

Prevention - Maturity Audit

1. Introduction

This audit was conducted with the Board's three statutory partners between March and May 2020, to deliver the planned objective set out within the LSAB Strategic Business Plan 2019-20. The Performance, Audit and Quality (PAQ) Sub-Group agreed the content and format for the self-audit, which was delivered using a guided discussion on the audit template between the LSAB Business Manager and the partner's representative (as well as background research and consultation within the agencies).

The PAQ agreed to assess the findings and usefulness from these initial audits before deciding to further roll this out to other Board partners.

2. Summary

As outlined below in Table 1, the vast majority of the Prevention Strands were rated as Amber by partners, with an agreed consensus that much more could be done both individually by each agency, as well as collectively as a Board partnership. Although the RAG Ratings illustrate that most areas are largely Amber, some of these strands should be prioritised and examined more closely, and in particular 'Improve Public Awareness', which underpins all of the other areas, and 'Focus on Equality & Narrowing Inequality'. This is crucially important in a Borough that is already highlighting racial disparity and disproportionality as a significant issue, brought into sharper focus due to the health inequalities exposed by COVID-19, and more broadly by the Black Lives Matter campaign.

3. Findings

3.1 Table 1: Overview of the RAG Ratings

Agencies	Prevention Strands						
	Improve Public Awareness	Identifying and Responding Effectively to Abuse	Consistent & Widespread Application of Policies and Procedures	Focus on Equality & Narrowing Inequality	Provide Information, Advice & Advocacy	Provide Access to Training & Education	Support Broader Wellbeing Strategies
CCG (Lewisham)	Amber	Amber	Amber	Amber	Amber	Green	Amber
Police (SE BCU)	Amber	Green	Amber	Amber	Amber	Green	Amber
LBL	Amber	Amber	Amber	Amber	Amber	Amber	Green

3.2 Improve Public Awareness

Two of the three agencies did not have specific strategies for this subject within their function in relation to adult safeguarding, and therefore did not specifically influence any broader corporate activities to improve public awareness. One agency achieves some good outcomes via a public facing website, by passing down information through professional networks, and by other communication activities, but not through direct engagement with the public.

The Board produced a Communication and Engagement Strategy in July 2019 to help co-ordinate this type of activity collectively in conjunction with partners (through the work of the LSAB Business Unit), using 12 methodologies to deliver this. Although a good start has been made, the volume and pace this work can be delivered at is affected by other pressures, such as the significant SAR workload.

All three agencies agreed that much more could and should be done in this area of preventative work, and individual actions have been generated as a result of this self-audit.

3.3 Identifying and Responding Effectively to Abuse

There is some good training being delivered by the agencies across the Borough which helps to underpin this strand, with appraisal and supervision also being used, although this has been described as 'patchy'. The Met Police have corporate toolkits and policies linked to adult abuse, specifically trained staff who investigate crimes, and a dedicated community safety unit. LBL have also invested in a Hoarding Development Officer Post (initially funded for 12 months), and recently initiated a project to re-configure the safeguarding pathway which will help improve this area of activity.

However, case work 'drift' has been identified across agencies in relation to the safeguarding pathway, and there is generally a low volume of adult abuse being identified in Lewisham, which illustrates that more work is needed across the system in this area (see Performance Report –Table 2).

3.4 Consistent and Widespread Application of Policies and Procedures

There is good performance from Police when there is a crime/suspected crime, although only a small amount of Merlin Reports submitted locally are being translated into s.42 Enquiries (see Performance Report –Table 3). It has been agreed more work can be done to improve the coding of these reports locally, and there has recently been some refreshed training linked to this subject. The s.42 Audit conducted in 2019 indicated some good work within LBL, but two strategies that were published locally (Self-Neglect and Hoarding and Modern Slavery) in the last 12-24 months do not appear to be generating any increased activity in these areas (see Performance Report –Table 5).

There are data problems within adult mental health which means it can be difficult to analyse performance and quality, and it is also difficult to generate a full picture across the health system due to the complexity and volume of commissioned services.

3.5 Focus on Equality and Narrowing Inequality

Although agencies are delivering equality and diversity training to staff and issues may be 'picked up' through processes such as Provider Concerns Meetings, there was no evidence of specific strategies or monitoring in this area of work individually within these agencies, although Met Police stated this can be delivered if requested.

Although this audit was completed before recent events linked to the Black Lives Matter campaigning, this has understandably created a new and sharper focus on this subject, which is reinforced by the racial disparity in relation to COVID-19 deaths within the general public and the health and social care workforce.

The Board established the Performance, Audit and Quality Sub-Group in September 2019 who have started to analyse the available and relevant information linked to Safeguarding Concerns and Enquiries, and there is commitment from agencies to support this work. However, partners may need to individually assess their effectiveness across every area of safeguarding activity, and the Board may also need to strengthen its strategic objectives to expand and intensify this monitoring, supporting the collective effort to reduce inequalities across the Borough.

3.6 Provide Information, Advice and Advocacy

This is another strand that all of the participating agencies rated as Amber locally, indicating that much more work is needed to strengthen the approach to this subject across Lewisham. There is some good work being delivered by the Nurse Advisor in the CCG, and good services delivered by Police (and commissioned services) linked to Domestic Violence and Abuse (DVA), as well as good advocacy within Learning Disability Services. But otherwise there are concerns that advocacy services are generically not robust enough, and there is not sufficient monitoring to provide the appropriate oversight for these commissioned services.

The Board's tranche of information materials for the general public also needs to be improved, including the provision of translated copies for the main safeguarding leaflet.

3.7 Provide Access to Training & Education

This area of the audit was most strongly rated by two of the agencies, who outlined the detailed training offer they are providing within their individual and commissioned workforces. The Council also has an appropriate Learning, Training and Development Strategy within ASC, but the wider corporate induction programme for all staff could be stronger, and the loss of the ME-Learning (e-learning) platform may also reduce access to foundation level learning for Council employees. This is also a big loss for the whole Borough as many agencies were able to access this, leaving a large gap in provision locally.

This has previously been discussed by the Board and initially deferred as online learning was seen as an unpopular methodology by some partners, however, in the current climate we live in online learning may now have become a necessity.

There is already an action for the Board to conduct a more in-depth Training Needs Analysis in support of the initial (and more simplistic) version conducted in the Autumn of 2019, however this is a very intensive and time consuming process, and some decisions may need to be made to ensure appropriate training activities are commissioned and delivered in the shorter-term.

3.8 Support Broader Wellbeing Strategies

Adult Social Care specifically, and LBL corporately, are delivering several projects which support the wider wellbeing agenda in Lewisham. Similarly there are many health based initiatives that the CCG fund and commission, although it is accepted that more could be achieved within the primary health domain. Local Police also deliver preventative work linked to wellbeing, particularly in relation to DVA as well as other projects such as the Herbert Protocol (dementia support linked to adults that may go 'missing').

However, there are currently no formal strategic links between the LSAB and the Lewisham Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB), and by extension no priorities have been identified to connect the work of the two Boards.

4. Conclusions

There is a fairly limited focus given to prevention linked to adult safeguarding within the three statutory agencies, probably due operational demands to manage incidents and risk. This initial set of self-audits should be expanded for use by all Board partners in 2020-21, leading to the development of local Adult Safeguarding Prevention Guidance to act as 'what works' reference for practitioners.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1 More emphasis and resources need to be prioritised to improve the profile of adult safeguarding related issues, both by agencies individually in the Borough, and collectively through the work of the Board.
- 5.2 The work to develop the Adult Safeguarding Pathway should be the catalyst for the PAQ Sub-Group to oversee any new local procedures that are created, and to also assess if more local guidance or strategies are required to help with the identification of and response to adult abuse and neglect.
- 5.3 The PAQ Sub-Group should also set up the necessary systems to further drill into data for each strand of abuse linked to ethnicity, and develop actions to help address inequalities and racial disparity across the Borough.
- 5.4 A full and formal review of advocacy services should be commissioned, leading to improved monitoring and reporting, which in turn will link to 5.3.
- 5.5 A group should be established to assess the need for public facing information and literature, which should then be co-produced with relevant and appropriate organisations (links to 5.1).
- 5.6 The Board's Training Plan for 2020-21 should include agreed method(s) to meet the demand at foundation level, filling the gap left by ME-Learning. Strong consideration should also be given to commissioning multi-agency training for Enquiry Officers and SAMs (or equivalent), which partners could fund collectively from their individual budgets, allowing the Board to deliver this.
- 5.7 The Board should work more closely with the HWB to develop joint strategic priorities and objectives.