

# CHESHIRE FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

**MEETING OF:** PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE  
**DATE:** 22 JULY 2020  
**REPORT OF:** HEAD OF PREVENTION  
**AUTHOR:** SEAN BARLOW & LEE MCGARITY

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**SUBJECT:** SAFEGUARDING ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20

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## Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this paper is to provide reassurance about safeguarding procedures. It outlines the number of safeguarding referrals that have been made by Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2019 to 31<sup>st</sup> May 2020. Detail regarding progress and future developments is also noted.

## Recommended: That Members

- [1] Note the report; and
- [2] Approve the future developments contained in paragraph 27 of the report.

## Background

2. Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service accepts and closely manages its responsibilities as a public service, ensuring that all adults and children and young people it interacts with are kept safe and free from harm.
3. The Safeguarding Children policy requires the Prevention Youth Engagement Manager to provide an annual report detailing the findings of routine safeguarding policy compliance audits.
4. This report also includes details of adult safeguarding referrals and identified trends and analysis.
5. During this reporting period, there have been sixteen children's safeguarding referrals submitted and on all occasions, the referrals have complied with the policy.
6. During this reporting period, there have been twenty-eight adult's safeguarding referrals submitted and on all occasions, the referrals have complied with the policy.
7. It is apparent from the audits undertaken and summarised in this paper, that the Safeguarding Children and Safeguarding Adult policy and procedure is effective and well embedded within the organisation.

## Information

8. The Service is committed to ensuring that all adults, children and vulnerable young people, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity, have the right to protection from abuse. All observations, disclosures and allegations of abuse are taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately. All staffworking for the Service have a responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate Designated Safeguarding Officer detailed within the policies.
9. The Safeguarding Children policy provides a framework to ensure that all staff and volunteers comply with the policy procedures, which are designed to support the recommendations of the Children Act 2004 (Section.10).
10. The Safeguarding Adults policy provides the framework within which staff and volunteers shall report matters of concern wherever an adult at risk is subject to harm, abuse or neglect. This includes self-neglect or harm and abuse or neglect arising from poor service provision or professional practice. Compliance with this policy ensures that the Service works in support of local authority statutory responsibilities as set out in the Care Act 2014.
11. Key milestones during this reporting period regarding the Safeguarding Children policy and preventative work completed to support CFRS staff and volunteers:
  - Staff attended the annual NSPCC Safeguarding Conference 'how safe are our children' which had a large focus on internet safety.
  - Staff attended NSPCC Designated Safeguarding Officer Training.
  - The Safeguarding Children E-Learning package has been rewritten and launched on learn pro reflecting recent changes to the Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 document.
  - All youth engagement staff have attended a one-day Safeguarding refresher training.
  - A continuation of last years training has been delivered to youth staff covering conflict resolution when working with young people.
  - A recent external Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and Local Safeguarding Adult Board (LSAB) audit has been conducted to ensure frontline staff are aware of internal referral processes.
12. Key milestones during this reporting period regarding the Safeguarding Adult policy and preventative work completed to support CFRS staff and volunteers:
  - The Adult safeguarding policy reviewed and brought up to date to reflect legislation changes.

- Safeguarding process flow chart produced and provided to staff with up to date contact details for the Designated Safeguarding Officers.
- Operational staff have received face-to-face briefings from the designated safeguarding officers and more recently, in relation to the covid-19 epidemic, all service staff have received additional briefings promoting extra vigilance during the period of lockdown.

### **Children and Young persons reporting data:**

13. The Service works with young people in order to promote positive safety messages that assist in making them aware of the dangers of fire, arson and road traffic collisions. We offer children and young people the opportunities to engage with the Service and develop themselves in order to become more skilled, safer and responsible citizens who then offer a positive contribution to their local community. This work is important but must only be done in accordance with the policy. Non-compliance with the policy by Service employees or volunteers is considered a serious disciplinary offence.
14. The routine annual audit shows that the number of referrals has decreased during 2019/2020 (Table 1 and 2).

Table 1: Number of referrals by year:

<b>Year</b>	<b>2018/2019</b>	<b>2019/2020</b>
<b>No.</b>	18	16

Table 2: 2019/2020 referrals by area:

<b>2019/2020 Area Referral Split</b>	
Cheshire East	5
Cheshire West and Chester	7
Halton and Warrington	4

Table 3: A breakdown of the referrals received:

<b>Breakdown of referrals by source</b>	
Fire Cadets	1
Firesafe Scheme	0
HSA visits	4
Fire Incidents	10
Prince's Trust Team	1
Targeted Youth Support Team	0

15. One referral was made relating to a young person who was involved in the Prince's Trust Team Programme.
16. Ten children referred to children's social care following Operational Crews attendance at incidents in this reporting period. The referrals were as follows:
  - Two children referred after a suspected gas leak. Cheshire Police took primacy over the referral, the family were already known to social care (SC).
  - One child with learning difficulties referred after crews attended a false alarm. The parent accepted support from the Local Authority's Early Help and Prevention Team.
  - Three children were referred after crews attended a house fire. Parents were later charged with neglect and Cheshire Police took primacy over safeguarding due to a criminal investigation taking place.
  - Three children were referred after crews attended a fire that had been deliberately set alight by a teenager living at the premises. The family, already known to social services, received interventions including the support of a seconded family support worker from CFRS staff.
  - One child was referred to after crews attended a flooded property in. The family, already known to social services, received family support and the parent was given advice relating to the child's lack of supervision.
17. Two referrals were made following disclosures made whilst Prevention staff were carrying out Safe and Well visits to premises.

18. A volunteer resigned due to an allegation of inappropriate behaviour. This was reported to the police as per policy. A full internal investigation took place and was fed back to the local authority.
19. It is apparent from the audit that the increase in briefings to operational staff has paid dividends in equipping those staff with the confidence to identify and raise concerns where they see them. Whilst there is a slight fluctuation between routes for referrals and referrals by source, there has been a greater number of young people signposted to other agencies for support where those concerns would not normally meet thresholds for social care referrals. Through ongoing training opportunities for staff, it is evident that CFRS personnel are becoming more proactive in identifying support for young people attending our youth programmes. Types of support include more appropriate early intervention services e.g. mental health support services and sheltered housing organisations.
20. Responding to the Covid-19 pandemic, the service has produced a number of briefings aimed at highlighting extra vigilance throughout this period. A temporary cessation in some of our youth engagement work, due to lockdown, may however, have promoted a decrease in referrals from this area of the prevention team's activities.
21. Fundamentally, the purpose of this policy is to ensure the safety of all children, young people and vulnerable young people the Service comes in contact with. Furthermore, it sets out processes, which provide protection for the Service and the individuals who work for it. It remains critical that all CFRS staff and volunteers continue to raise concerns regarding children to the relevant safeguarding leads so informed decisions can be made. This will ensure that we are fulfilling our requirements as an organisation to keep children and young people safe from harm and allow them to receive the specialist interventions that may be required.

### **Adult reporting data:**

22. The Service continues to identify and subsequently work with vulnerable adults across Cheshire. Once identified the Prevention team will case manage the person, if appropriate to do so, and work with partners to ensure the safety of each individual. This work is important but must only be done in accordance with the policy. Non-compliance with the policy by Service employees or volunteers is considered a serious disciplinary offence.
23. The number of referrals has decreased by one over this reporting period. (Tables 4, 5 and 6 refer).

Table 4: Number of referrals by year:

<b>Year</b>	<b>2018/2019</b>	<b>2019/2020</b>
<b>No.</b>	29	28

Table 5: A breakdown of the referrals made:

<b>Main Issue Identified:</b>	<b>Mental Health</b>	<b>Hoarding</b>	<b>Self Neglect</b>
Total number:	<b>17</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>

*NB: Of the 17 mental health, safeguarding referrals eight of these included an alcohol or substance misuse issue. Of the 28 referrals, smoking was factored in eight of the referrals.*

Table 6: A breakdown of the referrals made by unitary area:

<b>Breakdown of referrals by unitary area</b>	
CWAC	3
Halton & Warrington	9
Cheshire East	16

24. As indicated by table 5 above, the majority of the referrals made by the Service have mental health as the main contributing factor. The Service has a well-established secondment role within Cheshire and Wirral Partnership. The role of our Mental Health Engagement Officer is to engage with the service users of Cheshire Wirral Partnership (CWP) to reduce the risk of fire. It is also to promote the fire risks within these households to the staff of CWP. Due to the success of this role, it has been extended for a further 12 months.
25. Each of the breakdowns for referral has an element of mental health as a consideration. This is a very complex area and one that the Prevention team has gained excellent partnership agency contacts for quick resolutions and referral pathways.
26. The number of referrals made in each month since the C-19 crisis has dramatically reduced. This may be because much of our community work changed in its delivery. The majority of interventions are completed from a safe distance and homes are only entered where necessary.

## **Future Developments**

27. A number of future developments have been identified during the policy's operation, these include:
  - Annual review of the Children's Safeguarding Policy.
  - A full review of the Adult's Safeguarding Policy.
  - A full review of the out of working hours referral process.

- PAPYRUS mental health training to be provided to all staff in the Youth Engagement Department who regularly work with complex young people to support them with their day to day practice.
- Safeguarding training to be commissioned for managers. Safeguarding refreshers to operational crews to continue. This is required every two years to ensure staff remain upskilled relating to safeguarding.
- Post referral follow up briefings provided to all operational staff ensuring that the referral processes continue to be embedded.

## **Financial Implications**

28. The Safeguarding training required for managers does have a financial implication. This will be factored into the training budget bids.

## **Legal Implications**

29. All referrals complied with the policies and reporting procedure and therefore it is believed that there are no legal implications associated with the activity described in the report.

## **Equality and Diversity Implications**

30. The Children and Young People programmes run by the service are fully inclusive. Young people from all backgrounds and abilities can access our programmes. All children and young people can engage in our interventions regardless of gender, marital status, gender realignment, disability, race, colour, ethnic group, national origins, nationality, religious belief or sexual orientation.
31. All interventions carried out with adults are fully inclusive and carried out regardless of gender, marital status, gender realignment, disability, race, colour, ethnic group, national origins, nationality, religious belief or sexual orientation.

## **Environmental Implications**

32. As a Fire and Rescue Service, we have a pivotal role to play regarding the environment. All our children and young people programmes support the Service's environment policy and targets.

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**BACKGROUND PAPERS: NONE**