

SAFEGUARDING PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT

Cabinet Members & Portfolios	Cllr Jane Palmer - Cabinet Member for Health and Social Care Cllr Susan O'Brien - Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education
Responsible Officers	Corporate Director of Children's Services (DCS) Corporate Director of Adult Social Care & Health (DASS)
Report Author & Directorate	Suzi Gladish Children's Services Directorate
Papers with report	Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report Easy Read Annual Report You Said, We Did, What Next?

HEADLINES

Summary	<p>The Safeguarding Annual Report summarises the work undertaken by Hillingdon Safeguarding Partnership to support and safeguard Hillingdon's residents: adults with care and support needs and vulnerable children and their families.</p> <p>The report summarises the work of the strategic partnership in 2023-2024, providing an overview of progress against the agreed priorities, the impact of learning from practice, and the findings of quality assurance activity.</p>
Putting our Residents First Delivering on the Council Strategy 2022-2026	<p>This report supports our ambition for residents / the Council of: Be / feel safe from harm</p> <p>This report supports our commitments to residents of: Thriving, Healthy Households</p>
Financial Cost	There are no additional financial implications arising from this report.
Select Committee	Health and Social Care Select Committee Children, Families and Education Select Committee
Ward(s)	All

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Cabinet:

1. **Notes the Annual Report and is assured that the partnership continues to provide leadership and scrutiny of the safeguarding arrangements for Hillingdon residents.**
2. **Notes the way in which the partnership has responded to the challenges posed by changing local, national and international contexts.**
3. **Notes the strategic priorities for safeguarding for 2024-25.**

Reasons for recommendation(s)

To inform the Cabinet of the way in which safeguarding partnership performed the year before and which are the safeguarding priorities for the year ahead.

Alternative options considered / risk management

None

Select Committee comments

The Children, Families & Education has considered the Annual Report as part of their monitoring role of Council services and made the following comments:

"The Select Committee welcomes this report, which provides comprehensive information in respect to the safeguarding of our children, young people and families. We acknowledge the hard work being undertaken by all partners. As the need for support increases, we would recommend that there continues to be a strong focus on capacity, clear communication and consistency across the partnership."

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

In September 2019 the Hillingdon Safeguarding Partnership arrangements were launched in line with the statutory requirements set out in the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018. In December 2023 an update to Working Together to Safeguard Children was issued. The local authority shares equal responsibility with our statutory partners, the NWL NHS Integrated Care Partnership Group and Metropolitan Police, to safeguard children and young people.

The Care Act 2014 placed a statutory duty on each Safeguarding Adults Board to produce an Annual Report, outlining the work undertaken to achieve its strategic objectives, the work of each member to implement the Safeguarding Adults Boards' strategy and detailing the findings of any Safeguarding Adult Reviews and subsequent required actions.

In promoting this joint approach, both boards are scrutinised and held to account through the multiagency Executive Leadership Group. The group is chaired by a member of the NHS Northwest London Integrated Care Board and attended by the senior representatives of the safeguarding partners (Police and Local Authority).

The joint approach to safeguarding children and adults has been reinforced by the implementation of shared chairing arrangements across the three senior strategic Boards, with responsibility rotating through the three statutory partners on an annual basis.

The report provides an overview of the actions taken across the local partnership to prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, and self-neglect in the year 2023-2024. It sets out how we have discharged our duties to ensure that we learn from practice and provide strategic leadership that strives to continuously develop safeguarding practice in the borough.

There is shared and equal responsibility for safeguarding between the three statutory partners, the Local Authority, Metropolitan Police Service and NHS North West London Integrated Care Board. This approach is reinforced by the rotation of chairing responsibility across the three senior strategic Boards, the Executive Leadership Group, Safeguarding Adults Board and Safeguarding Children Partnership Board.

2023-2024 marked another busy year for the Hillingdon Safeguarding Partnership. The Partnership has striven to meet an increase in complexity of need for those adults and children requiring safeguarding support and intervention. We have seen a particular rise in the emotional and psychological needs of children, families, adults, and their carers. Many of our residents have experienced significant financial hardship due to the cost-of-living crisis with the associated stresses that this generates.

This increase in complexity of need occurs in a context of increased pressure on safeguarding agencies, rising inflation, and the associated implications for public sector organisations providing services in a challenging financial context. Each of the statutory partners has navigated areas of challenge in respect of recruitment and retention, and restructure of services. This rise in need impacts across all sectors, including universal services like our schools and primary care, to those services providing targeted and specialist support and intervention.

In December 2023 the Department for Education published an update to 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'. This is the underpinning Guidance for the Safeguarding Children Arrangements, with applicability to operational and strategic services, and to every agency working with children and families. We are in the process of identifying the Lead and Delegated Safeguarding Partners ahead of publishing an update to our 2019 Arrangements by the end of the calendar year.

During the year 2023-2024 there was considerable scrutiny of local services. Our local authority children's social care services were subject to Ofsted Inspection and graded as an Outstanding service, with specific recognition of the strengths in partnership working. The process of CQC inspection of Adult Social Care has been completed with reporting in the next financial year. The Metropolitan Police Service has responded to the findings of the Casey Review and HMICRFS Inspection of adolescent safeguarding services through the development of the New Met for London initiative. The CQC has also undertaken inspection

of Maternity Services at the Hillingdon Hospital. These focussed inspections take place in a context of routine regulatory activity for our schools, residential services, and care providers.

This year our Independent Scrutineer, Alan Caton OBE, was commissioned to review the effectiveness of our senior strategic boards: the Safeguarding Children's Partnership Board, the Safeguarding Adults Board, and the Executive Leadership Group and to consider the functioning of our safeguarding arrangements within statutory partners and relevant agencies. The Independent Scrutineer concluded that: '...there continues to be many strengths to the safeguarding arrangements for both children and adults across Hillingdon. I have found a strong partnership that is open to scrutiny and challenge and one that strives to continually learn and improve practice... I have not come across any areas of poor practice or weaknesses in service provision... There is strong leadership from the ELG and a clear sense of joint and equal responsibility from the three safeguarding partners. The partnership is one that is built on high support, high challenge and where difficult conversations are encouraged.'

The Report sets out how the multiagency strategic partnership contributes to safeguarding practice in the Borough, outlining the progress made against the agreed priorities of the Safeguarding Partnership. Each priority has a dedicated subgroup, with an agreed plan of work that, broadly, seeks to develop practice using a framework of prevention, identification, and response.

Our approach to learning from practice through quality assurance, reflective and statutory review ensures that we focus on practice and system development to reduce the risks of serious harm to adults or children. This includes direct engagement with frontline practitioners across the Partnership.

Identified learning informs our training provision with a diverse offer of newsletters, practice briefings, webinars, learning events and commissioned training available. We have continued to see increased engagement with professional development activity in the reporting year.

Strategic priorities for safeguarding for 2024-2025

The Safeguarding Children Partnership has identified the following priority areas

- Child Sexual Abuse
- Contextual Safeguarding
- Education Safeguarding

The Safeguarding Adult Board has identified the following priority areas:

- Neglect
- Cuckooing and Exploitation

Shared strategic priorities amongst the Council and partners are:

- Practice Development Forum
- Transitional Safeguarding

Financial Implications

This report details the work being undertaken by the Hillingdon Safeguarding Partnership and has no direct financial implications. The costs of the Safeguarding function delivering the work are contained within existing resources.

RESIDENT BENEFIT & CONSULTATION

The benefit or impact upon Hillingdon residents, service users and communities?

Hillingdon adults with care and support needs, vulnerable children and their families and carers remain safe, and the safeguarding partnership continues to respond effectively and efficiently to the needs of residents.

Consultation & Engagement carried out (or required)

The Annual Report has been endorsed by the Safeguarding Children Partnership Board, The Safeguarding Adults Board, and the Executive Leadership Group.

CORPORATE CONSIDERATIONS

Corporate Finance

Corporate Finance have reviewed this report and concur with the Financial Implications set out above, noting that there are not direct financial implications associated with the recommendations in this report.

Legal

Legal Services confirm that the legal implications are included in the body of the report.

Comments from other relevant service areas

Comments and updates from various agencies with a role in safeguarding residents are included in the appended report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The Care and Support Statutory Guidance, Department of Health and Social Care, October 2018 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-act-statutory-guidance/care-and-support-statutory-guidance>

The Care Act 2014 - <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/23/section/43/enacted>

Working Together to Safeguard Children, Department for Education, 2018/2023
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

The Children and Social Work Act 2017
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/16/contents/enacted>