

ESSEX FIRE AUTHORITY

Essex County Fire & Rescue Service



MEETING	Audit, Governance & Review Committee	AGENDA ITEM	14
MEETING DATE	18 January 2017	REPORT NUMBER	EFA/013/17
SUBJECT	Safeguarding Action Plan		
REPORT BY	Director of Prevention, Protection & Response, ACFO Dave Bill		
PRESENTED BY	Director of Prevention, Protection & Response, ACFO Dave Bill		

SUMMARY

This paper reports on the progress made following an independent safeguarding review (appendix 1) which was commissioned by the Acting Chief Fire Officer in February 2016. This paper also details the action plan (appendix 2) for standards assessed as not fully met following completion of a Section 11 audit completed in September 2016.

RECOMMENDATION

Members of the Committee are asked to note the contents of the report and attached appendices.

BACKGROUND

Following an increase in the number of Safeguarding referrals towards the end of 2015 the A/CFO initiated a review into the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service's (ECFRS) current Safeguarding arrangements, the purpose of the review was to;

- assess to what extent there is an adequate policy and procedure framework in place to support safeguarding practice for ECFRS and ensure minimum compliance with current safeguarding legislation;
- ascertain the integrity, reliability and appropriateness of ECFRS current response to Safeguarding and
- examine the arrangements in place for Safeguarding compliance, arrangements by which decisions are made, how referrals are monitored and reviewed, and related risks identified and managed.

With the Review's recommendations to consider:

- Responsibility of the Safeguarding Lead, managers and individuals
- Training and Support requirements for management and Staff
- Process for the support and safe practice in regards to referrals.
- Governance

Phil Picton, who undertook the review, has extensive experience in working at a strategic level for public sector organisations and has been working with Safeguarding Boards for nearly twenty years. He is currently Chair of the Essex adult and children's safeguarding board. The final report was received on the 10th of May and is found in Appendix One (with the salient points highlighted). It concludes that safeguarding in the Service is being well managed, is fulfilling all legal requirements and is generally managing potential areas of risk well, however also identifies one significant risk which requires immediate action (Page 1 of Report);

'EFRS is at risk of being unable to effectively manage safeguarding referrals if the resilience issues for the 'Safeguarding Manager' role are not addressed in the short and medium term.'

In addition to this, the Report offers solutions, both in potentially rationalising the Service's commitment to the Boards, and also offering the potential to mitigate the risk to the Service by taking a more supportive role to other agencies, rather than leading, when delivering community safety initiatives.

Steps taken since the review are; -

- ACFO Prevention, Protection and Response nominated as Strategic lead for Safeguarding.
- Safeguarding policies reviewed and updated.
- Suggested Deputy Safeguarding Manager was recruited in October 2016 (in response to the significant risk identified).
- An e-learning training programme has been developed and is currently being completed by all staff.
- The Service continues to complete Section 11 audits and monitor progress against the requirements (see below).
- The report was shared with all the Safeguarding boards.

SECTION 11 of the Children Act (2004)

Section 11 (S.11) of the Children Act (2004) places a number of duties on a range of organisations and individuals (and the services they contract out to others) to ensure that when they go about their day to day business, they do so in a way that takes into account the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults. S.11 outlines the need to have in place safe systems and safe processes; for example, by ensuring safe recruitment of staff, by providing appropriate training and by having up to date policies which all staff understand and know how to access.

Compliance with S.11 is a statutory requirement for the following organisations:

- Local authorities
- NHS organisations include the NHS Commissioning Board and clinical commissioning groups
- NHS Trusts and Foundation Trusts.
- The police
- British Transport Police
- Probation Service
- Governors / Directors of Prisons and Young Offender Institutes
- Directors of Secure Training Centres and
- Youth Offending Services
- Organisations such as ECFRS that are commissioned to provide a service on behalf of one of the agencies listed above should also be compliant with Section 11, and much of the funding attracted to courses such as fire break is done on the basis that ECFRS is S.11 compliant.

ECFRS Section 11 Audit

The most recent audit was completed in the Summer of 2016 at the request of Essex, Southend & Thurrock Safeguarding Children Boards. Allocated audits being on the following subject areas: -

- Senior Level, commitment to safeguarding and accountability
- Core Safeguarding policies and procedures
- Safer Recruitment
- Service Development
- Learning, Development & staff support
- Early help and inter-agency working
- Information sharing

Following completion of the audit an action plan was produced and meetings are held monthly and a number of actions have been achieved including the following: -

- The recruitment of the Safeguarding Deputy – Karen Soanes
- Introduction of a new E-Learning Level 1 Safeguarding training package for the whole service
- Work almost complete with regards to the incorporation of the Adult and Children Safeguarding policies
- Safeguarding “Whistleblowing” policy now prepared and shortly will be incorporated in the new joint Safeguarding policy
- Meetings have taken place with all section heads and action points shared

CFOA Centre of Excellence Duke of Edinburgh (DofE) Award Scheme

ECFRS have been named as the Centre of Excellence for chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) with regards to the National DofE Licence. The national licence is now managed by our Community Development & Safeguarding Manager who has responsibility for the management of the licence for and on behalf of CFOA and holds responsibility as the Child Protection National Manager for CFOA DofE Awards. The licence allows Fire & Rescue Services nationally to offer the DofE Award Scheme to all Fire Cadets throughout the Country.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Following the review ECFRS were added to the risk register of the Essex Safeguarding Board. Now these issues have been resolved, it is envisaged that ECFRS will be removed from the risk register in early 2017. The action plan established since submitting Section 11 Audit will ensure the service remains free of the risk register and that any future funding for services such as Firebreak will not be at risk.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The total cost for the review was £3,566.15. There may also be financial consequences following changes to Job Descriptions and additional training and development as suggested in the report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Are set out in Appendix One.

HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

None specific to this report.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

Safeguarding sets out clear standards in ensuring the Service's staff behave appropriately, not only when engaging with its communities, but also with each other whilst at work. When considering Safeguarding issues, the Service must recognise that those most vulnerable within the community are often within minority ethnic groups.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

None specific to this report.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985	
List of appendices attached to this paper: Appendix 1 – Safeguarding Review Appendix 2 – Section 11 Action Plan	
Proper Officer:	Dave Bill
Contact Officer:	Director of Prevention, Protection & Response Essex County Fire & Rescue Service, Kelvedon Park, London Road, Rivenhall, Witham CM8 3HB Tel: 01376 576000 Dave.bill@essex-fire.gov.uk