

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SERVICES AND LICENSING COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 14 MARCH 2024

Report Title	Safeguarding Policy and Procedures Guide			
Purpose of Report	To approve the revised SDC Safeguarding Policy and Procedures Guide			
Decision(s)	The Committee RESOLVES to approve the Council's Safeguarding Policy and Procedures Guide.			
Consultation and Feedback	The revised SDC Safeguarding Policy and Procedures Guide has been compiled through the work of the cross-services Corporate Safeguarding Group.			
Report Author	Steve Miles, Senior Youth Officer Email: steve.miles@stroud.gov.uk			
Options	It is a statutory requirement for each local authority to have a safeguarding policy and procedures guide.			
Background Papers	None			
Appendices	Appendix 1 – Safeguarding Policy and Procedures Guide Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment Appendix 3 – Audit Risk Assurance Report 2023 Appendix 4 – GSCP Section 11 Audit Report 2022-23			
Implications (further details at the end of the report)	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	No	Yes	Yes	No

1. Introduction / Background

- 1.1 Stroud District Council (SDC) has a legal duty of care to protect all children, young people and adults, who come into contact with our services. Subsequently, we need to ensure that people are supported to gain good access to support services, remain well and thrive.
- This duty is in-line with the Childrens Act (2004), Working Together to Safeguard Children Statutory Guidance (2018), the Care Act (2014) and the Care and Support Statutory Guidance (2014), Mental Health Capacity Act (2005), and Deprivation of Liberty Standards (2007).
- 1.2 SDC are required to have a relevant policy that meets our responsibilities with regards to safeguarding. We are also required to state our operating and practice procedures in accordance with the policy and good safeguarding practice standards.
- 1.3 The previous safeguarding policy guidance stated that a review of the policy and procedures should be carried out an annual basis – this report is a culmination of the review work that began in June 2023.

2. Main Points

- 2.1 In April 2023, a new cross-services Corporate Safeguarding Group (Appendix 1, Section 4.0) was created and includes staff from all community and customer facing services, plus our Human Resource service. Most staff in this group act as Service Safeguarding Report Lead Officers (see 2.4 of this report).

The group support the strategic and operational work regarding the Council's statutory responsibilities in the safeguarding of children, young people and adults. It has a Terms of Reference and is accountable to the Council's Strategic Leadership Team. The group is Chaired by the Strategic Director of Communities, who is also the Council's Strategic Safeguarding Lead.

Through the work of this group, the new safeguarding policy and procedures guide document (Appendix 1) has been produced.

- 2.2 The new safeguarding policy and procedures guide document features a move to the standardised format of all Council policies; that of being in one document and in accordance with the Council's Policy Development and Review Framework.

It lays out the Council's legal duties and the safeguarding arrangements in Gloucestershire. The latter are primarily determined by our respective partnerships with the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Childrens Partnership (GSCP) and the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Adults Board (GSAB).

- 2.3 The Council's role and responsibilities (Appendix 1, Section 3.0) include that relative to staff and elected members for safeguarding children, young people and adults.

Whilst coming to the latter stages of developing this new policy and procedures guide, the Statutory Guidance titled Working Together to Safeguard Children, was revised by UK Government. This is now subject to assessment by the GSCP with full implementation of new arrangements across the partnership required within 12 months (Appendix 1, Section 3.2.1).

- 2.4 All partner agencies of the GSCP, are required to complete an annual self-assessment audit, to meet statutory requirements outlined in Section 11 of the Childrens Act 2004 (Appendix 1, Section 3.2.1-part c).

GSCP manage the audit process and partners are required to present their report against the respective Section 11 standards framework – each report is subsequently scrutinised by a panel of young people working alongside the GSCP appointed Independent Scrutineer and their Safeguarding Managers. The theme for this year was 'commissioning'.

Some members of Stroud District Youth Council were panellists for the third year in succession. Such active involvement has inspired them to develop a strong interest in safeguarding matters – their manifesto statement titled: '*Youth Rights, Youth Voice, and Safeguarding*' (www.stroudyouthvoice.co.uk/manifesto) is a powerful message to all GSCP partners to ensure that continued progression on policy and procedure development remains vital for the protection of children and young people.

Recommendations are subsequently made to GSCP partners, and these feature in their annual report which is made public and submitted to UK Government. The recommendations from the 2022/23 report that apply to SDC (Appendix 4), have been acknowledged by our Corporate Safeguarding Group.

2.5 We are required to have designated safeguarding lead officers, who are defined by us as follows: Strategic Safeguarding Lead; Operational Safeguarding Lead; Operational Safeguarding Support. The respective officers in these roles, also represent the Council on the GSCP and the GSAB (Appendix 1, Section 3.4).

2.6 To help ensure we carry out our procedural duties, we have Service Safeguarding Report Lead Officers, who are responsible for supporting staff who identify safeguarding concerns and / or incidents (Appendix 1, Section 3.6) and ensure the reporting and referral processes are completed.

The policy and procedures guide features a breakdown of the responsibilities for the following: Strategic Leadership Team; Service Managers; Human Resource Service; all Staff; and all Elected Members. Such responsibilities include that of completing training at the designated level and within the stipulated time frame for their role.

2.7 Acknowledgement is given in the policy and procedures guide, to others affected by the policy and procedures. This includes the formal procurement and commissioning of services including grant giving, as well as contractors, partners, volunteers, apprentices, and those gaining work experience, plus workers under the age of 18 (Appendix 1, Section 3.8).

2.8 Safeguarding Training (Appendix 1, Section 5.0) has been a significant area of development for this new policy and procedures guide. Clarifying our training needs for staff, elected members, voluntary and community sector partners, taxi and private hire drivers, has been an important aspect of the work.

Whilst the monitoring of staff and elected member training is managed by our Human Resources service, the Corporate Safeguarding Group acknowledge that more work is needed to ensure we meet the required standards, as safeguarding practices evolve – a point that was highlighted in our Section 11 audit report (see 2.6 of this report). We are due to invite the GSCP to do a peer review of our training programme during Quarter 1 of 2024/25.

2.9 Our safeguarding practices are laid out in the document (Appendix 1, Section 6.0). As part of our safer recruitment requirements, all staff job descriptions now feature a statement reflecting safeguarding responsibilities (Appendix 1, Section 6.1.2).

The supervision and support for staff, including access to information, advice and guidance is very important – in addition to the new policy and procedures guide, the Hub and Members Hub will feature a revised look, including refreshed easy to follow guidance.

Safeguarding concerns and incidents are managed in accordance with the SDC Data Protection Policy and the Data Protection Act 2018. Data held will be used and concur with, that passed on to the Gloucestershire Childrens Help Desk and Referral Portal and the Gloucestershire Adult Helpdesk and Referral Portal, through their respective referral procedures. SDC is a data processor in respect of these procedures. Respective data is controlled by the GSCP and GSAB and managed in accordance with respective agreements with these bodies – these can be found via the following links:

<https://gloucestershirescp.trixonline.co.uk/chapter/information-sharing>

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/media/vftpj3xi/gsab-information-sharing-guidance-may-2023.pdf>

2.10 Following the correct safeguarding procedures are vitally important to ensure a best possible outcome in the protection of children, young people, and adults. We have laid out and defined in the guide document (Appendix 1, Section 7.0) the statutory requirements, explaining those relating to emergencies, internal and external procedures.

Working with partners through the safeguarding arrangements for Gloucestershire during the referral processes are an ever-important part of our role as a Council. We have stated the differences between the reporting process and the referral process – it is vitally important that all staff and elected members understand and follow these, including the use of correct terminology.

2.11 We have detailed our pre and post referral involvement with other agencies (Appendix 1, Section 8.0). The work that staff are required to be involved with, is often bespoke to the circumstances of individual safeguarding matters. A range of examples are featured in the guide document, but this is not an exhaustive list.

2.12 This policy and procedures guide acknowledges and relates to, other policies and procedures within the Council and that of statutory partners.

Included in the document (Appendix 1, Section 10 and Section 13) we have made reference to general information, advice and guidance on safeguarding, as well as supporting references to the knowledge gained through safeguarding training.

3.13 Whilst developing this policy and procedures guide, we have acknowledged the Council's internal audit of safeguarding, as directed by the Audit Standards Committee (Appendix 3).

We have made efforts to address more urgent matters highlighted in the audit report – these include the following: The production of this new Safeguarding Policy and Procedures Guide and the Corporate Safeguarding Group has introduced an Action and Decision-Making Log to record and monitor the actions and decisions of the group.

However, we accept further work is required to ensure that we comply with audit recommendations. Full consideration of the internal audit report is scheduled to take place at the next Corporate Safeguarding Group Meeting on 28 March 2024. A Management Update is scheduled to be presented to the Audit and Standards Committee on 16 April 2024.

3. Conclusion

3.1 In response to statutory requirements, our own in-house arrangements and through the establishment of a Corporate Safeguarding Group, the work in relation to the decision-making process of this Committee, we believe will have achieved the following:

- Reformatted our safeguarding policy and brought the policy and procedures together in one document.
- Met recommendations highlighted in recent Section 11 audits and begun our response to the recommendations from our internal audit.

- Brought greater clarification on our procedures for reporting and referring concerns and incidents.
- Clarified the training requirements for staff and elected members.

3.2 We do, however, acknowledge that safeguarding policy and procedures in the wider context, require updating regularly. For this, we need to review annually and make respective changes to our own policy and procedures. We also need to address the outcomes from the Working Together to Safeguarding Children 2023 statutory guidance once they are agreed by the GSCP. We will continue to address the recommendations from our internal audit, which we've already begun. We will also react accordingly to recommendations that come from the pending peer review of our training programme.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report as the decision is to approve the safeguarding policy and procedures.

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4.2 Legal Implications

The legal obligations in relation to safeguarding adults and children are included within this report and various statutory guidance has been referred to. There are no further legal implications in relation to safeguarding duties but data sharing, retention of information and other information sharing practices must comply with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

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4.3 Equality Implications

An EIA has been carried out by Officers in relation to the decision made in this report and no equality implications arise.

If an EIA has been completed, please ensure that it has been signed, and sent policy@stroud.gov.uk and attached as an appendix to the report.

4.4 Environmental Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.