

Housing and Health Committee Meeting	
Meeting Date	Tuesday 5 th March 2024
Report Title	Swale Safeguarding Policy refresh 2024
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Head of Service	Charlotte Hudson, Head of Housing and Communities
Lead Officer	Tina Grafton, Safeguarding Team Lead & ASB Officer
Classification	Open
Recommendations	1. For the Housing and Health Committee to approve this refreshed Safeguarding Policy for 2024

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report summarises the amendments that are proposed to be made to the Safeguarding Policy and asks that the Housing and Health Committee agree the revisions made.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Safeguarding Policy was last revised in March 2023 and is subject to an annual review to ensure that it reflects any legislative or procedural changes.
- 2.2 In terms of implementing and managing the Safeguarding Policy, in the financial year 2022/23 the team have dealt with 372 cases referred to them. This resulted in 451 onward referrals to other agencies or support services. Domestic abuse, homelessness and mental health including suicide ideation concerns are within the most frequently reported case types.

Some other examples of the teams' responsibilities include:

- managing and ensuring best practice and complying with local and national policies.
- ensuring training needs are met for all staff, members and volunteers whether this is face to face or online.
- completing and complying with local children's and adult safeguarding boards audits.
- working closely with procurement teams to assess contracts services and audit compliance with requirements.
- working towards the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation.
- quarterly performance reports.

- 2.3 The main amendments that have been made to the previous version of the Safeguarding Policy and summarised below:

- The Foreword, amended to reflect wording from the Chair of the Housing and Health Committee.
- Job titles amended throughout the document to reflect change of Safeguarding team lead role.
- A number of amendments have been made as a result of recommendations through the external audit by the Kent and Medway Safeguarding Adult Board (KMSAB):
 - Section 3.10 has been strengthened in relation to carers assessment has been emphasised.
 - Section 4.2 in relation to trauma informed practice has also been strengthened. An appendix added to reflect best practice and non-judgemental language and a trauma informed approach.
 - Section 5.3 - People in positions of Trust (PIPOT) policy reference added and refers to guidance from KMASB.
 - Within the Safeguarding Training Plan, Mental Capacity training/ awareness sessions has changed to mandatory requirement for levels 2b and 3 (table within section 12).
 - Appendix 4 has been added. This new section for 'Did not attend'.
- Section 3.11 for Legal Duties has been updated to show the revised Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 guidance. This includes revisions to the local partnership arrangements (for Kent, the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership for which Swale BC is a relevant agency); clarification of the roles of agencies within this Partnership; and introduces new children protection standards. There is no specific action Swale BC needs to take in relation to this, with changes to be led by the Kent Safeguarding Multi-agency Children Partnership Board.
- Section 5.7 Case Management -Sentence added - Rational / decision making should be clearly documented with the case management. This includes decisions rational of not completing certain actions or referrals. This will ensure clear demonstration of why specific decisions were taken. I.e. no consent for referrals.
- Appendix 1: Case standards – case standards the element of domestic abuse closure check list has been added. This has been highlighted due to the work of DAHA and ensure that lessons learnt can be identified and adds as a double check to ensure best practice guidance has been followed.
- Appendix 5 added to enable links to relevant guidance documents within the policy.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 For the Housing and Health Committee to approve this refreshed Safeguarding Policy for 2024

4 Alternative Options

- 4.1 That the Safeguarding Policy is not revised. This is not recommended as although the current Policy is largely accurate in relation to legislative requirements, it is not complete; and a number of recommendations were made by an external audit for inclusion within the policy.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 Consultation has taken place with team managers, of those teams that identify the greater number of safeguarding concerns.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	This policy refresh will contribute to the corporate priority - Housing and Health, once the new corporate plan is fully adopted.
Financial, Resource and Property	<p>Existing staff are in place (1 FTE Safeguarding Officer and part of Safeguarding and ASB Team leader who also has other responsibilities) to manage the implementation of this policy.</p> <p>In order to deliver the proposed staff training plan, there is a financial cost for some sessions, however these are met through existing corporate training budgets or by contributions already made to the Safeguarding Partnerships.</p>
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	<p>The Children Act 1989 states that the child's welfare is paramount and that every child has a right to protection from abuse, neglect and exploitation. The Children Act 2004 specifies the statutory guidance relating to Swale Borough Council under this agenda.</p> <p>The Safeguarding Policy also highlights other legislation relating to this agenda and requirements upon the Council including The Care Act 2014, Counter Terrorism Act 2015; Modern Slavery Act 2015; Domestic Abuse Act 2021; and more recently the Police, Crime Sentencing and Courts Act 2022</p>
Crime and Disorder	Through the implementation of the Safeguarding Policy and addressing safeguarding concerns of vulnerable individuals, there will naturally be some cases where the individual is also supported to address crime and anti-social behavioural issues, through referrals and information sharing with other agencies.

Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	No air quality, or climate/ecological emergency implications have been identified at this stage.
Health and Wellbeing	The Safeguarding Policy will ensure that the Council responds appropriately to safeguard children and vulnerable adults. This also extends to welfare concerns that may not have met the thresholds for referrals to statutory services, but by addressing the needs identified, improves the community's health and wellbeing.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	This revised Safeguarding Policy details the Council's response to Safeguarding and the process by which it should be managed.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	Safeguarding has in the past been one of the risks identified in the corporate risk register, but due to the levels of controls in place as identified by this Policy is now only within the Housing and Communities Service Plan Risk Register.
Equality and Diversity	No specific equality and diversity implications have been identified at this stage. All safeguarding concerns are handled in an appropriate manner for the case in question.
Privacy and Data Protection	The safeguarding database 'My Concern' referenced within the Policy as part of the recording process, has a high level of security – all users must be approved by the safeguarding team and given an appropriate level of access. All referrals can also securely be saved here and case notes. Section 4.4.11 of the policy discusses information sharing.

7 Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Draft Swale Borough Council Safeguarding Policy 2024

8 Background Papers

None.