

Safeguarding

Score: 2

2 - Evidence shows some shortfalls

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

Safeguarding systems, processes and practices

The systems, processes and practices around safeguarding have recently been reviewed. Safeguarding remains a challenging area for the local authority with evident high backlogs in managing both safeguarding enquiries and DoLS assessments. Derby received 3,931 safeguarding referrals between April 2023 and December 2023. 1866, of these met the section 42 enquiry threshold. A large backlog of referrals had accumulated historically before action was taken. As a result of the action the backlog had been reduced prior to our assessment. Staff told us that some referrals were about the understanding of partners of safeguarding thresholds as Derby had received a high number of inappropriate referrals. The local authority had taken steps to manage this by meeting with partners and ensuring that further training was offered to support and develop understanding of safeguarding thresholds. Safeguarding was seen to be a priority for the authority with a notable commitment from all levels of the organisation to reduce the backlogs in a targeted way. There had been a recent successful focus on reducing the backlog, this had been achieved by using staff to support with the workload as well as reviewing a number of areas of the process.

There had also been an introduction of a new safeguarding referral portal, available online to the public and providers. Work is still taking place to ensure that partners and providers understand the threshold for safeguarding.

Staff told us they had the relevant training and support to enable them to carry out their safeguarding duties and felt positive about the reduction of the waiting lists. The local authority was clear that safeguarding was an area of work which they were focused on to ensure continuous improvements. Staff told us that areas such as the recording and reporting of safeguarding by the customer contact team remained an area acknowledged for improvement.

The local authority had a strong partnership and leadership role in relation to the Safeguarding Adults Board and its responsibilities. Partners felt that the local authority had an active involvement in the Board and had been responsive to challenges.

National data reflected that 89.11% of people who use services said those services had made them feel safe. This was above the England average of 85%. 72.73% of carers said they felt safe which was below the England average of 80% (Adult Social Care Survey 2021/2022 ASCS).

Responding to local safeguarding risks and issues

The local authority had worked closely with partners to reduce risks with established relationships across the Boards. There had been 2 SARs in Derby City and work had commenced relating to some recommendations, actions were identified in a number of areas including safety plans for adults to remain in their own home and the analysis of data to confirm the percentage of safety plans in place. The local authority had developed an action plan to ensure recommendations were being embedded. Partners told us that there were still concerns around the lack of monitoring of whether learning from safeguarding concerns had been effective to drive improvement. Staff when asked were unsure of the learnings and there was lack of clarity about how it had impacted practice.

Responding to concerns and undertaking Section 42 enquiries

The local authority had a system in place to address safeguarding enquiries that met the section 42 threshold. This process had recently been revised and included community teams completing section 42 enquiries, this only takes place following a s42 enquiry being managed through the MASH, and in instances when community support teams have established relationships. Further work had taken place with the implementation of the provider portal which had been designed as a more efficient way for safeguarding concerns to be managed.

To ensure adequate prioritisation of referrals, the local authority used a risk tool to prioritise concerns. Staff told us that sometimes this resulted in longer delays for lower risk cases. However, the local authority recognised these issues and was using additional staff resource to support with these backlogs.

Partners told us, that the local authority had a good safeguarding website however, concerns were raised around communication between the local authority and partners. The local authority had processes in place to ensure that partners were involved and informed in relation to safeguarding enquiries. However, partners felt they were not always asked for their input in investigations and where they had sent information to the local authority around the mitigation of risk, they did not always receive a response from the local authority. There was a waiting list in relation to Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) applications where some people had been waiting more than 6 months. The local authority ensured that all referrals received were risk assessed and RAG rated on receipt and then reassessed when cases had been waiting a set amount of time. The local authority received 1094 applications in 2023/24, 13% of these applications were granted. Further analysis showed that 13% were applications from hospitals and 87% from care homes.

The local authority had identified they had a high backlog in the number of DoLS applications awaiting assessment. This stood at over 600 in the second half of 2023. The local authority identified this as an area for improvement. They use a framework of contracted Best Interest Assessors to undertake DoLS assessments. This was reproced in the autumn of 2023 which enabled them to focus on reducing the backlog in the first 4 months of 2024 so that by the time of our site visit this had reduced to 252, and the local authority told us that this had continued to reduce with the focus of additional resource.

There had been a marked improvement in reducing the waiting lists for both safeguarding and DoLS. A risk management tool was used to monitor risk while cases were waiting on the waiting list. The impact of the action by the local authority to reduce waiting lists was relatively recent and therefore it is too soon to judge whether the action taken will be sustained and will prevent large backlogs building up again in the future, particularly in the light of recruitment challenges faced by the local authority.

Making safeguarding personal

The local authority had a clear strategic priority in relation to making safeguarding personal. Partners told us that further work was needed which specifically focused on working with seldom heard groups within the community to understand the rationale behind lack of referrals coming in from these groups. The local authority told us they had done some work with the provider forum and also tried to engage providers in supporting the development of the portal to help understanding of safeguarding thresholds and referrals. However, we had feedback from partners who told us that there had not been awareness of training or safeguarding workshops support for providers to support them to understand the appropriateness of referrals. This would have had a direct impact on providers understanding the safeguarding thresholds.

In relation to the training of the local authority's own staff, national data reflected positive performance against national data. 59.5% of staff completed MCA DoLS training compared to the national average of 37.48% (Skills for Care Workforce).