

# **Northumberland County Council Corporate Safeguarding Policy**

## **Purpose:**

The purpose of this document is to introduce the Council's Policy for Safeguarding Children and Adults.

The following are the objectives of the Safeguarding Policy:

- To highlight how Northumberland County Council undertakes its legal commitments in the field of safeguarding children and adults.
- To give assurance to members of the public, service users, Councillors, employees (including those employed via an agency) and people working on behalf of the Council (including volunteers, contractors, students on placement, etc) – furthermore referred to in this document as “staff/ workers” - that there are clear arrangements in place to safeguard and protect children and adults.
- To ensure that Council staff/ workers and Councillors have clear guidelines for responding to when a child or adult may be at risk of harm or their wellbeing is being adversely affected
- To ensure that everyone within the council work together to protect people from abuse or harm of any kind.

## **Scope:**

This policy relates to all children and to adults at risk over the age of 18 regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation or religion or cultural background. By the nature of the organisation, it is inevitable that various degrees of contact with children and adults at risk will occur, and it is therefore our policy to have in place clear guidelines for safeguarding and promoting their welfare as well as protecting our staff/ workers and other adults in a position of responsibility from potential allegations of abuse.

This policy also includes the safeguarding of staff/ workers who are under 18 years and adult staff/ workers who may be at risk of harm.

## **Responsibilities:**

Every Councillor, every member of staff, every volunteer and every contracted service provider has a responsibility to adhere to the procedures and guidance set out in this policy.

## **1. Introduction**

1.1. One of Northumberland County Council's corporate priorities is to ensure that vulnerable people are protected and are able to live as independently as possible.

1.2. As a Council, we believe that every child and adult has the right to be safe from harm. The Council acknowledges its role and responsibilities to provide clear guidance for staff/ workers, Councillors, partners and those people whom we serve in this key field.

1.3. Corporate Safeguarding is everybody's business in every Directorate within the Council. While Children, Young People and Education, and Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing are the lead services for dealing with enquiries regarding allegations or concerns that children and adults may be suffering significant harm or experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect, everyone working or contracted within the Council has a responsibility to safeguard the welfare of children, young people and adults, whatever the role of the individual.

1.4. "Safeguarding" is a wider concept than the protection of children and adults and includes promoting:

- Physical, emotional and mental health
- Protection from harm and neglect (including financial abuse)
- Education, training and leisure
- Contribution to society
- Social and economic well-being

1.5. Although every organisation working with children, young people and adults should be committed to safeguarding and promoting their welfare, a number of organisations have statutory roles or duties:

- Under Part 3 of the Children Act 1989 and Part 2 of the Children Act 2004, Northumberland County Council has a duty to ensure that it undertakes its functions in a way that safeguards and promotes the welfare of children
- Under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, it is Northumberland County Council's duty to ensure that every reasonable step is taken to protect adults and prevent crime and disorder when it undertakes its functions
- Part 1 of the Care Act 2014 establishes a clear legal framework for how local authorities and other statutory agencies should protect adults with care and support needs who are at risk of abuse or neglect.
- Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021

## **2. Scope of this document**

2.1. The following are the objectives of the Safeguarding Policy:

- to highlight how Northumberland County Council undertakes its legal commitments in the field of safeguarding children and adults
- to give assurance to members of the public, service users, Councillors, employees and people working on behalf of the Council that there are clear arrangements in place to safeguard and protect children and adults
- to ensure that Council staff and Councillors have a clear understanding for recognising when a child or adult may be at risk of harm

2.2. As a Council, we believe that it is unacceptable for a child or an adult to be abused or harmed in any way. This is reflected in the following principles which form the basis of the Policy:

- Every child and adult has a right to participate in a safe society without any violence, fear, abuse, bullying and discrimination
- Every child and adult has the right to be protected from harm, exploitation and abuse
- We will put the welfare of children and adults centrally in our policies and procedures
- We will work closely in partnership with children, their parents, carers and adults and other agencies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and adults
- We will respect the rights, wishes, feelings and privacy of children and adults by listening to them and minimising any risks that may affect them
- We will invest in preventative work and early intervention and try to avoid situations where abuse or allegations of abuse or harm may occur

### **3. Outcomes**

3.1. This policy reflects the Council's commitment to safeguard children and adults and to protect them from being abused.

3.2. We will measure the impact in order to achieve the following high level outcomes:

- a clear understanding amongst employees, Councillors and those working on behalf of the Council of the policies for safeguarding children and adults
- robust corporate and directorate procedures in place to ensure compliance with the policy introduced here
- clear and accessible communication arrangements in place across the organisation, including information about the key officers in each directorate who are responsible for children and adult safeguarding issues
- consistency between these procedures which are operational and associated protocols for safeguarding children and adults

3.3. All staff/ workers and Councillors will receive information and training regarding safeguarding.

## **4. Roles and Responsibilities**

4.1. Every member of staff/ worker, Councillor, volunteer and service provider has a responsibility in the field of safeguarding and a duty to adhere to the procedures set out in this policy.

4.2. By following the correct procedures, we will ensure that the appropriate steps are implemented to deal with any allegation or concern and ensure that services are planned and delivered in a way which safeguards children and adults, and staff and Councillors are enabled to conduct themselves safely.

4.3. This means that every directorate within the Council has a key role to play and has to take full ownership of safeguarding matters. In addition, every directorate needs to understand where safeguarding issues are most likely to arise in their particular service and ensure they adhere to this policy in managing them safely.

4.5 Clear arrangements and procedures are in place across both Children, Young People and Education, and Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing directorates to ensure that enquiries into allegations and concerns that children and adults may be suffering or at risk of suffering harm receive due consideration.

## **5. Functions of Key Officers and Councillors**

5.1. The Chief Executive has the general responsibility for ensuring that there is an effective safeguarding policy and procedures for children and adults in place and that they are implemented.

5.2. The Chief Executive is also responsible for the development of effective corporate governance and satisfying all the statutory requirements. However, there are other key officers who have safeguarding responsibilities.

5.3. The Executive Directors for Children, Young People and Education, and Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing have the final responsibility for safeguarding issues. They are responsible for ensuring that the Council has appropriate safeguarding measures in place to protect children and young people, adults and vulnerable older people and are responsible for reporting at a corporate level to Councillors on their effectiveness.

5.4. The Executive Directors are also responsible for the following:

- supervising the process of implementing, monitoring and improving the safeguarding and protection procedures for children and adults
- ensuring that there are robust reporting arrangements and processes in place for safeguarding children and adults and to report at a corporate level and to Councillors

- ensuring the effectiveness of the Northumberland Adult and Childrens Safeguarding Partnership (NCASP) making sure that lessons are learned as a result of practice and departmental reviews in respect of children and adults and that they are applied as necessary by every agency, acknowledging that the effectiveness of arrangements are dependent on the quality of the contribution of every agency
- raising the profile, supporting the policy and ensuring that the Council complies fully with the Policy for Safeguarding Children and Adults
- ensuring that every member of staff in Children, Young People and Education, and Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing understands and implements high standards in terms of identifying risks and safeguarding practices
- promoting more awareness amongst the public of issues relating to safeguarding children and adults and ensuring social work practices evolve in light of appropriate research
- raising standards in practice by means of ensuring that professional supervision, training and other opportunities to learn and reflect are available, so that staff are supported appropriately
- submitting observations, in the statutory role, to Councillors

5.5. Whilst every member of staff has a responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and adults, the Executive Directors are the Senior Officers in the Council with the final accountability for this area of work.

## **6. Councillors**

6.1. Due to the importance of safeguarding for all Councillors, it is encouraged that every Councillor attends training in respect of safeguarding children and adults. Training will be offered to all new members and an attendance list will be maintained; this will be reported as part of the performance monitoring arrangements. The training will raise awareness amongst Northumberland County Councillors of this policy and increase their understanding of the safeguarding procedures that exist within the Council.

6.2. Annual refreshers will be provided to enable Councillors to update their knowledge and understanding and enable them to respond appropriately to safeguarding issues if and when they become aware of them.

6.3. Constituents will occasionally ask for assistance with these issues or ask Councillors to intervene on their behalf. Councillors should advise the constituent to seek legal advice. It is not appropriate for Councillors to become involved as it could give rise to a conflict of interest with the Council's statutory responsibilities to safeguard children and adults, investigate and take action in respect of allegations of abuse or neglect.

6.4. If Councillors become aware of individual cases of safeguarding concerns relating to children or adults arising from work with their constituents, they have a responsibility to report these concerns to the relevant Directorate.

6.5. Councillors will receive the following information in respect of safeguarding:

- Councillors on the Family and Childrens (Education and Children's Social Care Services) Overview and Scrutiny will have an important role in scrutinising information contained in the Executive Director of Children, Young People Annual Reports. It is also the duty of Councillors to ensure that effective corporate policies and procedures are in place and followed throughout the organisation
- Councillors on the Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee also have an important role in scrutinising information in relation to Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing and ensuring that adults with care and support needs receive support and protection and will receive a report from the Executive Director of Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing on an annual basis which will include the annual report for the Northumberland Safeguarding Children and Adults Safeguarding Partnership
- Councillors on the Corporate Parenting Board will receive information in respect of children in care
- Councillors of the Health and Wellbeing Board will receive the annual report from NCASP
- The Executive Directors of Children, Young People and Education, and Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing will report on the work of the Council to all Councillors on an annual basis.

6.6. Any lessons from Northumberland Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews or Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs) will also be identified to Councillors as part of these reports

6.8. This policy is in addition to the Member's Code of Conduct and the Officers' Code of Conduct and the principles within both these codes of conduct should always be applied to every situation.

## **7. Designated Managers within Every Directorate**

7.1. Every Directorate within the Council will be required to nominate a minimum of one "Designated Manager" for dealing with safeguarding children and adult's issues within each service within the Directorate.

7.2. The Designated Managers are responsible for:

- acting as a key source of advice and support for other staff/ workers in the Directorate on how to access advice on safeguarding issues.
- being familiar with Northumberland County Council's Corporate Policy for Safeguarding Children and Adults.
- ensuring that there are effective internal procedures to deal with concerns within the directorate by working closely with Children, Young People and

Education, and Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing to achieve this, including safe storage of a record of the concern and action taken

- ensuring that the process of complying with this policy is monitored through reporting regularly to the Executive Management Team (EMT)
- attending the relevant training for Designated Managers

7.3. Any member of staff/ worker wishing to report concerns for the safety of an individual should initially and immediately contact their line manager who has responsibility for ensuring risk is minimised by promptly contacting Onecall (see section 11 below) and for sharing the concern with the Designated Manager for consideration. If the concern is regarding the Designated Manager themselves, the line manager should contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

## **8. All Service Leads**

8.1. All Service Leads, through their Management Teams will be jointly responsible for ensuring that all the statutory requirements in terms of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and adults receive due consideration. This includes the quality, content and frequency of training provided and maintaining sufficient staff training records.

8.2. All Service Leads are expected to fully comply with this Corporate Policy and to adhere to the safer recruitment requirements as laid out in the NCC Recruitment Policy.

## **9. Every Line Manager**

9.1. Every Line Manager is responsible for ensuring that the staff/workers for whom they are responsible receive the safeguarding training which they need, proportionate to their responsibilities. The Learning and Organisational Development Team will incorporate Corporate Safeguarding into all relevant training. A priority will be the training of Designated Safeguarding Managers and line managers in each department.

9.2. Every member of staff/ worker and all volunteers are responsible for undertaking their duties in a manner which safeguards and promotes the welfare of children and adults. They must also act in a way which protects them against false allegations of abuse as far as possible and in accordance with this policy. They must bring issues of concern regarding the safety and welfare of children and adults to the attention of the Designated Manager in their department. Staff/ workers who feel unable to raise any identified issues with their Designated Manager should utilise the Council's Raising Concerns at Work Policy, available on the internal staff intranet.

## **10. Contractors, Sub-contractors or Other Organisations funded by or on behalf of Northumberland County Council**

10.1 Contractors, sub-contractors or other organisations funded by or on behalf of the Council are responsible for arranging the necessary checks through the Disclosure and Barring Service and for ensuring that their staff comply with

regulatory and contractual arrangements relating to safeguarding children and adults.

10.2 Some organisations are also required to undertake an annual self-assessment of safeguarding arrangements, and to report outcomes, as part of contract monitoring arrangements. It is expected that this will apply to more organisations over time.

10.3 Contractors are also responsible for informing relevant managers of the Council about any concerns they may have and to refer protection issues. Compliance with Northumberland County Council's expectations regarding safeguarding will be monitored via existing contract monitoring arrangements.

## **11.0. Clarity Regarding the Referral Process**

11.1. Any member of staff/ workers with concerns regarding the safety of an individual, or the behaviour of a colleague towards children or an adult should report their concerns to their manager who will contact Onecall on 01670 536400. After the issue has been referred to Onecall, the line manager should report the issue to the Designated Manager.

11.2. If a Councillor (or any member of the public) has concerns regarding the safety of an adult or a child they should contact Onecall immediately on 01670 536400

11.3. The Police must be contacted immediately if a child or adult is in immediate danger.

11.4 The referral process defined above is not intended to replace the existing safeguarding reporting arrangements established for those working in Children, Young People and Education, and Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing. Staff/ workers in these areas should follow normal reporting protocols.



## Reporting Flowchart

(for staff working outside of Children, Young People and Education, and Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing)

