Annex C
Analysis of Key Corporate Risk 5 – Safeguarding

Background

1. This Annex provides a more detailed analysis of KCR 5 – Safeguarding.

2. **The description of this risk is as follows:** A vulnerable child or adult with care and support needs is not protected from harm. Ensuring that vulnerable adults and children in the City are safe and protected is a key priority for the Council. The individual, organisational and reputational implications of ineffective safeguarding practice are acute.

Risk Detail

<u>Failure to protect a child or vulnerable adult from death or serious harm</u>

3. This risk relates to potential failure of services and systems to take appropriate and timely action to safeguard a child or vulnerable adult. Contributing factors may include poor information sharing, risk assessment or unclear accountability or escalation processes across the partnership.

4. Effective mitigation requires robust safeguarding policies, clear escalation pathways, multi-agency working, training and learning from audit and case reviews which in turn strengthens practice and improves outcomes.

5. The consequences are significant in terms of the impact on children, adults and their families, alongside the legal and reputational implications including public trust in services.

6. It does need to be noted that despite robust systems and best practice not all risks can be predicted and therefore prevented. In complex circumstances serious incidents may still occur therefore the focus is on minimising risk as far as possible through effective safeguarding arrangements need to be a priority.

<u>Poor outcome from statutory inspection (Ofsted, particularly ILACS and SEND or CQC)</u>

7. Poor inspection outcomes indicate services are not meeting the required standards. Inspections provide a snapshot in time and can not capture every element of practice however, a poor outcome can have a reputational impact, result in increased oversight, loss of public confidence and the financial cost can be high. The recent CQC assessment of the local authority in relation to Care Act duties for adults resulted in an overall requires improvement rating but with significant weaknesses identified in key areas.

<u>Supply failure within the national care market for children's placements following Ofsted introduction for 16-17 year olds</u>

8. The introduction of Ofsted regulatory requirements for supported accommodation has created a risk of a reduction in available placements for this age group of young people. The City of York alongside other providers are

now required to meet new standards and registration requirements. This is turn creates a risk that some providers may exit the market, reduce capacity or unable to achieve the compliance required.

9. While the introduction of regulation is intended to improve quality, it needs to be recognised this may create a risk of pressure within the system. The consequences could lead to an increase in out of area provision and higher costs to the Council.

Market Failure in Adult Social Care

10. The availability of safe and high-quality support for adults with care and support needs is a significant protective factor in preventing harm to adults at risk. The sustainability of local providers can be at risk due a combination of local market conditions and nationally driven cost pressures.

Implications

11. The implications across the identified risks are:

- Vulnerable children and adults are not protected from harm
- Significant reputational damage to the Council
- Loss of public confidence in safeguarding systems
- Financial implications including investment needed due to a failed inspection
- Resource and financial implications of increased in demand because of a shortage of supply in placements for children and support for adults.

Controls – Children's Services

12. Alongside the following controls Children's Services is in period of significant reform which is being driven by the national Families First Partnership Programme. The reform programme has been developed out of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care and subsequent national policies. The drive is to create a streamlined, multi-agency system which provides earlier and more effective support to children and families. This includes the creation of a Multi-Agency Child Protection Team to ensure a more decisive and integrated response to safeguarding concerns. Overall, the reforms aim to improve the safeguarding system and further reduce the risk of harm.

Safeguarding Partnership

13. Strong governance arrangements are in place through the City of York Safeguarding Partnership. The multi-agency partnership provides oversight, sets priorities, monitors performance and holds partners to account.

14. The partnership arrangements include several subgroups which are critical for a joined-up approach, consistency of practice for families and learning and development.

15. The Safeguarding Children's Partnership has maintained an Independent Scrutineer who offers challenge and assurance on the effectiveness of the safeguarding arrangements. This role is key in ensuring areas for development are identified, learning is embedded across the system and that work is undertaken to reduce the likelihood of harm to children ad young people.

<u>Multi-agency procedures</u>

16. Risks are further mitigated through robust multi-agency procedures. These procedures provide a shared framework for practitioners to identify, assess and respond to safeguarding concerns, ensuring a coordinated and timely approach to protecting children and young people.

17. The procedures set out agreed thresholds and referral pathways, therefore support practitioners to take appropriate action and promote consistent practice.

18. In addition, escalation pathways have been established, these empower practitioners and agencies to raise concerns where there is a disagreement. This strengthens accountability and prevents drift and delay in decision making.

<u>Performance Management, Self-Assessment and Peer Challenge</u>

19. Performance management arrangements are in place to monitor key indicators, these include understanding the quality of practice, outcomes and direct feedback from children and their families. Regular analysis supports identification of risks, trends and allows for any improvement activity. The Ambition Board which is chaired by the Chief Executive and attended by key officers and the Lead Member for Children's Service provides oversight and challenge in this area.

20. Children's Services maintains an up-to-date self-assessment which is overseen by the Corporate Director and Director of Safeguarding. This is shared with the Inspectorate (Ofsted) to keep them up to date on the direction of the service, along with allowing for scrutiny and challenge to support continuous improvement. In the last Ofsted inspection (2024) Children's Services moved from Requires Improvement to Outstanding across all judgement areas.

21. Sector led improvement through peer challenges are welcomed; these are undertaken by colleagues across the region and support with continuous development and improvement.

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Resourcing

22. Children’s Services continue to have an experienced and stable leadership team alongside a stable workforce. In recent years Children’s Services have move from 46 to 0 agency social workers therefore providing consistency of practice and service delivery to children and their families.

23. A workforce strategy has been developed to underpin development of practitioners which has included investment in training to drive a skilled, confident and capable workforce. All staff are subject to employment checks including DBS clearance, ensuring those working with children and families are safe to do so.

24. Work has been undertaken to increase internal placement sufficiency. This has included development of our residential home, ‘Together WE Can’, supported accommodation provision, ‘Staying Close’ and focused recruitment to increase the number of foster carers in the City. Together these measures have enabled us to reduce our reliance high-cost external provision.

Controls-Adult Services

25. Summarised below are the key controls for safeguarding adults with care and support needs from harm. Alongside this, early-stage national reform of the approach to safeguarding adults has been signalled by the DHSC through the intention to establish a new national safeguarding adults board and an urgent review of adult safeguarding statutory duties and powers. This is in response to recommendations made by the Independent Commission on Adult Social Care

City of York Safeguarding Adults Board

26. Strong governance arrangements are in place through the City of York Safeguarding Adults Board. The Board has a key responsibility for protecting adults from abuse, reducing the risk of abuse and supporting people to stop abuse where it happens The SAB is in place to assure itself that local safeguarding arrangements are in place and that partners act to protect adults at risk. The SAB leads safeguarding arrangements across the city to oversee and coordinate the effectiveness of the work of its members and partner agencies. The strategic plan produced by the SAB sets out how the board will meet its objectives and the contributions of members and partners agencies. The effectiveness of the work is detailed its annual report. Alongside this the SAB also commissions safeguarding adult reviews aimed at promoting effective learning and improvement to prevent future deaths or serious harm.

27. An independent chair is appointed to the SAB who offers independent challenge on the effectiveness of arrangements to protect adults at risk.

28. The SAB has a series of subgroups and task and finish groups to provide for quality assurance, learning and development, safeguarding adult reviews and key priority areas including self-neglect, exploitation and homelessness.

Multi Agency Procedures

29. Multi-agency procedures developed with partners are in place, providing a shared framework for practitioners to prevent, identify, assess and respond to safeguarding concerns, ensuring a coordinated approach to protecting adults at risk. Practice guidance is produced and published to support the implementation of these procedures. This includes an escalation process aimed at empowering practitioners and resolving disputes between agencies and practitioners. CYC has a mandatory training programme in place to enable competent practice and compliance is monitored.

Market Oversight

30. CYC has a commissioning team in place responsible for developing and maintain a market of safe, high quality, accessible support providers with a focus on meeting need and preventing harm. Work is underway on updating the market position statement and commissioning strategy.

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Performance and Improvement

31. CYC departments contribute to the SAB activity dashboard, supported by the SAB Quality Sub-group. This provides insight and challenge in to the key activities of CYC and its partners that prevent and respond to the risk of harm for adults. The dashboard is reviewed on a quarterly basis by the SAB.

32. CYC reports on safeguarding adults performance nationally through the safeguarding adults collection. Systems are in place to ensure the work that demonstrates CYC performance is captured, reported and scrutinised

33. Safeguarding Adults is one of the statutory duties that the Care Quality Commission assess as part of their local authority assessment framework. As part of the requires improvement rating given to CYC, CQC highlighted some significant weaknesses in safeguarding adults. In response to this, immediate actions were taken to improve safety. Safeguarding adults forms part of the transformation programme overseen by the Adults Improvement Board.

34. CYC has established an Improvement Board for adult social care chaired by the chief executive and attended by key officers and members, providing oversight of the transformation programme aimed improving CYCs approach to meetings its statutory duties.

35. CYC is supported by a DHSC appointed improvement advisor, offering support and challenge and reporting on progress to DHSC. In addition to this LGA peer support is in place to help with the improvement journey

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Resourcing and Transformation

36. Recognising the requirement for improvement in adult social care, including the need to mitigate against the death or serious harm to adults at risk, a transformation programme is in place across the directorate. This has included significant investment in programme management, additional staffing to reduce the risk, practice development and system and process change.