

<b>Housing and Health Committee Meeting</b>	
<b>Meeting Date</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> March 2025
<b>Report Title</b>	Safeguarding Policy Review
<b>EMT Lead</b>	Emma Wiggins, Head of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
<b>Head of Service</b>	Charlotte Hudson, Head of Housing and Communities
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Stephanie Curtis, Community Services Manager Tina Grafton, ASB and Safeguarding Team Leader
<b>Classification</b>	<b>Open</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. For the Housing and Health Committee to approve this refreshed Safeguarding Policy for 2025</li> <li>2. Agree that this policy is reviewed bi-annually rather than annually.</li> </ol>

## 1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report summarises the amendments that are proposed to be made to the Safeguarding Policy.

## 2 Background

- 2.1 Safeguarding is 'everyone's business'. The policy sets out Swale Borough Council's (SBC) responsibilities under the Children Act 2004, Care Act 2014 and other legislation to ensure children, young people and adults at risk are kept safe from harm.
- 2.2 The Safeguarding Policy was last revised in March 2024 and is subject to an annual review to ensure that it reflects any legislative or procedural changes.
- 2.3 The main amendments that have been made to the previous version of the Safeguarding Policy and summarised below:
  - Section 5.3 – Changes to Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) service as now Local Education Safeguarding Advisory Service (LESAS) due to merge with education service.
  - Section 7 - DBS Disclosures: Addition of reference to elected members and to DBS procedure which has been added as an appendix (appendix 6), following agreement from Standards Committee in 2024 that elected members will be required to undertake a basic DBS check.

- Appendix 5: added Managing Allegations policy (updated November 2024) and adding to main policy as an appendix. This has been added as part of the KMSAB audit outcome and brings together all documents around staff and members conduct.
- Section 11 - Addition of guidance for translation services making it more explicit when these services should be used, following a recommendation from the Kent Safeguarding Adults Board.
- Typo in web link corrected for a KMSAB policy link.
- added reference to internal policy for Safer Recruitment Policy (currently being updated) at the end of appendix 7 for awareness.

## 2.4

This policy has previously been reviewed annually due recommendations from serious case reviews and other practice recommendations and legislative changes. However it is now felt that we are at a level where this can be changed to bi-annually. Any necessary changes required can be made via an addendum except major policy/legislative changes which would be brought to necessary Committee or panels as necessary.

## 3 Proposals

1. For the Housing and Health Committee to approve this refreshed Safeguarding Policy for 2025
2. Agree that this policy is reviewed bi-annually rather than annually.

## 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
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Corporate Plan	<p>This policy refresh will contribute to the corporate priorities : Health and Housing priority - Ensure we meet our safeguarding obligations to keep children and vulnerable adults safe.</p> <p>Achieve Domestic Abuse Housing Accreditation, demonstrating our commitment to identifying abuse, preventing it and provide help to those affected.</p>
Financial, Resource and Property	<p>Existing staff are in place (1 FTE Community Services Manager; 1 FTE ASB and Vulnerability Team Leader; and 1 FTE Safeguarding Officer) 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	<p>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.</p>
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	<p>No air quality, or climate/ecological emergency implications have been identified at this stage.</p>
Health and Wellbeing	<p>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.</p>
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	<p>This revised Safeguarding Policy details the Council's response to Safeguarding and the process by which it should be managed.</p>

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. Resources to address any identified communication needs are within the revised policy and these place greater emphasis on the need for utilising translation services to cover individual communication needs in a safe manner.
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 2025

## 8 Background Papers

None.