

Equality Impact Assessment report

Devon District Councils Joint Safeguarding Policy

Introduction

Each district council in Devon has had safeguarding policies in place for some years but as the safeguarding leads now work more closely together it is felt that a joint policy would be appropriate.

The aim of the policy is to make sure that the safeguarding process is more accessible and effective through improving understanding of what safeguarding means, setting out a clear line of accountability and simplification of reporting.

The policy is a key corporate document and supporting procedures are available to all staff. The purpose of this policy and associated procedures is to protect and promote the welfare of the children and adults with care and support needs using or receiving services provided or commissioned by district councils in Devon and to protect the councils, their officers, elected members and volunteers.

Stakeholder consultation

Devon Local Safeguarding Children Board and Devon Local Safeguarding Adults Board provide the strategic lead for safeguarding in the county. The Devon district councils have a duty to co-operate with the county council in discharging its duties and to promote the wellbeing of children and adults with care and support needs.

The ultimate beneficiary from this policy will be the local community in that it will provide reassurance as to how the council will deal with safeguarding issues. However in practice the people who will be guided by the policy on a day to day basis will be council employees whose work relates to the welfare of children and adults with care and support needs. These include officers in environmental health, housing, homelessness, benefits and leisure.

Consultation on the policy will be sent to key officers within each council as well as the board managers and chairs for both children and adult safeguarding boards. However as the core content of the policy has been in place for sometime already it is not anticipated that there will be any major changes arising.

Policy review and development

Because of the statutory and high risk nature of safeguarding there are a number of processes and structures in place which allow for continual learning to feed into policy and procedure development:

- Lessons learnt and findings from serious case reviews and multi-agency case audits
- Regular meetings of district safeguarding leads with the chairs and managers of the local safeguarding boards
- Regular training opportunities provided by the county council for all staff involved in safeguarding
- Peninsula wide annual section 11 audit inspected by Ofsted
- Internal district council audit

- Lead officer links to local community safety partnerships

For this reason the policy and related internal procedures will be reviewed annually or whenever there is a change in the related legislation or an emerging risk is identified.

Identified impact

The aim of the policy is to have a positive impact on children and adults with care and support needs however most of the public interest has more recently been focused on the welfare of children. This may mean that awareness of safeguarding adults (and the duties contained in the Care Act 2014) may be low among staff. Training and awareness raising may be needed to increase emphasis on this issue.

Staff who have been in post a long time may become desensitised or over sensitive to the issues. While targeted training and promotion may address the former, the latter will need to be addressed by staff welfare programmes.

The Policy will be publicly available and can be translated into different languages and formats on request.

The Policy covers cultural or religious issues such as forced marriage and FGM which have an impact on young people. However it does not make clear that, while cultural differences are to be taken into account in assessing the needs and circumstances of children, young people and their families, these are not to be used as an acceptable reason for any form of child abuse or neglect.

The policy covers domestic abuse which has a disproportionate impact on women.

Actions

Consideration should be given to including a clause in the policy and/or procedures relating to how cultural or religious differences should be taken into account when assessing the needs and circumstances of children, young people and their families.

Further staff training on cultural diversity as well as specific issues related to safeguarding such as mental health, FGM, forced marriage, domestic abuse and modern slavery to be developed.

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