

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND VULNERABLE ADULTS POLICY 2022-2025

People and Places Advisory Committee - 1 March 2022

Report of: Deputy Chief Executive, Chief Officer- People and Places

Status: For Decision

Also considered by:

- Cabinet - 17 March 2022
- Council - 26 April 2022

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary: To present the Council's updated Safeguarding Policy and to reflect all changes in legislation and working practices.

This report supports the Key Aim of: the Community Plan - (Safe Communities, Caring Communities, Healthy Environment)

Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Lesley Dyball

Contact Officer(s): Sarah Robson, Ext. 7219

Recommendation to People and Places Advisory Committee

To recommend to Cabinet to recommend to Council the adoption of the updated Safeguarding, Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy.

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Recommendation to Council:

To adopt the updated Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy.

Reason for recommendation: To enable the Council to meet its statutory responsibilities and to follow guidance published by the Department of Health and Kent County Council in relation to safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults. To ensure that all Council staff, Members, contractors and volunteers are aware of their professional and moral obligations for safeguarding.

Introduction and Background

- 1 Sevenoaks District Council has a statutory safeguarding role within the wider public sector. We have a responsibility to children, young people and vulnerable adults. The Council has the responsibility to provide and ensure all employees adhere to safeguarding policies and ensure easy pathways to Kent County Council (KCC) to report safeguarding concerns. By ensuring our staff uphold our own Safeguarding Policy, we will support KCC in their statutory role in making safeguarding personal and provide them with the relevant and timely information they need to investigate concerns.
- 2 The Council has an Officer Safeguarding Group which oversees safeguarding work and is responsible for updating and maintaining the Policy. The policy has been updated to take into account various changes in legislation and working practices.
- 3 A revised version of the Safeguarding Policy is attached as Appendix A.

Aims of the Safeguarding Policy

- 4 The policy aims to ensure that an overarching approach to safeguarding is embedded within all Council services and that staff, elected Members, those delivering services on behalf of the Council and volunteers have a good understanding of safeguarding guidelines and good practice.
- 5 The main aims of the policy are to:
 - Raise awareness of the duties and responsibilities for children, young people and adults at risk of harm
 - Encourage good practice among staff, elected members, volunteers and contractors, to safeguard children and adults at risk who receive Council services
 - Provide clear guidance on procedures to be adopted if it is suspected that an adult, young person or child may be at risk of harm

Updates to the Policy

- 6 There have been some changes since the Safeguarding Policy was last updated, which are detailed in this section of the report.
- 7 The Kent Safeguarding Children Board has changed to become the Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Partnership (KSCMP), with slightly different reporting arrangements and responsibilities. These revisions have been included in the updated version.
- 8 With regard to adult safeguarding, KCC no longer accept “Adult LADO” referrals (LADO - Local Authority Designated Officer). These referrals were specifically for people wishing to report concerns against any person who works with adults in a position of trust. It is now important that the Council has its own policy and procedures in place to respond to these concerns. This is reflected in the revised policy with clear pathways for raising these concerns, including links to the Councils Whistleblowing Procedure.

- 9 As with previous versions of the policy, there is advice and guidance provided to encourage everyone to respond to safeguarding issues and concerns. This has become particularly relevant in the current climate, as we know the effects of the Covid restrictions have increased difficulties for many, leaving some people more vulnerable, more susceptible to abuse and also increasing anxiety and mental health issues.
- 10 An updated section on safeguarding roles and responsibilities within the Council has been included.
- 11 The types of abuse have been further defined and explained.
- 12 The referrals process has been updated, to provide further information on whether a notification will trigger a Designated Safeguarding Officer consultation or not.
- 13 The referrals process has been updated to include discussing any potential referral with the individual, asking whether this has been done and if not, why not.

Other options Considered and/or rejected

- 14 None. Failure to keep children, young people or vulnerable adults safe represents not only a significant risk to residents, but also to the reputation of the Council.

Key Implications

Resources

Safeguarding training for staff is being met from within existing resources.

Financial

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

Failure to meeting statutory responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children under S11 of the Children Act 2004 could lead to litigation if children come to harm whilst the Council are carrying out services/undertaking duties or partner agencies carrying out services/undertaking duties on behalf of the Council.

Failure to follow guidance published by the Department of Health and KCC in relation to vulnerable adults could weaken the Councils' position if vulnerable adults come to harm as a result of failure to implement an effective system of controls and procedures at a local level.

Failure to keep children or vulnerable adults safe represents not only a significant risk to residents but also to the reputation of the Council.

Risk	Mitigation
Failure to keep children, young people or vulnerable adults safe or report appropriately anything which a member of staff suspects, alleges or is informed about may lead to children, young people and vulnerable adults coming to harm, injury or death.	All staff and Members to be aware of the revised Safeguarding Policy for the protection of children and vulnerable adults. In addition, training for front line staff, Chief Officers and Managers rolled out within the organisation.
Risk of significant harm to the Council's reputation.	Ensure that all staff are aware of their responsibilities.
Failure to ensure groups in receipt of funding also take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously.	Conditions attached to funding agreements should be monitored appropriately.

Equality Assessment

Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups, and (iii) foster good relations between people from different groups. The decisions recommended through this paper directly impact on end users. The impact has been analysed and does not vary between groups of people. The results of this analysis are set out immediately below.

Consideration of impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty:		
Question	Answer	Explanation/Evidence
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to disadvantage or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	This Policy is intended to ensure that the needs of children, young people and vulnerable adults are appropriately recognised and their welfare promoted, in all communities in the District.
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have the potential to promote equality of opportunity?	Yes	This Policy is intended to ensure that the needs of children and vulnerable adults are appropriately recognised and their welfare promoted.
c. What steps can be taken to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		This Policy is intended to ensure that the needs of children, young people and vulnerable adults are appropriately recognised and their welfare promoted.

Net Zero Implications

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the council's ambition to be Net Zero by 2030. There is no perceived impact regarding either an increase or decrease in carbon emissions in the district, or supporting the resilience of the natural environment.

Conclusions

The policy and corporate safeguarding function within the District Council ensures that we are fulfilling our duty through a coordinated approach across all departments to ensure that we are aware of what safeguarding is, how to recognise it, how to discuss safeguarding concerns, where and how to report safeguarding, and lastly how to record all safeguarding concerns.

If approved, the policy will be made available to all staff, contractors and volunteers. The District Council Safeguarding Group will be responsible for reviewing and monitoring its implementation.

Appendices

Appendix A - Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy 2022-2025

Background Papers

None

Sarah Robson

Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer - People and Places