

Report to: **District Council of Easington**
Date: **8 September 2005**
Report of: **Head of Personnel and Payroll**
Subject: **Safeguarding Children Policy**
Ward: **All**

1 **Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to recommend to Members the adoption of a Safeguarding Children Policy.

2 **Consultation**

- 2.1 Consultation has taken place with the Management Team, the Executive Members for Corporate Services, Regeneration, Social Inclusion, Environment and Transport, Organisational Development, Community and Culture and Trades Union Representatives. External consultation included Durham County Council Social Services Department.

3 **Background**

- 3.1 The nature of the Authority's operations is changing with regard to the services offered to children and young persons. Initiatives involving Street Wardens, Sports Development and the Community Safety Partnership have all resulted in greater interaction with these groups.
- 3.2 Whilst we have an established procedure for Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks on new employees in relevant posts, and have arranged some limited training, the Authority has not previously established comprehensive arrangements to safeguard the welfare of children. We need such arrangements to both ensure compliance with the Childrens Act 1989 and 2004 and our duties under common law.
- 3.3 We do not have an established level of expertise in Child Protection. Such expertise lies with the authorities that have the statutory responsibility for providing services to children and vulnerable adults. In preparing the proposed policy we have used a "template" provided to us by Durham County Council Social Services. They have also provided us with specialist advice to help us develop a policy which meets the needs of this District Council.

4 **Position Statement and Options Appraisal**

- 4.1 Members need to be aware that as we implement the proposed policy we will need to make a number of operational changes.
- 4.2 The Authority needs to nominate a "Responsible Safeguarding Children Officer" (RSCO). His/her role will be to generally monitor adherence to the policy, to

receive reports of suspicions or allegations of abuse and to forward these to the Social Care and Health Emergency Duty Team. It should be noted that it is for the statutory agencies to investigate any allegations or suspicions and not the RSCO. A deputy should also be nominated.

- 4.3 The Authority should receive an annual report on Safeguarding Children from the RSCO. It is anticipated that this will include a summary of any incidents, any training activity, changes in relevant legislation and any significant non-compliance with the proposed policy.
- 4.4 As we recruit employees into posts which will involve working with children and young persons we will need to review the job descriptions and person specifications in line with this policy.
- 4.5 The appropriate job application forms will need to be amended to include the "self disclosure question" detailed in Section 4.5 of policy documentation.
- 4.6 We will also need to change our induction procedures to ensure we have a record that relevant employees have received both the Council's Code of Conduct for Employees and the proposed policy.
- 4.7 We will need to have appropriate training in place for all relevant employees and a system of supervision to ensure all employees awaiting training are closely supervised when working with children.

5 **Implications**

5.1 *Financial*

There will be some costs associated with providing the Safeguarding Children Training as required by the proposed policy. This can be met from existing budgets.

5.2 *Legal*

This document will assist the Council in meeting its obligations under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1975 and the Childrens Act 1989 and 2004.

5.3 *Policy*

In adopting the document, Members would deem the Safeguarding Children Policy to be a formal policy of the Council.

5.4 *Risk*

A risk assessment has been completed for the implementation of the proposed policy.

5.5 *Communications*

Adoption of this policy will have implications for all Service Units. Consequently appropriate training, briefings and wide communication will begin immediately.

5.6 *Corporate*

The proposed policy will support the Council's priority area to 'Make the District Safe' and in particular will help the Authority achieve the following objectives:-

MDS1 - 'To reduce crime and the fear of crime.'

MDS3 - 'To support our most vulnerable people, particularly the elderly.'

MDS4 - 'To engage our children and young people'

Recommendations

- 1 That the policy appended to this report is adopted.
- 2 That the Head of Personnel Services is nominated as the Authority's Responsible Safeguarding Children Officer and the Health and Safety Manager is his/her nominated deputy.
- 3 That the Service Delivery Scrutiny Committee receives an annual report on Safeguarding Children activity as outlined in Section 4.3 of this report.
- 4 That this Policy be made available to Parish/Town Councils and Community Groups and recommended as good practice and a possible 'template' to help them develop their own arrangements for meeting their own duty of care.

Background Papers/Documents referred to in the production of this report:-

Durham County Council Model Document.

Correspondence from Durham County Council Social Services Dept.

DW/MC/H&S/GEN/050102

13 January 2005