

Annual Council – 14 May 2025

Annual Report of the Member Champion for Safeguarding

Councillor John Heath

I interacted with two councillors with issues with social services in 2023-2024 providing advice & support.

I have gone through the process of referring concerns to MASH to two councillors during 2024 and ensuring there is an audit trail.

I have offered my services of welfare assessment to asylum seekers being placed in East Devon under a resettlement scheme.

The Bi-annual Safeguarding Champions Meeting

Rationale and Terms of Reference

East Devon District Council (EDDC) believes that all children, young people and adults have the right to be safe, happy and healthy and deserve protection from abuse. The council is committed to safeguarding from harm all children, young people and adults with care and support needs using any council services and involved in any of their activities, and to treat them with respect during their dealings with the council, our partners, and contractors.

For this reason, we have a Safeguarding Policy that sets out responsibilities and roles. One of which is the Safeguarding Champion (Officer and Member).

The Safeguarding Champion's role is to work individually and collectively to:

- Be aware of safeguarding issues relating to adults, children, young people and their families, and understand the different types of abuse, neglect and know how to spot the signs of abuse and neglect so any advice or guidance is tailored appropriately.
- Understand the 6 main principles of safeguarding; empowerment, prevention, protection, proportionality, partnerships and accountability and ensures that the advice and guidance they give follows those principles.
- Support the promotion of a safe working environment and a culture of care in which the rights of all children, young people and adults with care and support needs are protected and respected and have the right to be safe.
- Ensure the importance of "listening to the voice of the child or adult at risk" and responding appropriately is at the forefront of a safe working environment and a culture of care.
- Promote best practice in how employees, councillors and associated workers interact with children and young people and ensuring a shared responsibility where needed and supporting adults at risk.

- To act as a resource and a point of contact for colleagues who require support and guidance with safeguarding issues.

It is not the role of a Safeguarding Champion to be responsible for the submission of referrals on behalf of a service area or another Officer or Councillor.

Officers' Safeguarding Champion (Safeguarding Policy Responsibility)

- Receiving concerns, discussing them with whoever has raised the concern and taking advice from the relevant partner agency/County Council service: this could include complex matters such as consent and whether parents/carers should be notified.
- To always maintain confidentiality and not to discuss specific cases beyond the officer involved, except where there is a need to escalate (see below).
- Ensuring the procedure is followed on such matters as making a referral, confidentiality, and recording.
- Assist the Corporate Safeguarding Lead in implementing the policy.
- Provide advice and support to colleagues and promote good practice across the organisation.
- Attending appropriate courses and updating of safeguarding legislation.
- Liaise with the Corporate and Member Safeguarding Leads and the Member Safeguarding Champions through the biannual Safeguarding Champion meeting to ensure that the safeguarding policy is being implemented, that safeguarding process issues are addressed appropriately and that learning is shared across the Council.
- To raise any concerns regarding safeguarding in relation to staff or contractors to the Corporate Safeguarding Lead.

Member Safeguarding Champion (Safeguarding Policy Responsibility)

- Support the Officer Safeguarding Lead in implementing the policy.
- To always maintain confidentiality and not to discuss specific cases beyond the councillor involved, except where there is a need to escalate (see below).
- Provide advice and support where required to other Councillors on such matters as making a referral, confidentiality, and recording.
- Liaise with the Corporate and Member Safeguarding Leads and the Officer Safeguarding Champions through the biannual Safeguarding Champion meeting to ensure that the safeguarding policy is being implemented, that safeguarding process issues are addressed appropriately and that learning is shared across the Council.
- Promote good practice and understanding of the policy amongst Councillors.

- To raise any concerns regarding safeguarding processes in relation to Councillors to the Member and Corporate Safeguarding Leads.

There will be a biannual Safeguarding Champions meeting to support the delivery of the Safeguarding Policy. The purpose of the meeting is:

- To provide a biannual meeting for all Safeguarding Champions to meet to network and share best practice across the service areas in how “safeguarding” as a topic is being promoted and highlighted across the entirety of the Council.
- To receive up to date information from the Safeguarding Forum Chair, of national, regional and local relevance and an opportunity to receive presentations and updates from expert / guest speakers on matters relevant to safeguarding.
- To allow discussion of safeguarding policies and procedures within the Council to maintain awareness and effectively advise staff within their service area and Councillors about referral processes, etc.
- To provide the opportunity for the Safeguarding Champions to discuss with the other safeguarding leads, areas they have identified for improvement within their own service area which can then be taken forward by the Safeguarding support team.
- To annually review the Council’s Safeguarding policies and processes and to make recommendations to the Member Safeguarding Lead and the Councillor Safeguarding Champion as to any changes that should be considered.
- To consider statistically information on Safeguarding activity across the Council and to make recommendations to the Member Safeguarding Lead and the Councillor Safeguarding Champion that arise from them.

Biannual Safeguarding Champions meeting attendees:

- Corporate Safeguarding Lead
- Member Safeguarding Lead
- Councillor Safeguarding Champion
- All Officer Safeguarding Champions
- Safeguarding Forum Support Team

Safeguarding Champions meeting 31/10/2024 1400-1600 at Blackdown House

- A hybrid meeting attended by Catrin Stark Corporate Safeguarding Lead, Matt Blythe, Andrew Hancock, Andy King, Emma Congerton, Tim Child, Ed Freeman, Andy Wood, Cllr Heath & Cllr Loudoun and hosted by the Safeguarding Forum Chair Dave Whelan.
- **EDDC Safeguarding Delivery**

Outlined some of the activity we undertake around Safeguarding for EDDC having developed and implemented the new policy. Talked about Governance, the EDDC safeguarding forum which meets quarterly to talk about operational aspects as well as additional support from Ambassadors and the Champions. Improved internal reporting mechanism via Firmstep. Mandatory safeguarding training for staff as well as awareness training for members. Links to safeguarding networks at a district level with reps from both the adult and children safeguarding boards, a review of the policy and reporting yearly to scrutiny.

- **What do we expect of our champions for their own areas of business?**

To lead and champion and share knowledge supportive of Line managers and officers/members who find that they need to talk through a safeguarding issue.

- **Reporting Levels - What does it tell us?**

1/1/24-30/09/2024 (9 months) Period of reporting 53 referrals 48 adult referrals 5 children, outlined that adult safeguarding and self-neglect is still the main concern and a focus for EDDC.

- **What are the different but Linked Processes/Routes**

Described 10 different reporting methods from reporting a concern to adult safeguarding, Adult Social Care aspects, Mental Health channels, Child safeguarding, Early Help for children and families, to the local GP.

- **Updates on the National Safeguarding Adult Reviews**

A run through of the national Sar review 2019-2023 a summary of 652 reviews which outlined that our needs were similar to the national perspective and the issues identified were similar as those we see in Devon, outlined Safeguarding Adult reviews. As an example we talked through a Devon based SAR such as SAR ERIK an Exeter based male who had been cuckooed with mental health challenges, who took his own life and the learning that comes from these unfortunate incidents around engagement, sharing information and supervision which is shared with front line staff as well as publicly shared on the Devon Safeguarding Adult website.

- **Mental Capacity Assessment**

Talked through Mental Capacity and its implications at point of engagement and the need for a greater awareness for our staff, and how we as an organization have and continue to run courses for our front-line staff and an awareness session so Champions could support and direct with knowledge around this important aspect of safeguarding for adults.

- **Information Sharing Legal Considerations**

Talked through Legal considerations of Information sharing, about sharing with consent or when there are occasions, we can share without consent.

- **Self-Neglect Findings**

Talked about self-neglect and the hoarding guidance developed by Devon County Council and some key learning points for staff and line managers awareness.

This was an awareness raising session linked to safeguarding to help Champions understand the different key aspects so they can provide support.