

Epping Forest District Council Safeguarding Policy

July 2024

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to help the Council meet its legal duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and to discharge its legal obligations towards adults with needs for care and support. As part of the Council's commitment to robust safeguarding, it has a Corporate Safeguarding Group consisting of representatives from each Service. Each member of this group is responsible for ensuring that all colleagues across the Council are aware of the safeguarding policy and procedures.

1.1 Mission Statement

"Epping Forest District Council is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children, young people and adults with needs for care and support, as service users, residents and visitors to the area. The Council acknowledges the importance of working with partner agencies to ensure that children have safe, healthy and happy childhoods and that young people and adults with needs for care and support are given the support they need to enjoy a good quality of life and well-being".

This Mission Statement is underpinned by the following:

- valuing, listening to and respecting children, young people, and adults with needs for care and support as well as promoting their welfare and protection;
- provision of a current and comprehensive Safeguarding Policy and Procedures which are accessible and promoted to all staff;
- strategic planning and decision-making which considers the impact on children, young people and adults with care and support needs.

1.2 Aims

In order to meet its safeguarding duties and responsibilities, the Council will:

- ensure all employees are suitably trained to understand types of abuse and their roles and responsibilities;
- ensure that the welfare and needs of children and vulnerable groups are considered by all Members, employees, volunteers and contracted services when taking decisions in relation to service provision;
- take seriously, respond appropriately and expediently to all concerns, incidents and allegations;
- prevent abuse by promoting good practice amongst staff so they are confident to report concerns;
- undertake an annual review of safeguarding policies and procedures in line with any changes in legislation.

1.3 Scope

This Policy applies to all EFDC employees, whether in a paid or unpaid capacity, permanent, seconded or temporary, casual workers, voluntary workers, work experience students, agency staff, consultants, outside hirers and other contracted persons.

This also applies to work carried out in all settings (whether Council premises or at external, privately hired venues).

2. Definitions

Safeguarding - includes all forms of activity that aims to protect or promote the welfare of individuals and/or groups of people, which ensures prevention of harm, such as safe recruitment, staff training, awareness raising, provision of activities designed to promote inclusion, personalised risk management and risk assessments, confidential data storage, information sharing and referral.

Abuse - everyone has the right to protection from abuse regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or beliefs. However, it is not the responsibility of the Council to investigate or determine whether abuse is taking place – just to identify and report abuse.

Children and Young People - the legal definition of a child according to the Children Act 1989 is 'a person under the age of 18', including pre-birth. The welfare of the child is paramount and means protecting children from maltreatment; preventing impairment of children's health or development; ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

Adult Safeguarding - The Care Act 2014 established a statutory framework for care and support including adult safeguarding, which is designed to prevent harm and reduce the risk of abuse or neglect to adults with care and support needs. This applies to any person aged 18 or above who:

- has needs for care and support (regardless of the level of need and whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs)
- is experiencing, or is at risk of abuse or neglect, **and**
- as a result of those needs, is unable to protect themselves against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it.

The government has established six guiding principles that should underpin all adult safeguarding work:

- Empowerment:** People being supported and encouraged to make their own decisions and informed consent.
- Prevention:** It is better to take action before harm occurs.
- Proportionality:** The least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented.
- Protection:** Support and representation to those in greatest need.
- Partnership:** Local solutions through services working with their communities. Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse.
- Accountability:** Accountability and transparency in delivering safeguarding.

3. Responsibilities of EFDC

The Council's Leadership Team and Elected Members recognise the important role they play in ensuring the safeguarding agenda is driven across the whole organisation. They understand the Council's responsibility to work in partnership and share information with other agencies. Safeguarding is referred to in senior management meetings and information is disseminated through service teams and included within service strategies and business plans.

4. Designated Roles in EFDC

Elected Member Champion - The Portfolio Holder for Regulatory Services holds the position of Member Champion for Safeguarding and is responsible for attending the Corporate Safeguarding Group and promoting the importance of safeguarding amongst all Members.

Safeguarding Lead Professional – This position is held by the Service Director – Regulatory Services who has overall accountability for safeguarding children, young people and adults with care and support needs.

Designated Safeguarding Lead – this is the Directorate Specialist – Technical Services, who is responsible for advising the Lead Professional in regard to concerns, referrals and safeguarding allegations against staff. They also have overall responsibility for ensuring that staff are aware of the Council's commitment to safeguarding, are appropriately trained, understand their responsibilities and have a range of safeguarding experience.

Senior Safeguarding Officer

Responsible for the operational management and implementation of the Council's Safeguarding Policy and Procedures. Together with the Directorate Specialist – Technical Services they deliver safeguarding training and ensure concerns are referred to appropriate agencies and ensure they're recorded, monitored and reviewed.

Designated Safeguarding Reporting Officers – staff members who attend the Corporate Safeguarding Group are responsible for disseminating safeguarding information, identifying training requirements and providing best practice examples within their service areas.

Named Senior Officer (whistleblowing – allegations against staff)

The People Team Manager is the first point of call for staff reporting safeguarding allegations against employees and refers to the Lead Professional and Lead Officer on this.

5. The role of Council Staff and Members

Service Directors

Service Directors are responsible for ensuring that Service Managers, Team Managers and staff within their Directorate are aware of the contents of the safeguarding policy and procedures and that the Council's duties to safeguard and support are met and effectively discharged.

Service Managers and Team Managers

Responsible for complying with the safeguarding policy and relevant procedures and for the promotion of a staff culture which recognises the rights of children, young people and adults with needs for care and support and the Council's responsibility for their safety when receiving its services.

The People Team

Responsible for ensuring that safe recruitment procedures are followed and that appropriate checks are made. This includes Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks prior to employing someone who will have unsupervised/substantial contact with children and young people, or who will undertake certain prescribed activities with adults with care and support needs, before starting work with the Council. The Team Manager also has lead responsibility for dealing with allegations against members of staff.

Employees

All employees, volunteers and agency staff are responsible for complying with the requirements of the safeguarding policy and procedures. Staff should take all reasonable steps to ensure that risks are minimised, and that children and vulnerable people are protected and their welfare promoted when using Council services.

To effectively implement this policy, **all** employees have a responsibility to:

- be aware of, and abide by this Policy and the relevant procedures for their role;
- undertake safeguarding training at the level identified in respect of their work;
- co-operate with risk assessment process undertaken by their manager or designated person;
- ensure that they behave appropriately towards any children, young person or adult with needs for care and support who they come into contact with whilst carrying out their duties at all times.

Elected Members

All Members are appropriately trained and aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and those of the authority. It is mandatory and forms part of their core training programme.

Contractors

All contractors working with, or providing services for the Council, are required to demonstrate they have their own Safeguarding Policy/Procedures or agree to sign up to EFDC's Policy and Procedures.

Where contact with children and vulnerable adults is a necessary part of the contracted service, the manager who is using the services of the contractor is responsible for ensuring that satisfactory DBS checks have been completed where appropriate and that contracted staff are vigilant in respect of safeguarding issues.

6. Grant Applicants

All organisations receiving funding from the Council will be expected to have a safeguarding policy and procedure in place, which is understood by employees and volunteers and available to service users, irrespective of how the grant has been awarded.

7. Safe Recruitment

Employers must undertake appropriate checks on people working with children and vulnerable adults. EFDC has adopted the Essex Safeguarding Children Board's Recruitment and Employment Standards and takes all reasonable steps to ensure that unsuitable people are prevented from working with vulnerable groups.

8. Supervision

The Council aims to create an environment where staff feel able to raise concerns and feel supported in their safeguarding role, which is reinforced through 'supervision.' This can be part of staff 1:1 meetings or as a group and they might be planned or ad hoc. They could involve monitoring work in hand, reviewing progress against work plans, developing solutions or simply discussing problems and concerns.

9. Training

The level to which individual employees should be trained in safeguarding is determined in accordance with Essex Safeguarding Children and Adults Boards guidelines. All staff undertake the Council's basic e-learning training and all frontline staff undertake the Council's Enhanced Safeguarding Training, which reinforces the basic learning and will enable them to be equipped with the knowledge and confidence to identify and report concerns.

10. Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing is the mechanism by which staff can voice their concerns about behaviour of others in the work place, if made in good faith, without fear of repercussion. See the council's Whistleblowing Policy on the Intranet for more information.

11. Safeguarding Reporting Procedures

The SET (Southend, Essex and Thurrock) Safeguarding Guidelines outline safeguarding procedures which should be followed by all local authorities in Essex. The Council has developed its own safeguarding procedures and requires all staff and Members to follow these.

For more information on these procedures and other safeguarding issues, go to the Essex Safeguarding Children Board (<https://www.esccb.co.uk/>) and Essex Safeguarding Adults Board (<https://www.essexsab.org.uk/>).

12. Monitoring and Review

The Safeguarding Policy and procedures are reviewed annually unless legislation changes in the interim. Monitoring mechanisms include audits and engagement with Essex Safeguarding Boards; recording of staff training; reporting to the Council's Senior Leadership and Management Team; and participation in external and/or statutory reviews as required.

There are a range of other relevant and complimentary policies and procedures available on the council's intranet in the Safeguarding folder. Staff should also monitor internal bulletins and emails for other relevant information and to book on to training courses.

13. Additional Policies and Procedures

Please see the EFDC Intranet for other relevant and accompanying documents eg. Safeguarding Procedures (note there are two versions – for general use and specific to Housing and Community Resilience Teams); Suicide Threats Protocol/flowchart; Domestic Abuse safeguarding procedure flowchart; Domestic Abuse in the Workplace; and the Domestic Abuse Policy.