

CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF: PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE
DATE: 6TH JULY 2022
REPORT OF: HEAD OF PREVENTION AND PROTECTION
AUTHOR: SEAN BARLOW AND STEVE MCCORMICK

SUBJECT: SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE (CYP)
AND ADULTS – ANNUAL REPORT, 2021-22

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this paper is to outline the number of safeguarding referrals that have been made by Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service (the Service) from the 1st of April 2021 to the 31st March 2022. This report focusses on both Children and Young People (CYP) and adults' data. Details regarding improvements that have been made to safeguarding processes as well as plans for future improvements are also included for information.

Recommended: That

[1] the report be noted.

Background

2. The Service has a legal and moral responsibility as a public service, to ensure that all CYP and adults it interacts with are kept safe and free from harm. If concerns do arise then the safeguarding policies provide a clear expectation of what is required to ensure CYP and adults at risk are adequately protected from harm.
3. The Service is committed to ensuring that all CYP and adults who are at risk, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity, are protected from neglect or abuse. All observations, disclosures and allegations of neglect or abuse must be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately. All staff and volunteers, working for the Service have a responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate Designated Safeguarding Officer detailed within the policies.
4. The Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy provides a framework to ensure that all staff and volunteers, comply with the requirements of the policy and its associated procedures which are designed to help the Service comply with the requirements in the Children Act 1989 and expectations of the Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 guidance.

5. The Safeguarding Adults Policy provides a framework to ensure that all staff and volunteers, comply with requirements of the policy and its associated procedures which are designed to help the Service comply with the requirements in the Care Act 2014 and Mental Capacity Act 2005.

Information

CYP Safeguarding

Overview

6. During this reporting period, there have been 21 CYP's safeguarding referrals submitted relating to 25 CYP. This is an increase of 61% since the last report. All of the referrals have complied with the Service's policy.

Reporting data

7. The Service works with CYP to; promote positive safety messages that assist in making them aware of the dangers of fire, arson and road traffic collisions utilising a preventative approach; help re-engage them into their local community allowing them to progress onto positive outcomes e.g. education, employment or training. This work is important and must be done in accordance with the policy. Non-compliance with the policy by staff or volunteers may be considered a serious disciplinary offence.
8. The annual audit shows that the number of referrals has increased during 2021/2022 (table 1) by comparison with the previous year. It is believed that the impact of COVID-19 in the previous year is the cause of the lower figures. The delivery of the Service's youth programmes and activities varied throughout the year with some being suspended or restricted in delivery and others were delivered remotely before youth activities returned to full operation. As a consequence, most of the referrals have come from operational incidents. The breakdown of referrals by activity and Service Delivery Area is highlighted below (Tables 2 & 3).

Table 1: Number of referrals by year:

Year	2021/2022	2020/21
No.	21	13

Table 2: 2020/2021 referrals by area:

Area Referral Split	2021/2022	2020/2021
Cheshire East	4	5
Cheshire West and Chester	6	2
Halton	3	4
Warrington	7	2
Other	1	0

Table 3: A breakdown of the referrals received:

Breakdown of referrals by source	2021/2022	2020/2021
Fire Cadets	0	0
Firesafe Scheme	1	0
Safe and Well visits	0	0
Operational Incidents	20	9
Prince's Trust Team	0	2
Targeted Youth Support Team	0	0
Arson Threat Assessment	0	2

Referral Case Overview

9. The reason for a referral differs from case to case but included concerns around home conditions, poor mental health, drug and alcohol misuse and children being left at home unattended. It is positive to note that we are still seeing an increase in referrals made by operational staff following incidents. This demonstrates that recent training and information materials, including tool kits, are having a positive effect on recognising the signs of young people at risk. The three incidents below provide anonymised details of the type of referrals made to Children's Social Care following concerns being identified by firefighters.

- a. One referral arose after crews attended a cross border incident which saw one young person referred to the Service's Designated Safeguarding Officer. The Macclesfield Hydraulic Platform was deployed to a residential school in Buxton to provide support to a young person who had climbed onto a rooftop. On arrival the crews were stood down and local police dealt with the incident. This does, however, demonstrate good safeguarding practice and records the Service's operational staff ensuring that information is shared regardless of which agency takes primacy for safeguarding at incidents attended by multiple agencies.
 - b. Crews attended a deliberate fire set in a domestic property by a child. On arrival firefighters found that the child had left the property in the middle of the night and had been found in the street by passers-by. The incident was referred to Social Care by the Service's Family Advocate who is seconded to the Early Help and Prevention Team in Cheshire West and Cheshire. This initiated an emergency TAF (Team Around the Family) intervention, and a care package was put in place for the family. This demonstrates the benefits of having seconded staff embedded in multi-agency teams and saw a swift response to a family in need of support.
 - c. Crews in attendance at another deliberate fire set in a domestic property raised concerns about a child's welfare that resulted in the young person being referred to Social Care. As a result of the concerns raised by the Incident Commander (IC), Social Care carried out a Child Sexual Exploitation screening and assisted in the temporary rehousing of the young person concerned. The young person was taken into police custody at the time of the incident. However, the IC's vigilance brought to light further concerns, beyond the initial fire setting incident, that were subsequently reported to the local Integrated Care Team.
10. During the reporting period there have also been a number of concerns raised relating to young people which ultimately did not meet the threshold for Children's Social Care intervention. In these instances, support was identified for the individuals and referrals were made to external services such as mental health, drug and alcohol teams and early intervention services. This is common practice when working with children and young people who often require additional services to meet their complex needs.

Adult Safeguarding

Overview

11. During the reporting period, the Service was again significantly impacted by the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic. Throughout this period a number of amendments were made to safe systems of work and risk assessments to allow more face-to-face interaction with the community. In 2021-2022 there were 44 cases where adult safeguarding thresholds were met, requiring engagement with the local authority Adult Social Care Teams, where a referral for additional support was processed.

Reporting Data

12. The 44 cases referred in 2021-2022, represented a significant increase from 2020-2021, where the Service referred 28 adults at risk. This means the Service increased its adult at risk referrals by 63% in 2021-2022 when compared with the previous year.
13. The Service was able to deliver 11268 Safe and Well interventions in 2021-2022. This compares to 9000 delivered in 2020-2021. Therefore, a number of the adult at risk referrals would come from direct prevention intervention, but referrals were also generated from attending operational incidents.
14. The number of referrals, referrals by area and causation of referral are shown Tables 4, 5 and 6 below.

Table 7 also shows which part of the Service made the referral.

Table 4: Number of referrals by year

Year	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020/2021	2021-2022
No.	19	29	28	44

Table 5: 2020/21 Referrals by area

Area Referral Split	2021-2022	2020-2021
Cheshire East	9	11
Cheshire West and Chester	11	6
Halton	8	5
Warrington	16	6

Table 6: The causation of referral by area 2021-2022

Area referral split:	Cheshire East	Cheshire West and Chester	Halton	Warrington
Suicide attempt	2	2	1	7
Domestic abuse	1	2	0	0
Mental health, (including capacity and dementia)	3	2	4	4
Self-neglect	0	4	1	1
Substance misuse	1	1	2	0
Hoarding	1	0	0	3
Arson	1	0	0	0
Abuse	0	0	0	1
Total	9	11	8	16

Table 7: A breakdown of referrals received:

Unitary Area	Operational crews referral	Prevention department referral	Total
Cheshire East	9	0	9
Cheshire West and Chester	6	5	11
Halton	7	1	8
Warrington	14	2	16

Referral Case Summary

15. The most significant increase in referral causation was attempted suicide cases. These cases were highlighted by operational personnel when responding to emergency incidents that were followed up with a safeguarding referral.
16. There was a decrease in self neglect cases referred from 11 in 2020-2021 to 6 in 2021-2022.
17. In addition to the 44 adult safeguarding referrals, there have been 157 Vulnerable Persons (VP) Folders created by the Prevention teams.
18. VP Folders are established where safeguarding thresholds are not met, but further intervention or case management work by the Service is required. Of the VP folders established the most common causation was high risk smoking and lower-level hoarding issues. Other common reasons for VP Folder creation included lower-level self-neglect, and previous history of fire in the home, where the Service has attended further fires at the same address. The VP folders are managed on a day-to-day basis by the Locality Safety Managers and Lead Advocates in each Unitary area.

Progress and Key Achievements

19. Progress and key achievements implemented by the safeguarding leads for the Service in 2021-2022 include.
20. The Volunteer Recruitment Policy has been updated to reflect safer recruitment practices.
21. The Children's Safeguarding Policy and Equality Impact Assessment have been updated to reflect changes to practices and to ensure that the documents provide clear expectations and guidance to ensure our statutory duty is adhered to.
22. Safer recruitment trained personnel have been deployed to all interview panels for staff vacancies relating to posts working with CYP and adults at risk.
23. Safer recruitment questions have been included in interviews for posts that involve working with CYP and adults at risk.
24. All new wholetime operational personnel, inclusive of trainees, migration and Apprentice Firefighters have received 1-day CYP and adult safeguarding input.
25. The lead for Adult Safeguarding has completed the NFCC commissioned safeguarding train the trainer course.
26. The services Safeguarding policy and Equality Impact Assessment has been externally peer reviewed by Safe Associates who are an external safeguarding consultancy.

27. A safeguarding Toolkit has been created and is out for consultation. This will be rolled out to all CFRS staff in 2022-2023. This will also feature on a new Safeguarding portal on the CRFS intranet.
28. Quarterly update meetings were held with the Fire Authority Member Champion for Equality and Diversity, Cllr Razia Daniels to provide a safeguarding update.
29. A new mandatory safeguarding e-learning package for Service personnel has been introduced.

Future Developments/Recommendations

30. A number of future developments have been identified to improve the services safeguarding processes including:
31. Online safeguarding awareness sessions will be devised for Volunteer Cadet Leaders as the service looks to expand its Cadet provision post Pandemic
32. Quarterly Safeguarding Planning Meetings will be introduced to ensure an information sharing process is in place between Senior Management Team, Designated Safeguarding Leads and Group Managers. This is to ensure a coordinated and consistent approach is in place to further strengthen the organisation's current arrangement.
33. An NFCC formulated self-assessment of Safeguarding policy and procedure will be carried out this year.
34. CYP safeguarding lead will undertake the NFCC train the trainer course.
35. New Prevention Department managers will undertake accredited safeguarding courses appropriate to their roles.

Financial Implications

36. The external training courses required will be funded through existing Prevention Department budgets.

Legal Implications

37. The Service has a legal responsibility under the Care Act 2014, the Children's Act 1989 and the Working together to Safeguard Children 2018, due to our work with Adults at Risk and Children, to safeguard them from harm and risk in the home and community. This involves the implementation of Safeguarding leads, referral systems and staff training and awareness.

Equality and Diversity Implications

39. The Service discharges its duties and functions to all members of the community, including its Safeguarding responsibilities, regardless of gender, age, marital status, gender reassignment, disability, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or beliefs or sexual orientation

Environmental Implications

40. There are no environmental impacts as a result of this report.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: NONE