

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

1 November 2021

1. **PROGRESS REPORT ON REVIEW OF SAFEGUARDING IN WMFS**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

RECOMMENDED

THAT Members note progress made to date on the implementation of the recommendations made as part of the review of safeguarding.

2. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report is submitted to update the Scrutiny Committee on work to improve safeguarding arrangements and practice in West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS).

3. **BACKGROUND**

3.1 Effective safeguarding is integral to the WMFS strategic aims of Prevent and Protect. A review of safeguarding in WMFS was completed in 2019 by Alan Lotinga from the West Midlands Association of Directors of Adult Social Services. Alan returned to help progress the implementation of the action plan in early 2020. Several key areas for improvement including a further review of the WMFS Policy and Procedures were identified. The review of safeguarding made recommendations to:

- Strengthen leadership and governance for safeguarding.
- Improve oversight and assurance of safeguarding by establishing a Safeguarding Oversight and Assurance Group.

- Ensure safeguarding practice and principles are embedded across services in an efficient and effective way.
 - Lead and provide assurance both internally, with key partners and the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC).
- 3.2 The Safeguarding Manager, Mike Wood, was appointed in December 2020 following the safeguarding review undertaken by Alan Lotinga. The role was appointed to further progress this work and engage with key stakeholders and employees to embed a safeguarding culture. It acts as the Delegated Designated Safeguarding Officer as defined in legislation or NFCC safeguarding guidance on behalf of Strategic Enabler for People, leading, and managing safeguarding responsibilities across the organisation. The role ensures that WMFS effectively discharges its safeguarding duty, and that policy, process and practice is in line with current legislation. The implementation of Alan's work is being led by the Safeguarding Manager.

3.3 Summary of Progress to Date

There has been considerable progress to improve safeguarding in WMFS during 2021 as follows:

- The WMFS Safeguarding Oversight and Assurance Group was established with terms of reference (see Appendix 1) in the WMFS governance arrangements for safeguarding in February 2021. The main Group has senior representation from across WMFS and meets quarterly with monthly subgroup meetings in between. The Group has a safeguarding action plan which is updated at least monthly.
- Revised safeguarding policy and procedures have been produced and were implemented on 1 September 2021. They include, for the first time in WMFS, a people in a position of trust policy setting out the procedure for managing allegations of abuse against staff and volunteers. They also include a new safeguarding competency and supervision framework. It sets out minimum requirements to ensure the workforce (including volunteers) is competent to ensure the safety, protection and wellbeing of children and adults with care and support needs. Competencies within the

Framework refer to a combination of skills, knowledge and experience expected of individual staff and volunteers. The Framework aims to ensure that this informs safeguarding practice in keeping with an individual's job role, duties, and responsibilities.

- The Ecademy safeguarding awareness eLearning has been reviewed and significantly updated as a part of the safeguarding competency and supervision framework. The training content is with OLPD to develop the eLearning. The framework also includes a targeted approach for staff in intermediary, specialist, and strategic roles (the latter could include members of SET and the Scrutiny Committee). Work has started to set out the learning and development required to achieve competencies at these levels.
- Quarterly safeguarding data is produced from the Fire Control safeguarding records. It provides information on the number of safeguarding concerns, position of trust allegations, and identifies themes emerging from the data. It is regularly shared with the Safeguarding Oversight and Assurance Group. Recommendations and learning from Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs) and Serious Incident Reviews (SIRs) are being shared with the Safeguarding Oversight and Assurance Group. It shows that most people subject to SIRs have care and support needs. In 2020-21 there were 46 incidents that met the SIR criteria, 68% of casualties had care and support needs. Care and support is the mixture of practical, financial and emotional support for adults who need extra help to manage their lives and be independent - including older people, people with a disability or long-term illness, people with mental health problems, and carers.
- Work has started to improve systems for safeguarding. First, by developing Business Intelligence dashboard to improve safeguarding data, real-time information on activity and outcomes. Second, by further developing Tymly (an existing WMFS IT system) to include recording of safeguarding.
- All 7 Safeguarding Adult Boards (SABs) in the West Midlands Metropolitan region have agreed that the SAB will receive a single self-assessment and annual report from WMFS by the end of April starting in 2022. This will replace

the multiple requests for self-assessment and other assurance activity from SABs that WMFS is currently subject to. It will save time and a single self-assessment will strengthen WMFS's oversight of safeguarding in the Service.

- WMFS has had challenges to engage partners in SIRs. Some partners can be reluctant to share information for the purpose of an SIR, questioning the legal basis for sharing information. The 7 SABs have agreed to help promote the involvement of partner organisations in WMFS SIRs by tasking a SAB subgroup to help better understand and resolve the issue.
- WMFS and SABs are represented at the West Midlands Emergency Services Safeguarding Adult Group (WMESSAG). WMESSAG has developed a common referral form to social care for the West Midlands Metropolitan Region for WMFS, the Police, and Ambulance Service. It is not implemented yet.
- A new safeguarding page on Mesh is being used to share key safeguarding information with staff including the minutes of the Safeguarding Oversight and Assurance Group.

3.4 Engagement of Staff

Staff and Trade Union engagement has been an integral part of the progress set out in 3.3. This was particularly the case in the development of the safeguarding policy and procedures. For example, approximately 45 staff from across WMFS were involved in the development of the safeguarding policy and procedures through a Microsoft Teams site and 3 focus groups in March and April 2021. Each focus group covered the following 4 areas:

- Recognising and Responding to Abuse and Neglect.
- Reporting, Recording and Referring.
- People in a Position of Trust Policy.
- Staff Competency and Supervision Framework.

The focus groups resulted in amendments to the policy and procedures. They provided a wealth of information that will

be used to develop a safeguarding toolkit for staff.

There has been significant engagement with Trade Union representatives at the Human Resources Joint Working Party where safeguarding has been a standing agenda item.

A JCC consultation on the safeguarding policy and procedures was undertaken in July and August 2021.

The Safeguarding Oversight and Assurance Group has a communication plan to help organise and structure staff engagement.

3.5 Summary of Further Action Required

There are several actions to be completed by the end of June 2022. They are:

- A review Safeguarding Oversight and Assurance Group terms of reference and the safeguarding policy and procedures.
- Consider mainstreaming and recruitment for the Safeguarding Manager post.
- Complete the development of and implement the Business Intelligence dashboard to improve safeguarding data and the recording of safeguarding using Tymly.
- Develop and implement the learning and development required for the intermediary, specialist, and strategic levels of the safeguarding competency and supervision framework.
- Develop and implement the safeguarding toolkit including promoting use of the NHS safeguarding app which is on all brigade mobile phones and downloadable on personal devices if required
- Templates to record the investigation of position of trust allegations have already been produced but need to be implemented.
- Engagement with Children's Safeguarding Boards and partnerships to agree use of the WMFS single self-assessment and annual report, then conduct the first WMFS self-assessment and annual report and submit to safeguarding

boards by the end of April 2022.

- Implement common referral form through agreement at the WMESSAG.
- Improve assurance that learning from SIRs, SARs, Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, and other reviews is embedded in practice.

4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

A full Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and can be accessed (Appendix 2).

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The safeguarding policy and procedures will ensure that WMFS fulfills its safeguarding responsibilities for:

- Children and young people under the Children Act 1989 and 2004; and the statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018.
- Adults with care and support needs under the Care Act 2014.
- Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 – This places a statutory duty to promote fire safety in the community. The safeguarding responsibilities are defined in other legislation.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Any costs associated with releasing staff for safeguarding training would need to be met from within existing resources.

7. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Scrutiny Committee Report Review of Safeguarding 27.3.2019

[NFCC Safeguarding Framework](#)

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