



Report to:	STOCKPORT HOMES MEMBER COMMITTEE		
	11 October 2021		
Report of:	DIRECTOR FOR FOUNDATIONS & ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE		
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Type of Report	Assurance		
Title of Report:	SAFEGUARDING		
Purpose of Report:	To advise the Stockport Home Member Committee of the Safeguarding arrangements at Stockport Homes Group		
Recommendation(s):	That the Member Committee notes and comments on the report.		
Confidentiality	Non-Confidential		
Resource Implications	There are no resource implications arising from this report.		
Impact on Risk Appetite and Risk Register	Stockport Homes' risk appetite for health and safety (of which safeguarding could be considered to be included) is averse. This means that the business will actively avoid risk taking in this area and will ensure there are robust mitigation plans and strategies in place to safeguard children and adults at risk.		
	Risk Number	Risk Description	Risk Mitigation
	7	Positive, strategic relationships / approaches to partnership working are not maintained with SMBC, local	SHG continues to invest time and resources in all aspects of partnership work

		politicians and other key local partners, including Greater Manchester (GM)	around Safeguarding
	16	SHG is unable to attract, recruit and retain employees and leaders with the appropriate skills and talents to meet SHG's current and future aspirations	SHG provides appropriate training and support to colleagues to ensure they have the necessary knowledge and skills to meet their Safeguarding obligations
Customer Voice	Individual services engage and secure the customer voice in a variety of ways, from formal engagement and evaluations in programmes such as Motiv8 through to informal engagement and outreach through services such as GM Housing First and the Rough Sleeper Initiative. This input informs safeguarding practice.		
Equality, Diversity & Inclusion implications	Services delivered within SHG support some of the most vulnerable and marginalised customers and seek to improve quality of life and outcomes for all.		
Regulatory compliance	Safeguarding children and adults at risk contributes to a number of standards including the Tenancy Standard (meeting identified local housing needs / assisting local authorities to meet homelessness obligations / supporting tenants to maintain their tenancies), the Neighbourhood & Community Standard (engaging in local partnership arrangements) and the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard (building tenant capacity / understanding and responding to the diverse needs of tenants)		
Comments of the Stockport Homes Monitoring Group	<p>The Stockport Homes Monitoring Group provided comments relating to the Safeguarding Report. The comments covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The customers discussed the welfare calls made to older and vulnerable customers through the pandemic. They highlighted that it was nice to hear that the service was there, even if customers didn't need it. 		

- The customers were pleased to hear that the safeguarding services cover anyone who Stockport Homes have a relationship with, not just its tenants.
- The customers acknowledged Stockport Homes' requirement to carry out annual gas safety checks and fixed wire tests is an excellent way to ensure every tenancy is visited, which will help identify safeguarding issues.
- The customers concluded by highlighting that progress with safeguarding is promising and SHG are clearly doing good things.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Stockport Homes Group (SHG) has a clear commitment to supporting and working in partnership with the Stockport Safeguarding Children Partnership and the Stockport Safeguarding Adults Board and other partners to ensure the safeguarding of children and adults at risk.
- 1.2. The welfare of children and adults at risk is a priority for SHG, with all employees and contractors having a duty and responsibility to act on any safeguarding concerns they have.

2. SAFEGUARDING ARRANGEMENTS

- 2.1. SHG has a wide range of staff working with people in their homes and communities and are ideally placed to identify, raise and act upon safeguarding concerns. Many of SHG's customers have degrees of vulnerability and have life experiences which may render them more in need of safeguarding. Equally some SHG customers may exhibit behaviours which place others at risk and require a safeguarding response.
- 2.2. Staff at SHG have different roles and responsibilities in respect of safeguarding, with some roles limited to being alert to safeguarding concerns and raising them appropriately with their Manager and / or Safeguarding Champion¹. Whilst other roles will work closely with individuals and families to manage risk and may lead on safeguarding activity such as completing an Early Help Assessment (EHA) or organising and leading a Team Around the Child (TAC), Team Around the Family (TAF) or Team Around the Adult (TAA) approach. In addition, the Assistant Chief Executive leads on Safeguarding strategically and the Assistant Director (Access & Support) leads on Safeguarding at an operational level.
- 2.3. Stockport Homes Group has a detailed Safeguarding Policy & Procedure covering both children and adults at risk which has been developed to align with the practices in place within the Borough. The Procedure equips staff with detailed information on the types of abuse and neglect that occur, including those which are less common. The Procedure also details what actions are required, and specifically when it is appropriate to seek a statutory response from Children's Social Care or Adults Social Care. Information is included on what to do in an emergency / urgent situation as well as how to record low-level concerns so that a full understanding of a person's situation can be captured and specifically to address the fact that different officers in different parts of the organisation may identify a concern which of itself may not warrant action or escalation, but in aggregate, when combined with other information, may present significant concern.
- 2.4. SHG also employs a Safeguarding Housing lead (Children & Families) within the Independent Living Service who is based in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding and Support Hub (MASSH) for part of the working week, providing both

¹ Safeguarding Champions are colleagues and Managers with more experience of Safeguarding who provide guidance and support to others. More detail is provided in Section 4.6

housing advice and support to the team and ensuring effective links between Stockport Homes colleagues and Stockport Family².

- 2.5. From an adults' perspective a monthly meeting is held with Adult Social Care (ASC). Initially these meetings have tended to focus on rehousing needs amongst adults known to ASC however the group has recently been refreshed and Stockport Homes colleagues can bring cases they have concerns about in order to share information and agree a collaborative response. In addition, Stockport Homes has committed to funding a part-time Social Worker based in ASC, although this will have a specific remit around homelessness and ensuring statutory assessments are completed, it will also enhance joint working with ASC more broadly.

3. SAFEGUARDING DATA

- 3.1. From April 2020, the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system has been utilised to record basic details of Safeguarding concerns and ensure better visibility of concerns across the organisation where different teams are working with the same person / family. Prior to this, Safeguarding information was collected locally and then collated retrospectively on a quarterly basis.
- 3.2. During 2020/21, a total of 152 cases were reported on CRM. These are initial concerns only and do not include formal or on-going processes such as TAC, TAF, TAA and Case Conferences.
- 3.3. The three main types of primary Safeguarding concerns identified by staff are 52 (34%) due to Neglect and Acts of Omission, 49 (32%) due to Physical Harm and 19 (13%) due to Domestic Abuse. Surprisingly only one case was categorised under Mental Health, although 23 referrals were made to the Mental Health Crisis Team, illustrating the fact that a range of Safeguarding concerns are often present within a person's life.

TABLE 1: Main Area of Concern

Discriminatory Abuse	1
Domestic Abuse	19
Emotional Abuse	10
Financial or Material Abuse	13
Institutional / Organisational Abuse	1
Mental Health	1
Neglect and Acts of Omission	52
Physical Harm	49
Self-Harm	1
Self-Neglect	1
Sexual Abuse	4
Grand Total	152

² Stockport Family was established in April 2016 and brings together a range of roles which work with children, young people and families to facilitate easier access to support for families at the right time

- 3.4. The vast majority of concerns related to adults (114), with 38 relating to children. Officers took a range of actions to respond to concerns, with 296 referrals being made and / or information being shared with external organisations including the Police (39), Mental Health Crisis Team (23), Adult Social Care (48) and Children’s Social Care (38).
- 3.5. As information has been collated differently in the past it is difficult to provide a direct comparison with data on Safeguarding from previous years, however Safeguarding activity has increased during the Covid-19 pandemic with 114 initial concerns being identified in 2019/20 and 101 in 2018/19. This data should be treated with some caution due to teams previously capturing and classifying information locally in different ways.

4. SAFEGUARDING TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1. All SHG staff receive Safeguarding training which is appropriate and tailored according to their role and responsibilities. This is delivered in a range of formats including e-learning, formal training and through experience obtained whilst in the role. Basic Safeguarding awareness training is mandatory for all staff, those staff with more extensive roles in respect of Safeguarding (for example staff within the Tenancy Services Team, ASB, Temporary Accommodation and Independent Living) receive enhanced training.
- 4.2. Face-to-face Safeguarding training is delivered by a cohort of our most experienced Safeguarding Champions. Training content has been developed, and is continually reviewed, by the trainers and the Assistant Director (Access & Support) to ensure it is up-to-date and fit for purpose. In-house delivery has proved to be much more relevant and useful for staff. Previous approaches delivered by an external provider tended to offer a useful overview of Safeguarding but not the practical information about processes and what actions people need to take in line with the SHG Policy & Procedure.
- 4.3. Face to face training has been significantly reduced this year due to the Covid-19 pandemic, however during this time on-line training has increased.

Safeguarding Training 2020/21	Attendees
Safeguarding Adults Level 2	38
Safeguarding Children Level 2	39
Safeguarding Adults for Housing – E-learning	163
Safeguarding Children for Housing – E-learning	220
SMBC Safeguarding Children : FGM Awareness	2
Total	462

Staff attending the face-to-face training tend to be from those teams who are more likely to deal with Safeguarding issues including the Temporary Accommodation, Independent Living and Neighbourhoods Team. Shorter, toolbox talks have also been delivered to Operatives where appropriate.

- 4.4. An audit has recently been completed to understand how many staff have undertaken training and when, following which a detailed Safeguarding training schedule is being drawn up with plans to deliver eight Safeguarding Adults workshops to a total of 120 staff during the course of the year, with the same number of workshops on Safeguarding Children and a Safeguarding Refresher workshop to be delivered four times to approximately 60 staff.
- 4.5. All Managers ensure that Safeguarding is discussed as part of a new employee's induction, provide information on the Policy & Procedure and reporting channels as well as details of who the employee's Safeguarding Champion is. Information is also available at all times on the staff intranet: Huddle.
- 4.6. Stockport Homes has an established approach to providing support, advice and guidance on Safeguarding through a group of over 50 Safeguarding Champions across all areas of the business. Most Champions have extensive experience of dealing with Safeguarding and can support those with less experience and confidence to ensure the appropriate action is taken. Safeguarding Champions also act as a conduit for sharing information on Safeguarding, particularly learning from Serious Case Reviews.
- 4.7. Dealing with Safeguarding concerns can be difficult and emotionally demanding. Staff are encouraged to discuss their experiences and seek support from their Managers and / or Safeguarding Champions. Many managers discuss Safeguarding as a standard item at 1-1s and Team Meetings.

5. SERIOUS CASE REVIEWS

- 5.1. A Serious Case Review³ is required where a child or adult at risk has died and abuse or neglect is suspected or where a person has experienced serious abuse and neglect; and there are reasonable concerns regarding how agencies have worked together to safeguard that individual. The Safeguarding Boards are the only body that can undertake a Review however any practitioner can make a referral for one to be undertaken.
- 5.2. The purpose of the review is to gather the facts about the case, identify any immediate actions required, determine what the agencies and individuals involved might have done differently to prevent the harm or death, review the effectiveness of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and procedures and identify the learning, including examples of good practice, and apply these to prevent similar harm occurring again in future cases.
- 5.3. Agencies involved in a Serious Case Review initially complete an Agency Contact Form to confirm whether the person/s is known to the organisation, what dealings have been had with the person/s, an initial analysis of whether an appropriate level of service has been provided and whether any immediate actions or changes are required as a result of that case. A multi-agency panel is then held who, based on all returns submitted, will decide whether a full review is required. If it is, generally an independent author is commissioned to

³ The term Serious Case Review is used here to collectively describe the range of reviews which may be undertaken including Safeguarding Adults Review, Safeguarding Children Practice Review, Domestic Homicide Review, Local Learning Review

complete the review. The panel will develop Terms of Reference for the review and each agency is required to complete a full chronology of every contact with that person/s and an in-depth Independent Management Review of practice, areas of concern and learning.

- 5.4. In 2020/21, SHG has received nine Serious Case Review requests, four of which were tenants, one was a customer of Carecall only, two were Homechoice applicants and two were not known to SHG. Of the five cases that SHG were involved in, two progressed to Domestic Homicide Reviews and the remaining three did not fulfil the criteria for a review.
- 5.5. There is a clear commitment to ensuring the learning from Serious Case Reviews is shared broadly throughout the partnership, with the development of seven-minute briefings which provide a brief overview of the person, key issues and critically the learning in a way which is accessible for colleagues. There have been no substantial concerns regarding SHG's safeguarding arrangements or practices in the reviews SHG has contributed to.

6. ASSURANCE ARRANGEMENTS

- 6.1. Stockport Homes is an active member of a range of strategic and operational groups which promote Safeguarding in the Borough including:
 - Safeguarding Adults Practice Improvement Partnership
 - Safeguarding Adults Quality Assurance Partnership
 - Complex Safeguarding Group
 - Domestic Abuse Steering Group
 - Supporting Families Executive Steering Group
 - Prevention & Early Help Steering Group
 - Safer Stockport Partnership
 - Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)
 - Multi-Agency Adults at Risk (MAARS)
 - Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPa)
 - Looked After Children (LAC) Board
 - Suicide Prevention Board
 - GM Police and Crime Leads
 - GM MAPPa Board
 - Hate Crime Board
 - Youth Offending Board
 - Task and Target Rough Sleeping meetings
 - Mental Health Accommodation Panel
 - LAC Accommodation Panel
 - Family Drug and Alcohol Court
 - Daily risk meetings
 - Place Based Integration (PBI)
 - New Beginnings Board
- 6.2. Many of these groups require partners to provide assurance of the organisation's Safeguarding arrangements and the contributions made to the partnership to ensure children and adults at risk are supported to achieve positive outcomes.

- 6.3. Annual Assurance Statements are required by the Safeguarding Adults Board around the key themes of:
- Empowerment and Proportionality – including information and support provided to customers, roles and responsibilities of staff, evidence of working to secure best interests and ensuring customers and carers voices are heard
 - Prevention – including recruitment procedures, induction processes and training for staff and volunteers, Policies & Procedures, demonstrating actions and improvements against Serious Case Reviews, recording of safeguarding concerns and opportunities for reflective practice
 - Protection – including application of the Mental Capacity Act, positive risk taking, the use of Domestic Abuse Stalking and Harassment (DASH) Risk Assessments and involvement in MARAC
 - Partnerships & Accountability - including information sharing within and between agencies, taking a one team approach with other professionals, contribution to and representation on the Safeguarding Partnership and sub-groups, accountability and lines of responsibility and escalation processes
- 6.4. As Stockport Homes are involved in safeguarding both adults at risk and children, the Assurance Statement is a comprehensive assessment of the organisations approach to both. Stockport Homes also contributes to both the Safeguarding Children’s Partnership Annual Report and the Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report.
- 6.5. In addition, multi-agency audits take place based on relevant issues / themes identified in the Borough, recent examples include audits on neglect and mental capacity. This requires partners to identify specific examples of cases and then undertake a deep dive of such to ensure understanding of what has taken place, whether all appropriate actions were progressed and identify any learning. This takes place in a multi-agency setting with appropriate challenge and quality assurance.
- 6.6. Whilst there is considerable auditing, monitoring and reporting that takes place within SHG and the partnership, SHG’s approach to safeguarding can be periodically included in the PWC Internal Audit Plan if independent assurance of processes and controls to manage safeguarding risks is required. A future audit has been included in the 2021-24 audit plan.

7. COVID-19

- 7.1. During the Covid-19 pandemic, services to some of our most vulnerable customers have continued regardless, most notably Carecall, Temporary Accommodation, work with Rough Sleepers and GM Housing First. Other services such as Repairs and Caretaking have also maintained a presence in people’s homes and communities. However, some support services, which predominantly provided home visits, have had to rely on remote contact. This does have some limitations, seeing people in their own homes face-to-face undoubtedly provides opportunity to pick up on issues and concerns which may not be obvious over a phone or video call.

- 7.2. Conversely not having to visit people face-to-face with the required travel and lack of access on occasion, has meant Officers have been able to support more people and to have more frequent contact. For example, Housing Support Officers can now carry a much larger caseload and a range of staff resources were devoted to delivering the Welfare Calls to older customers.
- 7.3. In addition, Officers have taken a very pragmatic approach to risk assessing their customers and visiting where appropriate, balancing the risk in terms of Covid-19 with the risks associated with Safeguarding issues going unaddressed.
- 7.4. In terms of working with partners, relationships have been maintained throughout the pandemic with appropriate information shared and operational meetings and processes continuing on a virtual footing. An additional Safeguarding Check-In meeting was also established early on in the pandemic, initially meeting weekly, then fortnightly and now monthly to share information about trends and issues and how services are operating.

8. CHALLENGES

- 8.1. Ensuring safeguarding arrangements are effective requires significant investment, commitment to the partnership and a collaborative approach with partners. There will always be challenges and these consist of:
 - Increasing thresholds to access statutory services
 - Ensuring statutory assessments are completed – both in terms of capacity of services to do them and the difficulties in establishing and sustaining engagement of customers with complex needs
 - Access to other services, particularly Mental Health services as well as more informal forms of support often found in the third sector
 - Staff and contractor willingness and ability to deal with Safeguarding issues
 - Managing the expectations of partners in terms of what SHG can offer
 - Requirements and speed of Serious Case Reviews – requirements are significant meaning the process takes time and learning is not shared as readily as it should be
 - Managing the aftermath of the pandemic and its impact on people's health and well-being in the longer-term
- 8.2 SHG continues to respond to these challenges in a range of ways including advocating and challenging colleagues to ensure assessments are completed, advocating and supporting customers to access services and sustain engagement, continually promoting the Safeguarding responsibilities of colleagues and contractors and training and supporting them to exercise those responsibilities and being clear with partners about SHG's role and remit in respect of Safeguarding. Work is underway at a Borough level to address the specific issue relating to Serious Case Reviews with plans to reduce the length of time taken to complete a review and extract learning earlier.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1. SHG is an active partner in safeguarding children and adults at risk in the Borough and devotes considerable time and resource in meeting its commitments.
- 9.2. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and part of everyone's role at SHG, with all staff being provided with the necessary training and support to undertake this successfully.

10. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 10.1 That the Member Committee notes and comments on the report.