

Equality Impact Assessment report

Exeter City Council Safeguarding Policy

Introduction

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 Exeter City Council and to protect the council, its officers, elected members and volunteers.

The policy had been a joint policy with other district councils across Devon but following an annual review the Exeter City Council has decided to have its own policy thereby making it easier to reflect its internal reporting structures and levels of accountability. The other main changes made to the policy have been the addition of clauses on events and land hire, grant applications and clarity around accountability taking into consideration the creation of the new Corporate Safeguarding Group and Safeguarding Representatives Group.

Stakeholder consultation

Devon Children and Families Partnership Quality Assurance Board and Devon Local Safeguarding Adults Board provide the strategic lead for safeguarding in the county. Exeter City Council has 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.

The Safeguarding Representatives from each service area of the council have been consulted on the policy. The policy will be sent to 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 and others for all staff involved in safeguarding
- Internal district council audit
- Strategic and Corporate Safeguarding Lead officers links to Exeter Community Safety Partnership

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. This will need to be picked up in training and procedural documents.

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

Actions

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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