

Safeguarding

Indicative score:

3 - Evidence shows a good standard

What people expect:

"I feel safe and am supported to understand and manage any risks."

The local authority commitment:

We work with people to understand what being safe means to them and work with our partners to develop the best way to achieve this. We concentrate on improving people's lives while protecting their right to live in safety, free from bullying, harassment, abuse, discrimination, avoidable harm and neglect. We make sure we share concerns quickly and appropriately.

Key findings for this quality statement

Data for Suffolk was positive with 71.33% of people reporting feeling safe against the national average of 69.20%, and 81.02% of carers feeling safe against 80.51% nationally.

There were systems to manage safeguarding referrals to teams. A multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) triaged referrals coming into the local authority. Staff were clear about the difference between safeguarding and quality of care concerns. An advice line was offered for internal and external professionals to call for advice. More complex safeguarding concerns were managed by the central safeguarding and locality teams. Referrals were coded based on levels of risk with timelines for work to take place with people.

Staff were passionate about their work and the difference it made for people using services, and told us about a good camaraderie in their teams. Staff worked closely and effectively with police and health in MASH and explained they understood each other's remit and language, which led to some creative work happening to keep people safe. For example, one person with complex needs self-neglected, so staff co-worked with fire, health and police services to co-ordinate a plan to support them, which resulted in a good outcome for this person.

Staff worked to support people creatively, including those without traditional care and support needs. For example, several organisations had concerns about one person relating to modern slavery and exploitation. Staff worked closely with housing and, by taking a flexible approach, were able to identify abuse and find somewhere safe for them to live. Another person released from prison on compassionate grounds was given support to find suitable accommodation, with staff working alongside probation and housing services.

Although staff reported their workloads to be high, they were experienced and supported each other well. Staff told us it felt safe for them to raise concerns with managers, or if they remained concerned they could raise these with the Principal Social Worker.

A preventative approach was taken where, if staff were worried about any cases, they were entered onto a risk register and this was then reviewed by a risk panel. This additional oversight supported staff in decisions in relation to any difficult cases.

Senior safeguarding staff oversaw quality in teams, which included reviews of data and could include a range of measures from thematic audits of work to staff supervision. They told us one of their greatest challenges was making safeguarding 'everyone's business' and there was much more ownership taking place in the locality teams now to reflect this. Staff had a better understanding of their responsibilities, which meant people got the same consistent support in each area. Drop-in sessions were held to complement staff safeguarding training alongside a network of 'champions'. The aim was to ensure practice was embedded and part of the culture of the local authority.

Due to a large backlog of Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) assessments, a 'recovery plan' was being developed to address these. This was described as a staggered, multi-pronged approach over the next 3 years. Senior staff told us this was an area of concern for them, so the plan needed to be sustainable and one they could iterate when needed. The plan involved recruiting independent best interest assessors, increasing numbers in the permanent DoLS team and using agency staff to complete assessments. Locality teams were also tasked with completing some assessments. Twenty local authority staff were enrolled on best interest assessor training from September to help teams achieve this. A tool was used to assess risk and urgency of DoLS assessments, which staff used to triage. If the safeguarding team received any referrals about someone who was waiting for a DoLS assessment, this person would then be immediately prioritised.

The local authority had identified that it needed to continue to improve compliance with the Mental Capacity Act 2005 with staff to better raise their understanding. This recognition came from data, audits and staff feedback highlighting this area for improvement. Teams had nominated 21 staff for training in September. Senior staff told us the last audit completed in relation to this showed a 70% score, which was positive. However, it was felt to be important for the local authority to keep this as an area for ongoing improvement.

Service development and contracts staff fed into the safeguarding system to identify where concerns might be escalating in relation to a care provider, and they worked closely together if concerns were raised in relation to organisational abuse.

Learning from events and incidents was a core part of the approach at the local authority. The Safeguarding Adults Review panel ensured any learning outcomes were shared in a variety of ways including webinars and events. Staff told us they continually considered how to improve practice and learn from incidents, trying different ways of working and to iterate processes, for continuous improvement.

Safeguarding partners told us about a positive overarching culture in the local authority, an open learning approach with senior leaders, and enthusiasm from the locality teams. Briefings from safeguarding adult's reviews were accessible and were shared widely with local authority staff, district councils and in briefings.

Self-neglect and hoarding had been identified as an issue in Waveney. Policies in relation to these areas were kept under review and a forum linked to work was held every month with housing and other system partners to enable partners to work closely together.

Some partners told us there could be a lack of feedback and consistency at times relating to safeguarding. However, other partners said they were kept informed of outcomes of section 42 safeguarding enquiries. A section 42 enquiry is a legal requirement under the Care Act 2014 for local authorities to make enquiries, or have others do so, if an adult may be at risk of abuse or neglect. On occasion, care providers were asked to investigate safeguarding concerns while the safeguarding team continued to have oversight of these. Feedback from one partner agency reflected on the safeguarding framework, which they felt was clear in relation to what was a safeguarding concern, against a quality of care issue.