

## **CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

### **PART 1 - THE POLICY FRAMEWORK**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

This policy sets out Epping Forest District Council's framework for ensuring that it has appropriate arrangements in place for the protection of children that are commensurate with its work and statutory responsibilities. The Council is committed to ensuring that appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure that all children who come into contact with its services, our service users, or interact with Council staff, do so in a safe manner, and that any concerns are identified and appropriately actioned with respect to children's welfare.

#### **1.2 Scope of the Policy**

This policy covers all service users, their families, carers and supporters, and core and non core employees, casual workers, temporary employees, work experience students, agency staff, consultants and other contracted persons within the duration of that contract.

#### **1.3 Definitions**

The Government's vision for children's services, 'Every Child Matters' was published in 2003. It proposed reshaping children's services to help achieve the following outcomes:

- to be healthy;
- to stay safe;
- to enjoy and achieve;
- to make a positive contribution;
- to achieve economic well-being.

This policy sets out a corporate framework for the furtherance of these objectives, where they are within the role and responsibility of the District Council.

#### **1.4 Policy Statement on Child Protection**

The Council takes seriously its responsibility for the protection and welfare of children as this impacts upon its function and services. The Council recognises that although it is not the lead body for child protection, it is committed to working in partnership with other agencies such as Social Care and the Police, in compliance with legal requirements.

With respect to its direct provision of services, the Council will seek to ensure that these are delivered in ways that are safe and appropriate for children to use. This will be underpinned by a risk assessment process where required, and by consultation with children, their parents and carers, to ensure that services reflect (where possible and appropriate) the needs of children and their parents/carers.

This policy will be reviewed as required, for example, in the light of legislative changes and developments in best practice.

## **PART 2 - ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **2.1 Functions of the District Council that relate to child protection and the well-being of children**

There are a range of functions carried out by the District Council, which have a positive outcome on the well-being of children. The purpose of the following list is to be illustrative rather than provide a full set of duties which relate to this:

- As a housing authority, by achieving the decent homes standard, Epping Forest District Council directly improves the health and life chances of children by improving the standard of housing, by preventing and responding to homelessness and by working closely with children's services agencies. The Housing Service is also responsible for the allocation of suitable housing to those in most need, including children.
- Leisure Services provided by the Council ensure that children and families benefit from local leisure centres, play schemes, the museum, and holiday clubs. This contributes to the health of children and their families.

- Planning Services can impact upon children's, health and safety in the design of new developments, ensuring plans are appropriate to the needs of children (such as provision of play facilities in new housing developments) and that there is appropriate access to health and social care services.
- Environmental Services has a responsibility to children in respect of food hygiene and nutrition and the promotion of health improvement. There is also a key role as a licensing authority.
- Research and Democratic Services has a responsibility within its Community Safety function to help safeguard children and work in partnership with the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.
- Financial Services administers benefit payments to ensure that children are protected from the effects of poverty and that family income is maximised.
- Human Resources ensures that staff employed, who deal with children, are subject to the appropriate external checks prior to appointment.

## **2.2 Joint Chief Executive (Community Services)**

The Joint Chief Executive (Community Services) is responsible for ensuring that the arrangements set out in this policy are in place to ensure the protection of children. This postholder is also responsible for leading on the development of the Local Strategic Partnership and supporting community strategies which assist in the co-ordination and planning of services for young people.

The Joint Chief Executive (Community Services) also ensures that the Council's duty under Section 10 of The Children Act 2004 i.e., to co-operate with Essex County Council in its duty to promote inter-agency co-operation between those agencies which are involved with children and young people, is effectively discharged.

The Joint Chief Executive (Community Services) is also responsible for ensuring co-ordination of information and senior management commitment to the importance of safeguarding and promoting the well-being of children, and ensuring that a statement of the

Council's responsibilities towards children is brought to the attention of all staff. Finally, this postholder is also responsible for ensuring clear lines of accountability for work on safeguarding and promoting the well-being of children. This still applies to services which are being provided by the Council through external contractors, for example, for the provision of leisure centres.

### **2.3 Heads of Service**

Heads of Service are responsible for ensuring that managers and staff are aware of the contents of this policy and the Council's duties to safeguard and promote the well-being of children. Heads of Service are individually responsible for:

- The implementation of the requirements of this policy within their area of responsibility;
- Ensuring that all managers and Team Leaders properly discharge the responsibilities described below;
- Ensuring that they, and their managers and teams, are responsible for developing local policies, procedures and arrangements for the safeguarding and promoting of the well-being of children, as this relates to the duties and functions of their service area. Where necessary they are responsible for the production of action plans to ensure that children are safeguarded and protected with respect to the duties and functions of their service.
- Ensuring that, in liaison with the Head of HR and Performance Management, Criminal Records Bureau checks are undertaken, where appropriate, for new and (where permission has been given) existing staff.
- Ensuring that matters of concern relating to the protection of children referred to them are passed on to Social Care and/or the Police (via the Joint Chief Executive Community).
- Ensuring that service specific training is provided on child protection issues as they relate to the individual service. This will include existing staff and those new to the service/authority as part of their induction.

In carrying out these responsibilities, they will have regard to the following matters (amongst others):-

- (a) The appropriateness or otherwise of interviewing customers/service users with children present in light of the matters under discussion.
- (b) The appropriateness or otherwise of photographing children by members of the general public at Council events.
- (c) The use of photographs of children taken by the Council and the need to obtain permission of parents to use those photographs in promotional material.
- (d) The inappropriateness of physical contact with children except in extreme circumstances (e.g. assisting a child in difficulties at a Sports Centre).
- (e) The provision of first aid by Council staff to children.

#### **2.4 Managers and Supervisors**

Managers and supervisors are responsible for complying with the requirements of this policy and any service level policies, procedures and actions brought about as a result of the introduction of this policy. Furthermore, they are responsible for the promotion of a culture amongst staff which recognises the rights of children and the Council's responsibility for their safety when receiving our services.

Managers and supervisors will ensure that this policy, and the arrangements within services which result from it, are clearly published and understood by all staff working within their area of responsibility. They must ensure that any matters of concern, with respect to an individual child, are reported to the Head of Service and, where appropriate, properly investigated, and that appropriate follow-up action is taken in consultation with the Head of Service and/or the Joint Chief Executive (Community).

It is the responsibility of line managers and supervisors to ensure that all procedures and working practices with respect to the protection of children are up-to-date, including risk assessments. These should be reviewed when an incident occurs or modifications to

working practices take place. Any risks identified must be notified to the relevant Head of Service and a local action plan devised to manage, reduce or remove the risk.

## **2.5 Employee Responsibilities**

All staff are responsible for complying with the requirements of this policy and any service level policies, procedures or actions put in place by the Head of Service. Furthermore, staff should take all reasonable steps to ensure (within the context of their duties) that risks are minimised and that children are protected when using Council services.

In addition, to ensure effective implementation of this policy, all employees have a responsibility to:

- Be aware of, and abide by this policy, and any service level policies, procedures or actions, and undertake training as necessary to support their implementation;
- Ensure that they work in such a way that they do not place children in a position of risk or expose them to unnecessary risks;
- Report any incidents of concern, with respect to the protection of children, to their manager as soon as possible;
- Co-operate with any risk assessment process undertaken by their manager;
- Ensure that they behave appropriately towards any children they come into contact with whilst carrying out their duties;
- Seek the advice of their manager in any circumstances, or with respect to any issues that arise concerning protection and well-being of children, relating to their job.

## **2.6 Employees Working away from the Office Base**

Staff that come into contact with children whilst working away from their office base, for example, as a lone worker, must act in an appropriate manner with respect to their behaviour towards any child or his/her parents.

Staff have a responsibility under this policy to report any matters of concern which they become aware of when dealing with children, or the children of service users with whom they come into contact.

## **2.7 Corporate Co-ordination of Information relating to Child Protection Issues**

Where an individual service becomes aware of any issues relating to the protection or well-being of a child with whom it has contact, these concerns must be reported immediately to the Joint Chief Executive (Community), who will consider the information given and will share it with other services as appropriate (for example, where other services are likely to come into contact with that child or his/her parents). The Joint Chief Executive (Community) is also responsible for contacting either or both of the Police and Child Protection Officer at Essex County Council if the concerns are of a serious nature, and for agreeing with the Head of Service, an action plan with respect to the Council's actions towards that child and his/her family.

## **PART 3 - STAFF WHO ARE SUBJECT TO COMPLAINTS ABOUT ISSUES CONCERNING CHILD PROTECTION**

- 3.1 The Council takes seriously any complaints made about the conduct of staff in respect of their contact with children. Any concerns received by the Council will be investigated and, if necessary, action will be taken against the member of staff via the disciplinary procedure. Dependant upon the facts of the complainant the Council through its Joint Chief Executive (Community) will refer the matter to the Police and Essex County Council Child Protection Officer.
  
- 3.2 Where an investigation shows that the complaint against a member of staff was malicious, frivolous, or in any other way unfounded, the Council will support the accused if s/he noted to pursue action against the complainant, appropriate to its role and responsibilities, and the nature of the allegation made.