

Safeguarding Policy Review (Community Services, Jill Moody)

Synopsis of report:

- **Runnymede Borough Council has a legal and moral duty to safeguard children and vulnerable adults and requires a policy to be in place.**
- **The current policy has been updated to reflect best practice guidelines and embed safeguarding within the council process and people.**
- **It is the recommendation of this report that the Council agrees to adopt the new policy, from where Officers will implement the new structure and other actions required.**

Recommendation that:

- i) the new Safeguarding Policy be approved and adopted as proposed; and**
- ii) a Councillor, who is a Member of this Committee, be appointed for an initial 3 year term of office as Safeguarding Champion for the Council.**

1. Context and background of report

- 1.1 Runnymede Borough Council (the Council) has a moral and legal obligation to ensure a duty of care for children and vulnerable adults a life that is free from harm, abuse, and neglect is a basic right of every person.
- 1.2 The objective of safeguarding is to prevent and reduce the risk of harm to children and vulnerable adults from all types of abuse.
- 1.3 The Children Acts 1989 and 2004 (as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017) along with the statutory guidance, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018, provide the legal framework for safeguarding children.
- 1.4 The Care Act 2014 sets out the legal framework for protecting adults with care and support needs who are at risk of abuse or neglect.
- 1.5 Surrey County Council is the lead agency for child protection and the protection of vulnerable adults.
- 1.6 The Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership (SSCP) and Surrey Safeguarding Adults Board (SSAB) are the statutory organisations central to ensuring that relevant agencies collaborate effectively and promote and ensure the quality of safeguarding across the county.

- 1.7 The Council's safeguarding policy is intended to reflect our duties and processes in relation to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.
- 1.8 In early 2021, internal and external audits identified recommendations for improvements to the corporate safeguarding policy and management of safeguarding by the Council.
- 1.9 Following the amalgamation of the Community Services and Community Development Business Units in September 2021, the recommendations received were addressed as a priority by Officers.
- 1.10 Work has taken place to draft a new policy and make recommendations to ensure effective safeguarding arrangements are implemented within the Council and that the Council is aware of and compliant with its statutory obligations.

2. Report

- 2.1 A life that is free from harm, abuse, and neglect is a basic right of every person. The objective of safeguarding is to prevent and reduce the risk of harm to adults and children from abuse or other types of exploitation and impairment of development, while supporting individuals to maintain control over their lives and enabling them to make informed decisions without coercion.
- 2.2 Although safeguarding is recognised as a key responsibility of local authorities, safeguarding is everybody's business, with neighbours, citizens, and community members needing to be alert to neglect and abuse and committed to reporting our concerns.
- 2.3 The Runnymede Borough Council Safeguarding Policy sets out how it will meet its obligations to safeguard children and adults at risk. It applies to staff, agency workers, volunteers and contractors employed by the Council. It is also applicable to Councillors undertaking official duties on behalf of the Council.
- 2.4 In early 2021, internal and external audits identified recommendations for improvements to the corporate safeguarding policy and management of safeguarding. Following the amalgamation of the Community Services and Community Development Business Units in September 2021, the need to address the outstanding recommendations received became a priority for Officers.
- 2.5 This created an opportunity to re-focus and undertake a more critical and thorough review of the current Safeguarding policy with the aim of producing an up-to-date policy that reflects best practice guidelines and promotes safeguarding as central to and underpinning all Council activities embracing the highest standards and level of care aimed preventing and reducing the risk of abuse and neglect across the borough. In doing so, other Councils were consulted on their Safeguarding policies.
- 2.6 A project team consisting of the Corporate Head of Community Services; Senior Project Manager (Corporate PMO) and the Health & Wellbeing Manager were appointed to work with our partners regarding the external audits and to review the current Safeguarding policy.

2.7 As a consequence, responses to the external audits have been submitted and a new policy has been drafted with proposed recommendations and updates. It is a key message that Safeguarding is Everybody's Business, and the new policy aims to put this into action by providing a more robust, structured approach to the management of safeguarding and putting safeguarding firmly at the heart of everything we do.

2.8 A summary of the key areas considered/amended are as follows:

Safeguarding staffing structure

2.9 To provide accountability at all levels throughout the Council, by identifying key safeguarding roles and providing training in line with their responsibilities; to ensure processes are followed, staff are supported, there is appropriate representation at safeguarding meetings both internally and externally and sharing best practice with Council colleagues and partner organisations.

Training plan

2.10 To develop a highly trained, vigilant workforce who clearly understand the importance and principles of safeguarding and not only know how to report a concern but feel confident and properly supported by safeguarding leads/managers to do so.

Safeguarding process

2.11 To create a simplified and streamlined process for all safeguarding reports, presented in a user-friendly format. This is intended to be useful to all staff in all scenarios from dealing with an emergency to getting advice about a concern as well as how to report a concern. In combination with the training plan and the safeguarding lead roles, this will help to support those who have a concern but are unsure what to do next.

Record keeping/case management system

2.12 To consolidate all external safeguarding reports across the Council in one place, enabling cross departmental/multi-agency awareness and referrals as well as the sharing of best practice. A central record for all internal safeguarding concerns to be held and managed by HR.

Representation

2.13 To create a Runnymede Borough Council Designated Safeguarding Officers Leads Group so that regular case and policy reviews can be undertaken, and important safeguarding updates rolled out and cascaded to all Officers. It is proposed that this Group will formally review the Safeguarding Policy annually, in line with external audits from the Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership and Surrey Safeguarding Adults Board. Any significant updates to the Policy would be submitted to this Committee for approval. Nominated Safeguarding Leads will attend and actively participate in the 'Surrey District and Boroughs Safeguarding Forum' and 'District & Borough Lead Members and Officers for Children's Services Quarterly Meetings' to benefit from shared learning, partner updates and to be actively involved in the shaping of Safeguarding policy with partner organisations across Surrey.

- 2.14 The role of the Councillor Safeguarding Champion is that of taking the lead on behalf of elected Members. It is suggested that a 3 year term of office is appropriate given the need to undertake training (on-line) at level 1 and level 2 for the role which is also likely to have a time commitment in representing elected Members at the aforementioned quarterly meetings. Members will be asked to nominate and appoint a Councillor at the meeting of this Committee on 10 November 2022.
- 2.15 Should this policy be approved by Members, the following immediate steps would need to be taken to implement the new structure and internal arrangements for safeguarding:
1. Appointment of Senior Safeguarding Leads
 2. Appointment of a Safeguarding Champion from within each Business Centre
 3. Creation of meeting structures to coordinate safeguarding internally
 4. Creation of centralised storage systems for Safeguarding reports made by the Council and against Officers and Councillors
 5. Implementation of training plan as set out across Business Centres

3. Policy framework implications

- 3.1 The Council's Safeguarding Policy has been reviewed and updates have been proposed in line with internal and external audits and latest best practice guidelines.
- 3.2 The proposals within the policy support the "Organisational Development Strategy" within the forthcoming Health & Wellbeing Strategy. This will focus on Runnymede as a Council and its own development as an employer and as an anchor organisation.

4. Resource implications

- 4.1 No additional costs / resource implications have been identified. Staff roles and responsibilities within the safeguarding structure will run alongside normal duties and underlines the essence of the policy that safeguarding is embedded within the Council and is very much business as usual.
- 4.2 The proposed training plan is based on Surrey County Council provision via Surrey Learning Academy which is provided at no cost to local authorities in Surrey. If in the future training needs identified require funding, this will need to be met either from within service budgets or as part of a corporate training plan.

5. Legal implications

- 5.1 This Safeguarding policy is underpinned by a range of legislation including, but not limited to; The Children Acts 1989 and 2004 (as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017), along with the statutory guidance, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015 2018, provide the legal framework for safeguarding children.
- 5.2 This legislation places an overarching responsibility on Surrey County Council, as the lead authority for children, for safeguarding and promoting the

welfare of all children in their area but makes clear that other agencies also have a role to play.

- 5.3 Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 places a statutory duty on various agencies, including district and borough councils, to make arrangements to ensure that their functions are discharged taking account of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This includes any services or function they contract out.
- 5.4 This Act led to the establishment of the Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership and required Surrey County Council to secure the co-operation of partners in setting up arrangements to improve the well-being of children in Surrey.
- 5.5 Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 replaced the Area Child Protection Committee and sets out how organisations and individuals should work together to achieve this using the key principles: Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility: for services to be effective each professional and organisation should play their full part. The approach must be child-centred: in order to be effective, there needs to be a clear understanding of the needs of the child.
- 5.6 The Care Act 2014 sets out the legal framework for how local authorities and other statutory agencies, including district and borough councils, should protect adults with care and support needs who are at risk of abuse or neglect. It consolidates existing law and puts similar arrangements in place to those safeguarding children. The Act required Surrey County Council, as the lead authority for adults at risk to establish a Safeguarding Adults Board to bring together the key local partners to focus on safeguarding strategy and practice. The Act also places a duty on Surrey County Council to carry out safeguarding enquiries where it is suspected that someone is suffering or at risk of abuse or neglect conducting Safeguarding Adults Reviews (SARs) where there is a cause for concern about a particular case, to learn lessons for the future.
- 5.7 All these initiatives are designed to ensure greater multi-agency collaboration as a means of transforming adult social care.

6. Equality implications

- 6.1 The Council is required to have due regard to its Public Sector Equality Duty before adopting the new Safeguarding Policy.
- 6.2 The Council's Duty is stated under the Equality Act 2010 and is to have regard to the need to:
 - a) eliminate discrimination, harassment or victimisation
 - b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
 - c) foster good relations between those who share a relevant characteristic and those who do not
- 6.3 This Policy and Procedure will be implemented in accordance with the principles of the Council's Equality Objectives 2016 - 2020 (currently being

reviewed and updated up to 2026) to maximise positive outcomes for all adults and children, including those with protected characteristics.

- 6.4 An Equalities Impact Assessment screening document has been completed in respect of the proposed policy. It was considered by the Council's Equalities Group and is attached at Appendix 'B.'

7. Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications

- 7.1 The majority of the courses in the training plan are provided by e-learning or with an online tutor, which reduces the need to travel.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1 The proposed policy will provide Runnymede Borough Council with a method to embed a more structured approach to the management of safeguarding across the Council. In doing so, the policy will demonstrate the Council's commitment to the principle of making Safeguarding Everybody's Business. The Council is working to ensure that it actively promotes safeguarding by raising awareness and understanding of Safeguarding responsibilities across the workforce, and therefore putting care and safety of our residents at the forefront of everything we do.

(To resolve)

Background papers

Safeguarding Policy

Equalities Impact Assessment