

CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF: PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE
DATE: 12TH JULY 2023
REPORT OF: HEAD OF PREVENTION AND PROTECTION
AUTHOR: GM DUNCAN PALIN, GERALDINE LYNCH AND JASON MCTIGUE

SUBJECT: SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE (CYP) AND ADULTS, ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

Purpose of Report

1. To report the number of safeguarding referrals that have been made by Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service (the Service) between the 1st of April 2022 and the 31st March 2023. This report focuses 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 are 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 CYP Policy provides a framework to ensure that all staff and volunteers, comply with the requirements of the policy and its associated procedures which help the Service to comply with the requirements in the Children Act 1989 and expectations of the Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 guidance.

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

Information

CYP Safeguarding

Overview

- During this reporting period, there were 17 CYPs safeguarding referrals submitted. This is a decrease of 16.8% since the last report (previous year 21 CYP referrals). All the referrals made, have complied with Service policy.

Reporting data

- 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.
- The statistics show that the number of referrals has decreased during 2022-23 (table 1) when compared with the previous year. Several of the Service's youth programmes and activities returned to "normal" delivery during the reporting year, such as cadet units and face to face youth engagement programmes, following the impacts of Covid restrictions in the 2021-22 reporting year. Consequently, the referrals received have been more proportionate, across all our CYP activities, coming from both operational incidents and non-operational activities. In contrast, the 2021-22 report, highlighted that 95 % of CYP referrals came from operational incidents. This has reduced significantly within 2022-23 and is more in line with the previous year's data. The breakdown of referrals by activity and Service Delivery Area is also reported (Tables 2 & 3).

Table 1: Number of referrals by year:

Year	2022/2023	2021/2022	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19
No.	17	21	13	16	18

Table 2: 2020/2021 referrals by area:

Area Referral Split	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19
Cheshire East	9	4	5	5	2
Cheshire West and Chester	1	6	2	7	3
Halton	6	3	4	4	6
Warrington	1	7	2	0	7
Other	0	1	0	0	0

Table 3: A breakdown of the referrals received:

Breakdown of referrals by source	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19
Fire Cadets	0	0	0	1	1
Firesafe Scheme	1	1	0	0	0
Safe and Well visits	4	0	0	4	3
Operational Incidents	8	20	9	10	7
Prince's Trust Team	3	0	2	1	5
Targeted Youth Support Team	1	0	0	0	2
Arson Threat Assessment	0	0	2	0	0

Referral Case Overview

9. The reason for a referral differs from case to case but can include concerns around home conditions, poor mental health, drug and alcohol misuse and neglect. It is positive to note that staff remain pro-active in making referrals following operational incidents. This demonstrates that recent training and information materials, including safeguarding tool kits, continue to have a positive effect on recognising the signs of CYP at risk and responding accordingly following local and national guidance. A few examples appear below.
 - a. The Service attended an incident at a property which was inhabited by two adults and a 5-month-old baby. A small fire raised the alarm and a neighbour called 999 when the hard-wired smoke detectors activated. Firefighters found

a foil tray containing food had been left on the electric hob whilst the occupiers went out. There was clutter and large amounts of household waste all around the property which was blocking the exit routes. One occupier was a heavy smoker and there were signs of careless disposal of cigarettes outside the property window, near to the gas meter cupboard. The property was too small for a family of three and was understood to be for a single person over the age of 50. Prevention officers attended the property and have initiated follow up procedures with Children's Services.

- b. Fire crews attended a property following a 999 call, where water was leaking from an upstairs toilet into the kitchen below, which was affecting the electrics. The water and electricity were isolated by a neighbour prior to the arrival of the Service. Two young children resided at the property. Both appeared well enough, but they were wearing nappies and no clothes. The condition of the house was poor, dirty, and unsanitary. There weren't any carpets in either of the two bedrooms, and floorboards were lifted in the children's bedroom. The two mattresses in the children's bedroom, were on the floor without bedding. Only makeshift curtains were hung over the windows. There was no extended family support available, and the family were not known to Social Care. A referral to the Integrated Contact and Referral Team (ICART) was made and support was offered to the family.
10. During the reporting period there have also been several 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 CYP who often require additional services to meet their complex needs.

Adult Safeguarding

Overview

11. In 2022-23 there were 30 cases where adult safeguarding thresholds were met, and where a referral for additional support was processed. Information from Prevention teams has highlighted that post lockdown they are seeing an increase in vulnerabilities identified. Some of these vulnerabilities do not meet safeguarding thresholds but are supported by other means. These have become more prevalent as occupiers become more receptive to home visits after the Pandemic, and due to the cost-of-living crisis, that has had a detrimental impact on some residents. This has been identified through advocates and Service Delivery staff undertaking safe and well visits and attending operational incidents.

Reporting Data

12. The 30 cases referred in 2022-23, represented a decrease from 2021-22, where the Service referred 44 adults at risk. It should be noted though that the figure meeting safeguarding thresholds in 2022-23, is more in line with the pre-Pandemic period. In addition to safeguarding adults, the Service also identifies and refers vulnerable persons, which is addressed in the 'Referral Case Summary' section below.
13. The Service was able to deliver 21,861 Safe and Well interventions in 2022-23. This compares to 11,268 delivered in 2021-22. Therefore, several of the adult at risk referrals came from direct prevention intervention (delivered through Service Delivery and Prevention teams), 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 shows which department within the Service made the referral.

Table 4: Number of adult referrals by year

Year	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19
No.	30	44	28	27*	27*

*These figures have been amended from previous reports

Table 5: 2022/23 Adult referrals by area

Area Referral Split	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19
Cheshire East	12	9	11	15	12
Cheshire West and Chester	4	11	6	4	1
Halton	8	8	5	5	8
Warrington	6	16	6	3	6

Table 6: The causation of adult referral by area 2022-23

Area referral split:	Cheshire East	Cheshire West and Chester	Halton	Warrington
Suicide attempt	2	1	1	2
Domestic abuse	1			
Mental health, (including capacity and dementia)	3	3	5	2
Self-neglect	4			1
Substance misuse	1		2	
Hoarding	1			
Arson				
Abuse				1
Total	12	4	8	6

Table 7: A breakdown of adult referrals received 2022-23:

Unitary Area	Service Delivery referral	Prevention department referral	Total
Cheshire East	8	4	12
Cheshire West and Chester	3	1	4
Halton	8	0	8
Warrington	4	2	6

Referral Case Summary

15. The data above shows that the largest cause of referral was for mental health related issues (including capacity and dementia), followed by self-neglect and attempted suicide. Most of these referrals were generated by Service Delivery staff when attending operational incidents.
16. The most common type of safeguarding referral for the previous year was attempted suicide, followed by mental health. There was one safeguarding referrals for hoarding in 2022-23; however there were hoarding Vulnerable Persons (VP) Folders created to support individuals across Cheshire. In 2022-23 there were 67 VPs specifically for hoarding that required additional intervention/support from the Service.
17. In addition to the 30 adult safeguarding referrals during 2022-23, there have been 218 VP Folders (either newly created or existing folders already created) that required further support from the Prevention department. This is an increase from 157 VP cases in the previous year.
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 multiple fires (more than one) 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 or maintained by the safeguarding leads for the Service in 2022-23 include.
20. The Safeguarding CYP 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.
21. Safer recruitment trained personnel have been deployed to all interview panels for staff vacancies relating to posts working with CYP and adults at risk.
22. Safer recruitment questions are included in interviews for posts that involve working with CYP and adults at risk.
23. All new wholetime Service Delivery personnel, inclusive of trainees, migration and Apprentice Firefighters received 1-day CYP and adult safeguarding input delivered by Prevention managers.

24. Prevention staff received refresher level 1 and level 2 safeguarding training commensurate with their roles.
25. Level 3 safeguarding training has been delivered to Prevention middle managers and all Group Managers to enable them to make and manage safeguarding referrals.
26. The Service Designated Safeguarding Leads (and other key staff) have attended the level 5 safeguarding children course. This course provided awareness on the key legislation and strategic considerations.
27. Our safeguarding Toolkit was published in December 2022 and is now in use throughout the Service. This includes a dedicated Safeguarding area on the Service intranet site with key contacts and a new streamlined safeguarding referral form.
28. The Fire Standards Board (FSB) Safeguarding standard self-assessment was completed.
29. Safeguarding is a standard agenda item for quarterly Group Manager meetings, to support a standardised approach for any out of hours safeguarding referrals and to learn from best practice.

Future Developments/Recommendations

30. The team is exploring the opportunity to include a safeguarding theme in a Service Business Continuity/Crisis Management exercise.
31. The team facilitated a peer review of the FSB Safeguarding standards completed by North West Fire and Rescue Services and supported by the National Fire Chiefs Council.

Financial Implications

32. The external training courses have been funded through existing Prevention Department budgets. This approach is likely to continue for future courses.

Legal Implications

33. The Service has a legal responsibility to safeguard CYP and adults. The way it goes about fulfilling these responsibilities is summarised in this report.

Equality and Diversity Implications

34. 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

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

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: NONE