

CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF: PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE
DATE: 21 JULY 2021
REPORT OF: HEAD OF PREVENTION AND PROTECTION
AUTHOR: JESSICA BURTON AND STEVE MCCORMICK

SUBJECT: SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE (CYP)
AND ADULTS – ANNUAL REPORT, 2020-21

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 from the 1st of April 2020 to the 30th March 2021. This report focusses on both 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;
- [2] the non compliance with the policy be noted
- [3] the recommendations set out in paragraph 16 be noted

Background

2. Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service (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 are designed to support the provisions of the of the Children Act 1989 and expectations of 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 support the provisions of the Care Act 2014 and Mental Capacity Act 2005.

CYP Safeguarding

Information

6. During this reporting period, there have been 13 CYP's safeguarding referrals submitted relating to 24 CYP. On all but two occasions, the referrals have complied with the policy. On both occasions where there was a non-compliance to the policy, it was due to a delay in the reporting of potential safeguarding issues that could have had a significant impact on the CYP involved. On both occasions, these were reported to the relevant Local Authority social care teams and remedial actions were instigated with the staff members involved.

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 routine annual audit shows that the number of referrals has decreased during 2020/2021 (table 1). It is believed that the impact of COVID-19 is the cause of the lower figures as a number of youth programmes and activities have been suspended for a significant time during the reporting period. The breakdown of referrals by Service Delivery area and the activity being undertaken, is highlighted below (tables 2 and 3).

Table 1: Number of referrals by year:

Year	2020/2021	2019/2020
No.	13	16

Table 2: 2020/2021 referrals by area:

Area Referral Split	2020/2021	2019/2020
Cheshire East	5	5
Cheshire West and Chester	2	7
Halton	4	4
Warrington	2	0

Table 3: A breakdown of the referrals received:

Breakdown of referrals by source	2020/2021	2019/2020
Fire Cadets	0	1
Firesafe Scheme	0	0
Safe and Well visits	0	4
Operational Incidents	9	10
Prince's Trust Team	2	1
Targeted Youth Support Team	0	0
Arson Threat Assessment	2	0

Referral Case Overview

9. The reason for referral differ from case to case but included concerns around home conditions, poor mental health, drug and alcohol misuse and CYP being left at home unattended. It is positive to note that we are still receiving referrals made by operational staff following incidents. The two case studies below, provide further details of the type of referrals made to CYP's Social Care following concerns being identified by firefighters.
 - 9.1 Warrington - Crews attended a kitchen fire at a domestic house and during the incident it was evident the conditions and living arrangements did not meet the needs of the three CYP in the property. The family moved in with a sister until fire damage could be repaired. The Incident Commander asked for consent from the CYP's Mother to make a referral via the services safeguarding provisions in order to reach out to partnership agencies for additional support. CYP's Services Warrington were then informed who confirmed that the family had no open case. The Service made a referral to the Early Help and Prevention Team for a threshold triage. The local housing association (Muir Housing) were

contacted to arrange additional support and teams from Muir Housing began to clear and clean the property and a new cooker was arranged by the children's school.

- 9.2 Cheshire East - Crews attended a kitchen fire in a domestic flat. The fire was out on arrival however one unattended 9 year old female suffered smoke inhalation. Designated Safeguarding Officers were informed of the incident and North West Ambulance Service stated that they will assume the safeguarding responsibility. The Child was transported to hospital. Station Manager informed Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately and a referral was made by our Youth Engagement Manager to CYP's Social Care. This is an example of how the process should flow when following the safeguarding policy
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 CYP's Social Care intervention. In these instances, support was identified for the individuals and referrals were made to external services such as mental health and drug and alcohol teams. This is common practice when working with CYP who often require additional services to meet their complex needs.

Adult Safeguarding

Information

11. Throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic, service personnel, continued to identify and refer adults at risk, through prevention work, community response to COVID-19 activity or operational incidents. There were 28 cases where adult safeguarding thresholds were met, requiring engagement with the local authority Adult Social Care Teams, with a referral for additional support being processed.

Reporting Data

12. COVID-19 restrictions and lockdown measures had a major impact on our ability to provide the usual amount of proactive prevention work. The Service was able to deliver 9000 Safe and Well interventions, but these had to be carried out differently to include both doorstep and telephone engagements, where appropriate.
13. Despite the Pandemic and lockdown measures, there was only a slight decrease in the number of adult at risk cases (one) referred to local authority adult social care teams, compared to 2019 (table 4). The breakdown of referrals Service Delivery area and cause are shown below (tables 5 & 6)

Table 4: Number of referrals by year

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020/2021
No.	21	19	29	28

Table 5: 2020/21 Referrals by area

Area Referral Split	2020/2021	2019/2020
Cheshire East	11	9
Cheshire West and Chester	6	3
Halton	5	8
Warrington	6	9

Table 6: The most common cause for referrals made in 2020/21

Main Issue Identified:	2020/2021	2019/2020
Mental Health	10	17
Hoarding	5	6
Self Neglect	11	5

Referral Case Overview

14. Adult safeguarding referrals for mental health and hoarding saw a reduction from the previous year. This was not unexpected, due to the COVID-19 lockdown measures and the reduced time spent inside occupiers properties. This meant that living conditions and mental health implications were not always readily identifiable when engaging with occupiers.
 - 14.1 Self neglect referrals rose from 5 cases in 2019/20, to 11 in 2020/21.
 - 14.2 There was also an adult safeguarding referral for potential financial abuse and a potential modern slavery case, which indicates that Service personnel are aware of, and alert to such matters. In both of these cases, Cheshire Constabulary was also alerted.
 - 14.3 In collaboration with Cheshire Wirral Partnership NHS Trust (CWP), the Service's Mental Health Advocate continued to provide support and case management to new and existing mental health cases in the Cheshire West and Chester and Cheshire East unitary areas.

- 14.4 There is ongoing work with the Service and health partners to expand the role of Mental Health Advocates across all Unitary areas.
- 14.5 In addition to the 28 adult safeguarding referrals, there have been a further 402 Vulnerable Persons (VP) Folders created by the Prevention teams.
- 14.6 Vulnerable Persons Folders are established where safeguarding thresholds are not met, but further intervention or case management work by the Service is required.
- 14.7 Of the 402 VP Folders created, 123 (31%), were created due to the threat of arson at a property. In all cases, fire safety intervention was completed, and the offer of specialist equipment, such as a fireproof letterbox, was made where appropriate.
- 14.8 Other common reasons for VP Folder creation included; lower level self neglect, those living with dementia, bariatric occupiers, those who have experienced falls and mobility issues and high risk smokers in the home.
- 14.9 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

15. During this reporting period improvements have been made in relation to the Safeguarding CYP and adult Policies and the aligned safeguarding work to support staff and volunteers including:
 - 15.1 Youth Engagement, Prevention, Safety Central and HR staff were provided with Safer Recruitment training to ensure that the Services recruitment process is robust when employing staff or engaging volunteers into the organisation who will be working with CYP or adults who are at risk from abuse or neglect.
 - 15.2 The CYP'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.
 - 15.3 The Designated Safeguarding Leads for CYP and adults have both attained level 5 advanced safeguarding in both CYP and adult safeguarding.
 - 15.4 The Designated Safeguarding Leads for CYP and adults are scoping a peer review exercise of our Safeguarding policies to ensure they are compliant, promote best practice and are symbiotic with partner agency safeguarding policies
 - 15.5 The Service have supported a final year Social Work student who is in the process of completing a 100 day placement within the Prevention Team. This provides the organisation with another skilled professional with safeguarding

experience. This is an area that will be developed to ensure future placements can be provided. There is also a small financial benefit of having students in the team paid for by the university.

- 15.6 The Service's Youth Engagement Manager participated in a multi-agency audit process in partnership with the Halton Safeguarding CYP's Partnership. The cases audited highlighted a need for greater information sharing and a joined up approach. The audit had a focus on contextualised safeguarding and as a result a number of improvements across board membership were made. The purpose of this was to ensure agencies across Cheshire are working together to keep CYP safe from harm.
- 15.7 The safeguarding referral forms for CYP and adults, has been updated and the process streamlined. The intention is for this to be uploaded onto the webpage so all staff can complete it online and it will automatically be sent to the safeguarding email inbox for the relevant leads to action.

Future Developments/Recommendations

16. A number of future developments have been identified to improve the Services safeguarding processes including:
 - 16.1 All Group Managers and Prevention delivery staff will receive level 3 safeguarding training to assist them in their role providing safeguarding support.
 - 16.2 The production of a safeguarding toolkit to support staff and volunteers to understand their statutory responsibility for safeguarding and to provide a best practice guide which clearly details the referral pathway.
 - 16.3 Quarterly Safeguarding Planning Meetings will be introduced to ensure an information sharing process is in place between Service 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 approach.
 - 16.4 The development of a Safeguarding Communication Plan which ensures continued safeguarding education and awareness is maintained for staff and volunteers through the provision of training opportunities, best practice examples, case studies and briefings.
 - 16.5 Safeguarding 'champion' roles will be implemented and those interested will receive training and will be the Safeguarding Leads main contact to cascade information across the Service.
 - 16.6 A Safeguarding Action Plan, utilising a RAG rating, has been created to log developments and actions that are required to further enhance the work-stream and to ensure the organisation is compliant with safeguarding best practice. The outcomes of this will be implemented in collaboration with Service Management Team

Financial Implications

17. There are no known financial implications associated with the submission of this paper.

Legal Implications

18. Safeguarding CYP and adults at risk from neglect and abuse is underpinned by legal and moral responsibilities for the Service, its employees and volunteers. In the event of non compliance with either the CYP or adult safeguarding policies or procedures it is possible there could be reputational and even legal implications.
- 18.1 Accordingly, it is important that all incidents are dealt with properly. In addition non compliance must be identified, recorded and responded to adequately, so that actions can be taken to avoid future failures.

Equality and Diversity Implications

19. 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

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

**CONTACT: DONNA LINTON, GOVERNANCE AND CORPORATE PLANNING
MANAGER
TEL [01606] 868804**

BACKGROUND PAPERS: NONE