



**Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny
Committee**
24 January 2022

**Report from the Transitional
Safeguarding Task Group**

**Transitional Safeguarding Scrutiny Task Group Progress
Report**

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	N/A
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Task Group Activity
Background Papers:	N/A
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1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 To update the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee on the progress of the Transitional Safeguarding Scrutiny Task Group.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

2.1 To note the contents of the report and the progress made by the Transitional Safeguarding Scrutiny Task Group.

3.0 Detail

Background Information

- 3.1. At its meeting on 15 November 2021, the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee established the Transitional Safeguarding Scrutiny Task Group. The task group is made up of non-executive members of the Council and a co-opted member of the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee.
- 3.2. It was proposed to hold three evidence sessions between December 2021 to January 2022 and to agree any reports and recommendations that may be agreed by the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee for submission to Cabinet in April 2022.
- 3.3. The comments and recommendations from the task group are scheduled to be considered by the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee on 24 February 2022.
- 3.4. The following membership of the Task Group was agreed by the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee on 15 November 2021:
 - Councillor Ketan Sheth (Chair)
 - Councillor Anita Thakkar (Vice-Chair)
 - Councillor Claudia Hector
 - Helen Askwith
- 3.5. The following Terms of Reference for the Scrutiny Task Group were agreed by the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee on 15 November 2021:
 - (i). Understand the practice of transitional safeguarding, its evolution nationally and the applicability of its implementation in Brent.
 - (ii). Consider how Brent is developing transitional safeguarding practice as part of an improvement to children and young people's services, and what the current offer is.
 - (iii). Understand Brent's particular social demographics and the scale of the risks for adolescents in Brent.
 - (iv). Explore the next steps and potential further development of transitional safeguarding by the local authority and its partners.
- 3.6. The Task Group held its first evidence session on 9 December 2021. The session focused the practice of transitional safeguarding, its evolution nationally and how it is being implemented in Brent. The session was attended by key officers at Brent Council and Dez Holmes, Director of Research in Practice. Dez Holmes provided an overview of the underpinning safeguarding frameworks and legislation for children and adults and described how transitional safeguarding is evolving nationally. Brent Council officers provided an overview of services related to transitional safeguarding and the young population in Brent and the risks they face.

- 3.7. The Task Group held its second evidence session on 14 December 2021. The session focused on the transitional safeguarding development work being undertaken in Brent and the experiences of transitional safeguarding for frontline staff, young people and families. The session was attended by a range of stakeholders and expert witnesses including Brent Council officers, local commissioners and representatives from the police, schools and services working directly with young people.
- 3.8. The Task Group held its final evidence session on 11 January 2022. The session focused on the next steps for developing transitional safeguarding practice in Brent, and the lessons that have been learned from other authorities, other services and wider parts of the system. The session was attended by relevant Cabinet members and senior officers, local commissioners and service providers.
- 3.9. A list of the evidence sessions held, and key stakeholders in attendance, is provided in Appendix 1. The Task Group has been impressed by the knowledge and insight of all stakeholders and expert witnesses involved, and thanks them for their contribution.

4.0 Emerging Findings

- 4.1 The term transitional safeguarding describes the need for “an approach to safeguarding adolescents and young adults fluidly across developmental stages which builds on the best available evidence, learns from both children’s and adult safeguarding practice and which prepares young people for their adult lives”.¹ It focuses on safeguarding young people, from adolescence to adulthood, recognising this period of transition will be experienced differently by young people at different times.
- 4.2 Transitional Safeguarding is not simply transition planning for people who are moving from children’s social care to adult social care services. It refers to activity that has often fallen outside of the traditional notions of both ‘transitions’ and ‘safeguarding’, recognising that support to young people experiencing transition to adulthood can be fragmented, with differing age thresholds for service access and service eligibility and with differing services available for young adults.
- 4.3 It is recognised that those who would benefit most from transitional safeguarding are a group of young people who do not fit into adult safeguarding statutory criteria. There are specific cohorts of young people that continue to receive statutory children’s safeguarding support as they transition to adulthood such as those with disabilities and looked after young people leaving care. However, there are other cohorts of young people who may have met the statutory requirements for care and support from children’s services, but as they transition into adulthood there is no current legislative framework to support an intervention. One example is young people who are vulnerable to extra-familial harm such as criminal and sexual exploitation.

¹ Holmes, D. and Smale, E. (2018) ‘Mind the Gap: Transitional Safeguarding – Adolescence to Adulthood.’ Dartington: Research in Practice.

- 4.4 The systems in place to safeguard children and adults, whilst sharing a common aim of preventing abuse and neglect, have developed in accordance with different legislative and policy frameworks. This divergence presents some challenges in terms of providing a fluid transitional response to safeguarding needs as young people enter adulthood, as the criteria by which someone is deemed to require a safeguarding response can change significantly upon reaching their 18th birthday.
- 4.5 Older adolescents and young adults can fall through the gaps between children's and adults' services, often because they do not meet eligibility criteria for care and support from adult services (nor therefore for adult safeguarding), or because transition planning is ineffective or they fall out of contact with services. Whilst children in care are entitled to support as care leavers until the age of 25, those adolescents who have experienced high levels of trauma and harm but are not in care do not have the same entitlements. For example, adolescents entering adulthood often don't meet adult mental health criteria; and young people with moderate special educational needs who received support while at school do not necessarily meet eligibility criteria for care and support from adults' services. The issue of consent is another area of some complexity; in safeguarding, a child's consent is not required to initiate a safeguarding response; by contrast, where adults are deemed to have capacity, it is broadly considered essential that their consent is sought before making a safeguarding referral.
- 4.6 The evidence therefore points to a need to consider a new way of working in which existing safeguarding systems and services for children and adults become more aligned, more fluid and more responsive to the needs of young people. Working this way includes seeking to prevent harm for this cohort of young people, protecting them where harm is occurring and also recognising and responding in ways that can help them recover from the impact of harm. As such it is a multi-agency issue, dependent on collaboration and connection between agencies, services and with communities.
- 4.7 Transitional safeguarding is not a prescribed model. It is a joined-up approach to policy and practice that is being developed and applied in different ways according to local circumstances. For example, in some local areas the focus is on extending the support available to young people experiencing harm in their communities, for others there is a drive to develop services for young adults to prevent them developing longer-term care and support needs.
- 4.8 The development of Brent's approach to transitional safeguarding is at an early stage, yet there are a number of key forums where transitional safeguarding work is being undertaken. Brent Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) evidences information sharing on the highest risk domestic abuse cases between representatives of the local police, health, child protection, housing practitioners domestic violence advisors and other specialists. Young people are considered regardless of age.

- 4.9 The Exploitation, Violence and Vulnerability Panel (EVVP) is another forum in which the approach is being developed. Alongside overseeing interventions for children at risk of exploitation, the panel provides a coordinated, visible and accountable partnership response for managing those on the Violence and Vulnerability Programme cohort. The Violence and Vulnerability Programme focuses on supporting vulnerable young people and reducing reoffending and serious youth violence through a coordinated, multi-agency and intelligence led approach. As of May 2021, the programme was supporting 130 clients aged between 17-25. This includes gang members, persistent offenders, habitual weapons (knife/gun) carriers, domestic abuse perpetrators and those at the cusp of offending behaviour.
- 4.10 The Transitional Safeguarding Sub-group of the Contextual Safeguarding Strategic Group is another forum that has focused on developing transitional safeguarding policy and practice. The Sub-group has seen the Council's Children and Young People and Community Wellbeing services working together to pilot a more collaborative approach between the Leaving Care and Adult Safeguarding teams. This sought to explore the ways that vulnerable young people who are leaving care are supported where non-statutory interventions are needed.
- 4.11 Four sessions of multi-agency training on transitional safeguarding were conducted in 2021. Attendees included practitioners from the Council's Children and Young People and Community Wellbeing Services, alongside health partners, commissioned services, schools and local charities. The objectives of the training were to raise awareness of transitional safeguarding, communicate messages from Safeguarding Adult Reviews and to understand the tensions, blocks and barriers to developing a transitional safeguarding approach.
- 4.12 Brent's schools also undertake considerable work to support young people moving into adulthood. In particular, schools play an important role in identifying young people that may experience risks and harm. Many schools have close working relationships with a range of organisations, such as the local police, mental health services, statutory children's and adults' safeguarding services and commissioned services and work alongside these organisations to ensure safeguarding support is in place. This provides a platform by which young people transitioning into adulthood can be supported regardless of whether they fit into adult safeguarding statutory criteria.
- 4.13 Local health commissioners, such as North West London Clinical Commissioning Group and Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust, play an important role in supporting young people as they transition into adulthood, and provide another area in which transitional safeguarding practice is being developed in Brent. Local health commissioners are seeking to ensure that commissioned services are afforded flexibility in order to support people across this stage of development, and to incorporate co-productive principles within local commissioning approaches to ensure those young people that receive care are involved in the planning, development and delivery of the care they receive.

4.14 It has been noted that some elements of a transitional safeguarding approach can already be seen in some services. For example, the Council's SMART team supports adults who experience multiple and intersecting vulnerabilities but who do not meet statutory criteria for social care interventions. The SMART team is multi-disciplinary, involving social workers with mental health and social care backgrounds, an occupational therapist, drug and alcohol misuse professionals, a housing officer and supportive outreach officers.

5.0 Emerging Recommendations

5.1 On the basis of the emerging findings so far the Task Group is minded to develop recommendations in a number of areas for its final report which will be presented to the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee on 24 February 2022.

5.2 Firstly, the Task Group is considering recommendations around developing multi-agency and integrated models that can build more robust safeguarding mechanisms for young people aged 18-25 years old, building on pilots that have already taken place in Brent.

5.3 Secondly, the Task Group is considering a recommendation that ensures that transitional safeguarding practice is developed as a participative, user-led approach. It is hoped that user involvement will support the development of effective safeguarding practice, informed by young people whose self-confidence, self-esteem and resilience can be developed through that involvement.

5.4 The Task Group is also considering a recommendation that would provide officers, local commissioners and service providers with the support to raise awareness of transitional safeguarding, identify gaps and areas for improvement and support learning from other services and parts of the wider system where transitional approaches are more embedded.

5.5 Finally, the Task Group is considering a recommendation that would provide elected members with support and training to empower them to provide system leadership on the development of transitional safeguarding in Brent, recognising their experience of working across services, organisations and sectors, as well as their unique knowledge of the communities they represent.

5.6 It should be noted that further discussions may be held following the presentation of the interim report during which the recommendations may be developed further.

6.0 Financial Implications

6.1 There are no financial implications for the purposes of this report.

6.2 It is possible that some recommendations made by the Task Group in future will have financial implications for the local authority and/or local NHS organisations. Any possible financial implications will be considered by Cabinet.

7.0 Legal Implications

- 7.1 Section 9F, Part 2 of the Local Government Act 2000, *overview and scrutiny committees: functions*, requires that Executive Arrangements by a local authority must ensure that its overview and scrutiny committees have the power to make reports or recommendations to the authority or the executive with respect to the discharge of any functions which are or are not the responsibility of the executive, or on matters which affect the authority's area or the inhabitants of that area.
- 7.2 Section 9Fe, *duty of authority or executive to respond to overview and scrutiny committee*, requires that the authority or executive;-
- (a) consider the report or recommendations,
 - (b) respond to the overview and scrutiny committee indicating what (if any) action the authority, or the executive, proposes to take,
 - (c) if the overview and scrutiny committee has published the report or recommendations, publish the response, within two months beginning with the date on which the authority or executive received the report or recommendations.

8.0 Equality Implications

- 8.1 The scrutiny review should consider equalities duties as part of the general duty set out in the 2010 Equality Act.
- 8.2 Under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the Council has a duty when exercising their functions to have 'due regard' to the need to:
- a) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act;
 - b) advance equality of opportunity; and
 - c) foster good relations between those who share a "protected characteristic" and those who do not.
- 8.3 This is the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). The 'protected characteristics' are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

9.0 Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders

- 9.1 The report has been drawn up in consultation with Task Group members.

Report sign off:

SHAZIA HUSSAIN
Assistant Chief Executive