

Epping Forest District Council

Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults Policy

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Introduction

Children and adults with care or support needs have the right to be safe accessing all services provided for them by Epping Forest District Council (EFDC). Vulnerable groups have a right to protection from all forms of abuse and mistreatment. This Policy sets out the roles and responsibilities of EFDC in working together with other professionals and agencies in promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults with needs for care and support (previously referred to as Vulnerable Adults) and safeguarding them from abuse and neglect.

Although all organisations who work with vulnerable people share a commitment to keeping them safe from harm, many have specific roles and responsibilities required by law. EFDC has a duty to cooperate with Essex County Council in discharging its safeguarding duties as a Children's Services Authority. The Council also has responsibilities under Sections 27 and 47 of the Children Act 1989 and Sections 10, 11 and 13 of the Children Act 2004. These duties include keeping children and young people safe whilst carrying out all its functions and taking part in the work of the Essex Safeguarding Children's Board. The council may also have extra duties under the new Care Act 2014 which becomes law in April 2015.

EFDC has a responsibility for the safeguarding and well-being of adults with needs for care and support and works with other statutory agencies to carry out this role. This Policy also incorporates guidance from the Essex Safeguarding Adults Board for safeguarding of adults.

Policy Statement

As part of the Council's commitment to robust safeguarding, it has a Corporate Safeguarding Group consisting of representatives from each Directorate, who have responsibility for ensuring that all colleagues across the Council are aware of the safeguarding policy and procedures.

EFDC Mission Statement

"Epping Forest District Council is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children, young people and adults with needs for care and support, as service users, residents and visitors to the area. The Council acknowledges the importance of working with partner agencies to ensure that children have safe, healthy and happy childhoods and that young people and adults with care or support needs are given the support they need to enjoy quality of life and well-being".

This Mission Statement is underpinned by the following:

- valuing, listening to and respecting children, young people and adults as well as promoting their welfare and protection;
- provision of a current and comprehensive Safeguarding Policy and related Procedures which are accessible and promoted to all staff;
- strategic planning and decision-making which considers the impact on children, young people and adults with care or support needs.

Aims

In order to meet its safeguarding duties and responsibilities, Epping Forest District Council will:

- ensure that unsuitable people are prevented from working with children, young people and adults with needs for care and support through robust use of the Council's Recruitment and Induction Procedures and through Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checking.
- provide training to staff appropriate to their level of involvement with children, young people and adults with needs for care and support to ensure that employees understand the different forms of abuse as well as their roles and responsibilities with regard to the relevant Council policies and procedures.
- conduct regular reviews of safeguarding practice throughout the organisation.
- ensure that the welfare and needs of children, young people and adults with needs for care and support are considered by all Members (councillors), employees, volunteers and contracted services when taking

decisions in relation to service provision.

- take seriously and respond appropriately and expediently to all concerns, incidents and allegations.
- prevent abuse by promoting good practice amongst staff; creating a safe and healthy environment for children, young people and adults with needs for care and support and encourage a whistleblowing environment where staff feel confident and safe in reporting any concerns.
- work in partnership with other agencies in order to safeguard children, young people and adults with needs for care and support and share information where required and appropriate.
- undertake a complete review of safeguarding policies and procedures annually and in line with any changes in legislation.

Scope

This Policy and the accompanying Procedures apply to all services within the remit of Epping Forest District Council. It covers all aspects of safeguarding for service users, their families, carers and supporters, and local residents.

It applies to all EFDC employees, whether in a paid or unpaid capacity, permanent, seconded or temporary, casual workers, voluntary workers, work experience students, agency staff, consultants, outside hirers and other contracted persons within the duration of that contract. This applies to work carried out in all settings (whether they are based in Council premises or at an external privately hired venue) whatever their position, role, or responsibilities.

The Council's Intranet lists the main safeguarding concerns that have been identified within Essex, Epping Forest District and most other districts within the county. Although in some areas of Essex the number of incidents relating to, for example, Child Sexual Exploitation and Honour Based Abuse is fairly low, these are becoming more and more evident and are a focus within the agendas of the local multi-agency partnerships.

Definitions

Abuse

The main categories of abuse are physical; sexual; psychological and emotional; financial and material; neglect and acts of omission; discriminatory; and organisational. More information about types of abuse can be found on the Council's Intranet, under the 'Safeguarding' section.

Adult Safeguarding

An adult is someone who is over 18 years. The Care Act 2014 now defines Adult Safeguarding as 'working with adults with needs for care and support to keep them safe from abuse or neglect.' It is an important part of what many public services do and a key responsibility of local authorities. Safeguarding is aimed at people with needs for care and support who may be in vulnerable circumstances and at risk of abuse and neglect. In these cases, local services must work together to spot those at risk and take steps to protect them.

Adults with needs for care and support are at risk of abuse in the same way as children and young people, but also in respect of having property/money stolen or misused, being defrauded, or being put under pressure in relation to their money or property.

Children and Young People

The Children Act 1989 states the legal definition of a child is 'a person under the age of 18'. This also includes pre-birth. Child Abuse is any form of physical, emotional, sexual mistreatment, neglect or lack of care that leads to injury or harm of a child or young person.

Safeguarding

This term includes all forms of activity that aims to protect or promote the welfare of individuals and/or groups of people. This includes activity which ensures prevention of harm, safe recruitment, staff training, awareness raising, provision of activities designed to promote inclusion, personalised risk management and risk assessments, confidential data storage, information sharing and referral.

Significant Harm

This is any physical, sexual or emotional abuse, neglect, accident or injury that is sufficiently serious to adversely affect health, development and quality of life. This includes any impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another person.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

All children, young people and adults with needs for care and support have the right to be protected from abuse regardless of age, culture, disability, gender, language, criminal history, immigration status, racial origin, religious belief, pregnancy/maternity status, location, sexual orientation and gender identity.

Children and adults who have a disability or come from a different ethnic or cultural group are quite often more likely to become victims of discrimination and prejudice. Any discrimination is harmful to person's wellbeing and may mean that they don't obtain the services they need to keep them safe.

The Council recognises there may be additional communication barriers for people with a disability or whose first language is not English and are committed to working jointly with external partners to help overcome these barriers.

There are several legal or recognised definitions of 'vulnerability', related to factors such as homelessness, eligibility for assistance, safeguarding from abuse and direct payments of benefits. This Policy does not seek to replace established definitions but to promote a broad approach to identifying potential vulnerability in order to support customers as individuals and provide services and support in a manner appropriate to their needs.

Recognising abuse

Everyone should be aware of the potential indicators of abuse and bullying and be clear about what to do if they have concerns. However, it is not the responsibility of the Council to determine whether abuse is taking place. Any concerns, incidents or allegations must be raised with appropriate agencies using the accompanying procedures without making any investigations or judgement. Responsibility for the implementation of this policy lies with all staff at all levels of the Council.

The Council therefore aims to ensure that every member of staff whether full-time, part-time, agency or voluntary are equipped with the knowledge and confidence to identify and deal effectively with any safeguarding situation or concern that arises.

Responsibilities

The Leadership Team and Elected Members recognise the important role they play in ensuring the safeguarding agenda is driven across the whole organisation. They also understand the Council's responsibility to work in partnership and share information with other agencies such as Essex Social Care and Essex Police. This work includes Member representation on the Corporate Safeguarding Group, regard to safeguarding in meetings, dissemination of information through service teams and inclusion of safeguarding within service strategies and business plans.

Service Roles

There are a range of functions carried out by Epping Forest District Council which have a positive outcome on the wellbeing of children, young people and adults with needs for care and support. During their everyday work many staff are in a position to identify safeguarding issues including Domestic Abuse which is becoming significantly more common and has a direct impact on children, young people and adults with care or support needs. This may be at Council-run activities, through visiting people's homes and inspecting local business. For example:

Housing Services - The Council directly improves the health and life chances of children, young people and adults with care or support needs by improving the standard of housing; preventing and responding to homelessness and by working closely with other local services and agencies. They are also responsible for allocating housing to those in most need and helping people with disabilities get necessary adaptations to enable them to participate fully in everyday life. The Council will also work with MAPPA (Multi-Agency Protection Panel Arrangements) and MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference) to ensure vulnerable people are safeguarded within the Epping Forest District.

Community Safety – Alongside general work to reduce crime and fear of crime, the Community Safety Team plays a key role in ensuring the safety of local children, young people and adults with needs for care and support. This includes identifying a range of safeguarding concerns and reporting these directly to Essex Police and Essex Social Care. The team also provides a signposting service to vulnerable people to enable them to access local support.

Community Services – The Community, Health & Wellbeing and Heritage, Museum and Culture services provide a wide range of activities such as playschemes, health improvement initiatives and community events. This work contributes to the improved health of vulnerable children and adults, helps build self-esteem, confidence and improves resilience to potential harm or exploitation.

Planning Services – This service can impact upon children, young people and adults' health and safety through the design of new developments. The provision of play facilities and 'green space' ensures that vulnerable peoples' needs are met and there is access to health and social care services.

Environmental Health Services – Services often associated with Environmental Health are the monitoring of noise complaints, food hygiene and nutrition but officers also inspect conditions in Council-owned, private rented accommodation and local businesses. They also play a key role as a licensing authority, as one of the four of the Licensing Act objectives is 'protection of children from harm'.

Financial Services – With responsibility for administration of Benefit payments and Council Tax, the Council's Financial Services help to ensure that children, young people and adults with needs for care and support are protected from the effects of poverty and that family income is maximised.

Human Resources - Ensures the effective implementation of the Recruitment Policy and Induction Procedures and that all staff employed to work with children, young people and adults with needs for care and support are subject to the appropriate external checks including, where relevant, Disclosure and Barring checks, prior to appointment. The Learning and Development team also maintains a database of all posts giving the level and type of safeguarding training required for each of these and when this requires updating.

Designated Roles in Epping Forest District Council

Elected Member Champion

The Portfolio Holder for Safer, Greener & Transport holds the position of Member Champion for Safeguarding and is responsible for attending the Corporate Safeguarding Group and promoting the importance of safeguarding amongst all Members.

Safeguarding Lead Professional

This position is held by the Director of Communities and has overall accountability for safeguarding children, young people and adults with needs for care and support. Their responsibilities include:

- to ensure that the arrangements set out in this policy are in place and followed to by all Council staff and Elected Members.
- to ensure that the Council effectively discharges its duties under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 and Section 11 of The Children Act 2004 and promotes inter-agency co-operation and information sharing.
- to oversee procedures in relation to allegations made against a member of staff, which are carried out by the Council's Assistant Director – Human Resources or their Deputy.
- to maintain a high level of senior management commitment to the importance of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults with care or support needs.

Safeguarding Lead Officer

The Safeguarding Lead Officer is the Assistant Director Community Services and Safety, who is responsible for advising the Lead Professional in regard to concerns, referrals and safeguarding allegations against staff. They also have overall responsibility for ensuring that staff are aware of the Council's commitment to safeguarding, are appropriately trained and fully understand their responsibilities. This work includes:

- chairing and managing the Council's Corporate Safeguarding Group.
- advising the Council on new legislation, procedures and policy and updating the relevant documentation.
- Reviewing the statutory Section 11 Safeguarding Audit Inspections on behalf of the Council.
- ensuring there are clear lines of accountability for safeguarding including those services provided through external contractors, such as leisure centres.

- to ensure that all information regarding safeguarding is held confidentially, in a central database, and in accordance with the Council's Data Protection Policy.
- acting as safeguarding advisor and expert to the Council.
- acting as the Council's main link with the Essex Safeguarding Children and Adult Boards.
- acting as the Chair of the West Essex Stay Safe multi-agency group.

Safeguarding Lead Deputies

The Safeguarding Lead Deputies are the Community Safety Manager, Housing Options Manager, Community Health & Wellbeing Manager and Fraud Investigation and Intervention Officer and the Tenant Liaison Officer. These officers deputise for the Safeguarding Lead Officer as and when required.

Designated Safeguarding Reporting Officers

Those staff members attending the Corporate Safeguarding Group are known as the Designated Reporting Officers. They are responsible for disseminating safeguarding information, identifying training requirements of staff and providing best practice examples within their service areas.

Named Senior Officer (whistleblowing – allegations against staff)

The Assistant Director (Human Resources) is the first point of call for staff reporting safeguarding allegations against employees and refers to the Lead Professional and Lead Officer on this.

Deputy Named Senior Officer (whistleblowing – allegations against staff)

This is the Senior HR Officer who will deputise for the HR Assistant Director in their absence.

Safeguarding Officer

The Safeguarding Officer is responsible for the management and implementation of the Council's Safeguarding Policy and Procedures; for monitoring the Safeguarding Strategy and for the co-ordination and promotion of safeguarding training across the Council for all staff, volunteers and Elected Members. They are the single point of contact for safeguarding cases across all Directorates of the Council, ensuring cases are referred to the appropriate external agencies and that they are recorded, monitored and reviewed in accordance with relevant Council policies and procedures.

Safeguarding Administration Assistant

Supports the Safeguarding Officer in the delivery of safeguarding initiatives.

The role of Council Staff and Members

Service Directors

Service Directors are responsible for ensuring that Assistant Directors, Managers and staff within their Directorate are aware of the contents of this Policy and the accompanying Procedures. Also, that the Council's duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, young people and adults with needs for care and support are met and effectively discharged. They are additionally responsible for:

- developing local arrangements for safeguarding/promoting the welfare of vulnerable people as it relates to the duties and functions of their service area and within annual business plans and service action plans.
- ensuring that the Council's Safe Recruitment Policy is implemented and that an appropriate level of DBS checks are undertaken for new staff, as appropriate, and renewed for all relevant staff every three years.
- ensuring that staff refer any safeguarding concerns to Essex Police (where a vulnerable child/person is in immediate danger or where a crime may have been committed), or to the Safeguarding Team who may refer on to Social Care.

- ensuring that the appropriate level of safeguarding training is undertaken by all staff as per service requirements. This includes existing staff and those new to the service/authority as part of their induction.

In carrying out these responsibilities, they will have regard to the following matters (amongst others):

- the appropriateness of interviewing customers with children, young people and adults with needs for care and support present, in light of matters under discussion.
- the appropriateness of photographing children, young people and adults with needs for care and support by members of the general public at Council events, and the need to obtain permission of parents/guardians to use photographs in promotional material.
- the appropriateness of staff having physical contact with children, young people and adults with needs for care and support except in certain circumstances e.g. assisting a child or young person participating in sports activity such as gymnastics/trampolining.
- the provision of first aid by Council staff to children, young people, and adults with needs for care and support.

Assistant Directors, Managers and Supervisors

Assistant Directors, Managers and Supervisors are responsible for complying with the requirements of this Policy and accompanying Procedures. Also, for the promotion of a staff culture which recognises the rights of children, young people and adults with needs for care and support and the Council's responsibility for their safety when receiving its services.

They will also ensure that:

- this Policy and accompanying Procedures are clearly published and understood by all staff working within their area of responsibility. They must ensure that any matters of concern are reported as per the Safeguarding Procedures and that appropriate follow-up action is taken.
- Line Managers and supervisors check that all procedures and working practices are up-to-date, including risk assessments, and that these are always reviewed when an incident occurs or modifications to working practices take place. Any risks identified must be notified to the relevant Service Director and an action plan devised to manage, reduce or remove the risk.
- Service Managers that provide direct services for children, young people and adults with needs for care and support, where practicable, ensure that these groups are involved in the planning and development of services provided and seek feedback on service delivery to enable effective review.

HR Operational Team

The Human Resources Team is responsible for ensuring that safe recruitment procedures are in place and that appropriate checks are made, including Disclosure and Barring Service Checks prior to any employee who will have unsupervised and substantial contact with children and young people or who will undertake certain prescribed activities with adults with care or support needs, before starting work with the Council. The HR Assistant Director also has lead responsibility for dealing with allegations against members of staff.

Employees

All employees, volunteers and agency staff are responsible for complying with the requirements of this Policy and Procedures or actions in place. Staff should take all reasonable steps to ensure (within the context of their duties) that risks are minimised and that vulnerable people are protected and their welfare promoted when using Council services. To effectively implement this policy, **all** employees have a responsibility to:

- be aware of, and abide by this Policy and accompanying Procedures.
- undertake safeguarding training at the level identified in respect of their work.
- ensure that they work in such a way that they do not place vulnerable people in a position of risk.
- report any incidents of concern with respect to safeguarding to their line manager immediately.
- co-operate with any risk assessment process undertaken by their manager or designated person.
- ensure that they behave appropriately towards any children, young person or adult with needs for care and support who they come into contact with whilst carrying out their duties.

- seek advice as per the procedures in respect to any issues that they have concerning safeguarding or the welfare of children, young people and adults with needs for care and support.

Employees who come into contact with children, young people or adults with needs for care and support whilst working away from their office base, or whilst lone working, must act in an appropriate manner and not put themselves at risk from allegations of inappropriate behaviour.

Elected Members

The Council is committed to ensuring that its Elected Members are appropriately trained and aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and those of the authority. This includes awareness of the Council's safeguarding duties under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004.

Contractors

Epping Forest District Council will take all reasonable steps to ensure that contractors working for the Council are monitored appropriately. All contractors and sub-contractors working with, or providing services for, the Council are required to demonstrate they have their own Safeguarding Policy and Procedures or agree to sign up to the EFDC Safeguarding Policy and Procedures to ensure they meet the Council's safeguarding requirements. The Council will also ensure that contractors doing work on its behalf are monitored appropriately.

Where contact with children and adults with care or support needs is a necessary part of the contracted service, it is the responsibility of the manager who is using the services of the contractor to ensure that satisfactory DBS checks have been completed where appropriate.

Contractors will not undertake work in Council properties unless children are supervised by a responsible adult, and will inform the tenant accordingly.

Grant Applications

As a minimum, any organisation receiving funding from the Council will be expected to have a statement of policy and procedure regarding safeguarding in place, understood by employees and volunteers and available to service users. This applies to all organisations the Council awards grants to, irrespective of how the grant has been awarded.

Safe Recruitment

It is a criminal offence for an employer not to undertake the appropriate checks on an employee working with children, young people and adults with care or support needs, or to knowingly give a job to someone who is inappropriate to work with these groups. The Council has adopted the Essex Safeguarding Children Board's Recruitment and Employment Standards and takes all reasonable steps to ensure that unsuitable people are prevented from working with vulnerable groups, regardless of their position. All job descriptions are risk assessed to identify which roles are likely to involve regular substantial unsupervised contact with children and adults with care or support needs. For all new employees, confirmation of employment will be dependent on satisfactory checks where appropriate.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Enhanced Plus checks are sought where staff will have unsupervised and substantial contact with children and young people or who will undertake certain prescribed activities with adults with care or support needs as part of their duties or responsibilities.

Confidentiality

Employees have a duty to share information relating to suspected abuse with Social Care and the Police. Employees must not discuss any allegations of abuse or bullying, substantiated or not:

- with anyone from EFDC other than with their line manager and other designated members of staff as outlined in the Safeguarding Procedure.
- with any member of an external agency (excluding Essex Social Care and Essex Police), other than as part of a formal investigation.
- with any other interested party, including parents, carers and relatives of the child, young person or adult with needs for care and support without the express permission of the person with overall responsibility for the investigation.

This does not exclude the employee from the need or right to consult with a solicitor, trade union representative or other bona fide legal adviser.

Supervision

Employers are responsible for ensuring that their staff are competent to carry out their responsibilities for safeguarding and creating an environment where they feel able to raise concerns and feel supported in their safeguarding role.

The term supervision can be considered where a member of staff has a meeting with their line manager to discuss work issues. This might mean in a group but would more usually mean a 1-1 meeting with their manager. These meetings might be planned or ad hoc and could involve monitoring work in hand, reviewing progress against work plans, discussing problems and concerns, developing solutions and delegating new tasks and projects.

At Induction, all EFDC staff are familiarised with their safeguarding responsibilities and the procedures to be followed if they have any concerns. Each member of staff has an annual Personal Development Review (PDR) which analyses their working practise over the previous year, identifies gaps in learning and enables staff to discuss training opportunities.

Being a witness to, hearing about, or supporting a child or vulnerable adult through abuse can be very distressing. Staff will be supported by their line managers and EFDC through regular supervision sessions and other support mechanisms. For example, staff can access up to five counselling sessions, financed by HR and if necessary five extra sessions can be financed by their manager, to enable the staff member to 'process' what they have seen and heard.

Training

The level to which individual employee training is required is determined in accordance with the training guidance issued by the Essex Safeguarding Children and Adults Boards. All Council staff are required to undertake safeguarding training to a level appropriate to their role.

Staff who don't work directly with children and adults with care or support needs will receive safeguarding training via the Council's e-learning modules on the intranet. Staff who work directly with vulnerable groups will undertake a minimum of Level 2 Integrated Safeguarding Training to enable them to be equipped with the knowledge and confidence to identify and refer any incidents of abuse.

All Managers will undertake training to ensure that they have a sound working knowledge of relevant legislation, fully understand their duty of care and responsibilities and can be advocates of best practice in safeguarding.

All EFDC Managers are responsible for carrying out the correct safeguarding induction process for all new members of staff, including ensuring that all new staff attend safeguarding training to a level appropriate to their role within 3 months of their appointment. It is recommended that refresher training should be carried out every 3 years. Employees are also directed to access key information within the Safeguarding section on the Intranet.

Complaints

The Council has a formal complaints procedure for customers who are unhappy if they feel the Council has:

- not done something it should have done.
- done something it should not have done.
- agreed to do something but have then been slow to act.

The process enables the Council to deal with customer's complaints as quickly and effectively as possible for a mutually satisfactory outcome. However, the procedure cannot deal with complaints where customers have:

- a formal or legal right of appeal.
- problems which need to be decided by the courts.
- if they let more than 12 months go by before telling the Council about the problem.

In these cases the Council will inform customers to write to instead.

Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing is the mechanism by which staff can voice their concerns, made in good faith, without fear of repercussion. Staff should understand their individual responsibilities to bring matters of concern to the attention of senior management and/or relevant external agencies, which is particularly important where the welfare of children and young people and adults with needs for care and support may be at risk.

All staff should feel able to discuss with their line manager any difficulties or problems that may affect their relationship with vulnerable people so that appropriate support can be provided or action can be taken. Staff should:

- be familiar with methods for raising and recording concerns.
- take responsibility for recording any incident and passing on that information to the relevant people within the Council in the appropriate manner.
- report any behaviour by colleagues which raises concern.
- discuss any concerns with their line manager if they believe a service is being provided which may result in putting a child, young person or adult with needs for care and support at risk.

The Council's Whistleblowing Policy (also known as the Confidential Reporting Policy) covers staff concerns about colleagues in regard to safeguarding children, young people and adults with needs for care and support.

Some may find it difficult to raise safeguarding or other concerns about colleagues or managers due to fear of repercussions. The Policy therefore provides guidance and assurance regarding the process to be followed in respect of raising concerns. It also provides details of alternative ways to report concerns confidentially, outside of the Council.

Allegations against Staff or Members

The Council takes seriously any complaints made about the conduct of staff and volunteers in respect of their contact with children, young people, families and adults with needs for care and support. This includes any person who works with children or adults that has, in any connection with her/his employment, voluntary activity or in a personal capacity:

- behaved in a way that has, or may have harmed a child, young person or adult with needs for care and support.
- possibly committed a criminal offence against, or related to, a child, young person or adult with needs for care and support, or;
- behaved in a way which indicated they are unsuitable to work with children, young people or adults with needs for care and support.

All allegations received by the Council will be investigated fully, and, where applicable, action will be taken against the member of staff via the disciplinary procedure. If deemed necessary, the member of staff will be re-deployed or suspended whilst the investigation takes place. The decision to suspend lies with the appropriate Director, or in their absence, the Chief Executive or another member of the Management Board.

In the event of a serious allegation against a member of staff regarding children, the Council will follow the procedures set out in the Southend, Essex and Thurrock (SET) Procedures and will involve the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) employed by Essex County Council. Support is routinely offered to all staff who are subject to an allegation. In the case of malicious or unfounded allegations being made against a member of staff by a colleague in the Council or a member of the public, the Council will treat this very seriously and take any necessary action accordingly. Safeguarding allegations against Elected Members will be treated the same way as an allegation against a member of public. This will involve a referral to Essex Police, who will conduct a full investigation into any allegation made.

Safeguarding Reporting Procedures

The SET (Southend, Essex and Thurrock) safeguarding guidelines outline the basic safeguarding procedures which should be followed by all local authorities in Essex. The Council has developed simplified procedures,

which accompany this Policy, in regard to safeguarding issues and concerns and requires all staff and members to follow these.

However, there may be occasions when agencies in another county have to be contacted to report a safeguarding concern – for example, if an incident occurred at an EFDC facility based in a neighbouring county. Emergency information for these teams is given at the end of the accompanying Procedures.

Information Sharing

All staff and Members are responsible for keeping safeguarding information confidential, outside of sharing this with appropriate officers within the Council. Where staff become aware of any issues relating to the protection of a vulnerable person, these concerns must be reported immediately as per the Council's Safeguarding Procedures. Elected Members should report their concerns directly to the Council's Lead Officer or a Lead Deputy. Information should not be shared with a third party and should always be shared lawfully and ethically. Information relevant to protection of children, young people and adults with care or support needs will be about:

- their health and development and exposure to possible harm.
- a parent or carer who is unable to provide adequate care for them; or
- other individuals who may present a risk of harm.

Care must be taken to ensure that the vulnerable person's confidentiality is maintained and that information is handled and shared on a need to know basis. Individuals must be confident that information held about them by the Council will only be disclosed to others either with their consent or when there is a legal duty to do so. Once a report has been made, the Safeguarding Team will decide who to share the information with and this will depend on the following:

- the urgency of the concern.
- if the concern relates to a disclosure by a child and young person, or, adult with needs for care and support.
- if other services may come into contact with the vulnerable person, child or the child's parents/carers.
- if advice is needed on a case which may require assessment for intervention.

The Government expects organisations to share information about individuals who may be at risk of abuse as early as possible so that individuals can be protected. Withholding information may lead to abuse not being dealt with in a timely manner. No member of staff should assume that someone else will pass on information which they think may be critical to keeping a vulnerable person safe. If they have concerns and believe a vulnerable person is suffering or likely to suffer harm, then they should share the information. Staff have a duty to share information related to suspected abuse, and consent is not required to breach confidentiality and make safeguarding referrals where:

- a serious crime has been committed.
- the alleged perpetrator may go on to abuse other victims.
- the child, young person or adult is deemed to be at serious risk.
- there is a statutory requirement eg. Children's Act, Mental Health Act and Care Standards Act.
- other adults with needs for care and support are at risk in some way.
- the public interest overrides the interest of the individual.
- when a member of staff of a statutory service, a private or voluntary service or a volunteer is the person accused of abuse, malpractice or poor professional standards.

Often, it is only when information from a number of sources has been shared, collated and analysed, that it becomes clear that a vulnerable person is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm.

Risk Assessment

A risk assessment is an important part in protecting employees and customers, as well as complying with the law and should be integral to all planning processes. It helps identify risks that really matter – the ones with the potential to cause real harm. The law does not expect the Council to eliminate all risk, but it is required to protect people as far as 'reasonably practicable'.

All staff who work with vulnerable children, young people and adults need to be aware of the risks and complete a risk assessment for any activities they develop and deliver. This is simply a careful examination of

what could cause harm to people, to ensure that the appropriate measures are put in place to prevent this from happening. The primary aim of a risk assessment is to establish:

- current risks that people face.
- potential risks that they and other adults may face.
- if there are any risks to others.

Assessment of risk is dynamic and ongoing and should be reviewed throughout so that adjustments can be made in response to changes in the levels and nature of risk.

Data Protection

All copies of the Safeguarding Report Form (the form used by staff to raise safeguarding concerns to the Safeguarding Team) are retained on the Council's secure database in accordance with data protection periods and as per the Retention of Records Policy.

All copies of Referral Forms sent to Essex Social Care are retained by the Safeguarding Team in a secure location to ensure confidentiality. This information is retained in accordance with data protection periods and no other copies are kept.

External Agencies

The role of Essex County Council

Essex County Council has responsibilities as the Children's Services Authority and as provider of Adult Social Care for Essex. It has a duty to conduct Section 47 (s.47) enquiries where there is reasonable cause to suspect a child who lives in, or is found in a local authority area, is suffering from or likely to suffer significant harm in the form of physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect. There is now a duty under the new Care Act to conduct enquiries regarding adults.

All other statutory organisations in Essex including EFDC have a duty to assist and provide information in support of s.47 child protection enquiries. The Council requires all staff within the organisation to refer or report safeguarding concerns, incidents and allegations to Essex Social Care or directly to the county-wide Initial Response Team in respect of children and young people. This may be done directly by staff in emergencies but is usually carried out via the Council's Safeguarding Team as per the Safeguarding Procedures.

The relevant officers at Essex County Council are then responsible for coordinating any safeguarding investigation under s.47 of the Children Act 2004.

The role of the Essex Safeguarding Boards

Essex Safeguarding Children's Board (ESCB) is a statutory multi-agency organisation, which brings together agencies who work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. The objective of this Board is to coordinate and oversee the work of local partners and agencies in regard to safeguarding and to advise and direct improved safeguarding practice.

The Essex Safeguarding Adults Board (ESAB) is an inter-agency forum for agreeing how the different services and professional groups should cooperate to safeguard adults with needs for care and support across Essex. It also makes sure that arrangements work effectively to identify abuse or inadequate care, help vulnerable people and plan and implement joint preventative strategies. The Board aims to raise awareness and promote the welfare of adults with care or support needs by the development of an effective cooperative, involving people from a wide range of public and voluntary services and other organisations.

The role of the West Essex Stay Safe Group

The West Essex Stay Safe Group consists of representatives from a range of agencies including NHS, Essex Social Care, Police, Probation, Education, Voluntary Sector and District Councils. This group is responsible for developing an action plan to improve safeguarding practice across the West area and for considering actions to address emerging issues.

Monitoring and Review

This Policy will be reviewed annually by the Safeguarding Lead Officer unless legislation or processes change in the interim. Monitoring mechanisms include:

- Section 11 audits.
- engagement with Essex Safeguarding Boards and sub groups.
- internal audits.
- recording of staff training at different levels.
- reporting to the Council's Senior Management Team and Leadership Team.
- Special Case Reviews/Domestic Homicide Reviews and safeguarding reviews.

Other relevant EFDC documents

Other EFDC policies and procedures that may be read in conjunction with, or be linked to, this policy are:

- Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults Procedure
- Compliments and Complaints Booklet
- Honour Based Abuse Policy and Procedures
- Whistleblowing Policy (Confidential Reporting)
- Recruitment Policy and Procedures
- Dignity at Work Policy
- Domestic Violence in the Workplace – Policy and Manager's Toolkit
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- A Guide to Risk Management for Managers and the Risk Assessment Template
- Retention of Records Policy
- Safe Working Practice Guide
- Staff Handbook
- Prevent Policy

Staff should monitor internal Council bulletins and Intranet pages for new and updated versions of relevant safeguarding policies.

External documents

- Essex County Council Early Years & Children - How to respond to Safeguarding Concerns.
- Essex County Council Early Years & Children - Safeguarding Guidance.
- Essex County Council - Support for Disabled Children and Young People and their Families in Essex.
- Essex Safeguarding Children's Board - Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex.

This policy is intended to support staff working within EFDC and is supplementary to the:

- Southend, Essex & Thurrock (SET) - Child Protection Procedures.
- Southend, Essex & Thurrock (SET) - Safeguarding Adult Guidelines.

The Council's Intranet also has information in the 'Safeguarding' section on the legal framework which makes references to legislation which staff might find useful eg. The Children Act 1989 and 2004.