

SCAS Safeguarding Peer Review Visit - 5 November 2023

Introduction and Context

Hampshire and Isle of Wight ICB (HIOWICB), Buckinghamshire Oxfordshire and Berkshire West ICB (BOBICB) and NHSE have undertaken a programme of increased scrutiny and oversight of South-Central Ambulance Service (SCAS) since September 2022 following the CQC Inspection of April 2022. Additional work related to Operation Avocet, (September/October 2023) resulted in more in-depth scrutiny and testing of SCAS safeguarding processes and referrals.

As a result of this increased oversight, a decision was made by members of the Joint CQC Safeguarding SCAS meeting, to condense the planned peer review, to focus specifically upon the safeguarding team and several key lines of enquiry (see below).

Representatives from BOB ICB and HIOW ICB attended SCAS Headquarters in Hampshire on 5 November 2023. This is the second peer review visit that has taken place, the initial visit focused upon quality of SCAS service delivery and performance. Individual interviews took place with members of the safeguarding team, available on the day and further interviews took place via TEAMS for those unavailable on the day. Interviews included SCAS Safeguarding Team members, Chief Nursing Officer, and members of the SCAS Senior Leadership Team.

A visit template was developed to ensure a consistent and focused approach to the review, (see appendix 1).

Focus of the Peer Review

The Peer Review was focused upon the work of the safeguarding team to understand how well embedded processes were within the team/wider organisation and seek assurance on aspects of the improvement work. The peer review was also seen as an opportunity for safeguarding system leaders to meet the SCAS Safeguarding Team, providing them with an opportunity for reflection and a mutual sharing of experiences and feedback on the improvement journey so far. The following key lines of enquiry were identified:

- safeguarding team structure, statutory roles, governance, and leadership
- safe recruitment and allegations management
- supervision
- learning culture
- organisational culture and safeguarding
- safeguarding improvement journey

Summary Outcome of visit

The principal feedback reflected throughout the interviews was the significant change that has taken place within the Safeguarding Team and across SCAS since the current Associate Director of Safeguarding/MH/LD and Complex Care came into post. The strength of leadership and clarity of vision has nurtured a positive, effective, safeguarding team consisting of staff who feel empowered and valued.

There is clear leadership and accountability for safeguarding within SCAS with senior leader oversight and scrutiny. The Safeguarding leaders within the team are accessible, approachable, and considerate of individual's development and wellbeing. It was shared with the reviewers that over recent months, despite the intense pressure that the team has

been under, the workload and associated impact upon staff has been well managed and coordinated, which has minimised the impact upon staff wellbeing and enabled a continued focus upon safeguarding improvement, organisational learning, and wider engagement with the SCAS workforce to embed understanding and appreciation of safeguarding.

Over the year, the safeguarding team has seen significant investment in key safeguarding roles which is enhanced through a range of multi-disciplinary practitioners, fulfilling the statutory roles required of a health provider organisation. This diversity introduces new perspectives, enhanced skill sets and creates opportunities for innovation. There were, however, areas where the team felt that potential opportunities existed for further improvement. These are highlighted within the paper. In addition, it was apparent that the Information Technology supporting SCAS operational function including safeguarding remains a significant concern and challenge and reputational risk. It was acknowledged during the review, how the IT server issues and outages has a significant impact upon the safeguarding team and their ability to deliver business as usual. It is hoped that the new IT server will result in improved reliability and the elimination of future issues.

The paper further highlights areas of strength noted as part of the review process and areas which SCAS may wish to consider further.

Strengths

- Regular team meetings and weekly huddles ensure Safeguarding Team cohesion and reduce silo working.
- Safeguarding Standard Operating Procedures (SOPS) have been developed to provide clear processes for the management of; statutory reviews, case studies, investigations, and audits, etc. which provide evidence of change and improvement.
- Collaboration across teams, in particular with HR, to develop trust policies that meet statutory requirements and work related to safer recruitment/ allegations work has been positive and beneficial for SCAS.
- SOPs and policies understood and articulated by the Safeguarding Team.
- SOPs and new induction pack support new staff joining the team, including those joining for alternative placements.
- New posts introduced to the team including MCA lead, has provided an increased degree of flexibility in terms of knowledge and skills and links directly with other areas of SCAS development work e.g., ensuring training programmes are fit for purpose and meet the actual needs of the workforce.
- Clear evidence of increased innovation within the team as result of investment and variation of roles
- Staff from across SCAS know how to report concerns, and how to contact the Safeguarding Team.
- Supervision for front line staff is developing and well received.
- Systems are in place to support organisational learning from serious adult review, child safeguarding practice review and the recommendations are also integrated into safeguarding learning and training.
- Extensive activity from the Safeguarding Team to engage with frontline staff, increase visibility, building trust and confidence including providing feedback on safeguarding referrals made by practitioners (feedback loop).
- Supervision structure in place across SCAS with supported release of operational staff ("supervision extraction").
- Robust safeguarding communications across SCAS supporting a learning environment.
- Proactively seeking evidence of staff learning through the new staff feedback form developed for use after training, supervision, etc.

- Statutory policies in place, accessible to staff and promoted through the communications process.

Areas for further consideration

- Whether allocating specific roles and responsibilities to practitioners placed within the team short term (alternative duties), can enable, and support the preventative elements of safeguarding.
- Opportunities for those staff placed within the team on alternative duties, to develop a wider cohort of safeguarding practitioners able to assist with succession planning and the spread of safeguarding skills and knowledge beyond the team.
- SCAS Senior Leadership Team to strengthen, build confidence and sustainability within the Safeguarding Team, with a focus upon team.
- The potential to introduce developmental career progression structure with the Safeguarding Team which can further support leadership functions.
- Review existing arrangements for safeguarding supervision within the Safeguarding Team and outside of line management supervision.
- Opportunities for additional resources to support the Domestic Abuse agenda incorporating sexual safety.
- Further activity across SCAS to embed the Sexual Safety Charter as part of wider organisational change to affect positive practice/culture across SCAS.
- Work with the workforce to understand better how learning can be shared more effectively from reviews.
- Further work to improve the quality and appropriateness of safeguarding referrals.
- Promote the Safeguarding Champion arrangements across SCAS and the benefits of a SCAS wide champion peer network including shared supervision groups.
- SCAS leadership to recognise the impact of IT failings upon the safeguarding team and wider Trust reputation and work to seek resolution to these ongoing issues.

The overarching theme of the peer review of SCAS Safeguarding Team was overwhelmingly positive. Thanks to all those involved in the review for their time, honesty, and commitment over the past year. The final words in the paper were shared as part of the review and provide further examples as to the quality and excellent work that the SCAS Safeguarding Team have delivered and continue to progress.

- *“Safeguarding referrals received on the ward (from SCAS) were always very comprehensive with additional information such as photographs, capacity assessments, domestic abuse assessments – all adding to the richness of the referral ...”*
- *“... when the SCAS crew member found out that I was part of the safeguarding team, the crew shared that they now understand safeguarding, their roles, how to raise a concern and why it is important.”*

Appendix 1: Visit Template 6 Nov 2023

KLOEs	Comments	Evidence and feedback from SCAS colleagues:
Structure, Governance and Leadership Statutory roles (named/exec lead safeguarding children, adults at risk/Prevent)	Safeguarding team in place, recruited to over past 12 months. All statutory roles in place. Annual report confirms governance and reporting arrangements for safeguarding children, adults and children in care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory roles e.g. prevent, FGM, etc. • Well led /direct leadership of safeguarding • Safeguarding team visibility • Escalation process (how, when and where)
Safe Recruitment and Allegations Management	Safe recruitment embedded across organisation incl. HR, managers, etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allegation management and oversight • Process and wider organisational engagement • Organisation learning linked to SAMA / LADO
Supervision	Supervision arrangements in place in SCAS with supported release of operational staff – “supervision extraction”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervision arrangements – individual and group • Organisational engagement • Impact / feedback from front line practitioners
Learning Culture	<p>Significant evidence of organisation and system improvement.</p> <p><u>SCAS Deep Dive/Audits:</u> Emerging theme - sexual behaviours of staff – Feb 23 Quality of SG Referral audit – Feb 23 SCAS Self-Assessment (Ox) Jan 23 Non mobile baby Mar 23 Delayed Referrals Dec 22 DA referral Feb 23 BDO Oct 22 Referral data (Bucks) Feb 22 External Rapid Appraisal Review Jul 22</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisational - embed learning to drive improvement - CSPRs/ SARs, case studies, investigations, audits • Evidence of change and improvement
Organisational Culture and Safeguarding	Staff knowledge of personal responsibilities for safeguarding and information sharing – “Safeguarding Stars” Freedom to Speak Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Team and wider organisational culture ○ Support and assurance from other SCAS divisions ○ Staff connection with safeguarding and responsibilities

Safeguarding Improvement Journey	Team development and experience Impact of Operation Avocet and responsiveness of team	○ Opportunity to share feedback
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