

REPORT TO:	AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
DATE:	11 th September 2024
SUBJECT:	ANNUAL SAFEGUARDING REPORT 2023-24
KEY DECISION:	No
PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	Councillor William Gray
REPORT AUTHOR:	David Postle, Deputy Designated Safeguarding Officer & Wellbeing Service Manager
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL
EXEMPT REPORT?	NO

SUMMARY

This report provides an overview of the Council's safeguarding activity from 1 April 2023 to 31st March 2024. It seeks to provide assurance that the Council is vigilant in keeping people safe and to challenge any areas which could further improve the Council's current approach to guard against complacency.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members note the report.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To fulfil the Committee's oversight role.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

None

REPORT

- 1.1. This report seeks to provide assurance that ELDC is vigilant in responding to safeguarding concerns, is actively engaged in working with other agencies and fulfils its statutory duties.
- 1.2. All agencies, including District Councils, are required to comply with national legislation, statutory guidance and locally agreed multi-agency policies and procedures in order to safeguard children and adults, including those affected by domestic abuse. The range of issues is constantly expanding but includes child abuse, domestic abuse, violent extremism, hate crime, county lines and modern slavery. The legislation and guidance include:
 - Children Act (2004) and Working Together (2018)
 - Care Act (2014) and Care and Support Statutory Guidance (2016)
 - Mental Capacity Act (2005)
 - Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act (2014)
 - Modern Slavery Act (2015)
- 1.3. All agencies have a legal duty to work within local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. Lincolnshire's District Council Safeguarding Officers share attendance at different multi-agency groups, reporting back to each other by email and meeting every 3 months to share best practice, needs and concerns. ELDC officers are fully engaged in Lincolnshire's multi-agency structures.
- 1.4. National guidance and local policies are developed in response to learning e.g., from case reviews. The Council's Safeguarding Policy is subject to an annual review to reflect any changes in national legislation or guidance, local procedures, and learning from audits and case reviews. Our Safeguarding Policy has been reviewed to create a single joint policy across the South & East Lincolnshire Council Partnership which we expect will be approved by all three councils before the end of 2024. All staff and councillors will be asked to sign the updated policy, once adopted.
- 1.5. All agencies, including District Councils, are held to account by the Independent Chairmen of the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) and the Lincolnshire Safeguarding Adults Board (LSAB). In line with national legislation, each Board requires agencies to complete regular audits, formally reporting their findings. An online audit tool provided by the Boards enables agencies to update their evidence as work develops, reducing the surge of work required when a formal audit is due. Compliance is shown as follows:
 - LSCP: A Section 11 Audit is due every 3 years, with one taking place across Lincolnshire between October 2023 and May 2024. The Audit considers regular Audit Assurance updates; self-assessment; external moderation; thematic reviews, serious case reviews, domestic homicide reviews.
 - LSAB: Lincolnshire Assurance Framework (LAF), every 3 years (last completed July 2022); self-assessment; action plan with some essential criteria to meet.
- 1.6. The LSCP employs an Audit and Policy Officer to oversee a rolling programme of case file audits to ensure that all agencies regularly review working practices on key issues. Not all audit topics are relevant to District Councils, but ELDC participates fully in those which are. After each audit, a report with clear recommendations is produced for the Board and

agencies are required to implement the findings. ELDC reviews all reports arising from these audits. Any action required is captured in ELDC's Strategic Plan. Progress is reported via Portfolio Holder Meetings.

- 1.7. Both Safeguarding Boards have Serious Incident Review Groups (SIRGs) to review individual cases in detail. These work to national criteria to identify improvements in policy and practice. Similarly, there is a statutory duty to undertake Domestic Homicide Reviews. ELDC officers are fully involved in DHR's relating to cases from the District when these arise.
- 1.8. All three Councils are also involved in Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews which are commissioned where a child has died and abuse and/or neglect is known or suspected. One such review was undertaken during the period of this report, and while it was not completed until May 2024, I can report, involvement from ELDC departments was positively viewed by the members of the review. Officers showed effective professional curiosity, following established procedures to report the concerns they identified.
- 1.9. ELDC is proactive in supporting the Prevent agenda which seeks to identify, support, and protect those at risk of becoming involved in violent extremism. A senior manager is identified as the Prevent lead for the Council. Training is provided as part of the safeguarding training programme for staff and councillors, which is currently being updated as part of the policy review. All officers and councillors will access the training required for their role via the corporate HR system First4HR. Utilising this system will provide managers with a simple method of checking training has been completed, while also providing data for audits in a timely and efficient manner.
- 1.10. The Local Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) Adult Safeguarding Board (LSAB) and Safer Lincolnshire Partnership (SLP) meet regularly to ensure effective scrutiny, accountability and collaborative working is enhanced and carefully managed across the boards. Under the umbrella of the Public Protection Board the close working relationship between the boards is proving effective in ensuring that priorities are understood and shared, resources are coordinated, and challenge between the boards is robust and effective to ensure the very best for Children and Adults alike. All three councils are represented at these meetings, ensuring we meet our collaborative working function to safeguard our residents and staff, by keeping up to date with legislative changes, as well as learning shared by the other members.
- 1.11. The most recent Section 11 Audit began during the later part of the year covered by this report. While the audit was completed during the 2024/25 financial year, it is still timely to report the outcome of the audit. I have attached a copy of the outcome letter received from LCC which shows the SELCP passed the audit. Evaluation of each organisations
- 1.12. ELDC has a legal duty to act to ensure that its own employment practices, and those of its contractors, prevent and disrupt Modern Slavery. ELDC must publish an annual Modern Slavery Act Transparency Statement and Action Plan on its website.
- 1.13. ELDC's safeguarding duties apply to all staff, elected members, volunteers, key contractors, consultants and directly commissioned providers acting on behalf of the Council.
- 1.14. The SELCP is exploring the feasibility of having a shared Safeguarding Officer role working across the three councils.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

N/A

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

These are considered throughout this report

CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

None

EQUALITY AND SAFEGUARDING IMPLICATIONS

ELDC's Safeguarding Policy identifies the potential increased risk of abuse and neglect for those with additional needs and the need to act accordingly. This includes assessing a person's mental capacity in line with the Mental Capacity Act 2005. The Policy also recognises that some practices which may be legal in some parts of the world are not legal in the UK and may result in formal action being taken.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Safeguarding is included in the Council's Strategic Risk Register. The Council's overall risk appetite is 'open and aware' but for safeguarding the Council's appetite for risk is minimal. Whilst no organisation or legislation can stop people who are determined to do harm from doing so, the Council aims as far as possible to prevent and reduce the risk of harm occurring by taking steps to ensure that:

- staff and councillors are knowledgeable, well trained, and vigilant i.e., they know what to look for, who to speak to, etc.;
- key contractors comply with national and local policies and procedures;
- information sharing and record keeping are appropriate;
- ELDC co-operate with a wide range of agencies to help prevent, detect, and disrupt inappropriate activity;
- national and local policies and procedures are adopted, disseminated, and implemented;
- regular audit and reviews take place to identify and embed learning, to ensure compliance and to challenge complacency.

CONSULTATION

No consultation undertaken.

APPENDICES

None.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

Background papers used in the production of this report are listed below: -

Document title	Where the document can be viewed
Draft SELCP Safeguarding Policy and Procedures	Attached

CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF THIS REPORT

Name of body	Date
Audit & Governance	September 2024
Audit & Governance	June 2023
Audit & Governance	November 2021
Audit & Governance	July 2019
Audit & Governance	July 2018

REPORT APPROVAL

Report author:	David Postle Deputy Designated Safeguarding Officer & Wellbeing Service Manager
Signed off by:	Emily Spicer, Designated Safeguarding Officer; Assistant Director Wellbeing & Community Leadership
Approved for publication:	Councillor William Gray