

Report of the Assistant Chief Officer: Director of Prevention

Safeguarding Assurance – Annual Report

Purpose of report

1. To provide an update on the Service's commitment to Safeguarding.
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Recommendation

It is recommended that the progress of the Prevention department's activity against the Fire Standards Board's Safeguarding Fire Standard is noted.

Introduction and Background

2. Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS) personnel and volunteers undertake a wide range of public facing roles, which includes education and engagement with all members of our communities including children, young people, and adults with complex needs and vulnerabilities. Employees and people working on behalf of the Service have a legal and moral obligation to recognise and report concerns about abuse or neglect along with having the necessary skills and training to ensure they are safe and effective practitioners.
3. Fire and Rescue Services also have a responsibility to safeguard and protect those that represent their service and it is, therefore, imperative that they are provided with guidance and support in order to effectively safeguard themselves and others.
4. Safeguarding is a Service wide responsibility. HWFRS is fully committed to its legal and moral duties placed upon it and ensures our safeguarding responsibilities are practiced well and that they are fully embedded into the culture of the organisation.
5. The NFCC Safeguarding Self-assessment states 'Where applicable those that hold governance for the Fire and Rescue Service are regularly made aware of safeguarding issues and risks affecting the Service. They demonstrate a commitment to safeguarding and can hold the Service to account regarding their safeguarding responsibilities'.
6. This paper provides an overview of the work the Service has undertaken over the last 12 months and provides assurance that it is compliant with safeguarding legislation.

Safeguarding Fire Standard

7. In January 2022, the Fire Standards Board launched the Safeguarding Fire Standard. The Standard aims to ensure that Fire and Rescue Services are doing all they can to support and promote the safeguarding outcomes for communities, employees and volunteers.
8. The desired outcomes are to have:
 - *A Fire and Rescue Service that actively promotes the safeguarding of those in its community and its employees and volunteers along with working to proactively reduce the risk of abuse, harm and neglect.*
 - *One that is compliant with safeguarding legislation, understanding and effectively fulfilling its obligations and responsibilities to its Local Safeguarding Adults Boards and Local Safeguarding Children's Board or Partnership.*
 - *A service whose employees and volunteers are trained, supported and empowered to respond to safeguarding needs, appropriate to their roles and responsibilities.*
 - *A service that collaborates appropriately with others to ensure a coordinated approach to safeguarding.*
9. An annual review of the Service's progress against the Safeguarding Fire Standard takes place each year to examine progress made. Outstanding actions are incorporated into the future planning for the Prevention directorate and feature within a Prevention department Safeguarding Action Plan and associated plans.
10. There are ten requirements to be met for the Standard. Analysis for 2023 identified full compliance with nine of the requirements and partial compliance with one of the requirements. There were no areas identified as non-compliant.
11. Full details of the Safeguarding Fire Standard are set out on the Fire Standards Board website - [Safeguarding - Fire Standards Board](#).

Key Developments

12. The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) provide a suite of guidance, risk assessments and training options which enables the sector to meet their safeguarding duties. This assists the Service in working towards achieving the requirements of the Safeguarding Fire Standard. Included is the Safeguarding Guidance for Adults and Young People and a self-assessment toolkit. The self-assessment toolkit is designed to enable Services to carry out a review of its safeguarding practices.
13. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) for the Service is the Assistant Chief Officer: Director of Prevention. Their role is to ensure that the Service is and remains compliant with legislation and that relevant safeguarding guidance is adhered to. The DSL has received the appropriate safeguarding training and are partners on the local Safeguarding Adults and Childrens Boards.

14. It is important that all staff understand what safeguarding is and that everyone is aware of their duty in the reporting of any concerns and the processes to follow to do this. In order to give employees the knowledge and tools it is essential that all staff complete the level of safeguarding training which is relevant to their role. To assist with this, the Service introduced a Safeguarding Training Competency Framework in May 2023.
15. The contents of this Framework meet the requirements for Service personnel to be competent in the most appropriate level of safeguarding training. The Level 1 Safeguarding training package, which is completed by all Service personnel and volunteers is reviewed on an annual basis and is updated based on amendments in legislation or recommendations following Serious Case Reviews.
16. Appropriate staff groups have completed specific targeted awareness training in relation to local and national trends which includes Suicide Awareness and Prevent Duty training. A plan is in place to deliver safer recruitment training to those staff who are involved in the recruitment of staff.
17. The Prevention Management team are members of the NFCC Safeguarding Practitioners Group, meeting bi-monthly with colleagues across the country. The group provides an opportunity to share best practice.
18. The Head of Prevention attends the Regional Safeguarding Leads meetings where best practice and learning is shared and contributes to the continual improvement of safeguarding practice and processes across the Service.
19. A Safeguarding Steering Group meet on a quarterly basis, chaired by the Assistant Chief Officer. Delegates from a cross section of departments attend and it has a Terms of Reference which are reviewed on an annual basis. This group provides oversight and assurance with regards to all areas of safeguarding. An Action Plan is in place for this meeting and the actions are monitored and reviewed on a regular basis
20. To ensure all staff are regularly informed of developments in safeguarding policies and procedures, a suite of promotional items have been produced that includes posters and credit cards for all staff on the safeguarding reporting procedure. Triple play videos have been produced to assist staff in embedding their understanding of their roles and responsibilities regarding Safeguarding and the Service website and SharePoint sites have been reviewed and updated.
21. In April 2023, the Service submitted their response to the Section 11 Children Act and Care Act compliance audit. Partners from across the two counties completed this regional audit tool which allows for the benchmarking of responses to compare across partnership areas.

The year ahead - 2024

22. The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Prevention Committee led a proposal, with the support of the Home Office, for the inclusion of Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) employees in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (Exemptions) Order 1975. The Service has committed to a DBS Checking programme for all staff which is expected

to be in full in progress from the 1 January 2024. An implementation plan is currently under development.

23. In July 2023, the NFCC produced Managing Allegations Guidance. The aim of this guidance is to provide a framework for all Services to effectively manage cases where an allegation or concern of harm has been made against a representative of the Service. As a result, a Managing Allegations Policy will be produced and training will be delivered.
24. A peer review of the Services' progress and approach against the Safeguarding Standard and NFCC Self-assessment tool will be carried out by regional colleagues. Any recommendations resulting from this will be considered and formulated into an action plan. These will be continually monitored, reviewed and updated accordingly.

Conclusion

25. All activities related to safeguarding continue to be developed and evolved to align with the Safeguarding Fire Standard and Prevention Strategy. Activities will be quality assured, monitored and reviewed regularly.

Corporate Considerations

Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	No resource implications
Strategic Policy Links & Core Code of Ethics (Identify how proposals link with current priorities & policy framework and align to the Core Code of Ethics)	The Safeguarding Fire Standard aligns with the Safeguarding Adults and Children and Young People Policies. The Fire Standard also compliments the Prevention Strategy. CCofE – Putting our Communities First / Leadership / Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).	There are links to the Strategic Risk Register.
Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)	Not required

Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)	Not required
Data Protection Impact Assessment (where personal data is processed a DPIA must be completed to ensure compliant handling)	Not required