

Annual Council – 13 May 2026

Annual Report of the Councillor Champion for: Safeguarding

Councillor Joe Whibley

REPORT:

This report updates Council on the work of the Safeguarding Champion

Work Achieved during 2025/2026

Safeguarding is not the responsibility of a trained professional in an institution such as ours. Instead, **the job of safeguarding belongs to everybody**, all of the time. Yet for most people, it's something we'll never need to do. So, staying alert and being informed is of paramount importance.

We are lucky to have a workforce who's training includes safeguarding awareness, and the figures we will see later in this report show that our staff and contractors have the skills to carry out their responsibility when they encounter someone at risk.

However, we as councillors also carry this responsibility. In every interaction we have, at the back of the mind we need to be alert to signs of harm or risk. Usually, we don't see it, and usually that's because none exists. However, occasionally, we may witness subtle signs that don't quite sit right with us. That may be with an adult in our ward asking for help, it may be a situation with a child when we visit a house. It's incredibly important that we are aware of our responsibilities, and what to do.

East Devon has numerous safeguarding champions in various teams across all portfolios. As members, I am your representative. I welcome questions and input from all members, as do the other champions. Do you feel confident in your safeguarding responsibilities? Do you have a specific question regarding your practice? If not, please, please ask; there is no such thing as a stupid question when we are looking at reducing risk of harm. Also, if you experience something traumatic, or something which is difficult to process, talk to someone such as myself and don't try to cope alone - look after yourself.

Over the next year, we need to ensure that all staff have the relevant training, and that they feel confident in exercising their safeguarding responsibility. Training will follow for any members who have not received it.

In February, when safeguarding champions last met, we spoke about our biannual review of our safeguarding policy. This is informed by national policy, member need and the need of our residents. This is ongoing throughout 2026 and will be published when completed.

We have also noticed an upturn in members worrying about their own safety – I am happy to help take this forward and push for greater safeguards.

In terms of experiences in 2025, as is the norm for our council, the majority of cases dealt with were adult referrals. In the course of our workforce's working day, these are naturally the at-risk residents they encounter, especially when interacting with clients in our housing stock. When child protection issues occur, national guidelines are followed and they are referred to the LADO at Devon County Council where necessary.

I have had conversations with colleagues asking for reminders about how to access safeguarding procedures in the council. I will ensure that this is redistributed as soon as possible.

A new Multi-Agency Risk Management Framework has been implemented in Devon, with principles and guidance for operational use across partner organisations.

Where there is a high risk of harm to the person and a multi-agency approach would be beneficial, but the circumstances may sit outside of the statutory safeguarding adults framework, this comes into effect.

It exists as an early help mechanism to prevent people needing urgent or high levels of care.

In 2025, the following safeguarding statistics were recorded.

94 Safeguarding reports mainly for adults, often those in EDDC stock properties, broken down into the following categories:

- 61 Self Neglect
- 8 Mental Health
- 11 Domestic Violence
- 8 Exploitation
- 7 Concerns for Welfare

This led to 6 Safeguarding Annual Reviews, with a common theme throughout of tackling self-neglect.

As a reminder, the safeguarding member champion's role is as follows.

- Assist the Councillor Safeguarding Lead in implementing the policy.
- Provide advice and support where required to other Councillors.
- Liaise with Officer Safeguarding Champions to ensure that safeguarding issues are addressed appropriately, and that learning is shared across the Council.
- Promote good practice and understanding of the policy amongst Councillors.

As I have said, please contact me if you need advice, a chat or signposting to other services.

