

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

TO:	ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE		
DATE:	1 JULY 2021		
TITLE:	SAFEGUARDING AUDITS - SECTION 11 & SECTION 175 BFFC SUMMARY		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR TERRY	PORTFOLIO:	CHILDREN
SERVICE:	CHILDREN'S SERVICES - BRIGHTER FUTURES FOR CHILDREN	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report is provided to offer assurance to the Members of the ACE Committee that Brighter Futures for Children (BFfC) and partners have undertaken or collated three key safeguarding audits over the past six months, and the findings are that the company continues to meet safeguarding and wellbeing requirements across its service areas. Where improvements are required, action plans are being implemented, with support being provided as required to schools, settings and providers across the local area.
- 1.2 These three audits capture safeguarding measures across the Company; local area schools including nursery schools; and local area early years settings. The first two audits are statutory requirements; the third is a best practice option that enables the company and its partners to identify any issues in early years settings and address them.
- 1.3 BFfC has completed a section 11 Audit, reported to Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership; schools across Reading have completed a section 175 Audit that has been collated and analysed by BFfC; and early years settings across Reading have completed a safeguarding audit, also collated and analysed by BFfC.

DETAILS

Section 11 Audit

- 1.4 Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 places duties on a range of organisations and individuals to ensure their functions, and any services that they contract out to others, are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Locally, Reading is required to submit a section 11 audit return to

the Section 11 Panel when requested (usually every three years). This Panel is a Berkshire-wide sub-group of the Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership.

- 1.5 BfFC submitted and presented its section 11 audit in December 2021. This was the first section 11 audit the company has completed on its own, previously children's services has been included as part of the RBC return. These previous returns historically there have been concerns and challenges, this is an improving picture - performance, leadership, stability.
- 1.6 A summary of our section 11 return is as follows:
 - 31 measures met, two partially met, none not met (one not applicable)
 - Good understanding and ownership of responsibilities - contributions to the audit
 - Strong governance arrangements, with Board engagement and challenge on key elements
 - Improving picture for the Company - strategic direction, improvement plans, business plan.
 - Strong proactive and reactive processes (e.g. recruitment and allegation management)
- 1.7 In a follow up letter to the audit presentation in December, the S11 Panel acknowledged that this was the first s11 submission from Brighter Futures for Children and were in agreement that the information provided was clear, reflective and demonstrated that our organisation understands and complies with the wider s11 duties placed upon us.
- 1.8 The Panel agreed with the actions identified by BfFC as a result of the audit, and made some additional recommendations. These have been collated and a robust action plan has been implemented. We are confident that all areas will have been addressed and can be evidence at the next audit.

Section 175 Audit

- 1.9 The annual section 175 safeguarding audit was completed in May 2021, and considers how schools in the local area are managing their statutory responsibilities to safeguarding (section 175 Education Act 2002, section 157 Education Act 2002 and section 11 Children's Act 2004). Alongside Wokingham and West Berkshire, uses the online NSPCC Safeguarding Audit tool for the section 175 audit. It sets out four standards areas, each comprising a set of measures with 43 elements in total.
- 1.10 Key findings of the 2021 audit include:
 - A high majority of all settings met all requirements
 - 100% of settings met the following criteria for standard 1: Leadership and Management of Safeguarding, Managing Allegations, Reporting Concerns, Record keeping
 - 100% of settings met the following criteria for standard 2: Pastoral Care
 - 100% of settings met the following criteria for standard 3: Local Procedures, Early Help, Parental responsibility, Children Missing Education
 - On comparison between all settings, there were 2 primary schools that had disproportionately higher unmet criteria compared to all other settings when considering their unmet requirements. These settings are being identified to the appropriate partners for further support to ensure they are offered additional support by the relevant teams available within BfFC.
 - There has been a significant reduction in unmet elements relating to the relevant safeguarding standards. The total difference last year's audit has been a 44% reduction in unmet elements.

- The results of the Section 175 audit were comparable with the other two areas in the Berkshire West Safeguarding Children’s Partnership.
- 1.11 Again, a risks and action plan for BfC teams has been implemented on the back of the audit findings.

Early Years Safeguarding Audit

- 1.12 The Early Years safeguarding audit for 2019/20 was reported in February 2021. The audit template is also used by West Berkshire and Wokingham. It should be noted that this audit is not mandatory, and it may be that the standards set in the audit and by settings and provider is higher than the Ofsted and BWSCP standards.
- 1.13 Of the Early Years settings that have signed a provider’s agreement, 64% of childminders and 98% of group providers returned the safeguarding audit. In April 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in 26% of providers temporarily close (some childminders and one PVI provider have still not reopened) and may be a contributing factor in the lower submission rate.
- 1.14 Most providers who returned an audit identified at least one action to enhance the provisions safeguarding practice. Across the Early Years Providers in Reading the confidence that they have met the safeguarding criteria is high.
- 1.15 Audit responses regarding safer recruitment, visitors, outings and information to parents all scored above 90%, with training and policies and procedures (88% and 81% respectively). Timing and cost of training tended to be the main reason cited, whilst most of the safeguarding training is free, this is not so for the other mandatory training that providers must undertake.
- 1.16 The Early Years Team is contacting the settings with part-met judgements to confirm progress in regard to the actions set. Safeguarding forms part of the annual compliance visits undertaken by the Early Years team. The team also has its own detailed action plan that is being implemented and monitored.

<p>2. RECOMMENDED ACTION</p>

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| <p>2.1 That the report be noted.</p> |
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3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The audits summarised in this report relate to the following statutory guidance:
- section 175 Education Act 2002,
 - section 157 Education Act 2002
 - section 11 Children’s Act 2004

4. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 4.1 The areas of work identified in this report are aligned with Priority 3 of the Council’s Corporate Plan: To protect and enhance the lives of vulnerable adults and children

5. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 Not applicable.