

Epping Forest District Council Safeguarding Policy



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Author(s)	Caroline Wiggins	Policy Lead Officer	Julie Chandler

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1. Introduction

Everyone has the right to be safe when accessing services provided by Epping Forest District Council. 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. It also sets out the roles and responsibilities of the Council in working together with other professionals and agencies to safeguard vulnerable groups from all forms of abuse and neglect.

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 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

The Council will:

- ensure all employees receive relevant training suitable to their roles to understand types of abuse and their responsibilities relating to the relevant Council policies and procedures;
- conduct regular reviews of safeguarding practice throughout the organisation;
- 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 and respond appropriately and expediently to all concerns, incidents and allegations;
- prevent abuse by promoting good practice amongst staff, building confidence in reporting any concerns;
- work in partnership with other agencies so as to safeguard children, young people and adults with needs for care and support and share information where required and appropriate;
- carry out regular review of safeguarding policies and procedures in line with any changes in legislation;
- carry out checks via the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and use its Recruitment and Induction Procedures to prevent unsuitable people from working with children, young people and vulnerable adults.

1.3 Scope

This Policy applies to all services within the remit of Epping Forest District Council. It covers all aspects of safeguarding for service users, their families, carers, supporters and local residents. It 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 whatever their position, role, or responsibilities. This also applies to work carried out in all settings (whether Council premises or at external, privately hired venues).

2. Definitions

2.1 Safeguarding

This 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.

2.2 Abuse

The 10 main types of abuse are Physical; Domestic Abuse; Sexual; Psychological/Emotional; Financial or Material; Modern Slavery (including Human Trafficking and Child Sexual Exploitation); Discriminatory; Organisational (Institutional); Neglect or acts of omission; and Self-neglect (which includes Hoarding).

2.3 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.

2.4 Adult Safeguarding

The Care Act 2014 established a new 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 and 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 Care Act definition largely replaces the term 'Vulnerable Adults', but it is still used within this document.

2.5 Significant Harm

This is any physical, sexual or emotional abuse, neglect, accident or injury that is sufficiently serious to adversely affect health, development or quality of life. This includes any impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another person.

3. Recognising Abuse

Everyone should be aware of the potential indicators of abuse and know what to do if they have concerns.

*It is however not the responsibility of the Council to investigate or determine whether abuse is taking place. **The Council's responsibility is to identify and report abuse.***

The Council therefore aims to ensure that every member of staff is equipped with the knowledge and confidence to identify and deal effectively with any safeguarding situation or concern that arises.

4. Other Related Areas

4.1 Modern Slavery (including Human Trafficking)

This involves the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of people, who, with the threat or use of force, coercion, abduction, abuse of power or deception, are exploited for the purposes of prostitution, forced labour, slavery or other similar practices. This can occur either from one country to another or even within the same country, county or town.

Some victims are forced to work in places like cannabis factories, nail bars, brothels and car washes. There is no typical victim and some victims don't understand that they have been exploited and are entitled to help and support.

4.2 Prevent

This is a strand in the Government's anti-terrorism strategy called CONTEST. Prevent aims to stop people from supporting violent extremism or becoming terrorists. Violent extremists often use persuasive rationale and charismatic individuals to attract children, young people and adults with care and support needs to their cause (grooming). Radicalisers attract people to their reasoning, inspire new recruits and embed their extreme views and persuade individuals of the legitimacy of their cause.

The council contributes to the prevention of terrorism by noticing concerning behaviours displayed by vulnerable individuals, checking concerns with the Safeguarding Officer and sharing concerns with the appropriate agency(ies) accordingly.

Please refer to the Council's Prevent Policy and Procedure available on the Intranet.

4.3 Honour Based Abuse (HBA)

This is violence and abuse in the name of honour, covering a variety of behaviours (including crimes), this is mainly but not exclusively against females, where the person is being punished by their family and/or community for a perceived transgression against the 'honour' of the family or community, or is required to undergo certain activities or procedures in 'honour' of the family. This can also include harmful cultural practices such as breast ironing/flattening or binding.

A child or adult who is at risk of abuse in the name of honour is at significant risk of physical harm (including being murdered) and/or neglect and may also suffer significant emotional harm through the threat of violence or witnessing abuse directed towards a sibling or other family member. For this reason, it is vitally important not to talk to family members or community elders.

Please refer to the Council's HBA Policy available on the Intranet.

4.4 Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

This is a term used to describe procedures that include partial or total removal of the external female genital organs, such as female circumcision, excision or infibulation. This collective term also covers injury to the female genitalia for a cultural or non-medical reason.

4.5 Forced Marriage

The act of physically, emotionally, psychologically or financially pressurising someone to marry against their will. Forced marriages can occur in this country or abroad and differ from an arranged marriage, which is entered into freely by both people, despite their families taking a leading role in the choice of partner.

4.6 Child Sexual Exploitation/Criminal Exploitation

Child Sexual Exploitation is a form of child abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

It can happen to boys as well as girls, affecting children from any background, however some children may be more vulnerable to exploitation than others.

Child Criminal Exploitation involves a young person, or adult at risk, being groomed into undertaking criminal activities, such as drug dealing/trafficking and working in cannabis farms, etc. It is often perpetrated by an adult through the threat or use of violence.

Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the child, young person, or adult at risk's limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability.

4.7 Domestic Abuse

The Government's definition of domestic abuse is 'Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over, who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.' Domestic abuse has a devastating effect on victims, their families and the wider community and cuts across all boundaries of social group, class, age, religion, sexuality, gender and lifestyle. Everyone has the right to be safe from abuse and fear.

Controlling behaviour is: a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten the victim.

4.8 Stalking

The Suzy Lamplugh Trust defines stalking as 'A pattern of fixated and obsessive behaviour which is repeated, persistent, intrusive and causes fear of violence or engenders alarm and distress in the victim.'

Stalking can consist of any type of behaviour such as regularly sending flowers or gifts, making unwanted or malicious communication, damaging property and physical or sexual assault. If the behaviour is persistent and clearly unwanted, causing fear, distress or anxiety then it is stalking. This behaviour can only be classed as stalking where the victim and perpetrator are not in, or no longer in, a relationship.

4.9 MARAC

A Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) is a victim-focused information sharing and risk management meeting, where high risk domestic abuse cases are discussed. The role of the MARAC is to facilitate, monitor and evaluate effective information sharing to enable appropriate actions to be taken to increase public safety. In a single meeting, MARAC combines up-to-date risk information with a timely assessment of a victim's needs and links those directly to the provision of appropriate services for all those involved in a domestic abuse case: victim, children and perpetrator.

Officers must attempt to complete a Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment (DASH) when they encounter a domestic abuse safeguarding concern. There are a pool of DASH Trained Officers across Council services - contact the Safeguarding Officer for details.

5. EFDC Responsibilities for Safeguarding

Role	Responsibilities
Elected Member Champion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Portfolio Holder for Community and Partnership 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
Leadership Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council's duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, young people and adults with needs for care and support are met and effectively discharged. Allocate resources to enable responsibilities to be met.
Safeguarding Lead Professional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raise the profile and embed safeguarding processes; support the policy and promote the development of services to ensure the protection of children and adults at risk within the district. Resolve escalated professional disagreements.
Designated Safeguarding Lead Officer & Deputy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of policy and strategy, issuing operational guidance, promoting good practice and making policy recommendations to Senior Leadership Team. Ensure safeguarding training is available to meet requirements and the needs of staff. Submit reports to Senior Leadership Team and relevant Committee(s) to ensure that child and adult protection policy requirements are met. Identify gaps in service provision. Representative at multi-agency safeguarding meetings. Work with key officers to deliver relevant safeguarding responsibilities.
Safeguarding Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide advice and guidance to staff and members regarding their safeguarding concerns. Co-ordinate and deliver safeguarding training. Co-ordinate Essex Safeguarding Adults and Children Boards audits and requests for information, i.e. Serious Adult Reviews, Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews. Representative at multi-agency safeguarding meetings. Respond to Essex Social Services Section 47, Section 42 and Section 17 enquiries.
Peoples Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) process in conjunction with recruiting managers. Make a referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) when a member of staff has acted in a way which may have harmed a child or adult at risk, in liaison with the Designated Safeguarding Lead Officer. Ensure delivery of corporate training.

Designated Safeguarding Reporting Officers (Service Rep's at Corp SGD Group)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support staff to recognise and understand their roles and responsibilities. • Disseminating safeguarding information. • Identifying training requirements in their respective services. • Providing best practice examples.
Service Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support staff to recognise and understand their roles and responsibilities. • Provide suitable supervision to staff dealing with safeguarding concerns. • Consider safeguarding implications when developing policies and procedures, procuring services on behalf of the council and in their decision-making processes. • Ensure staff are appropriately trained. • Identify training needs of staff to support them to undertake their duties. • Ensure contractors have the appropriate safeguarding policies in place. • Ensure volunteers working on behalf of the council are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities. • Ensure reference to the DBS Guide to Eligibility to assess whether a role requires a disclosure.
All Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to any safeguarding concerns they may have. • Ensure safeguarding training is undertaken to an appropriate level. • Comply with the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures. • Report any concerns through the appropriate referral process. • Report allegations against a member of staff or volunteer.
Elected Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure mandatory safeguarding training is undertaken at the appropriate level and they have awareness of safeguarding responsibilities and those of the authority. • Report any concerns through the appropriate referral process.
Volunteers, Consultants and Agency Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance with council's Safeguarding Policy and procedures. • Report any concerns through the appropriate referral process. • Report allegations against a member of staff or volunteer.

6. Grant Applicants

As a minimum, 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

It is a criminal offence for an employer not to undertake the appropriate checks on an employee working with children, young people and adults with care and support needs, or to knowingly give a job to someone who is inappropriate to work with these groups. The Council has therefore 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, regardless of their position.

All job descriptions are assessed to identify which roles are likely to involve regular / substantial unsupervised contact with children and adults with care and support needs. For all new employees, confirmation of employment will be dependent on satisfactory checks where appropriate.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Enhanced Plus checks are sought where staff will have unsupervised and substantial contact with children and young people or who will undertake certain prescribed activities with adults with needs for care and support as part of their duties or responsibilities.

8. Supervision

The Council is responsible for ensuring that its staff are competent to carry out their responsibilities for safeguarding and for creating an environment where they feel able to raise concerns and feel supported in their safeguarding role. This is reinforced through 'supervision', which can be part of staff 1:1 meetings or as a group and all staff are entitled to access this support.

These meetings might be planned or ad hoc and 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 will undertake the Council's basic e-learning training and staff who work directly with children or vulnerable groups will undertake the Council's bespoke Enhanced Safeguarding Training, which reinforces the basic learning and will enable them to be equipped with the knowledge and confidence to identify and report any incidents of abuse.

Council staff without access to email eg. trades staff, will be provided with shorter, tailored face-to-face Safeguarding training sessions.

10. Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing is the mechanism by which staff can voice their concerns about behaviour of others in the work place made in good faith without fear of repercussion.

The Council's Whistleblowing Policy covers any staff concerns about colleagues in regard to safeguarding children, young people and adults with care and support needs. Staff need to feel confident in reporting these concerns so the Policy provides guidance and assurance regarding the process. It also provides details of alternative ways to report concerns confidentially outside of the Council.

Please refer to the Council's Whistleblowing Policy available on intranet.

11. Safeguarding Reporting Procedures

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

There may also be occasions when agencies in another county have to be contacted to report a safeguarding concern, for example, if an incident occurs at an EFDC activity but the child or adult lives in a neighbouring London Borough or county.

12. External Agencies

Essex County Council

Essex County Council is the Children's Services Authority and provider of Adult Social Care for Essex. It has a duty to conduct enquiries where it's suspected that a child who lives in, or is found in a local authority area, is suffering from, or likely to suffer significant harm in the form of physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect.

Under the Care Act, there is now a duty to conduct enquiries regarding adults. EFDC has a duty to assist and provide information in support of these enquiries.

13. The Role of the Essex Safeguarding Boards

Essex Safeguarding Children's Board (ESCB)

The ESCB operates in line with the requirements of the statutory guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018' and covers the same geographical area of Essex, as defined by the local authority boundaries. The safeguarding partners and relevant agencies included in these arrangements will fulfil their statutory duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children from Essex who live or are placed outside of our local authority area.

There are now seven organisations in Essex who are jointly responsible by law for the partnership arrangements for keeping children safe – Essex County Council; Essex Police; and five of the seven Clinical Commissioning Groups covering Essex. These are known as the Statutory Partners.

The Statutory Partners have identified relevant agencies which are legally required to cooperate with the new safeguarding arrangements.

These new partnership arrangements will continue to be referred to as the Essex Safeguarding Children Board.

Essex Safeguarding Adults Board (ESAB)

The Care Act 2014 placed the Adult's Board on a statutory footing. The Board oversees and leads adult safeguarding across the locality and is interested in a range of matters that contribute to the prevention of abuse and neglect. The Board must publish a strategic plan and annual report, setting out how it will meet its main objective and what the members will do to achieve these objectives. It must also conduct any Safeguarding Adult Reviews in accordance with the Care Act.

West Essex Stay Safe Group

West Essex Stay Safe Group consists of representatives including NHS, Essex Social Care, Police, Probation, Education, Voluntary Sector and District Councils. This group is responsible for delivering an action plan to improve safeguarding practice in West Essex and for considering actions to address emerging issues.

14. Monitoring and Review

This Policy and Procedure will be reviewed regularly unless legislation or processes change in the interim.

Monitoring mechanisms include:

- Section 11 Audits and engagement with Essex Safeguarding Boards and sub groups.
- Recording of staff training at different levels.
- Reporting to the Council's Senior Management Team and Leadership Team.
- Participation in Serious Case Reviews/Domestic Homicide Reviews and safeguarding reviews.

15. Other Relevant EFDC Documents

Other EFDC policies and procedures that may be read in conjunction with, or be linked to this policy are:

- A Guide to Safeguarding Reporting Procedures
- Honour Based Abuse Policy and Procedures
- Whistleblowing Policy (Confidential Reporting)
- Recruitment Policy and Procedures
- Domestic Violence in the Workplace – Policy and Manager's Toolkit
- Prevent Policy
- Safe Working Practice Guide
- E-Safety Policy

Staff should monitor internal Council bulletins and intranet pages for new and updated versions of relevant safeguarding policies.

16. External Documents

This policy is intended to support staff working within EFDC and is supplementary to the:

- Southend, Essex & Thurrock (SET) - Child Protection Procedures.
- Southend, Essex & Thurrock (SET) - Safeguarding Adult Guidelines.

Staff should also see the Council's intranet in the 'Safeguarding' section for more in-depth information on various aspects of safeguarding.