

# **ANNUAL SAFEGUARDING REPORT**

**2022/2023**

**COMBAT  
STRESS**  
FOR VETERANS' MENTAL HEALTH

# INTRODUCTION

**Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, and at Combat Stress we strive to ensure that the service we deliver is responsive to the needs of our veterans, their families and our staff group.**

This Safeguarding Report provides an overview of how the charity has embedded a culture of positive safeguarding practice over period from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023. It sets out the volume of safeguarding incidents that we responded to in this period, and perhaps more importantly explains how we are actively seeking to develop and improve our safeguarding practice in our efforts to develop a culture that aims for excellence.

## SUMMARY OF KEY SUCCESSES INCLUDED:

### Increased safeguarding leadership

- The development of a national discussion space for senior leaders to explore safeguarding issues and share solutions.
- Appointment of an additional Social Worker who can act as Deputy Safeguarding Lead.

### Safeguarding reporting

- Establishment of a safeguarding report that can be pulled from the electronic patient record system.
- Creation of an automated reporting process to analyse incident data.
- Safeguarding as a heading in clinical governance reports.

### Safeguarding training, workshops, consultations

- The creation of online safeguarding training.
- Inclusion of all staff in mandatory safeguarding training at a minimum Level 2 for Children and Adults.
- Regular safeguarding workshops on topics chosen regionally.
- Regular safeguarding reflective practice sessions throughout England.
- The appropriate use of safeguarding consultations.

## EVALUATION SOURCES

**For the purposes of this report, incidents have been classed as safeguarding if they involved either:**

- Risk to self
- Risk to others
- Risk from others

**Information for audit during the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 was taken from the following sources:**

- Data held on our incident management system
- The safeguarding adults and children policy and processes
- A review of Safeguarding Clinical Notes recorded on the electronic patient record system.

# KEY STATISTICS

There were **48 Safeguarding Incidents** recorded on our incident management system between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023. This equated to approximately one third of all entries.

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**This can be broken down further into major themes:**



It is clear that statistically the most significant incident that is recorded on our incident management system pertains to “risk to self” as **73% of safeguarding entries pertain to self-harm or suicide.**

In contrast, there were 37 clinical notes made on the electronic patient record system under the categorisation safeguarding and **35 of those entries related to either safeguarding children, or domestic abuse.**

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**Safeguarding development sessions were facilitated by the Head of Engagement and Social Care (HESC) and the following were delivered nationally:**

**11 Workshops**      **14 Reflective spaces**

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## Safeguarding Training

Via the Combat Stress Learning platform, as part of the Veterans’ Places, Pathways and People Programme we have facilitated **safeguarding training to 52 external professionals** and also held two discussion spaces that were attended by **55 professionals from the veteran sector** looking to enhance their own, and their organisational safeguarding practices.

# EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

**All staff are trained to at least Safeguarding Level 2, with anyone within Combat Stress involved in direct contact with veterans and/or their families are trained to Level 3. There are also a number of Level 4 trained members of the senior leadership team in each hub to help empower staff to make informed safeguarding decisions at a regional level.**

All Local and National Clinical Governance meetings have safeguarding as an item on the agenda. This provides an opportunity to share examples of good practice and highlight any lessons learned to ensure this knowledge would be disseminated charity wide. It also provides an opportunity to discuss changes to legislation and share any new research that could be relevant to Combat Stress.

The reporting of concerns in a formal way via our incident management system and the electronic

patient record system also ensures that we have a safe, secure and accessible tool to log, monitor and track safeguarding incidents.

**Safeguarding reflective spaces** were offered nationwide to all staff during this reporting period. These provided a space for all staff to come together and reflect on safeguarding cases, the actions taken and the impact it had on them.

**Safeguarding consultations** were available for any staff member to access by contacting the HESC. These created an environment where staff could check out their thinking and discuss potential consequences of available options. These were well received and accessed by multiple members of staff from each hub.

**Training workshops** could be accessed upon request at a hub or smaller team level in order to meet the needs of as many staff as possible.

## QUOTES FROM STAFF

“

Over the past couple of years, I have witnessed the culture around safeguarding within Combat Stress change. Attitudes towards safeguarding are more positive, with clinicians approaching potential concerns with an open curiosity. I have had more safeguarding training in the last two years than ever before, and this has increased my confidence personally in handling and responding to concerns when they arise.”

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The introduction of safeguarding workshops, drop-ins and the new roles that have safeguarding as a part of their remit, have been the mechanisms for change within the organisation. I feel that we are now formulating and treating veterans from a truly bio-psycho-social model and are more confident when doing this. Overall, our ability to safeguard has improved vastly, and will inevitably lead to the safer treatment of those we care for.”

“

Safeguarding issues continue to be one of the more problematic areas of my job however I feel confident I have the knowledge and support to navigate this complex area.”

# CONCLUSION

**Combat Stress displays an organisational culture that supports the development of a healthy and robust safeguarding practice. There should be a level of pride taken in the way that the charity recognised the importance of this area and responded to it.**

There is substantial interest in enhancing practice at all levels of the organisation, this is evidenced by the high numbers of staff attending training, workshops and/or reflective sessions. These efforts to have safeguarding as a golden thread running through all directorates, is where the substantial progress has been made, particularly throughout England.

Although there are still improvements to be made, the direction of travel is completely positive and Combat Stress delivers a safer service as a result.

January 2024