

SUBJECT:	PROTECTING VULNERABLE PEOPLE UPDATE
DIRECTORATE:	CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND TOWN CLERK
REPORT AUTHORS:	JOANNE SMITH, SAFEGUARDING LEAD; MICHELLE HOYLES – BUSINESS MANAGER CORPORATE POLICY AND TRANSFORMATION; EMILY KATE HOLMES, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR – TRANSFORMATION & STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide to Performance Scrutiny Committee a summary of the key issues, trends and statistical data associated with Protecting Vulnerable People in the city. This summary includes an overview of the types of cases being reported or occurring within Lincoln, and performance information which demonstrates the Council's continued compliance with statutory safeguarding requirements.

2. Background

- 2.1 This report provides information which demonstrates the Council's corporate commitment to its safeguarding duties and responsibilities. It also provides a means by which statutory compliance can be monitored and provides an opportunity to impart key information on current and emerging public safety concerns within the city and surrounding areas.
- 2.2 The updates provided in this report span the following key topics:
- Training
 - Key service changes in 2023/24
 - Safeguarding children and young people
 - Safeguarding adults
 - Domestic abuse
 - Internal safeguarding referrals
 - Prevent
 - Audit
 - Corporate Safeguarding Policy
 - Service priorities in 2024/25

3. Training

- 3.1 Safeguarding training is a mandatory requirement for all employees and forms part of the corporate induction process. A full training needs review was conducted in 2023/24, matching every job role in the Council to available training courses so that all staff have the knowledge and skills necessary to identify and report safeguarding concerns. For most staff, this training comprises a suite of mandatory training courses agreed with the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership (LSCP), Lincolnshire Safeguarding Adults Board (LSAB) and the Domestic Abuse Partnership

(DAP). Some staff within the Council require enhanced safeguarding training due to their contact with the public, and a training matrix has been implemented that requires these roles to undertake a selection of additional training courses to deepen their knowledge of a range of safeguarding topics. These roles are spread across the Council and include areas such as Customer Services, Food Health and Safety, and a range of roles in the Housing Assets Directorate.

- 3.2 There is also a range of roles, mostly located within the Housing Management Directorate, and PPASB and Private Sector Housing teams, that require advanced knowledge of safeguarding. These roles are those most likely to have regular contact with vulnerable people and are required to complete a six-year training pathway delivered in partnership with LSCB, LSAB and DAP.
- 3.3 The training programme is regularly monitored, and in 2023/24 substantial progress was made to ensure safeguarding training across the Council is up to date.
- 3.4 Two safeguarding Member training sessions were delivered in 2023 and additional training, including for newly elected Members, will be delivered throughout the year.
- 3.5 Completion of staff training will continue to be monitored internally by the Safeguarding Lead Officer, with compliance concerns reported to the Protecting Vulnerable People Group. The Chair of the PVP Group will continue to escalate concerns to the Corporate Management Team if necessary.

4. Achievements in 2023/24

- 4.1 There have been some notable events linked to the safeguarding function in the last 12 months, including:
 - Staff and Member training review and refresh (as set out in section 3)
 - Introduction of safeguarding case management
 - Adoption of a new corporate Safeguarding Policy
 - Introduction of a 'Super Reds' case management process to provide a means for individuals in the city with particularly high risk needs or behaviours to be identified and protection/prevention solutions discussed and actioned
 - Review of multi-agency meetings and introduction of a Vulnerable Adults Panel (VAP). The VAP process has recently commenced and will be running for an initial six-month pilot focusing on cases originating in Housing Solutions and Tenancy services, before being extended city-wide.
 - Participation in a Section 11 children's safeguarding audit with LSCP. In August it was confirmed that the Council passed the audit with 100% of the criteria being rated as green.
 - Implemented a Key Performance Indicator for safeguarding referrals.
 - Reviewed and implemented an enhanced process for PPSB and Housing, so complex cases can be screened and referred into the correct multi-agency meeting.
- 4.2 In addition to these achievements, the Council's Safeguarding Lead was invited to speak at a county-wide child exploitation conference; to provide their reflections on the actions the Council is taking to support local and national efforts to protect children and young people from county lines activity in the city.

5. Safeguarding Children and Young People

- 5.1 Officers continue to correctly identify and report safeguarding referrals regarding children and young people, and in 2023/24 46 such referrals were made. Most council services involve primary contact from adults rather than children/young people, however as demonstrated in Figure 1 there has still been a notable increase in the number of referrals year-on-year:

Safeguarding referrals (children and young people)	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
	10	4	27	46

Figure 1: Year-on-year comparison of safeguarding referrals related to children and young people

In Q1 2024/25 the number of internal safeguarding referrals related to children and young people is 12.

- 5.2 Officers also continue to attend and contribute to Child in Need meetings and Child Protection Conferences. The number of meetings attended remains quite small.
- 5.3 Whilst safeguarding referrals initiated by City of Lincoln employees for children/young people remains much lower than for adults, officers continue to participate in multi-agency activity including MACE (child exploitation), MARAC and DVDS (domestic abuse).
- 5.4 Lincoln is now represented weekly at Level 2 MACE due to the number of children/young people linked to exploitation in the city. 108 cases were heard at Level 2 MACE in 2023/24; it should be noted that this number comprises victims, persons of concern and locations, and includes repeat cases. Almost all of this exploitation is linked to 'county lines.' Lincoln has by far the highest number of cases heard at Level 2 MACE compared to neighbouring Lincolnshire authorities and it has the highest attendance rate in the County for Level 2 MACE multi-agency meetings:
- 5.5 Officers also work closely with LSCP and Police to support the disruption of exploitation activity. This has included use of CCTV, park rangers, Tenancy Services, Housing Repairs Services and the Neighbourhood Team, in addition to liaising with other social housing providers.
- 5.6 Lincoln was asked to participate in a 'Child Exploitation and Missing' awareness conference in late 2023. At this conference, the Safeguarding Lead gave a briefing on the roles of Districts and what disruption measures can be used to prevent/protect children and young people from exploitation. Due to concerns regarding suspected county lines activity in the city, the Safeguarding Lead is arranging additional training for key frontline officers on how to complete an 'Op. Insignia' referral form.

6. Safeguarding Adults

- 6.1 The number of adult safeguarding referrals made in the city remains high, and there has been a year-on-year increase of 55% in the last 12 months:

Safeguarding referrals (adults)	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
	93	69	154	240

Figure 5: Year-on-year comparison of safeguarding referrals related to adults

In Q1 24/25 the number of internal safeguarding referrals related to adults is 63.

- 6.2 The substantial increase in adult safeguarding referrals is partly attributed to recent staff training, although it is anticipated that the statistics are also indicative in an upward trend linked to increasing levels of vulnerability among some adults in the city.
- 6.3 As in 2022/23, the nature of these safeguarding referrals can be broadly categorised as follows:
- A significant increase in complex hoarding cases
 - Adults, including older adults, exhibiting signs of self-neglect or neglect by carers
 - Self-harm and suicidal thought
 - Poor mental health
 - Potential cuckooing and criminal exploitation
- 6.4 The Council has recently set up a Vulnerable Adults Panel (VAP). The purpose of VAP is to provide a multi-agency environment to discuss adults with more complex needs, who are not, for various reasons, currently able to access single agency support. VAP is currently operating as a pilot and accepting referrals from Tenancy Services and Housing Solutions, with a view to opening up a process for referring into VAP city-wide. This will include accepting referrals from partner agencies.

In Q1 of 24/25 VAP cases;

May	4
June	14 *12 of which were hoarding
July	6 *including one urgent on the day referral

Predominantly concerns have been in relation to hoarding, mental health and wellbeing, substance misuse (both drugs and alcohol), domestic abuse and ASB.

6.5 Right Care Right Person

Right Care Right Person began as an initiative within Humberside Police which was then adopted nationally as best practice.

A national partnership agreement was signed by public sector bodies in July 2023 and police forces were instructed nationally to look at RCRP with advice from a national team.

For Lincolnshire, this is being implemented in phases and the impact is being closely monitored. Lincolnshire Police, NHS organisations, local authorities, East Midlands Ambulance Services (EMAS) and the voluntary sector are reviewing how to

implement the Right Care, Right Person approach in the county. There will always be some cases where the police need to be involved in responding to someone in mental health crisis (for example, where a crime or potential crime is involved), police are not always the most appropriate agency to respond. This can result in people with mental health needs experiencing greater distress and having poorer experiences of the mental health care pathway and police being taken away from other areas of their work. The Right Care, Right Person is an approach designed to ensure that people of all ages, who have health and/or social care needs, are responded to by the right person, with the right skills, training, and experience to best meet their needs.

NHS 111 Option 2 has been launched which now allows for members of the public and agencies to refer in for support.

Front line officers have been briefed on the correct referral routes and in Q1 of 2024/25 there are no significant operational concerns at the moment or need for escalation as referrals are being made appropriately. This will continue to be monitored.

6.6 Prison Early Release Scheme

The current Prison crisis has resulted in some changes to be made to Prisoner custody length and release dates. This is something that is being monitored across services. Currently the Duty to Refer system is working well locally between Probation and the Council. Probation are providing Duty to Refer information quickly when they become aware of the releases. Officers will compile examples and evidence to share with wider partners to demonstrate the impact on the city and on services if needed.

7. Domestic Abuse

- 7.1 During 2023/24 there has been a substantial number of Lincoln-based domestic abuses cases heard at the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC). All cases heard at MARAC involve domestic abuse where there is deemed to be at high risk of death or serious injury to the victim. The full year breakdown of MARAC cases is provided in 'figure 6':

Month	Total cases heard at MARAC	Cases involving CoL tenants
Apr-23	16	9
May-23	13	6
Jun-23	21	12
Jul-23	9	3
Aug-23	30	14
Sep-23	18	6
Oct-23	26	18
Nov-23	22	7
Dec-23	15	8
Jan-24	26	10
Feb-24	28	9
Mar-24	24	14
2023/24 TOTAL	248	116

Apr-24	20	10
May-24	22	5
Jun-24	19	11
Q1 24/25	61	26

Figure 6: Summary of Lincoln cases heard at MARAC, including proportion that are CoL tenants

- 7.2 Cases heard at MARAC originate from all city Wards and span a wide range of different tenure types. Lincoln cases include students living in University accommodation and people living in Lincoln Refuge. Due to the high number of Lincoln cases, the Safeguarding Lead attends at least one MARAC meeting per week. This is significantly higher than other Lincolnshire districts.
- 7.3 The Council's Safeguarding Lead has recently become a rotating MARAC Chair, and will perform this role for 12 meetings each year.
- 7.4 Due to the high number of Lincoln cases heard at MARAC, the Safeguarding Lead recently arranged training for relevant City of Lincoln officers on how to complete a domestic abuse risk assessment form (DASH) and stalking/domestic abuse risk assessment form (S-DASH).
- 7.5 A Safer Accommodation Project Co-ordinator has recently been appointment within the Lincolnshire Domestic Abuse Partnership (DAP) to review the domestic abuse advice currently offered by Districts and to establish a county-wide target hardening programme, allowing survivors of domestic abuse to safely remain in their current accommodation.
- 7.6 The multi-agency domestic abuse strategy for Lincolnshire which sits under the Lincolnshire Domestic Abuse Partnership will be reviewed and refreshed during 2024/25.

8. Safeguarding Referrals

- 8.1 Figure 7 below summarises the number of safeguarding referrals received, and where they originated:

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Total referrals	103	73	181	286
Tenancy	27	10	48	88
Housing Repairs Service	10	12	22	24
Housing Strategy	12	1	3	
Independent Living			28	34
Rough Sleeper Team	1	14	20	25
Housing Solutions	4	6	18	45
Benefits	1		1	2
Council Tax	2		2	3

Welfare Team	2	3		1
Elected Members	1			
Customer Services	26	14	30	49
PA to Leadership	1		1	
PPASB/Private Sector Housing	14	9		5
Arboricultural		1		
Legal Services		1		
Licensing		1		
Safeguarding		1		
Pollution			1	
City Centre			1	
External	2		1	
Other			5	10
ADULT REFERRAL	93	69	154	240
CHILD REFERRAL	10	4	27	46
Adult/child split (%)	90/10	95/5	85/15	84/16

Figure 7: Year-on-year comparison of safeguarding referrals

- 8.2 As in previous years, the majority of safeguarding referrals made relate to adults. There has however, over the past two years, been an increase in the proportion of safeguarding referrals that relate to children. Whilst it is anticipated there has been some impact on safeguarding referrals arising from both the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent cost-of-living crisis, the increase is believed to have been partially driven by increased staff training and an improved awareness of safeguarding among the Council's workforce.

9. Prevent

- 9.1 The Council continues to be represented at the Prevent Steering Group, and the PPASB and Licensing Manager remains the organisation's Prevent lead. Prevent is one of the four elements of 'Contest,' the Government's Counter Terrorism Strategy, and its purpose is to safeguard and support vulnerable individuals who are at risk of radicalisation and to enable those engaged in terrorism to disengage and rehabilitate. Increasing and refreshing staff and member awareness around Prevent is a key action for the coming year. 13 Members received a Prevent briefing in July 24 and updated E-learning materials are also being provided to local authorities by the Home Office which can be rolled out from October 2024.

10. Audits

- 10.1 The Council has recently participated in a county-wide Section 11 children's safeguarding audit. During the collation and moderation stages, no significant issues were identified with the Council's approach to safeguarding children and during external moderation all 'standards' assessed as part of the audit were RAG rated 'green.' On 22 August, it passed the audit with 100% of the criteria being rated as green, as agreed with moderators, demonstrating that the Council has the required functions to safeguard children as required by Working Together to Safeguard Children

2023.

11. Corporate Safeguarding Policy

- 11.1 The Council's Corporate Safeguarding Policy has been reviewed and updated in the last 12 months, and was adopted by the Executive in March 2024. The new policy ensures the Council's approach to safeguarding is compliant with current statutory requirements and best practice guidance.

12. Service Priorities – 2024/25

- 12.1 As highlighted in this report, some significant and positive changes have been made to protecting vulnerable people in the city. As part of ongoing continuous improvement, and to further build on the positive steps already taken, the following actions are proposed for the coming year:

- Following development of case management software to support the new Vulnerable Adults Panel, it is intended that use will be further expanded to include case management of safeguarding referrals
- Review and implement deputy safeguarding leads and safeguarding champions across the Council to improve resilience of the service
- Deliver additional Member training and continue to monitor staff training to ensure safeguarding knowledge is maintained across the Council
- Support frontline services following county-wide implementation of 'Right Care Right Person' so teams know how to signpost customers who show signs of mental health crisis/distress
- Continue to work with PPASB and Housing teams to divert complex cases involving vulnerable people to the correct multi-agency meetings for appropriate action
- Monitor cases to help identify need or gaps in provision that can be addressed with partners

13. Organisational Impacts

- 13.1 Finance (including whole life costs where applicable)

There are no finance implications arising from this report.

- 13.2 Legal

This report demonstrates commitment and compliance with safeguarding duties and statutory guidance.

- 13.3 Equality & Diversity and Human Rights

The Public Sector Equality Duty means that the Council must consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work, in shaping policy, delivering services and in relation to their own employees.

It requires that public bodies have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities.

There are no direct E&D impacts arising from this report.

14. Risk Implications

- 14.1 Protecting Vulnerable People and Prevent are risks on the Strategic Risk Register for the authority and are monitored in accordance with its requirements. At this current time there are no concerns to raise in respect of these strategic risks.

15. Recommendation

- 15.1 That Performance Scrutiny Committee notes the report, and provides comments as necessary for future work and further progression of this report.

Is this a key decision?	No
Do the exempt information categories apply?	No
Does Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules (call-in and urgency) apply?	No
How many appendices does the report contain?	None
List of Background Papers:	None

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