

Safeguarding Reporting Procedures - general

Who is responsible for making a referral?

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, and anyone can raise a safeguarding concern. If a member of staff sees something that worries them, they have a responsibility to report it. Staff are not responsible for deciding whether or not someone is being abused, or for carrying out investigations – just for raising their concerns appropriately.

Confidentiality and Consent

Employees must not discuss any allegations of abuse, substantiated or not, with:

- anyone from EFDC other than their line manager and other designated members of staff as outlined in the relevant safeguarding procedure;
- any member of an external agency (excluding Essex Social Care and Essex Police), other than as part of a formal investigation; or with,
- any other interested party, including parents, carers and relatives of the child, young person or adult without the express permission of the person with overall responsibility for the investigation.

Staff must consider whether seeking consent from a victim might increase the risk to them, cause an unjustified delay or could prejudice the prevention, detection or prosecution of a serious crime.

Consent is **not** required where:

- other people or children could be at risk from the person causing harm;
- it is necessary to prevent crime, or if a serious crime may have been committed;
- there is a high risk to the health and safety of an adult at risk;
- where the alleged perpetrator may go on to abuse others;
- there is a statutory requirement;
- the public interest overrides the interest of the individual;
- when a staff member is the person accused of abuse, malpractice or poor professional standards.

On **all** Safeguarding referrals, officers must disclose why they have not obtained consent.

Mental capacity

The Mental Capacity Act (MCA) 2005 requires an assumption that an adult has full capacity to make decisions unless it can be shown that they lack capacity to make a decision for themselves, at the time the decision needs to be made. Any decision made, or action taken, on behalf of someone who lacks the capacity to make the decision or act for themselves, must be made in their best interests. Issues of mental capacity and the ability to give informed consent are central to decisions and actions surrounding safeguarding adults. All interventions need to take into account the ability of adults to make informed choices about the way they want to live and the risks they want to take.

This includes their ability:

- to understand the implications of their situation;
- to take action themselves to prevent abuse;
- to participate to the fullest extent possible in decision-making about interventions.

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

All officers should retain all safeguarding records in accordance with GDPR and as per the Retention of Records Policy.

Information Sharing

This is a vital part of early intervention and preventative work, to promote welfare, for wider public protection and in improving outcomes for all. People must be confident that their personal data is kept safe and secure, and that staff maintain their privacy.

Decisions about what information is shared and with whom will therefore be taken on a case-by-case basis.

Information should be:

- necessary for the purpose for which it is being shared;
- shared only with those who have a need for it;
- be up to date and shared in a timely fashion;
- be shared accurately and securely.

In all cases where information is shared, the following information should be recorded:

- date and time;
- an accurate summary of information shared;
- who the information was shared with;
- whether it was shared with or without consent (if without consent, whether the child or family or employee were informed and why this decision was made);
- how the information was shared and any receipt of it having been received.

Evidence-gathering and preserving

The Police are always responsible for the gathering and preservation of evidence to pursue criminal allegations against people causing harm. Staff should contact them immediately if they feel a crime has taken place.

However, the first concern must be to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the alleged victim.

Staff can play an important part in ensuring that evidence is not contaminated or lost. Staff should:

- try not to disturb the scene, clothing or victim if at all possible;
- try to discourage the vulnerable person from washing, showering or bathing, or from washing their clothes if the allegation or disclosure concerns a possible rape or sexual assault;
- secure the scene (e.g. lock the door if possible);
- ensure nothing is removed from the scene and it is left exactly as it was found;
- contact the Police and ask for advice if in doubt.

Allegations against Staff or Members

Any complaints made about the conduct of staff/volunteers about their contact with children and adults with care and support needs are taken very seriously. This includes anyone who works in a voluntary activity or in a personal capacity. In the event of a serious allegation against a member of staff regarding children, the Council will follow the procedures set out in the Southend, Essex and Thurrock (SET) Procedures and may involve the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) employed by Essex County Council.

Safeguarding allegations against Elected Members will be treated the same way as an allegation against staff. See the Council's Whistleblowing Policy on the Intranet for more information.

Making a referral

All safeguarding concerns must be sent to the Safeguarding Team. To do this, staff should complete the internal Safeguarding Report Form (see the front page of the Intranet) so that the Safeguarding Team can review and record the concern. On receipt of the form, a member of the Safeguarding Team will start the assessment and will contact the referring officer to advise on the next steps.

As officers may need to use the information provided on the internal form to make an external referral, it's important to ensure information provided is accurate eg. correct spelling of names, correct date of birth etc. Staff should also reduce the number of additional documents that are attached to the form e.g. not send lots of emails to provide background information.

The Safeguarding Report Form will also act as an accurate record for staff to keep in their own confidential and 'locked down' files. Staff must remember that their reports may be used as evidence in a court of law or at a case review or inspection.

Designated Roles in the Council

The Senior Safeguarding Officer is the first port of call for advice, guidance and enquiries concerning safeguarding from Council staff and members of the public:

Lynn Maidment - Senior Safeguarding Officer: Tel: 01992 564000 x 2706;

In her absence, staff should contact:

Sevda Kaygili - Safeguarding Officer: Tel: 01992 564000 x 2079; or

Caroline Wiggins - Directorate Specialist: Tel: 01992 564122.

Main Safeguarding email to send safeguarding concerns or enquiries to:

safeguarding@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Procedure A: Immediate Risk

This is for incidents where staff believe that a child, young person or vulnerable adult is in **immediate danger of physical or psychological harm** and that the situation calls for **immediate action or intervention**.

Staff may have witnessed the incident themselves, had a vulnerable person disclosure directly to them or they are given information from a third party.

In these situations, staff should:

1. **CALL 999** and report what they've seen or heard to the relevant emergency service. If possible, staff should ensure that they have details to hand before contacting the emergency services e.g. addresses, telephone numbers etc.

Staff should record details of the incident as soon as possible afterwards for their records. These records may be needed to complete an external referral but, in any case, staff should fill out an internal Safeguarding Report Form within one working day of the incident occurring.

2. Stay until the Police and/or the ambulance crew arrive if they've witnessed an incident.
3. Ask any other witnesses if they can stay and provide support to the victim if possible, but only if it's safe to do so without compromising the situation.
4. Talk to the victim and record whatever is said in writing as soon as possible, but only if the perpetrator is not at the scene.
5. Inform their Line Manager as soon as possible after the situation has been resolved.

Procedure B: No Immediate Risk

This is where staff have their own concerns about a person or situation; if a third party has disclosed information to staff; or if a child or vulnerable adult has disclosed something directly to the member of staff which may be considered a safeguarding concern or may involve a crime.

These concerns are of a **serious nature**, which staff believe **could lead to harm**, but where the victim is **not in any immediate danger** of harm and immediate action is **not** required. Staff should:

1. Record what is said as accurately as possible.
2. Reassure the person and explain that information will be passed on – that staff are unable to keep the information a secret and that they will be seeking help for them.
3. Staff should fill out an internal Safeguarding Report Form within one working day of the incident occurring to determine what actions are required.

These could include but is not restricted to:

- No action required – send an internal Safeguarding Report Form to Safeguarding for their records;
- Referral to Adult or Children Social Care;
- Signpost to a support agency eg. Peabody;

If the safeguarding concern involves domestic abuse, staff should follow the separate procedure outlined in the **Domestic Abuse Safeguarding Procedure flowchart** (see the Safeguarding folder on the Intranet).

If staff are unsure about whether something is a safeguarding concern, they can ring the Senior Safeguarding Officer or the Designated Safeguarding Lead to discuss in the first instance.

Procedure C: Allegations Against Staff

This procedure also covers allegations made against anyone acting on behalf of EFDC including volunteers or Elected Members. Staff should:

1. Try to get a witness to their conversation with the person reporting the allegation if it is made in person.
2. Take accurate notes of the allegation and not ask leading questions. Staff should transfer this information in as much detail as possible to a Safeguarding Report Form (on the Intranet) as soon as they can.
3. Forward the Form to the **Named Senior Officer**:
 - **Joanne Budden, Peoples Team**; in her absence, staff can also discuss concerns with:
 - **Caroline Wiggins - Designated Safeguarding Lead Officer**: Tel 01992 564122
4. If the allegation is made in writing, attach it to the Safeguarding Report Form or send it directly to the Named Senior Officer.

Suspension of the staff member is not automatic and is considered a neutral act. Where suspension is not appropriate, consideration will be given to putting safeguards in place to protect the vulnerable person.

Useful Information

Essex Social Care:

Children

If unsure whether something requires a referral to Essex Children Social Care, ring the **Children & Families HUB** on **0345 603 7627** and ask for the **Consultation Line**.

Please report a safeguarding concern about a child using a link through the main Essex County Council website:

<https://socialcareportal.essex.gov.uk/s4s/FormDetails/FillForm?formId=1>

More information can be found on the Essex Safeguarding Children Board Website at:

www.escb.co.uk/

Adults

Ring **Social Care Direct** on **0345 603 7630** or submit a referral using the SET SAF Form via the Essex Safeguarding Adults Board website, at: www.essexsab.org.uk/professionals/reporting-concerns/

Contractors and Qualis:

There is a separate procedure for contractors and Qualis staff – concerns are usually flagged to housing officers in the first instance and copied to Safeguarding to monitor.

Specific safeguarding categories:

It may be necessary to contact specialist agencies regarding some forms of abuse and there may also be extra forms to complete.

Staff should **always** refer concerns to the Senior Safeguarding Officer, who will provide advice and guidance as required.

Modern Slavery (including Human Trafficking):

For advice staff should ring the **Modern Day Slavery Helpline** on **0800 0121 700**;

or the **Salvation Army Helpline** on **0300 3038 151** (24 hours a day, seven days a week).

Threats of suicide and self-harm

Please refer to EFDC Suicide Threats Protocol Suicide Protocol flowchart on the Intranet.