

Local Members Interest
N/A

Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday 14 September 2021

Adult Safeguarding Transformation Project

Recommendations

I recommend that the Committee:

- a. Note the update on the Adult Safeguarding transformation including changes to the Care Director system and processes
- b. Note the requirement to increase resource capacity within the Staffordshire Adult Safeguarding Team

Report of Cllr Julia Jessel, Cabinet Member for Health and Care

Summary

What is the Overview and Scrutiny Committee being asked to do and why?

1. The overview and scrutiny committee are being asked to consider the safeguarding transformation activity and note the proposed changes to practice and resources to ensure that Staffordshire County Council can continue to effectively meet the duties under section 42 of the Care Act to respond to concerns of abuse and neglect of adults who have care and support needs.

Report

Background

2. Staffordshire County Council has seen a year-on-year increase in the number of safeguarding concerns. As demonstrated by the table below this increase equates to an increase of 63% since 2017. Whilst the exact reason for the increase is not known, regional and national data shows all local authorities have had an increase and it is cited to be as a result of increased awareness within providers and the wider population

Year	Safeguarding contacts
2017	10,925
2018	11,356
2019	14,769
2020	16,165

3. During this period the service has continued to operate with the same permanent resource levels; albeit in 2021 additional temporary resource has been seconded to the team to support some of the demand pressures.
4. Ultimately the increase in demand has led to an increase in time taken to process referrals with a number of concerns being dealt with outside of our two-week timeframe.
5. It is important to note that even with the high demand levels we have experienced, all initial concerns are reviewed by the Staffordshire Adult Safeguarding Team (SAST) on the day they are received. They are all risk assessed and a decision made under section 42 of the care act by a qualified social worker (Advanced Practitioner). Working within the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) enables SAST to continue to share information with relevant partner agencies and be effective in risk assessing adult safeguarding concerns.
6. We have also continued to respond to concerns assessed as high risk as a priority.
7. The processes, systems and paperwork have not been reviewed for 4 years and it became apparent that that review of the service was required to improve efficiencies and productivity of the team.

Safeguarding Transformation Project Update

8. The Safeguarding transformation project began in February 2020 to ensure the correct processes and resource were in place to deliver the Council's statutory responsibilities for safeguarding. Unfortunately, the Covid 19 pandemic delayed some progress due to the changing priorities; however, the transformation review has now been completed.
9. **Review of concerns received:** The review identified that SAST manage and close between up to 86.3% of all concerns with no further safeguarding actions being required by district social work teams.
10. **Process and System review:** We have completed a wholesale transformation review of all our processes and forms, removing duplication and repetition. This will not only enable decisions to be made as quickly as possible and reduce delays but will also streamline the process and reduce unnecessary administrative time.
11. The revised process will ensure that SAST gather relevant information earlier in the process which will ensure that adults receive the necessary protection as quickly as possible, and that there is a clear plan in place if any further enquiries are required.
12. To ensure consistency of practice across Staffordshire, from August 2021 SAST will also make the initial decisions for any mental health related safeguarding concerns within the south of the county (Cannock, Tamworth, Lichfield, South Staffordshire, Stafford and East Staffordshire). This will align with the current approach used for concerns raised in Newcastle-under-Lyme and Staffordshire Moorlands.

13. A high number of these contacts are “self-neglect” and “concerns for safety”; these will usually result in a Care Act assessment being completed rather than requiring a safeguarding referral. Therefore, we are improving the process to ensure that this identified at the point of referral and hence a Care Act assessment can be completed as soon as possible.
14. In addition, there are a high number of “service user altercations” being reported and subsequently closed following assurance being sought from the care provider. Our ambition is to transform the service from a reactive crisis management response to a proactive and preventive response. We will do this by improving the knowledge of referrers to the service (e.g., care providers and voluntary sector organisations) improving the quality and timeliness of adult safeguarding concerns being raised with the service.
15. In the future our care management system, Care Director, will also enable us to record safeguarding concerns against a care provider. This will ensure that the Quality Assurance Team and safeguarding to proactively monitor care providers, for example by identification of repeat or frequent concerns.
16. **Review of Resource Capacity:** Whilst the transformation review has identified the potential to improve efficiencies within the team, it is recognised that there remains a requirement to increase resource capacity within the team to continue to meet the increasing demand.
17. Increased capacity is also required to enable the team to proactively respond to identified concerns in providers; reduce large scale enquiries due to systemic risks within providers; and support the quality assurance team in their work to ensure that care services are providing high quality care. It is anticipated that this proactive approach will ultimately lead to a reduction in safeguarding concerns and risks to adults.
18. It is therefore proposed that resource in Adult Safeguarding Enquiry Team (ASET) Team is increased by 1 Advanced Practitioner post; and SAST is increased by 3 Advanced Practitioner Posts. The cost of this resource will be met through existing Adult Social Care and Safeguarding budgets.
19. **Ongoing Assurance of Quality and Performance:** To provide ongoing assurance and visibility of Safeguarding performance. We have developed clear Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in line with the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Adult Safeguarding Partnership Board (SSASPB), national data and regional reports. These KPI's will allow us to better monitor performance and trends to ensure that we are continually improving our response to concerns which will ultimately ensure more timely and better outcomes for the adults in our community.
20. In addition, we have developed a programme of Quality Audits to continue to evaluate and improve safeguarding practice.
21. **Next Steps:** The recommended changes identified from the transformation review have already commenced; the changes will be fully embedded by March 2022.

Link to Strategic Plan

22. Adult Social Care & Safeguarding as a service play an important part in contributing to the Health & Care Vision by:

“Working in partnership to ensure that people who need support are able to maintain and maximise independence.”

23. The key responsibilities of the DASS are:

- a. Leading commitment to outcomes for people at risk of harm.
- b. Developing the means to measure whether outcomes are realised so that practitioners and boards know how efficient they are.
- c. Services and procedures drive engagement with people and discusses with them the outcomes that they want at the beginning, middle and end of the process.
- d. Staff are competent in working with families and networks and have skills, knowledge and permission to use the full range of legal and social work interventions.
- e. Engage with local criminal and justice systems to make sure victims get the same access to justice as everyone else.
- f. Performance of safeguarding services is regularly checked and audited.

Link to Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity

N/A

Community Impact

No Impact.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

None.

Contact Details

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