

Report to: Scrutiny Committee



Date of Meeting 04/09/2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

East Devon Safeguarding Annual Review 2024/2025

Report summary:

The report outlines the key deliverables that have been achieved during 2024/25 as part of East Devon District Council's Safeguarding responsibilities.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

Recommendation:

That Scrutiny Committee note the activity that has been taken with regards to Safeguarding delivery for 2024/25

Reason for recommendation:

No decisions are required, and the report is for informational purposes

Officer: David Whelan Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Officer

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- ☐ Assets and Economy
- ☐ Communications and Democracy
- ☒ Council, Corporate and External Engagement
- ☐ Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism
- ☐ Environment - Nature and Climate
- ☐ Environment - Operational
- ☐ Finance
- ☐ Place, Infrastructure and Strategic Planning
- ☐ Sustainable Homes and Communities

Equalities impact Low Impact

Whilst the implications from the report are low impact, the Safeguarding work would be considered high impact in terms of some groups with protected characteristics.

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Low Risk; Whilst the implications from the report are low risk, the Safeguarding work is considered a higher priority which is why we have measures in place to mitigate a risk area of business for vulnerable adults and children so we ensure that staff are supported, and reduce the risk of harm to members of the public.

Links to background information Click here to enter links to background information; appendices online; and previous reports. These must link to an electronic document. Do not include any confidential or exempt information.

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- ☒ A supported and engaged community
- ☐ Carbon neutrality and ecological recovery
- ☐ Resilient economy that supports local business
- ☐ Financially secure and improving quality of services

Introduction

East Devon District Council believe 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.

The Council also has a number of statutory obligations with regards to safeguarding. It has a Safeguarding policy which was updated and published in March 2024 and is due for review in 2026.

This report outlines the safeguarding work that the Council has undertaken in 2024/25.

General Safeguarding Submissions 2024/5

Table 1. Numbers of Safeguarding Referrals

Year	Adult Referrals	MASH (Child) Referrals	Main Reporting Services (%)
2023/24	65	3	Housing (75%) Revenues (20%)
2024/5	94	3	Housing (85%) (Revenues 10%)

As a District Council we are engaged with more adults at risk who require safeguarding than children and this is reflected in our safeguarding data. This is mainly due to our customer demographic. We continue to monitor our submissions to ensure we are aware of the issues for adults and children in East Devon. Our main areas of safeguarding submission come from our Housing colleagues (85%), followed by Revenue & Benefits including customer services (10%).

In 2024/25 East Devon District Council submitted 94 adult safeguarding referrals to Torbay & Devon Safeguarding Partnership (compared to 65 in 23/24 – see Table 1). Some forms were submitted to raise a concern for welfare or other form of assessment with Devon County Council Adult Social Care. We see this increase in reporting as a positive aspect linked to our awareness raising and the confidence we have given to staff through our safeguarding support work. We always ask staff to go with their gut feeling and err on the side of caution in relation to raising a

safeguarding concern. Self-neglect is still the predominant type of concern raised by EDDC with 63 out of the 94 submissions having a self-neglect element.

For Child Safeguarding referrals the process is slightly different as submissions to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) are direct via the Devon's Safeguarding Children Partnership (DSCP) website. Referrals for Children safeguarding by us remains low due to the nature of our business and other agencies greater levels of interaction, and they therefore take the more appropriate lead i.e. schools, health and police. There is currently no central feedback loop to us from DSCP for these direct submissions. We have raised this issue as part of the recent external section 11 audit. In 24/25 we made 3 submissions, this is similar to previous years submission figures. Even though our submission numbers are low we continually keep aware of the processes and remit for DSCP via MASH. We also regularly work with and provide support to children and young people as part of our multi-agency groups who have already been referred as a safeguarding concern. In these cases there is generally not a need for us to report as well.

Safeguarding Policy

In March 2024, the Council adopted an updated Safeguarding Policy. This is due for review in 2026, and we are starting the work now to ensure the Policy reflects current Safeguarding guidance and localised changes (i.e. upcoming DSCP changes regarding submission and triage process). Councillor Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) checks which were part of the policy review in 2024 are now published on the EDDC Website for openness and transparency.

Safeguarding Leads

Our Safeguarding policy identifies our Safeguarding Leads across the council with all Directors and Assistant Directors as our Officer Champions.

- Corporate Safeguarding Lead
- Councillor Safeguarding Lead
- Councillor Safeguarding Champion
- Safeguarding Forum Chair
- Safeguarding Operational Lead

Safeguarding Forum

The Safeguarding Forum is now well established and now meets quarterly under the guidance of the Corporate Safeguarding Lead. It includes managers and officers from the main services where safeguarding is a live issue (e.g. Housing, Revenue and Benefits, Environmental Health). The Forum continues to horizon scan looking at safeguarding policy, processes, training opportunities, external safeguarding trends and case reviews. The forum looks at submitted EDDC safeguarding concerns which make up the data above, these activities in turn further raises our awareness within the most relevant areas to safeguarding. The forum also considers any learning from published Safeguarding Adult Reviews and how this can be implemented in the Council's practice.

Safeguarding Champions

The policy requires that member and officer safeguarding champions are designated. Cllr Joe Whibley is the current member champion. Senior officers from all services currently act as member champions. Champions meet 6 monthly to discuss safeguarding issues, share knowledge and experience and ensure that learning from the forum is shared wider. A

Safeguarding Champions meeting was delivered during 2024/5 and we have had an initial meeting with Cllr. Whibley. We are currently arranging a further meeting for the end of October 2025.

Since the introduction of the policy, all Councillors are now subject to Disclosure Barring Service checks (see separate policy). All East Devon District Council members have had an up to date check and this information is publicly available on the website.

Safeguarding Training

We continue to deliver level 3 Safeguarding and Mental Capacity Assessment training for our front-line staff across the council to improve their knowledge base in these areas. We have also provided specific joint training for our Officer Champions and Member Champion (2024). Online Safeguarding awareness training is now a mandatory requirement for staff upon induction and subsequently every three years.

We maintain a dedicated intranet and internet pages for Safeguarding, with the intranet page holding current information and guidance relevant for staff who need to know more about safeguarding routes, external processes, points of contacts and our policies and procedures.

Member training has not been run since 2023. At that time there were 31 members who are recorded as undertaking the training when this was delivered just before and after the election by Spectrum training. We will work with Democratic Services to ensure the appropriate training opportunities are provided for members.

We have two sets of online safeguarding training for staff which we have set as mandatory training which needs to be completed every 3 years.

Safeguarding Adults training online 97% of staff have undertaken the training since joining of which 66% are currently in date (1st Sep 2025). We have sent out reminders to managers to ensure that officers refresh their training. We will continue to review and follow up.

Safeguarding Children's Training online 97% of staff have undertaken the training since training of which 60% are currently in date (1st Sep 2025). We have sent out reminders to managers to ensure that officers refresh their training. We will continue to review and follow up.

We will continue to monitor the compliance with mandatory training via updates to the safeguarding forum

We also have a face-to-face Safeguarding Level 3 mandatory training for staff working with vulnerable groups. 109 officers are currently trained. We are continuing to deliver this training and have further courses booked for October 2025 and March 2026. Additionally, we provide practical operational training and support to front-line services on an ad-hoc basis.

As part of the Section 11 audit action plan, we are looking for a review all our safeguarding training needs, including the work currently being undertaken by HR around identifying our core mandatory training, the requirement for any further bespoke training, and we have already started the process for increasing mandatory training compliance.

Internal Operational Processes

We continue to use a Firm step process for submission of our adult safeguarding forms to Devon County Council to maximise the capture and understanding of our corporate adult safeguarding risks. Unfortunately, this can't be done for Children submissions due to their external process.

We run several Operational Multi agency panels which focus on local anti-social behaviour (ASB) but also deal with the safeguarding aspects which can be associated with ASB.

ASB panels act as a problem-solving group to respond to adult antisocial behaviour and crime with a focus on trauma, diversion and safeguarding. They are held monthly by the Safeguarding operational lead.

ASB Intervention and Prevention Panel, is a multi-agency panel that deals with ASB and links to safeguarding to assist in resolving cases of significant youth related anti-social behaviour where a single agency approach cannot or has not brought about a resolution or acceptable mitigation aspects monthly meeting with links into multi-agency groups held monthly.

Partnership Work

We continue to be active members of the Devon Districts Safeguarding Network which meets quarterly and has meeting inputs from representatives of the Devon Safeguarding Children Partnership and the Torbay and Devon Safeguarding Adult Partnership (TDSAP) as well as links into the TDSAP Learning and Informing subgroup to ensure we are aware of national and county wide developments. This meeting allows the districts to be sighted on relevant safeguarding information, share good practice, as well as the ability to provide a shared response on issues which impact the Districts Devon wide.

In August 2025, we also completed a self-assessment children's safeguarding section 11 audit for Devon Safeguarding Children Partnership. Overall we assessed ourselves as good with particular outstanding aspects such as Governance, Policy & Procedures (and staff access to them), DBS check compliance and our training record keeping. But there were a few areas where we identified action required. As a result, we have developed an action plan.

- To review our training delivery (see above)
- Ensure our Policy review in 2026 still reflects the updated "working together 2023" guidance.
- A commitment that our recruitment is in line with the "safer recruitment process".

We are engaged with several Multi-Agency/Community Safety processes, that are key to local safeguarding work. Due to our roles we may not be the lead agency reporting or identifying safeguarding but work with adults and children who have been raised as a safeguarding concern by others and need our support to as part of that multi-agency group to reduce the risks they face.

We are active members of the Exeter Missing and Child Exploitation Meeting. It is aimed at preventing children and young people from being exploited by working together to gather, share and understand information and intelligence in order to identify potential risks and for agencies to use their resources to protect the child or young person. Child exploitation requires a multi-agency response

As part of local Prevent work we are a key agency who supports the local "Channel" process, Channel is a multi-agency approach to safeguarding and supporting individuals vulnerable to radicalization and extremism. It involves collaboration between local authorities, statutory partners (like social services, education, health, and offender management), and the police to identify, assess, and develop tailored support plans for those at risk.

We contribute to local Domestic Homicide Reviews. A Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) is a multi-agency review conducted when a person dies as a result of violence, abuse, or neglect by a

relative or someone with whom they had an intimate relationship. The purpose is to understand the circumstances surrounding the death and identify lessons to prevent future tragedies.

We work with our partners around modern slavery aspects and are a co-founder of the Devon & Torbay Modern Slavery MOU & Protocol which we are still signed up to.

Going Forwards

The focus for safeguarding work in 2025/26 will be to review the policy and ensure it captures the learning from external audits and national guidance and ensure that officer and member champions are fully engaged with the safeguarding work. We are also working to ensure that we have full oversight of the referrals being made into the two safeguarding partnerships, so that we can monitor effectiveness and take any learning points forward outside of the children and adult safeguarding process.

Conclusion

2024/25 was a stabilising year for how the Council delivers safeguarding which remains a high priority in all the Council's work. In 25/26 we are looking how we can develop stronger processes and increased safeguarding partnership links.

Financial implications:

There is no request for additional budget.

Legal implications:

The Council's statutory duties are set out in the Safeguarding Policy.