

Report to: Cabinet



Date of Meeting 14 July 2021

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Safeguarding policy refresh

Report summary:

Districts across Devon have produced and have adopted a joint safeguarding policy designed to protect children and vulnerable adults. In raising safeguarding standards we have seen that we are all working towards the same outcomes and that a consistent policy approach has proven useful. The policy covers children and adults in one high level statement, and also incorporates modern slavery and counter terrorism. It is intended to update and replace our existing safeguarding policy.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendation:

To adopt and implement the Joint Safeguarding Policy

Reason for recommendation:

To ensure that we have a 'fit for purpose' safeguarding policy in place for the organisation.

Officer: John Golding Strategic Lead – Housing, Health & Environment.

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Climate Action and Emergencies
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- Culture, Tourism, Leisure and Sport
- Democracy and Transparency
- Economy and Assets
- Finance
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities

Equalities impact Medium Impact

The equalities considerations are as set out in the report and the policy. The policy itself and processes that underpin the policy are an important way of reducing inequality and ensuring that vulnerable people are protected.

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Low Risk;

Links to background information

Link to [Council Plan](#):

Priorities (check which apply)

- Outstanding Place and Environment
 - Outstanding Homes and Communities
 - Outstanding Economic Growth, Productivity, and Prosperity
 - Outstanding Council and Council Services
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1. Background

- 1.1 We have adopted policies for staff and members to follow that sets out our roles and responsibilities for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. The district's Safeguarding Leads in Devon have produced a combined policy drawing on good practice found in existing safeguarding policies to ensure that we all have access to a policy that is relevant and appropriate. The updated version of the proposed county wide policy is shown at **annex 1**. The approach is to have a single countywide policy for safeguarding under which individual procedures can sit reflecting any local variation of practices.
- 1.2 The policy sets out a series of high level aims and goes into detail on the responsibilities to provide clarity on who should be doing what.
- 1.3 In essence we have a duty to work with other agencies and the policy reminds us of the Council's responsibility under the Children Act 2004, the Care Act 2014 and related legislation, which is essentially to ensure that our functions are discharged with regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and other vulnerable groups.
- 1.4 We have a shared responsibility with a variety of statutory agencies to protect children and vulnerable adults from harm, ensure their safety, and prevent impairment of their health or development. As a partner agency we appreciate that safeguarding is not just the duty of Social Services and child protection specialists.
- 1.5 Typically in a district council our staff and Members in housing, environmental health, Countryside, benefits and leisure have the most contact with children and families, and vulnerable adults. Other Services and Members will also get involved in service delivery where we come into contact with families and children. As an example, in Housing we are involved in homeless situations; anti-social behaviour; community development; children's cases conferences; investigating housing conditions etc. that requires close working with Social Workers, and there will be examples in other Services where operationally we come in to contact with children and their support workers.
- 1.6 As a minimum all employees, elected members and partners/contractors should become familiar with our adopted safeguarding policy and procedures on how to report and handle incidents where we suspect abuse or neglect.

2. The Council's Commitments

- 2.1 We have set out a series of commitments in the Policy which says that we will seek to tackle and manage safeguarding concerns.
- 2.2 We have raised awareness of our duties through the staff welcome process, making safeguarding mandatory training for staff, managers meetings and reports to Strategic Management Team. There is training available through the our Learning provider for

frontline staff that come into regular face to face contact with customers and require more than just an awareness of the issues.

- 2.3 We have encouraged managers to reinforce awareness of safeguarding issues with their teams at team meetings to help keep this important duty in our corporate consciousness.
- 2.4 There has been a number of high profile safeguarding issues in the media recently depicting horrendous incidents and highlighting organisational failures. This policy update will help to ensure that we meet our legal and moral obligations towards safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.
- 2.5 In adopting a simplified policy it will be necessary to underpin this policy with procedures that set out how staff and members should deal with particular situations. We draw on good practice and advice from our Safeguarding Boards to ensure that we have a policy and procedure that is clear and easy to follow.
- 2.6 Our attendance as a member of the Devon Districts Safeguarding Officers Network, which has representatives from both safeguarding boards and the other Devon Districts, ensures that we are aware of all relevant local updates, changes and emerging threats. We share these updates with our Safeguarding Leads for cascading to our frontline staff.

Financial implications:

There are no direct financial implications from the recommendation made in this report.

Legal implications:

The legal framework which results in the need for this policy is set out within the report and the policy itself and requires no further comment. This policy is not part of the Policy Framework and therefore can be adopted by Cabinet.