

# Safeguarding Children Policy

**Date Written:** April 2012

**Date reviewed:** November 2022

**Purpose:** To set out our approach to the protection and welfare of the children and young people who live in our properties or who visit our services and schemes.

**Scope:** All staff, contractors and customers, including members of the public who may come into contact with children who live in or visit our services and schemes.

**Definitions:** A child can be defined as:

A child is anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. 'Children' therefore means 'children and young people' throughout.

**Date For Review:** 1 November 2023

## Policy

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 We provide housing services to a wide range of individuals throughout the North East of England and we recognise that we will come into contact with vulnerable children while delivering services to our customers.
- 1.2 The Procedures that relate to this Policy are in place to guide and inform the practice of members of staff to protect children. The Procedures should be applied in all situations where the possibility of abuse cannot be ruled out and they apply to any child who lives in or visits any of our housing schemes, services or offices.
- 1.3 The aim of this policy is to set out how any child living in or visiting our schemes and services is protected and kept safe from harm and also to:
  - Provide a framework that defines the basic values and principles that govern professional practice when providing services
  - Ensure we are accountable and can demonstrate our decision making in this area.
  - Set the parameters of what is and is not acceptable behaviour towards children living in our properties or visiting our housing schemes and services.
  - Protect and inform workers, volunteers and clients by clarifying what types of behaviour cause concern.
  - Give staff confidence to react to different situations.
  - Encourage high standards of work and consistency between staff.

### 2. Policy statements

#### 2.1 Statement of Commitment

- 2.1.1 This policy has been produced to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Through the implementation of the policy its purpose is to protect children from abuse (with regard to the relevant legislation and

issues of consent) and to support the abused child and their families. We believe in the following:

- everyone has the right to live his or her life free from fear, violence or harm.
- all children have the right to be protected from harm or abuse.
- acting in a way that supports the rights of the individual
- treating all children and their families positively regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, gender reassignment or religion.
- promoting the safety and welfare of children – this is defined as:
  - protecting children from maltreatment;
  - preventing impairment of children's health or development;
  - ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and
- undertaking that role so as to enable children to have optimum life chances and to enter adulthood successfully.

2.1.2 We are committed to working collaboratively with our partner agencies and statutory authorities to prevent or reduce the risk of abuse or the mistreatment of children. This will involve action on our part and in order to properly implement the policy we will:

- raise awareness and recognition of the issues involved.
- take action when abuse is suspected.
- ensure that staff have a knowledge and understanding of our policy and procedures through appropriate training.
- support monitoring, reviewing and evaluation of our own practices.
- ensure that the public, people who access our services and carers have access to information about safeguarding children, this policy and the associated procedures.

2.1.3 Many forms of abuse to children are a criminal offence and it is important that employees are able to recognise signs of abuse and help to prevent it. We seek to provide a safe environment for all of our clients, staff and visitors and strive to protect them from all forms and levels of abuse by encouraging both management and staff to work together positively to achieve this objective. We all have a duty of care to protect the vulnerable in our society, to raise awareness and ensure abuse does not occur.

2.1.4 Children have the right to be protected against physical, sexual and emotional abuse, to be safe, to be educated, to be given boundaries that are consistent and age appropriate, to be given choices, depending on age and understanding and to be believed.

2.1.5 We recognise that the vast majority of staff who work with children or who come into contact with children while at work are caring people. It

is further recognised that the behaviour of some children, particularly those who have been abused before may continue to raise suspicion of abuse. These children may relate to adults in a way that means that adults in close contact with them are vulnerable to allegations of abuse. It should, however, also be recognised that abuse of a child by a member of staff is always a possibility.

- 2.1.6 A safeguarding complaint made against a member of staff must be reported in line with disciplinary procedures to ensure full investigation and relevant action is taken in relation to the allegation.
- 2.1.7 All members of staff and any representatives working on behalf of the organisation have a personal responsibility and a professional duty to the child who is the suspect of concern, to ensure that the concerns are fully discussed with a Designated Person within the organisation who has been nominated for this purpose.
- 2.1.8 When abuse is suspected it is important that a report is made in accordance with the relevant inter-agency Safeguarding Children Procedures.
- 2.1.9 If it is also identified that an Adult is being abused then a referral must be made to the relevant local authority in accordance with Safeguarding Adults Policy and Procedure.

## **2.2 Legal Context**

- 2.2.1 The law in respect of the abuse of vulnerable children is found in various Sections of separate Acts of Parliament. These constitute a framework of legislation which promotes the welfare of children and legislates for their safeguarding.
- 2.2.2 Local Authorities have a duty to investigate (S47 of the Children Act 1989). Where a Local Authority is informed that a child who is living, or is found, in their area is either subject to an Emergency Protection Order, Police protection or they have reasonable cause to suspect suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm they must make such enquiries as necessary to promote or safeguard the child's welfare. Children's Services Social Care undertake this responsibility on behalf of the Authority once a referral has been made.
- 2.2.3 In 2003 the Government published a Green Paper called *Every Child Matters*.

The Green Paper built on existing plans to strengthen preventative services by focusing on four key themes:

1. Increasing the focus on supporting families and carers – the most critical influence on children's lives.

2. Ensuring necessary intervention takes place before children reach crisis point and protecting children from falling through the net.
3. Addressing the underlying problems identified in the report into the death of Victoria Climbié – weak accountability and poor integration.
4. Ensuring that the people working with children are valued, rewarded and trained.

The Children's Act 2004 legally underpins Every Child matters.

2.2.4 Section 7 of the Children's Act 2004 places a duty on local authorities to make arrangements through which key agencies co-operate to improve the well-being of children and young people. To ensure that, within this partnership working, safeguarding children continues to be given priority the Act places a responsibility for key agencies to have regard to the need to safeguard children and promote their welfare in exercising their normal functions. We are committed to our obligation as a key agency to safeguard children who live in or visit our schemes and promote their welfare.

## 2.3 Roles and Responsibilities

2.3.1 In most instances where there is a relationship between an organisation and a person who uses their service it is simply stated that **a duty of care** exists. In reality there will actually be various different duties operating concurrently which will overlap and complement one another.

2.3.2 All adults working with, or on behalf of children, have a responsibility to protect children. Within the organisation the following individuals have special responsibilities:

Key roles:

**Alerter** – Any person in contact with, or who has knowledge of a child at risk from or suffering from ill treatment or the impairment of health or development. Anyone can be an Alerter. All staff and contractors working on behalf of us are Alerters. The Alerter is responsible for passing all concerns on to a Responsible Designated Person.

**Responsible / Designated Person** – a person who will co-ordinate all matters relating to safeguarding issues. These will include:

- Dealing with reports of abuse against children
- Dealing with complaints against staff/volunteers
- Making referrals, if appropriate, to Children's Services Social Care Initial Response Team (IRT) or for allegations to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

- Keeping the organisations Safeguarding Manager fully informed of all Safeguarding issues that may arise

A **Designated Deputy** will also be appointed to deputise in the absence of the Designated Person.

**Safeguarding Manager** - a person with managerial responsibility for all Safeguarding matters within the organisation

- Ensuring all staff/volunteers receive training in Safeguarding every 3 years
- Ensuring that the Designated Person and the Nominated Deputy receive training in Safeguarding every 2 years
- Ensuring that all new staff/volunteers are properly inducted in safeguarding issues within the first month

2.3.3 The Designated Person will be informed immediately by an employee, volunteer or other persons which includes the parents, child or members of the public, in the following circumstances

- Suspicion that a child is being harmed
- There is evidence that a child is being harmed

The Designated Person will keep a full record of concerns raised and make referrals to Children's Services Social Care/Police if necessary. The Safeguarding Manager will be kept informed at all times.

2.3.4 The Safeguarding Procedure will provide clear guidance on how to report concerns and clearly identifies Designated Person and Deputy within referral chart.

## 2.4 What Is Abuse?

2.4.1 Abuse relies on the exploitation of differences in power within relationships where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm to an individual. This can be by act or omission.

2.4.2 Abuse is the result of individual, group or institutional wrongdoing that result in pain, anguish and harm to the person and can be defined as:

"Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons".

- Abuse may consist of single or repeated acts.
- Abuse may be intentional or unintentional.
- Abuse may be an act of neglect or an omission or failure to act.
- Abuse can occur in any relationship and may result in significant harm to, or exploitation of, the person subjected to abuse.
- Abuse may cause harm temporarily or over a period of time.

2.4.3 Children are at risk of being abused by relatives, parents, another child or children, professionals, neighbours, friends and strangers. All staff have an active role to play in the prevention, reduction and reporting of abuse directed at children.

## 2.5 Categories Of Abuse

2.5.1 **Neglect** -The persistent failure to provide for a child an adequate standard of physical and/emotional care, or failure to protect a child from danger, resulting in significant impairment of the child's health and development, including failure to thrive.

This includes the following:

- Neglect during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse
- Persistent failure to provide a standard of warmth & shelter, clothing, nourishment, and hygiene appropriate to the child's age or developmental stage.
- Persistent exposure of the child to danger, e.g. by leaving the child alone, unsupervised or with unsuitable carers.
- Persistent failure to provide stimulation and age appropriate opportunities for social development.
- Persistent failure to provide age appropriate and consistent warmth and affection.

2.5.2 **Physical Injury** - Physical injury, which has been inflicted or knowingly not prevented, including, deliberate poisoning suffocation and inflicted illness (Fabricated or Induced Illness).

This includes physical injury (or harm) which is known to have been inflicted (or not prevented) or which is strongly suspected to have been inflicted (or not prevented) because of one the following factors:

- Absence of an unacceptable explanation.
- Explanation which is confused or inconsistent.
- Explanation which is not consistent with the child's developmental stage.

### 2.5.3 Sexual Abuse

The involvement of dependent developmentally immature children and adolescents in sexual activities which they do not truly comprehend and to which they are unable to give informed consent, or which violate the sexual taboos of family roles.

Sexual abuse is the exploitation of a child by someone who has the power over that child (e.g. adult/child) and or age, gender or physical strength. It is behaviour which the abuser expects will gratify their own needs. Pressure imposed on the child either by threats, coercion or by more subtle means, is commonly associated with child sex abuse, and there is an absence of true consent. This definition includes situations where the abuser is also a child or young person, if the above factors apply.

#### **2.5.4 Emotional Abuse**

The severe adverse effect on the emotional, physical or behavioural development of the child, or on the child's health, including failure to thrive, as a result of persistent or severe emotional ill-treatment or rejection.

Emotional abuse includes:

- Persistently acting negatively towards the child, e.g. by ridiculing, humiliating, name calling and scapegoating
- Persistent punishing for normal desirable behaviour
- Persistently expecting the child to act in a way which is beyond his or her capabilities or level of development.
- All abuse or neglect of a child will involve a degree of emotional abuse.

#### **2.6 Signs Of Abuse**

All staff must be vigilant to recognise the indicators of abuse. We recognise that children who are abused or who witness violence may find it difficult to develop a sense of self-worth and to view the world in a positive way. We therefore, recognise that such children might exhibit challenging and defiant behaviour and will take careful note of the context of such behaviour. We also recognise that some children who have experienced abuse may in turn abuse others. This requires a considered and sensitive approach in order that the child can receive appropriate help and support.

#### **2.7 Protection**

A range of actions need to be taken to:

- Promote the safety of children through reducing the likelihood of abuse.
- Ensure good practices based upon inter-departmental and inter-agency procedures and guidance to be followed in the event of abuse.

#### **2.8 Prevention Of Abuse**

A number of commitments are outlined which will be effective in contributing to the prevention of abuse. These include:



- Rigorous recruitment practices (including volunteers).
- Internal guidelines for staff.
- Training.
- Information for clients and the general public including encouraging awareness and usage of the Complaints Procedure.

## **2.9 Staff Training**

Staff training is a key element in safeguarding children from abuse as well as supporting staff. Policy and Procedure training is given as part of the induction process in addition, all Supported Housing staff are provided with training organised by the local authority within which they work. This ensures that staff are trained to the correct protocol for their location.

## **2.10 Provision of Support**

We will endeavour to support our children and young people through:

- Our ethos, which promotes a positive, supportive and secure environment and which gives all children and young people and adults a sense of being respected and valued
- A coherent management of behaviour
- Liaison with other professionals and agencies who support children and parents
- A commitment to develop productive, supportive relationships with parents whenever it is in the child's interest to do so
- The development and support of a responsive and knowledgeable staff and volunteer group whose role it is to respond appropriately in Safeguarding situations.

## **3. Responsibility for implementation**

- 3.1 Directors and managers responsible for ensuring that this policy is adhered to and implemented.

## **4. Actioning the policy**

- 4.1 This policy will be actioned every time there is a report of a potential safeguarding issue which is highlighted by a resident or member of staff.

## **5. Monitoring the policy**

- 5.1 We will monitor abuse throughout the year to form a judgement on the service we provide in relation to the issue. This will be the responsibility of the Assistant Director Care and Support.

## 6. Resources

- 6.1 There are no resource implications of this policy as all actions should be able to be delivered from existing resources.

## 7. Equality and Diversity

- 7.1 An equality and diversity impact assessment has been undertaken on this policy. In carrying out its services, we are committed to:

- Treating all customers and employees positively regardless of including gender, age, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, gender reassignment or religion.
- Taking seriously all complaints and investigating and responding accordingly.
- Using plain language and providing information in other languages, large print, audio and Braille on request.