

MBC Policy for Safeguarding Children & Adults at Risk

Final Decision-Maker	Communities, Housing & Environment Committee
Lead Head of Service	John Littlemore, Head of Housing and Community Services
Lead Officer and Report Author	Matt Roberts, Community Partnerships & Resilience Manager
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

Maidstone Borough Council has a statutory and moral responsibility to safeguard children and vulnerable adults who may be at risk of harm. This policy has been written to give staff, contractors and elected Members guidance around relevant legislation, signs and types of abuse and what to do next to refer the concern to the most appropriate agency so that the subject of that concern can receive suitable help.

This report makes the following recommendations to Communities, Housing & Environment Committee

That:

1. The draft version of MBC's Safeguarding Policy be approved for consultation.
2. Delegated authority be granted to the Head of Housing & Community Services to formally adopt the Policy, subject to any minor amendments in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee.
3. A safeguarding training session be arranged by the Head of Housing & Community Services for all Councillors in the 2019/20 municipal year.
4. Council be recommended that the Chairman of the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee is automatically appointed to the role of Member Safeguarding Champion.
5. Council is recommended to amend the delegations to the Head of Housing and Community Services to include specific reference to responsibility for Safeguarding.
6. Delegated authority is granted to the Head of Legal Partnership and Monitoring Officer to make the appropriate amendments to the Constitution to give effect to the decisions.

Timetable	
<i>Meeting</i>	<i>Date</i>
Communities, Housing & Environment	12 February 2019
Council	27 February 2019

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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 On the 18th October 2016 the Communities, Housing and Environment Committee (CHE) approved the adoption of a combined Safeguarding policy covering both Safeguarding of Children and Adults at Risk, the formation of an MBC Safeguarding Board and the creation of Safeguarding Champions across the organisation, including a Member Champion.

2. Key Changes from the Current Policy

2.1 Kent County Council has introduced changes to the way referrals are handled and made to the authority. The Policy has been updated to include the Kent Support Levels Process and the Integrated Front Door service and instructs staff on how referrals can be made. These issues are covered in the Quick View flow chart and the body of the Policy.

2.2 The Policy now highlights the need for staff to be professionally curious and to seek further information if they have a concern, this is important in ensuring that concerns are not overlooked.

2.3 A section on Missing Children has also been included due to the concern about children who go missing being at increased risk of being groomed for sexual exploitation or becoming involved in gangs or criminal activity.

2.4 Clare's Law and how someone might apply for a disclosure of information under the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) has been added. There is still a lack of awareness about this important process.

2.5 A key change to the current Policy is the inclusion of a section about Mental Health, Suicide Awareness and Suicide Prevention guidance. Suicide has recently become one of the key safeguarding concerns raised by staff, particularly those in Revenues and Benefits and Housing, where dealing with customers facing financial hardship or risk of homelessness can have a detrimental effect on their mental health.

2.6 The guidance provided by the Policy is intended to guide staff in responding to concerns of this type. The Mental Health First Aiders, Designated Safeguarding Officer and the Safeguarding Champions are also there to provide support and advice to staff.

2.7 Information sharing guidance has been updated in line with the Council's Data Protection Policy and GDPR requirements. The Kent & Medway Information Sharing Agreement continues to be the platform for information exchange between agencies.

3. MBC Internal Safeguarding Board

3.1 The group meets on a quarterly basis and provides an excellent platform to discuss safeguarding arrangements and ensure liaison between

departments. Where appropriate, joint working takes place between Council departments and Kent County Council's Children and Young People's and Adult Care & Support Services.

- 3.2 The Board also discusses learning drawn from any Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs), Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) undertaken for children and Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) that have occurred in the borough. The Board will be involved when Maidstone Council has participated in the review by providing information about the Council's contact with the subject of the review.
- 3.3 Any new legislative guidance, best practice or issues raised from referrals made to KCC are also discussed to make sure that we are supplying a high stand of appropriate referrals.
- 3.4 The Board has been closely involved in the development of the updated Policy.

4. Safeguarding Champions

- 4.1 The Safeguarding Champions are now in place across the organisation. Six of the Champions have completed the 'Designated Officer' training provided by the Kent Safeguarding Children's Board which gives them the higher level of knowledge required, including understanding the thresholds for accessing children's services, best practice for safeguarding considerations and how to make referrals.
- 4.2 Each of the following departments has a Safeguarding Champion in place or are in the processes of identifying a suitable person:
 - Community Partnerships
 - Housing & Community Services
 - Housing Outreach Service
 - Customer Services
 - Museum & Learning
 - Maidstone Borough Services (Depot)
 - Bereavement Services
 - Revenues & Benefits
 - Legal Services
 - Planning - TBC
 - Communications – TBC
 - Member Champion – TBC

5. Member Training

- 5.1 A Members Safeguarding workshop was held on the 11 October 2017, the session was delivered by Sue Gower, Programme Development Manager for the Kent Safeguarding Children's Board and Matt Roberts, Community Partnerships & Resilience Manager. The session was attended by 11 Members.
- 5.2 It is recommended that a further workshop is arranged for the latter half of 2019.

6. Member Champion for Safeguarding

- 6.1 Included with the proposal to create Safeguarding Champions was the role of an elected Member to both act as a champion for the organisation and to promote awareness of safeguarding practices amongst fellow elected members.
 - 6.2 Cllr Shellina Prendergast was chosen to be the Champion due to her position as an elected member for Kent County Council, and Deputy Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education. However the role has been vacant since Cllr Prendergast stepped down as a Maidstone Borough Councillor.
 - 6.3 To ensure that the function of Member Safeguarding Champion does not become vacant for any length of time in future it is proposed that the Chair of the CHE Committee takes on the function as Champion.
 - 6.4 Recognising that the Chairman of CHE holds a number of responsibilities, it is proposed that the Chairman has the ability to delegate this responsibility to another Member as required.
 - 6.5 If the Committee agrees to adopt this proposal to fill the Member Champion role, full Council must make the final decision and appropriate appointment. The necessary adjustments to the Constitution will be made and will be appended to the Council report as tracked changes. It is also recommended that specific reference is made to the responsibility for Safeguarding within the delegations to the Head of Housing and Community Services, as currently this is implied but not specifically stated.
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7. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 7.1 Option one: Do nothing. This is not recommended as the current safeguarding policy is now out of date and does not reflect changes in guidance, best practice and the thresholds for accessing Kent County Councils' new 'front door' referral process to access Children's services.
 - 7.2 Option two: Adopt this policy and agree the recommendations in this report. The report will be released for consultation over a period of 28 days by making it available to staff via the intranet and to key stakeholders. As the Policy has had significant input from the Safeguarding Board, it is anticipated that any changes will be minor. If this is the case, the Policy will be adopted as agreed in this report. If material changes are required to the draft document an amended version will be reported to the next Committee for consideration.
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8. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 Option two is recommended. If the Council does not have a Policy which sets out expectations on staff and current best practice then the

organisation will not be able to adequately discharge its duties and ensure that suitable referrals are made to safeguarding children and adults at risk.

9. RISK

9.1 The risks associated with this proposal, including the risks if the Council does not act as recommended, have been considered in line with the Council's Risk Management Framework. That consideration is shown in this report. We are satisfied that the risks associated are within the Council's risk appetite and will be managed as per the Policy.

10. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

10.1 The Policy will be distributed to Heads of Service, the Safeguarding Champions, Mental Health First Aiders and key stakeholders from Kent County Council, Maidstone & Mid Kent Mind and others, with a request for them to review the policy and suggest any alterations to ensure it is fit for purpose.

10.2 The Policy will be made available via the Safeguarding Portal on the Council's Intranet and included in the next Wakey Wakey publication to all staff.

10.3 In order to ensure that all staff are aware of the policy it should be pushed out to staff via NETConsent, in addition to being circulated electronically. A paper copy will be provided to each Safeguarding Champion so that it can be accessed by staff who do not have easy access to the intranet.

10.4 Managers will be asked to deliver a Team Talk on Safeguarding practices.

11. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	This policy will contribute towards the corporate priorities by ensuring that all staff, contractors and elected Members understand the Council's Safeguarding obligations, children and vulnerable adults who are at risk harm can be referred to the appropriate agencies.	Head of Housing & Communities
Risk Management	The adopted policy will contribute to reducing the risk	Communities Partnerships

	of the Council failing to achieve the standard of safeguarding required.	& Resilience Manager
Financial	There are no specific financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report.	S 151 Officer and Finance Team
Staffing	Contained within the report	Communities Partnerships & Resilience Manager
Legal	The Policy covers a number of areas of legislation and responsibility for the Council. These include the Care Act 2014, which covers responsibilities on local authorities for safeguarding adults and the Children Act 2004 as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017, which impose duties on councils and agencies to work together to promote the welfare and safeguarding of children in their area.	Principal Solicitor (Contentious and Corporate Governance).
Privacy and Data Protection	N/A	Communities Partnerships & Resilience Manager
Equalities	The additions to the Policy as detailed in the report, for example, Clare's Law, are likely to have a positive impact on groups with protected characteristics, However, it is important that the EqIA is revisited to ensure that the implementation of the policy changes fully considers the needs of those affected and most vulnerable in its processes, with appropriate practices put in place	Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer
Public Health	We recognise that the recommendations will have a positive impact on population	Senior Public Health Officer

	health or that of individuals.	
Crime and Disorder	The policy supports the priorities identified by the Safer Maidstone Partnership, particularly gangs and child sexual exploitation.	Communities Partnerships & Resilience Manager
Procurement	N/A	Communities Partnerships & Resilience Manager

12. REPORT APPENDICES

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

- Appendix 1: Maidstone Borough Council – Policy for Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk