

Report to: Cabinet



Date of Meeting 29 November 2023

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

Safeguarding Policy Review

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 taken the Devon Districts Safeguarding Policy as an overarching framework and included some additional requirements to the original policy specific to East Devon District Council. The wider policy covers children and adults in one high level statement, and also incorporates modern slavery and counter terrorism. The East Devon District Safeguarding policy is now to be considered alongside the wider Devon Districts Safeguarding policy for all staff, members, other workers and volunteers of East Devon District Council.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendation:

To adopt and implement the updated East Devon District Council Safeguarding Policy

Reason for recommendation:

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

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Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

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

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. Equalities Impact Assessment conducted at initial creation of the policy in 2015.

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Medium Risk; failure to take action around Safeguarding is a Medium risk as we have an existing Policy and reviewing this policy keeps it current with learning and legislation and therefore a continued mitigation against those risks occurring.

Links to background information

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- Better homes and communities for all
 - A greener East Devon
 - A resilient economy
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Report in full

1. Background

- 1.1 The Council has adopted policies for staff and members to follow, that set out our roles and responsibilities for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. The district Safeguarding Leads in Devon have produced a combined policy as part of the Devon Districts Safeguarding Officers Network, drawing on good practice found in existing safeguarding policies to ensure that we all have access to a policy that is relevant and appropriate, this year we have adapted to create a new policy to reflect East Devon District Council's (EDDC) specific way of working. The East Devon District Council safeguarding policy is to be considered in conjunction with the wider Devon District Councils safeguarding policy moving forward for East Devon District Council. The Devon District Councils joint safeguarding policy was last reviewed and presented to Cabinet in July 2021. The East Devon District Council Safeguarding policy has been developed to include the recommendations from the Verita report, our response to the 2022 Self-assessment audit commissioned by The Devon Children's Safeguarding Partnership and feedback from local training delivery. The proposed policy is shown at annex 1.
- 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's 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 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, development of an Internal Safeguarding Forum and reports to the Senior Leadership Team.
- 2.3 There is now mandatory training on induction which is renewable every three years. Also available through our Learning provider is a Level 2 course for frontline staff that come into regular face to face contact with customers and require more than just an awareness of the issues. We have also provided an ongoing package of safeguarding training for Elected Members, Senior Leadership Team, and bespoke enhanced safeguarding/mental capacity act training for staff.
- 2.4 The EDDC Safeguarding Forum has been in place since November 2022 it is made up of representatives including the safeguarding lead, safeguarding champions, Housing and Benefit managers and safeguarding support officers. The forum meets every two months to discuss the direction of safeguarding delivery internally, monitoring how we are currently working and drawing on National/County and local learning to inform staff and keep their knowledge current around emerging trends.
- 2.5 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.
- 2.6 In adopting a standalone policy that dovetails with the wider Devon Districts 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.
- 2.7 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 Champions and through our forum for cascading to our frontline staff.

3 Enhancements

- 3.1 Enhancements to the Devon Districts Joint Safeguarding policy have been made to the following sections of the existing policy in addition to minor wording changes, to produce the East Devon policy.
 - 3.1 Aims of Policy,
 - 4.4 Volunteer policy & Members Code of Conduct included.
 - 5.3 & 5.6 Councillor Safeguarding Lead and Champion.
 - 5.5 Designation of Assistant Director/Director as Champions.
 - 5.7 inclusion of line manager and champions.
 - 5.12 leads reference change to champion and inclusion of line manager role.
 - 5.13 champion reference and mandatory training requirement.
 - 5.15 Councillor's responsibilities.
 - 5.17 LADO liaison. Accompanied LADO meeting attendance consultation with safeguarding lead and reference to EDDC Safeguarding Forum.
- Appendix 1 inclusion of process flowchart

4 Conclusion

4.1 The proposed amendments build on the Devon Districts' Safeguarding Policy and take into account changes since it was adopted by East Devon.

4.2 The amended policy is now tailored to East Devon procedures and practices.

Financial implications:

There are no direct financial implications identified from the recommendations in this report.

Legal implications:

This is an important policy and it is important that it is regularly reviewed and updated, to ensure it is robust and in accordance with best practice. As it is not part of the policy framework, it can be adopted by the Cabinet.