

Cheltenham Borough Council

Cabinet 19th December 2023

Safeguarding Policy

Accountable member:

Councillor Flo Clucas, Cabinet Member for Safety and Communities

Accountable officer:

Tracy Brown, Safeguarding and Partnerships Manager

Ward(s) affected:

All

Key Decision: Yes

Executive summary:

The Council's safeguarding policy is due for revision having last been fully revised and agreed by Cabinet in 2017.

Taking input from the lead cabinet member, elected member champions, leadership team and service managers, the new policy reflects the aspirations of the Council to effectively embed safeguarding practice across the council.

As with previous versions the policy incorporates both safeguarding children and vulnerable adults into one policy.

Recommendations: That Cabinet:

- 1. adopts the revised safeguarding policy;**
 - 2. delegates authority to the Director of Communities and Economic Development in consultation with Cabinet Member for Communities and Safety to agree updates to the policy as we transition our housing services.**
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1. Implications

1.1 Financial, Property and Asset implications

The recommendations have no direct finance, property or asset implications.

Signed off by: Gemma Bell, Head of Finance, gemma.bell@cheltenham.gov.uk

1.2 Legal implications

The relevant legal provisions are contained within the policy. The authority has various legal duties in respect of safeguarding and the policy seeks to provide guidance on how the authority will exercise those duties and functions.

Signed off by: One Legal – legalservices@onelegal.org.uk

1.3 Environmental and climate change implications

None arising directly a result of this report.

Signed off by: Maizy McCann, Climate Emergency Officer, Maizy.McCann@cheltenham.gov.uk

1.4 Corporate Plan Priorities

This report contributes to the following Corporate Plan Priorities:

- Being a more modern, efficient, and financially sustainable council

1.5 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications

The Council's safeguarding policy and training associated with it follows good practice guidance from Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership and Gloucestershire Safeguarding Adult Boards. This training and guidance addresses issues including race, culture, disability, sexuality, gender, and age ensuring the Council applies the policy without prejudice or discrimination. By its nature the policy supports the Council in its public sector equalities duty by ensuring Council services are safe for all its communities.

2 Background

2.1 Cheltenham Borough Council's staff and elected members have a strong commitment to safeguarding children, vulnerable adults, and the wider community. The current safeguarding policy, adopted in 2017, reflects this and has been a valuable framework to support the Council's delivery of its statutory safeguarding duties.

2.2 With the adoption of the council's new corporate strategy 2023-2027, it is right to review and update the policy. As we transition our housing service, further amendments may be required. We expect that any proposed changes would be minimal and therefore seek delegation through this report to facilitate further amendments.

2.3 The District Safeguarding Network (a subgroup of the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership and the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Adults Board) met in September to review district safeguarding policies. The network looked at good practice across the districts. Although it was agreed it wasn't appropriate for all districts to follow the same policy, it was agreed that some basic elements should be included in district policies. These elements have been incorporated within the updated policy.

3 Updates to the policy

3.1 The main structure of the policy is still consistent with current best practice so has remained the same however the following changes have been made.

3.2 With Human Resources (HR) coming back in house there have been some changes to embed their role within the policy. It is proposed that there will be a nominated safeguarding lead in human resources who will also act as a deputy designated safeguarding officer. This is important as areas of safeguarding such as safer recruitment, allegations management and wellbeing support to staff are part of the role of HR. It also gives greater resilience to the Council's safeguarding response. Human Resources have also audited the policies they have related to safeguarding to ensure they are up to date and that they are appropriately referenced in the safeguarding policy.

3.3 Although the majority of categories of abuse have stayed the same, how some of these are reported has changed and this is now reflected in the policy. However child exploitation, domestic abuse and harassment have been added.

3.4 Domestic abuse is contained within the policy in terms of how the council will respond to incidents within the community. The Council will bring a separate domestic abuse policy to cover its staff and elected members to cabinet early in 2024.

3.5 Under the responsibilities section the role of elected member safeguarding champion has been added. Previously the lead cabinet member undertook this role however this is now a separate role and is appointed by full council and held by back-bench councillor. It is therefore necessary to define it separately to the cabinet lead role.

3.6 As mentioned above the role of deputy designated safeguarding officer has also been created. In addition to a member of human resources becoming a deputy designated officer, front facing services across the organisation will be asked to nominate a deputy designated officer. This will allow greater resilience and help embed the policy across the Council. The names of additional deputy designated officers will be published internally once they have received appropriate training.

3.7 In regard to training the policy now sets out that all Cheltenham Borough Council staff and elected members must undertake safeguarding training covering both children and adults as a minimum. Other training will be offered dependent on job roles and current issues of significance within the borough.

3.8 The Council's safeguarding responsibilities link with a variety of Council areas and legislation. Legislation that covers the council's responsibilities around domestic homicide

reviews and its new serious violence duty have been added. There is also a section that highlights the links to the Council's responsibilities around events on Council land, Council owned buildings and its statutory licensing responsibilities.

4 Reasons for recommendations

4.1 It is recommended that the policy is adopted at this time to increase the resilience of the Council's safeguarding response as well as update it to current best practice. While it should be acknowledged that the policy will need to be updated as housing services are re integrated into the Council, their integration should not mean that the policy needs substantial revision. Delegating authority for updating the policy as recommended will allow for implementation of the good practice changes in the policy in a timely manner and give flexibility to incorporate changes at the appropriate time.

5 Alternative options considered

5.1 The option of waiting to update the policy until housing services are fully reintegrated was considered. As the policy is already overdue for a full update this option is not recommended because it this would cause a delay to making some necessary changes to safeguarding practices at the Council.

6 Consultation and feedback

6.1 Consultation on the policy has taken place with the Council's human resources team, licensing team, procurement team, One Legal and leadership team. It has also taken place with the elected member champions. Their feedback has been incorporated in the sections on how safeguarding links to specific service areas, the role of deputy designated officers and training.

7 Key risks

7.1 Safeguarding is a statutory duty of Cheltenham Borough Council failure to have an up-to-date safeguarding policy would mean that the Council was not fulfilling its statutory duties. If the policy is not fully implemented across the Council it could also put children, vulnerable adults and the wider community who use Council services at risk of harm.

Report author:

Tracy Brown Safeguarding and Partnerships Manager

Appendices:

- i. Risk Assessment
- ii. Safeguarding Policy

Background information:

Not applicable.

Appendix 1: Risk Assessment

Risk ref	Risk description	Risk owner	Impact score (1-5)	Likelihood score (1-5)	Initial raw risk score (1 - 25)	Risk response	Controls / Mitigating actions	Control / Action owner	Deadline for controls/ actions
	If the Council fails to engage fully with the safeguarding agenda the council may not meet its statutory duties.	Tracey Birkinshaw	4	2	8	Reduce	Adoption and roll out of new policy	Tracy Brown	December 2023
	If service areas fail to engage with the safeguarding agenda fully there may be a failure to safeguard a child or vulnerable adult in our care	Tracey Birkinshaw	4	2	8	Reduce	Roll out of training to all staff and elected members, deputy designated officers identified and trained. Communications plan	Tracy Brown	January 2024
	If services commissioned by the council do not meet the safeguarding standards required the council may not meet its statutory duties and a child or vulnerable adult may not be effectively safeguarded	Tracey Birkinshaw	4	2	8	Reduce	Adoption of the policy and training for relevant staff Continue to seek confirmation that commissioned services have safeguarding policies in place via the annual	Tracy Brown	January 2024

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							assurance certificate		