

Local Members Interest
N/A

Safe and Strong Communities Committee- Monday 13 January 2020

Adult Safeguarding Referrals

Recommendation

The Safe and Strong Communities Select Committee is asked to:

- a. Scrutinise and provide feedback on the Staffordshire Adult Safeguarding Service.

Report of Cllr Alan White, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Health, Care and Wellbeing

Background

1. The Care Act 2014 sets the legal framework for how Local Authorities and other public bodies should protect adults at risk of abuse or neglect.
2. Section 42 of the Care Act 2014 places duties on the Council to:
 - a. Lead a multi-agency local adult safeguarding system that seeks to prevent abuse and neglect and stop it quickly when it happens.
 - b. Make enquiries, or request others to make them, when they think an adult with care and support needs may be at risk of abuse or neglect and they need to find out what action may be needed.
 - c. Carry out Safeguarding Adults Reviews when someone with care and support needs dies as a result of abuse or neglect and there is a concern that the Council or its partners could have done more to protect them.
 - d. Arrange for an independent advocate to represent and support a person who is the subject of a safeguarding enquiry or review, if required.

Staffordshire Adult Safeguarding Service

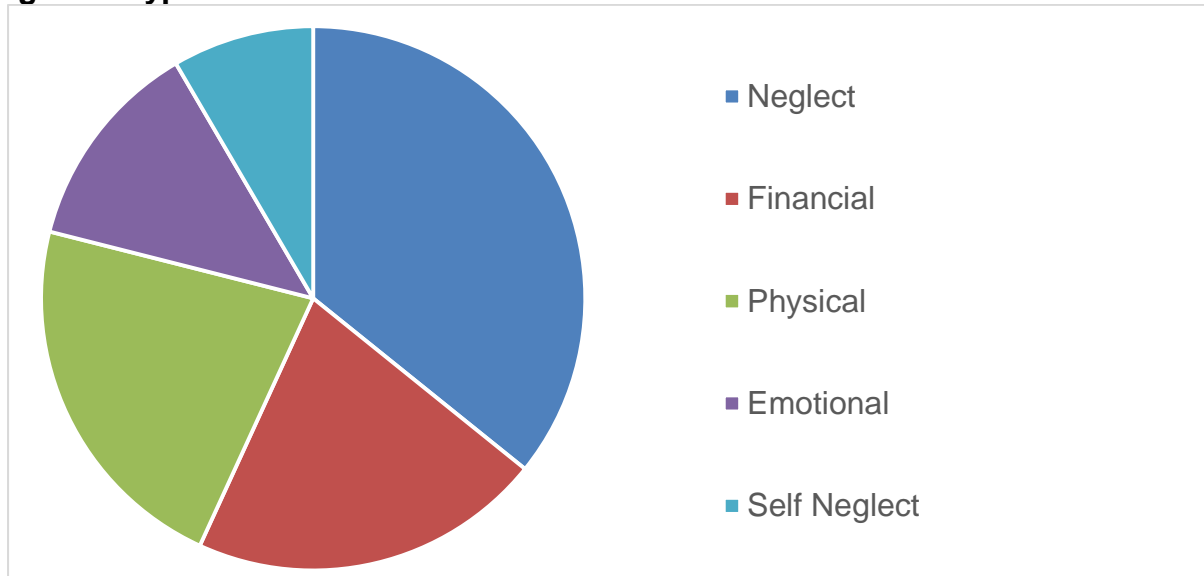
3. The Staffordshire Adult Safeguarding Service discharges these duties for the Council. The Staffordshire Adult Safeguarding Service comprises two teams: Staffordshire Adult Safeguarding Team (SAST) and Adult Safeguarding Enquiry Team (ASET).
4. Referrals are received at the Staffordshire Cares Contact Centre by specially trained advisors, mainly via telephone calls but also through e-mails. The advisors may contact SAST Advanced Practitioners for advice at this stage. The referrals are loaded onto Care Director and sent to SAST via email.

5. SAST are based in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) at Police Headquarters. The team has 4 Advanced Practitioners and 5 Safeguarding Assistants. The role of SAST is to:
 - a. Ensure the immediate safety of the individual for whom a concern has been raised.
 - b. Manage the initial decision making on all safeguarding referrals and determine the level of risk to the individual for whom a concern has been raised.
 - c. Complete safeguarding planning discussions to gather information to understand the circumstances of abuse, including the wider context such as whether others may be at risk of abuse, whether there is any emerging pattern of abuse, whether others have witnessed abuse and the role of family members and paid staff or professionals.
 - d. Refer cases on for enquiries under Section 42 of the Care Act 2014 as appropriate and ensure that these have been properly concluded. ASET will complete Section 42 enquiries where the risk has been assessed as high. The adult social care teams in Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, the Adult Learning Disabilities Team and the North Staffordshire Mental Health Team will complete Section 42 enquiries where the risk has been assessed as medium or low.
6. ASET are based at Police Headquarters and are co-located with Staffordshire Police ASET team. The role of ASET is to complete all high-risk Section 42 enquiries as well as to chair and co-ordinate all Large Scale Enquiries (LSEs) about providers where there are significant concerns. ASET also provide support to SAST to ensure that a safeguarding practitioner is available each day to respond immediately to concerns.
7. A Section 42 enquiry is concluded when the ongoing risk is negligible, when there remains a ongoing risk and a Safeguarding Plan has been implemented, or at the individual's request.

Demand

8. The number of safeguarding referrals is rising. Last year it was between 800 – 1000 concerns per month; this year we have seen a steady increase to between 1000 – 1200 concerns per month.
9. We have reviewed the rise in demand to try and identify the causes, however this has not identified any particular pattern or reasons. It is unlikely that we will be able to significantly reduce the demand and therefore system and process changes are planned to reduce the amount of time taken to process each referral and accommodate the additional numbers within the staffing time available.
10. The concerns are categorised by type as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: type of concern 2018/19



11. Every referral is reviewed by a qualified practitioner on the day it is received. Any immediate risks are identified and an appropriate response initiated.
12. Referrals are categorised and prioritised according to risk. The increase in demand has resulted in some delays to further management of referrals with the numbers awaiting completion ranging from 100 to 400 and averaging 250. Referrals are usually completed within 4 weeks; those that require Section 42 enquiries should be completed within 2 weeks – 3 days for high risk cases.
13. In 2018/2019 we received 12,372 referrals. 3,711 (30%) of these required a planning discussion and 3,342 (90%) progressed to full Section 42 enquiries with 1,405 having fully or partially substantiated outcomes (42%).
14. Approximately 70% of all referrals were closed at initial decision-making stage with 6% being referred for Care Act assessment at this point.

Safeguarding Plans

15. An adult Safeguarding Plan is an agreed set of actions that are designed to manage any ongoing risk of abuse or neglect for an adult with care and support needs following a Section 42 enquiry. If at the end of Section 42 enquiry the ongoing risk is considered to be medium/high then a Safeguarding Plan should usually be implemented.
16. A Safeguarding Plan should be agreed by the individual in line with Making Safeguarding Personal. In some cases it may not be beneficial for a Safeguarding Plan to be implemented. This should be clearly identified on the outcomes and reasons for closure.
17. Currently 15% of safeguarding referrals result in a Safeguarding Plan. This is lower than expected given the outcomes of Section 42 Enquiries. There has also been a decrease in the number of timely reviews of Safeguarding Plans.

18. A target has been set to increase to 20% of safeguarding referrals resulting in a Safeguarding Plan. The decrease in the number of timely reviews of Safeguarding Plans has been audited and a series of practitioner forums organised to raise understanding of these.

Variance in statistics in Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent

19. In 2018 the Safe and Strong Communities Committee raised questions about the variation in the reported number of Section 42 enquiries completed in Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent.
20. Over the last year Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Safeguarding managers have reviewed procedures and recording to understand the reasons for this – the outcome of this was reported in the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Adult Safeguarding Board Annual Report.
21. Both Local Authorities review initial referrals and make a decision about whether to progress based on:
 - a. does the adult have care and support needs; and
 - b. are they at risk or experiencing abuse or neglect; and
 - c. as a result of their care needs are they unable to protect themselves.
22. If the three criteria are met then both Local Authorities proceed to a planning discussion and once information has been gathered both Local Authorities make a decision about whether a full Section 42 enquiry is required.
23. If the decision is not to proceed to a full Section 42 enquiry the two Local Authorities record this differently:
 - a. Staffordshire record this as: Section 42 enquiry completed (either no ongoing risk, closed at adult's request, concerns substantiated or unsubstantiated).
 - b. Stoke-on-Trent record this as: no Section 42 required (along with any other actions required).
24. In essence Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Local Authorities follow the same procedures but record them differently. This difference in recording is replicated throughout the country with a wide variation in conversion rates for Section 42 enquiries between 12% and 69%. Both Local Authorities have been involved in work with the Local Government Association in an attempt to reduce this variance.

Conclusion

25. Staffordshire Adult Safeguarding Service is under increasing pressure due to the increasing number of referrals. We are confident that risks are being effectively managed currently, however there is a need to review systems and processes to ensure that demand can continue to be managed with the available resources.

Link to Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Adult Safeguarding Partnership Board Annual Report 2018/19

Community Impact – There is no anticipated Community Impact

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Safeguarding plan presentation for SLT

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