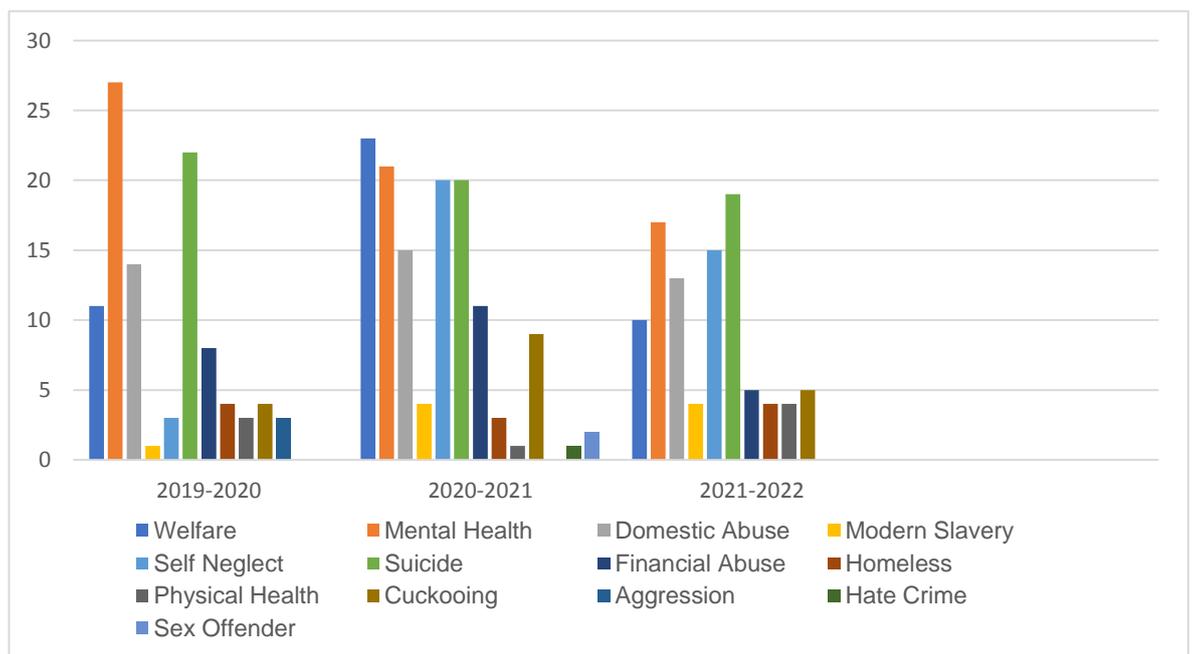
It is recommended that the Housing and Wellbeing Committee endorse the Safeguarding function at Arun District Council and the work of its officers.

1.0 BACKGROUND:

- 1.1 Arun District Council has a Safeguarding Policy that covers both children, young people and adults at risk of harm and abuse ([Safeguarding Policy](#)). The policy accords with the Pan Sussex overarching policies overseen by the West Sussex Adult Safeguarding Board and the Safeguarding Children's Partnership.
- 1.2 The Council has a dedicated Safeguarding Officer within the Community Wellbeing team providing advice and support to all service areas. The officer works in partnership with the West Sussex Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) and the West Sussex Safeguarding Children's Partnership (WSSCP), but also has a working relationship with Sussex Police and West Sussex County Council's Child and Adult Social Care teams.
- 1.3 The role of the Safeguarding Officer is to ensure that the Council's Safeguarding policy is applied consistently across the Council. Key to this is chairing an internal staff group of Designated Safeguarding Officers (DSO's) comprised from each Council department. These officers cascade information to maintain compliance with both the Council's and other partner organisations processes and policies.

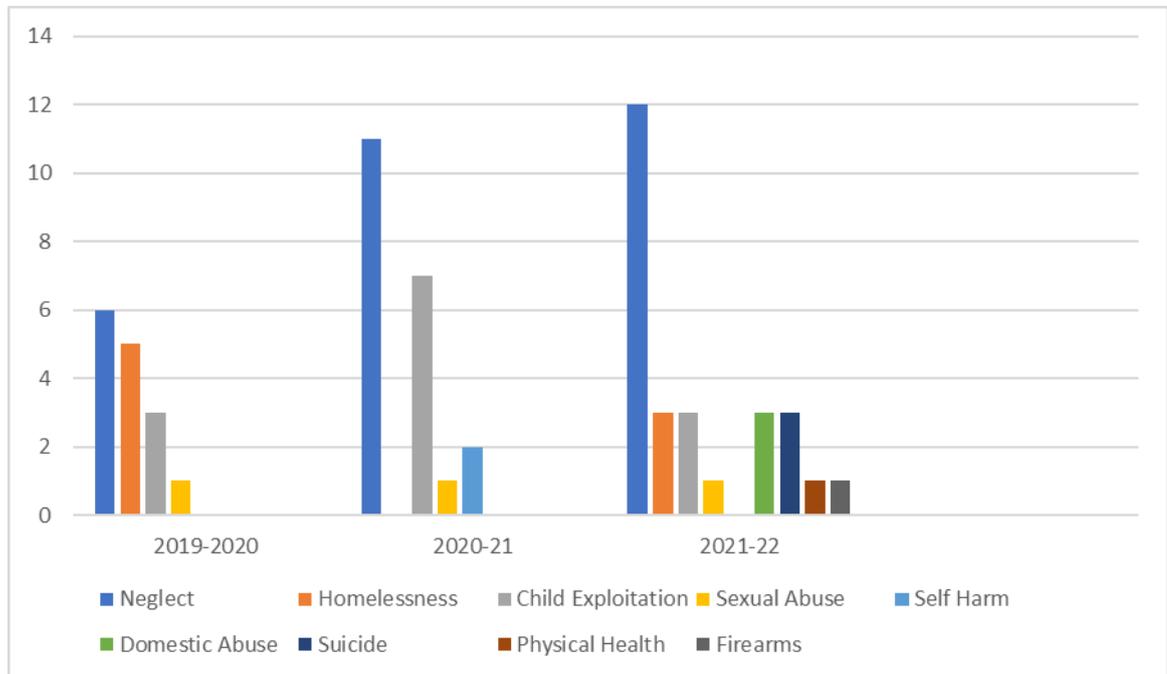
- 1.4 The Safeguarding Officer also plays an important role in training staff to identify and report safeguarding concerns, particularly those who have a significant role in visiting or meeting with customers. These staff and their supervisors are provided with enhanced training so that they are able to act on their concerns and provide appropriate support.
- 1.5 The nature of Arun's services tend to result in a greater number of adult cases being referred. Over the past three years (2019 to 2022) an average of 108 Adult cases were submitted each year compared to an average of 21 cases concerning children and young people. A summary of cases and categories of referral are provided in Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1 Adult Safeguarding Referrals



100 referrals 2019/20
 130 referrals 2020/21
 95 referrals 2021/22

Figure 2 Children and Young People Safeguarding Referrals



15 referrals 2019/20
 22 referrals 2020/21
 26 referrals 2021/22

1.6 To provide further insight a range of anonymised cases are provided in Appendix 1. Below are further details relating to the most frequent categories of referral made by officers.

1.7 **Domestic Abuse**

1.8 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places a statutory duty for the provision of safe accommodation, but also to broaden the provision of community-based services and provide a statutory definition which recognises victims and their family (to include children).

1.9 Arun has the highest incidence of Domestic Abuse in West Sussex and accounts for a third of serious violence in Arun. This is a key priority for the Safer Arun Partnership. In March 2022 WSCC made an executive decision to split the Arun and Chichester joint Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), to a single Arun meeting to manage the increased number of cases being reported across the district. This meeting is attended by a member of the Housing team.

1.10 Two domestic homicides occurred in Arun over the period covered by this report, one of which was during the Covid lockdown. Both are subject to statutory Home Office Domestic Homicide Reviews commissioned by West Sussex County Council.

- 1.11 Since the most recent homicide, training has been provided to key staff on the signs of domestic abuse and resources have been provided on SharePoint. A web page has also been created on the Arun District Council website with a safe exit button for members of the public to hide their browsing history.
- 1.12 The Council is also running a pilot project in 2022 to increase the safety of victims/survivors in their own homes with the provision of ring doorbells to those identified as being at high risk of harm. This work is being undertaken jointly with Sussex Police.
- 1.13 **Child Exploitation**
- 1.14 In September 2020 in response to increasing concerns of Child Exploitation and harm occurring outside the family, the Safeguarding Officer implemented an Arun Peer Group Conference to discuss young people and locations of concern with key local partners including town and parish councils, the Community Safety team, Sussex Police, secondary schools, youth providers and Children's Social Care.
- 1.15 To date the group has discussed 233 individual children and young people and forged a partnership that has strengthened the local response to safeguarding concerns for young people at risk of being exploited. The Council has provided specific training on Child Exploitation to ensure professional knowledge and practice is maintained.
- 1.16 **Mental Health**
- 1.17 Concerns regarding emotional wellbeing have been consistent over the past three years, but many referrals submitted to WSCC Adult Social Care are not adopted as safeguarding enquires as many do not meet the threshold of the Care Act 2014. The Council has offered Mental health training to staff in recent years. This training supports staff with their own mental health whilst helping to manage the needs of customers for whom they have a concern.
- 1.18 **Suicide**
- 1.19 The Council regularly receives a number of threatened suicides each month particularly from callers to the Contact Centre and the Revenues and Benefits team. The Council has a duty of care to treat every self-report seriously and officers listen empathetically to customers and offer appropriate advice and support. However, there are instances where a professional judgment warrants a welfare call from a visiting officer or the emergency services to carry out a welfare visit.
- 1.20 Over the period (January 2022), Arun experienced one youth suicide within a family dwelling and one attempted youth suicide occurred at a Council car park in Bognor Regis. The Safeguarding Officer coordinated the Councils response with key internal departments and represented the Council at Public Health multi-agency response meetings.
- 1.21 The Council's training programme regularly offers suicide awareness training for staff. Following the incidents in January 2020, further training was provided to increase staff awareness and confidence in dealing with future situations.

1.22 **Self-Neglect**

1.23 Self-neglect is a prevalent issue but particularly difficult to raise as a safeguarding concern because of an individual's right to self-determination. Frequently the ability to intervene is based on an assessment of the individual's capacity to make decisions for themselves. If an individual is assessed to have mental capacity, a safeguarding referral may not be an option to mitigate potential risks or harm.

1.24 The increase in households where hoarding is identified as problematic is a case in point. Hoarding can be considered to be a life-choice rather than self-neglect and may not reach the required threshold for a safeguarding referral, even if the living conditions and safety of the individual are a concern. To address these situations a 'Safe and Habitable Homes' forum was established by West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service in 2021 to support all professionals to access appropriate services for their clients.

1.25 The Safeguarding Adults Board also set up a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Meeting (MARM) in March 2021 to help professionals with cases where risk remains despite interventions. Some complex safeguarding referrals have been submitted by the Safeguarding Officer on behalf of individual service areas with positive outcomes. The Arun Safeguarding Officer also represents safeguarding colleagues from other District and Borough councils on the MARM.

1.26 **Neglect**

1.27 Neglect is particularly relevant to children and young people. In recent experience referrals have tended to feature a child's exposure to parental drug use and there have been many instances when the Safeguarding Officer has had to escalate concerns to West Sussex Children's Social Care.

1.28 **Conclusion**

1.29 In addition to scrutiny by the Housing and Wellbeing Committee, Arun's Safeguarding Policy and procedures are reviewed by both the West Sussex Safeguarding Adults Board and the West Sussex Safeguarding Children's Partnership.

1.30 Safeguarding at Arun is overseen by a dedicated Safeguarding Officer who supports a team of Designated Safeguarding Officers distributed across Arun's services. This team provides support and advice to colleagues so that Arun is able to fulfil its safeguarding duty.

1.31 In conclusion it is not the Council's job to establish whether abuse is taking place, but it is our responsibility to report and record any concerns to protect the welfare of vulnerable members of our community.

2. PROPOSAL:

2.1 It is proposed that the Housing and Wellbeing Committee endorse the Safeguarding function at Arun District Council and the work of its officers.

3. OPTIONS:

3.1 To support the recommendation evidenced in the report and appendices or request further information to support the recommendation.

4. CONSULTATION:		
Has consultation been undertaken with:	YES	NO
Relevant Town/Parish Council		✓
Relevant District Ward Councillors		✓
Other groups/persons (please specify)		✓
5. ARE THERE ANY IMPLICATIONS IN RELATION TO THE FOLLOWING COUNCIL POLICIES: (Explain in more detail at 6 below)		
Financial		
Legal		✓
Human Rights/Equality Impact Assessment		✓
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime & Disorder Act	✓	
Sustainability		✓
Asset Management/Property/Land		✓
Technology		✓
Other: Safeguarding	✓	
6. IMPLICATIONS:		
Arun District Council has a safeguarding duty		

7. REASON FOR THE DECISION:
To endorse the Safeguarding function at Arun District Council and the work of its officers.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:
Safeguarding Policy

Appendix 1 - Case Studies- concerns raised to Safeguarding Officer (SO)

Adult 1

Over a period of 10 years adult 1 was a persistent caller to the Council self-reporting tubes with invisible fumes being pumped into their house and seeking damages to stop them going to the press regarding the Council. Adult 1 was also a persistent caller to two of the emergency services.

Safeguarding officer (SO) became the single point of contact (SPOC) for adult 1 and due to the risk convened multi-agency meetings with Sussex Police, SE Cambs Ambulance and Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust (local Community Mental Health team). Adult 1 had a history of non-engagement with services, so the SPOC aimed to build a gradual, trusting rapport to listen to their concerns and make safeguarding person centred.

Home visit undertaken by SO with Ambulance service and rapport built with adult 1's partner- who in turn called the SO when worried about the health of adult 1. Liaison undertaken with SE Cambs Safeguarding led to conveyance to hospital. Due to being physically and mentally unwell, the hospital authorised a Deprivation of Liberty (DOLS) order to prevent an unsafe discharge whilst medical care could be provided. Sadly, Adult 2 passed away in hospital from natural causes in lockdown 1. Support by SO given to partner and referral made with consent for social care support.

Adult 2

Adult 2 came into the council to self-report they were struggling with paying council tax. The advisor had concerns and made a referral to SO who then met with adult 2 and they disclosed financial abuse from neighbour (council tenant) and another adult blackmailing them for money after befriending Adult 2.

SO made a referral to adult social care, highlighting care and support needs and vulnerability due to learning disability and arranged a multi-agency meeting with adult 2 and their family advocate, due to lack of mental capacity. At the request of adult 2 and advocate, SO supported them to report this alleged crime to the Police and attend Police interview.

SO liaised with Residential Services team and in conjunction with GP & Social Worker, Adult 2 was moved to another property more applicable for learning and housing need where they continue to thrive.

Adult 3

The Council's ASB team started to receive complaints from members of the public regarding adult 3 and the SO became involved through team discussion.

When intoxicated, Adult 3 would try and enter other residents' flats, was Unknowingly defecating in communal areas and leaving trails of blood (from injuries sustained in their flat) for residents to clean up.

The SO and ASB officer undertook a home visit to adult 3. In being invited in, an assessment was made of hazardous conditions, broken glass from cabinets knocked over, rotting food in the kitchen and faeces on the floors. Due to a head injury a call for an ambulance was made but Adult 3 declined medical treatment and was deemed to have mental capacity.

The SO made a referral to Adult Social care due to concern and undertook a further visit with a social worker to attempt to engage Adult 3. SO was provided with the details of adult 3's adult child who was very distraught as they had been trying to help for their parent but was facing constant barriers.

From continual visits to adult 3 they advised of their intention to enter private residential detox which was privately funded. This enabled (with consent) their child to clear the flat. Adult 3 completed this detox treatment and was delighted with the home they returned home. Adult 3's child wrote to the SO acknowledging their gratitude for the support provided to them and their parent.

Adult 4

Adult presented to the Council's Housing Options team as homeless, but staff were concerned for adult 4's mental health and made a referral to SO, who then met with adult 4. Self-report of fleeing from family in London and details given of support agencies. The SO made enquires and Adult 4 identified as a high-risk missing person under the Metropolitan Police with a schizophrenia diagnosis.

SO worked with local and London mental health agencies and located Adult 4 on early morning outreach which then to ambulance conveying Adult 4 to hospital for assessment and then transfer to London. Adult 4 later wrote to SO thanking them for keeping them safe.

Child 1 –

Council Housing officer raised concerns regarding an elderly council tenant and concerns of potential sexual abuse of children known to frequent the address. The Safeguarding officer raised the children's social care which led to Sussex Police undertaking an investigation which resulted in a conviction of 10-year prison sentence for child sexual abuse.