

Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority

Human Resources Committee

Agenda Item 9

10 July 2013

Hampshire Safeguarding Children Board: Outcome of audit of HFRS arrangements to safeguard and protect the welfare of children

Report by the Chief Officer

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Note: This report is being presented to both the Standards and Governance and Human Resources Committees. It is anticipated that the Standards and Governance Committee will refer the actions to the Human Resources Committee for approval given their relationship with staffing and management.

1 Summary

- 1.1 Section 11 of the Children's Act 2004 places a statutory duty on key organisations to make arrangements to ensure that, in discharging their functions, they have regard of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Local Safeguarding Children Boards are responsible for monitoring compliance with Section 11 of the Act. In Hampshire this is done through an annual audit of all relevant organisations.
- 1.2 Following this year's audit, we have been notified that we are compliant with Section 11 of the Children's Act 2004. Our good practice in sustaining compliance over the last two years was recognised.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Human Resources Committee is invited to:
 - a) Note the outcomes of the Children's Act 2004 safeguarding audit.
 - b) Note the proposed action to be taken, including the improvement to governance.
 - c) Agree the actions set out in the appendix in view of the implications for staff and managers.

3 Introduction and Background

- 3.1 Local Safeguarding Children Board's (LSCB) are responsible for monitoring of compliance with Section 11 of the Children's Act 2004. The Hampshire LSCB covers Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton, and the Isle of Wight. Compliance is

monitored through an annual Section 11 audit. This is a self-evaluation audit, aimed at supporting agencies in achieving compliance.

4 Audit Process

4.1 The self assessment tool was completed by the prevention department (Area Manager Prevention and Station Manager Vulnerable Groups), with evidence for the self assessment provided by all relevant departments. The audit covered:

- Strategic leadership
- Integrated working practices – Common Assessment Framework (CAF) processes
- Staff responsibilities and competencies
- Staff recruitment and selection
- Staff induction, training and appraisal
- Staff supervision and accountability
- Safe working practices
- Complaints and allegations against staff
- Client confidentiality and information sharing
- Additional specific requirements for fire and rescue services

Once completed, the self evaluation was authorised by the Chief Officer before submission.

4.2 The self-evaluation was then considered by a panel made up of members of the LSCB Monitoring Effectiveness and Scrutiny Committee. As LSCBs are responsible for monitoring services, rather than inspecting, their judgement is based on the assumption that 'self-evaluation responses are adequate, robust and verified through internal governance systems'. Any agency, where concerns were identified was invited to attend a panel discussion.

5 Audit Outcome

5.1 Feedback on compliance and any area in need of further development was sent to the Service in February 2013. The panel's overall view was that Hampshire Fire & Rescue Service (HFRS) is compliant with Section 11 of the Children's Act 2004. The panel recognised our good practice in sustaining compliance over the last two years.

5.2 Specific identified strengths were:

- Evidence of engagement in the self-evaluation process (within the supporting evidence and actions plans).
- Generally a strong return across all the standards.
- Addressed an area for development from the 2009/10 audit relating to the delivery of safeguarding training.

5.3 All areas for development identified by the panel were general themes across all agencies' returns. These were:

- Continue to invest in CAF¹ implementation.
- The inclusion of responsibilities relating to the CAF process in job descriptions.
- Strengthen safer recruitment training. (From reviewing all the returns the panel considered that, as a minimum requirement, the chair of a recruitment panel for a post which has contact with children and families should have completed safer recruitment training.)

5.4 There was a further general comment that the panel deemed our answers were more directed towards the firesetters intervention scheme than other areas of our activity. This gave the impression that the self-evaluation had, perhaps, not considered the Service as a whole. Following this comment the self assessment answers were reviewed. It can be concluded that this inference was due to the range of safeguarding activity the Firesetters Intervention Manager is responsible for across HFRS as a whole – not by a failure to consider all areas of activity.

5.5 The panel were interested to hear about the scope of HFRS work with children and young people. It will be suggested to the HSCB business group that HFRS make a presentation to the Board on this work. This action will be picked up through subsequent LSCB meetings.

5.6 The next step in the process will be a request in August/September for agencies to report back on progress against their action plans. The Performance Review Team has taken responsibility for overseeing the completion of the HFRS action plan (appendix A).

6 Future Audits

6.1 The audit process occurs annually, although we were not audited in 2011. While the audit was completed on the last two occasions by the prevention department, It has been decided that the governance around this audit would be improved if responsibility for compiling the self-assessment is moved to the Performance Review Team.

7 Supporting our corporate aims and objectives

7.1 Compliance with section 11 of the Children's Act 2004 is important for the Authority to ensure safe arrangements in its work with children and vulnerable adults.

8 Risk analysis

8.1 Corporate risk register entry number 11 deals specifically with how we safeguard and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults. Following this audit the score for this risk has been reassessed. Considerations were that the attached action plan will improve our compliance from 'generally strong' to 'excellent', but the audit does not cover our work with vulnerable adults.

¹ a standardised approach used by practitioners to assess children's additional needs and decide how these should be met.

9 Resource implications

- 9.1 The existing resources will be used to implement the action plan, monitoring progress, and compiling future self-assessments.

10 People impact assessment

- 10.1 The proposals in this report are considered compatible with the provisions of the equality and human rights legislation.

11 Conclusion

- 11.1 We are currently compliant with Section 11 of the Children's Act 2004 and have suitable arrangements to ensure that, in discharging our functions we have regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- 11.2 We can improve on these arrangements. By completing the actions in appendix A we should move our compliance from 'generally strong' to 'excellent'.

12 Background Papers

- 12.1 The following documents disclose the facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and has been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of the report:
- Hampshire Safeguarding Children board:
- Completed Section 11 Self Assessment Audit Tool 2012;
 - Section 11 Self Assessment Audit Tool 2012 covering letter;
 - Section 11 return 2012 – Evaluation form;
 - Section 11 return 2012 covering letter to CO Bonney.

Appendix A: Action Plan following Section 11 Audit 2012

	Planned Actions	Department responsible	Timeline
	Integrated working practices (Common Assessment Framework processes)		
1	Continue to invest in the Common Assessment Framework process. (CAF)	Service Delivery - Prevention	Ongoing
	Staff Responsibilities and Competencies		
2	<p>Inclusion of responsibilities relating to early help (CAF process) within job descriptions for those staff working with children and families.</p> <p>The panel recognised where Hampshire is at with the CAF process. It was considered that the inclusion of responsibilities relating to early help should be included in job descriptions for those relevant staff, once the early help process has been agreed in Hampshire. The panel recognised that the review of, and any changes to, job descriptions need to be compatible with agency's HR processes. Support from the Hampshire Safeguarding Children Board may be required to assist agencies in articulating responsibilities and roles.</p> <p>Within this process, the Firesetter Intervention Manager job specification to be made more specific regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) responsibilities to conduct a CAF assessment to identify child and family strengths; and (ii) ability to act as Lead Professional 	Service Delivery Prevention team will review the job description and provide a copy to the HR Department	<p>Can not commence until early help process has been agreed in Hampshire</p> <p>30/09/2013</p>
	Staff Recruitment and Selection		
3	Completion of basic criminal record checks for all operational staff and new entrants.	Human Resources Department	30/09/2013
4	<p>Strengthen safer recruitment training.</p> <p>The panel considered that, as a minimum requirement, the chair of a recruitment panel should have completed safer recruitment training.</p> <p>Free e-learning on safer recruitment is offered by the</p>	Service Delivery – Prevention team will liaise with support teams to find the best solution.	31/12/2013

	Department for Education on their website: Online training - Safer Recruitment		
	Staff Induction, Training and Appraisal		
5	Complete review of training for staff involved in Young Firefighters Associations and implement any improvements.	Service Delivery - Prevention team	30/09/2013
6	Line manager of Schools education team to ensure that skills, competencies, and knowledge around child protection issues and processes are included in next year's personal development review (PDR).	Service Delivery - Prevention	30/06/2013
7	Line manager of Firesetters Intervention Team to ensure that primary line managers of firesetter intervention staff include skills, competencies, and knowledge around child protection issues and processes in next year's PDR.	Service Delivery - Prevention team	30/06/2013
	Staff Supervision and Accountability		
8	Introduction of work impact assessment process.	Service Delivery – Prevention team will liaise with Occupational Health team	30/06/2013
	Safe Working Practices		
9	Our overall information management project will examine Service Orders and Policies to ensure that staff are aware of those key to their role.	Service Delivery - Prevention	31/03/2014
	Client Confidentiality and Information Sharing		
10	Improve alignment of work across teams to make our approach consistent and make use of key tools such as Safetynet.	Service Delivery – Prevention team	31/03/2014