

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

24 MARCH 2020

1. REVIEW OF SAFEGUARDING ARRANGEMENTS

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 THAT the Scrutiny Committee note and comment on the contents of this report; and
- 1.2 THAT the Scrutiny Committee continue to receive future updates on progress of the safeguarding action plan.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to update Scrutiny Committee on progress made and proposed next steps with implementing the review of the West Midlands Fire Service's safeguarding arrangements – for children and adults.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Service, wanting to provide a level of assurance and identify further areas to improve safeguarding arrangements, engaged an independent safeguarding consultant to review current processes and make recommendations for improvement between September 2018-March 2019. An interim report was presented to the Committee at its meeting on 27 February 2019.

A final report and action plan, which had been developed as an outcome of the review, was received, considered and the recommendations approved at its meeting on 27th March 2019.

- 3.2 The agreed recommendations were for the Service to:
 - maintain and celebrate its safeguarding strengths, as summarised in the main body of the report;

- develop and deliver the Action Plan framework outlined in the Appendix of the report, based on the safeguarding areas for improvement.
- report back to the Committee on progress with these actions in the future.

3.3 For ease of reference, the above-mentioned Appendix (the agreed Action Plan framework) is attached as an appendix to this report.

3.4 In January 2020, the safeguarding arrangements were realigned to a Brigade Manager and the consultant was re-engaged by the Service to assist in developing and embedding the recommendations of the action plan across the Service.

3.5 As at the end of February 2020, considerable progress has been made to implement the actions across the four areas in the attached Appendix. To include:

- safeguarding leadership now rests with ACFO Sarah Warnes, Strategic Enabler, People.
- the Service's Safeguarding Policy and linked policies/ procedures have been updated – and will be revised in the light of external developments and progress made with other outstanding key aspects of our safeguarding action plan outlined below.
- a detailed process-review of who needs to do what and when is being progressed and will be implemented within the next review period.
- in the meantime, and of particular importance, a simple, effective 24/7 triage system is already in place to better advise and direct officers around safeguarding issues in urgent situations.
- all relevant safeguarding policies, procedures, guidance, flowcharts, forms etc. are being brought together to be made more quickly accessible within the Service's internal MESH intranet system
- the current approach to and scale of DBS Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), previously Criminal Records Bureau, checks has been compared and cross-checked with that of other Services and nationally, and confirmed as sufficient.

- 3.6 The primary outstanding areas of the action plan to progress require more detailed work including liaison and agreement with a number of partners and are as follows:
- develop a specific safeguarding competency framework, supported by a more dedicated training and development programme and staff supervision framework.
 - specific proposals and where necessary a business case to provide support and the continued management and assurance of our approach to safeguarding. This will also take into consideration how we work with partnership and any other linked work to other parts of WMFS (e.g. people, risk, intelligence, emergency planning, health and safety and wellbeing).
 - redefine in detail the WMFS safeguarding relationship, roles and responsibilities with the 14 sets of Safeguarding Adults and Children's Safeguarding Boards' (or equivalent Strategic Partnerships) – structures and processes. Seeking to provide clearer, common referral forms, year-end and in-year assurance processes, and who needs to attend what groups, etc. Balancing what WMFS can realistically offer with Safeguarding Boards' etc. expectations.
 - replace current "holding" People in Positions of Trust West Midlands Adults' framework with a clear, short, WMFS-dedicated Position of Trust Adults and Children's policy.
 - help and support any relevant communication, at the appropriate time, across the Service and nationally with other Services, promoting the good safeguarding practice being carried out in WMFS and confirming to/re-assuring staff and volunteers what they need and do not need to do.
- 3.7 It is anticipated that these actions and related updating of the Service's Safeguarding Policy should be completed by the late spring of 2020. Scrutiny Committee will, of course, be kept updated on further progress.

4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

In preparing this report an initial Equality Impact Assessment is not required and has not been carried out. The Service's policies that are applied in all case management have been subject to full Equality Impact Assessments.

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The statutory obligations for public sector organisations such as Fire Services in relation to the safeguarding of vulnerable children, young people and adults are covered in a range of legislation and supporting statutory guidance, primarily the Children's Act 1989, the Child and Social Work Act 2017, and the Care Act 2014.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications to this report.

7. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no environmental implications to this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Item 4 Scrutiny Committee 4 June 2018: Scrutiny Review of Safeguarding - Scoping Document

Item 4 Scrutiny Committee 12 September 2018 - Progress update

Item 6 Scrutiny Committee 27 February 2019 - Presentation and verbal update.

Item 4 Scrutiny Committee 27 March 2019 – Review of Safeguarding report and action Plan

The contact officer for this report is Sarah Warnes, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Strategic Enabler – People, telephone number 0121 380 6551

PHIL LOACH
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER



Recommended Actions, Responsibility and Timescale

STRENGTHS

Celebrate/inform all Service staff and volunteers of all the strengths and good practice highlighted in this report	Prevention Team	April 2019
Share key Service learning/messages from Metro Court Review nationally via NFCC	SET	April 2019

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Leadership

Consider location and dedicated support for the leadership of the Service's safeguarding activity	SET	June 2019
Make safeguarding priority more explicit in Community Safety Strategy	SET	At next review of Strategy
Work with Adult Safeguarding Emergency Group to establish equivalent Children's Group or extend existing Group to cover children's issues	Prevention Team	September 2019
Through these Groups, press for just two (one each for Adults and Children) annual self-assessment safeguarding assurance templates and safeguarding concern referral forms	Prevention Team with support from SET	September 2019
Through these Groups, supported by direct contact from CFO to the seven Local Authority CEOs, confirm which safeguarding-related boards and groups definitely require WMFS attendance, why, and at what level	Prevention Team with direct support from CFO	September 2019

Policies and Procedures

Make relatively minor amendments to Safeguarding Policy 1712	AL to suggest to Prevention Team	End March 2019
Introduce a new People in Position of Trust (PiPoT) Policy	AL to suggest framework Prevention Team to use that to draft new Policy	End March 2019 June 2019
Develop simple guidance for Officers to follow Voice of the Child/Making Safeguarding Personal approaches (focus on outcomes citizens are seeking)	AL to provide suggestions Prevention Team to develop guidance/checklist from this	End March 2019 June 2019

Workforce Issues

Share and discuss full report and recommendations with Unions/Federations with a view to jointly actioning workforce-related recommendations	SET/Joint Consultative Committee (JCC)	April 2019
Design, issue and collate returns from a short staff survey to identify perceived gaps in wider community safety and wellbeing services or access to these (to be raised with partners), and how staff themselves can be better supported in their welfare role	Prevention Team, HR Team and JCC	September 2019
Mirror Adult Safeguarding Competency Framework into a Children's Safeguarding Competency Framework	Prevention Team, HR Team with (new) Children's Emergency Services Group	September 2019
Review safeguarding-related training to decide which should be mandatory and which periodic (as opposed to just one-off) – with particular emphasis on Mental Health Act/mental capacity awareness	AL to suggest a short list SET	End March 2019 June 2019
Review mix of types of safeguarding-related training	Prevention and HR Teams in conjunction with Birmingham Council	June 2019

	Training and Development	
Introduce more co-ordinated and focussed use of case studies into TDEs and “one-minute briefings”	SET with proposals from Prevention Team	June 2019
Discuss and consider the feasibility of all staff undertaking at least a basic DBS check – approximate annual cost suggested £15,600 + any admin cost	HR Team and SET	June 2019

Oversight and Assurance

Bring together all safeguarding and related policies, procedures, guidance, flow-charts, training and other information in one co-ordinated section of MESH system	IT Team	June 2019
Undertake an “as is” compared to “to be” process-mapping review to ensure all safeguarding concerns are properly and fully logged through a “one record” approach	IT Team	June 2019
Introduce a central 24/7 safeguarding duty “triage” system to provide clarity and on consistency on what should be logged as safeguarding concerns and alerts	SET	September 2019

AL/5.3.19