

Safeguarding Adults Policy

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Southern Housing takes all concerns and allegations of abuse, neglect and harm seriously. Safeguarding¹ means protecting a person's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect. It is about people and organisations working together to prevent and stop both the risks and experience of abuse or neglect, while ensuring the person's wellbeing is promoted.
- 1.2 We know abuse against people occurs in society, and individuals from all communities can be at risk of abuse. We recognise there are large numbers of adults at risk living in our homes and across our communities.
- 1.3 Abuse can take many different forms. It may occur via neglect of a person, by inflicting harm, or failing to act to prevent harm. It is behaviour that either deliberately or unknowingly causes harm, endangers life, or infringes on a person's rights.
- 1.4 A key aspect of the statutory framework is 'making safeguarding personal'. This means we work with people to decide outcomes, actions, and timescales, as the focus is on the person, not the process.
- 1.5 This Policy applies to:
 - Residents
 - Household members
 - People receiving a service from us who are not our residents
 - Southern Housing employees
 - Board members
 - Committee members
 - Those working with us and for us, for example, agency staff members, volunteers and apprentices.

2.0 Overview

- 2.1 In accordance with the [Care Act 2014](#), we are committed to maintaining safeguarding policies and procedures, implemented by knowledgeable and trained staff.

¹ Definition of safeguarding as outlined in the DOH Care and Support Statutory Guidance issued under the [Care Act 2014](#)

2.2 Our primary role as 'alerters' is to report safeguarding concerns to the local authority and/or multi agency partners.

2.3 The six key principles of adult safeguarding are:

- Empowerment: Interventions must support people to make decisions and have a say in their care. Presumption of person-led decisions and informed consent.
- Protection: Supporting victims and allowing them to have a say. This includes support and representation for those in greatest need.
- Prevention: It is better to take action before harm occurs. Interventions for people at risk should focus on preventing care and support needs from developing.
- Proportionality: Interventions must represent the least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented.
- Partnership: Local solutions from services working within the community have a part to play in preventing, detecting, and reporting neglect and abuse. Housing providers, their contractors, and residents all have a role to play.
- Accountability: Safeguarding practice and arrangements should be accountable and transparent to the public. There should be a lead safeguarding officer that is known and available to staff.

2.4 We operate a policy of zero tolerance of abuse, neglect and exploitation. We're committed to preventing and reducing the risk of harm to adults with care and support needs.

3.0 Definitions

3.1 An adult is any person aged 18 years or over. Adults at risk within the [Care Act 2014](#) are referred to as 'people with care and support needs'. Safeguarding duties apply to an adult who:

- *'Has needs for care or support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of these needs)*
- *Is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect, **and***
- *As a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of, abuse and neglect.'*

3.2 Abuse

For this Policy, we define abuse as 'the violation of an individual's human and civil rights by another person or persons'.

Abuse is behaviour that either deliberately or unknowingly causes harm or endangers life or infringes on rights. It may be:

- A single or repeated act

- Deliberate neglect or a lack of appropriate action
- Where the person is persuaded to do something they have not consented to or cannot consent to.

3.3 Abuse causes harm or distress to a person and is often a crime. It often occurs where there is an expectation of trust.

3.4 Abuse can happen to anyone, abuse cannot be excused for any cultural or religious reason and should always be reported.

4.0 Aims of Policy

4.1 The aims of this Policy are to make sure we:

- Comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements and best practice, including:
 - [Care Act 2014](#)
 - [Mental Capacity Act 2005](#)
 - [Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards \(LPS\)](#)
 - [Human Rights Legislation](#)
 - [Health and Social Care Act 2008 \(Care Quality Commission\)](#)
 - [Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998](#).
 - Protect staff, volunteers, contractors, and agents who have a responsibility towards adults at risk
 - Make safeguarding personal, working with people in a way that supports them in making choices and having control about how they want to live
 - Raise awareness of the different types of abuse and signs to look out for
 - Raise awareness of the action we'll take on suspecting, witnessing, or discovering abuse or inappropriate conduct
 - Provide information and support in accessible ways to help people understand the different types of abuse, how to stay safe and what to do to raise a concern about the safety or wellbeing of an adult
 - Recognise and respect cultural and ethnic diversity
 - Work in partnership with multi agency partners around safeguarding
 - Work in line with our safeguarding partners' policies and procedures.
- 4.2 We will achieve our aims by:
- Protecting the rights of individuals at risk, and treating them with respect and dignity at all times
 - Ensuring when in contact with people at risk, appropriately trained staff carry out all necessary health and safety risk assessments
 - Ensuring our safeguarding lead provides clear lines of accountability for reporting abuse
 - Having a safeguarding team in place to oversee strategic objectives for safeguarding
 - Working within, and keeping up to date with, government legislation, guidance, and regulation.

5.0 Roles and responsibilities

- 5.1 While safeguarding responsibility sits with all staff, there are clear individual and team responsibilities too.
- 5.2 All staff, Board members, volunteers, agents, and contractors are responsible for understanding the different types of abuse and reporting concerns or suspected abuse.
- 5.3 All departmental managers are responsible for ensuring safeguarding matters are reported and safeguarding is effectively managed within their areas of responsibility.
- 5.4 We have a designated strategic lead on safeguarding, supported by a Safeguarding Team.
- 5.5 We are committed to identifying, recording and responding to the needs of our residents and people who receive a care and support service from us who are not our residents, wherever possible. We will do this by:
 - Making referrals to, and working with, local authorities
 - Signposting and working with relevant support agencies
 - Facilitating or carrying out aids and adaptations where required
 - Keeping the person updated and involved
 - Monitoring and reviewing support action plans as necessary.
- 5.6 The Safeguarding Team, via the Executive Team, is responsible for making sure lessons learnt are communicated to all relevant staff. Where necessary, supporting policies, procedures, and guidance will be amended.
- 5.7 Safeguarding reports will be provided on a quarterly basis to senior managers across the organisation. As a minimum, six-monthly reports will be provided to the Executive Team, together with an annual report to the Board.

6.0 Reporting concerns – residents

- 6.1 We record all safeguarding reports and alerts relating to our residents and people receiving a service from us, on a central database.
- 6.2 We must report safeguarding concerns to the relevant local authority. Local authority are the decision makers in relation to section 42 enquiries².
- 6.3 Anyone making a complaint or allegation or expressing concern, whether they be [any person listed in 1.5](#) or a member of the general public, should be reassured we'll:
 - Take them seriously

² A section 42 enquiry relates to the duty of the local authority to make enquiries, or have others do so, if an adult may be at risk of abuse or neglect.

- Give them support and protection if necessary
- Treat their comments confidentially, but we may share their concerns if they or others are at significant risk.

6.4 We will raise awareness of how to report safeguarding concerns and the support we can offer to residents and those people receiving a service from us who are not our residents.

6.5 If a resident, relative, or person receiving a service from us, is concerned about an adult at risk, they can contact us directly to inform us and for support and guidance.

7.0 Reporting a concern – non-residents

7.1 We take any concerns raised about our staff, Board and Committee members, volunteers, agents, or contractors very seriously.

7.2 If a member of staff suspects someone is being abused by another member of staff, they should report their concerns in line with our People policies.

7.3 We will address any allegations of or suspected abuse by our employees through formal statutory investigative procedures and our own internal disciplinary procedures.

7.4 If we become aware of staff who are alleged perpetrators of abuse from people living in the community, a third party or another statutory agency, we can take appropriate action in line with our People policies.

7.5 If a staff member is concerned for a non-resident using our services or a member of the public they should report the concerns to the relevant local authority.

7.6 Any allegation we receive relating to a contractor or person working on our behalf may result in their immediate suspension from our contract. The suspension will remain in place pending the outcome of any investigation. We reserve the right to permanently exclude the operative or agent from our contract following the outcome of the investigation.

7.7 We will protect the anonymity of people who report concerns of abuse. If the concern relates to significant harm or a criminal act we may need to share the details of the witness or person reporting their concerns with appropriate professionals. We will work sensitively with any person reporting concerns to support them throughout the investigation process.

8.0 Gaining consent

8.1 Before we refer a safeguarding case to the local authority, we must obtain consent from the person affected.

8.2 We'll only override consent where there's risk of serious harm, or by asking for consent we would be putting the victim at further risk of abuse. A risk of 'serious

harm' is when a person's life is in danger and/or they're a victim of abuse causing a deterioration of mental or physical health.

9.0 Escalating concerns

9.1 If there is a case involving death or serious harm to a vulnerable resident or person receiving a service from us that could lead to reputational, financial or regulatory risk, the Safeguarding Team will immediately alert the Executive Team.

9.2 The Executive Team will report to Board where there have been:

- Incidents of significant abuse reported to statutory agencies that may lead to reputational, regulatory, or financial detriment
- Safeguarding allegations made against an employee.

All reports going to Board will be anonymised to hide the identities of those involved.

9.3 Concerns can also be escalated through safeguarding board local authority procedures.

10.0 Information sharing

10.1 When sharing information about people, we will comply with the [Data Protection Policy](#).

10.2 We are permitted to share information with an appropriate agency where there are overriding and serious concerns about the risk to an individual's health or personal safety. The law also provides Registered Providers with the power to disclose information to, and request information from, relevant authorities where it will work towards reducing crime and anti-social behaviour.

10.3 We will respect the wishes of the person at risk in relation to what information should be shared, and with whom, where possible.

10.4 Our staff will respect confidentiality at all times and not share any information given in confidence unless justified by the assessed risk to the person or required by law.

11.0 Mental capacity

11.1 The [Mental Capacity Act \(2005\)](#) was created to enable people receiving support to make their own decisions, and to offer protection for those individuals charged with making decisions on the behalf of those lacking capacity.

The Act has five main principles:

- Every person has the right to make their own decisions unless it can be shown they are incapable of doing so
- People should be supported to make their own decisions where possible

- A person has the right to make decisions even if others regard the decisions made as being inappropriate. A decision deemed as inappropriate does not in itself mean the person should be deemed incapable.
- A person making decisions on the behalf of someone lacking capacity must do so in their best interests
- Decisions made by a third party on behalf of someone lacking capacity should always be the option which is least restrictive on their basic rights and freedoms.

11.2 Where staff have concerns about a resident or person receiving a service from us who is not our resident, or their ability to make an informed decision relating to an abuse allegation or concerns around abuse, we must:

- Request a mental capacity assessment takes place
- Ensure advocacy is provided where necessary.

Where the person at risk has an allocated social worker or care coordinator, we'll ensure we speak to them in the first instance.

12.0 Safe recruitment and training

12.1 The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) helps prevent unsuitable people from working or volunteering with people at risk. The People Team will make any referrals to the DBS and ensure all staff and volunteers are employed according to DBS regulations.

12.2 All staff, volunteers, and Board members will complete mandatory safeguarding e-learning training as part of induction. This will be repeated at intervals appropriate for their role.

12.3 Frontline staff will attend mandatory training sessions appropriate to their role. The frequency will be subject to contractual or statutory requirements.

12.4 We recognise the emotional impact on staff of working with vulnerabilities and having to recognise and deal with safeguarding concerns. Employees also have access to a specialist stress counsellor provided through our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).

13.0 Contractors and people working on our behalf

13.1 Contractors and service providers for frontline services on our behalf need to make sure their staff:

- Are suitable to provide frontline services
- Comply with contractual requirements
- Are aware of who to contact with any safeguarding concerns.

Contractors must also:

- Notify us of all safeguarding concerns
- Fully co-operate with any investigation into received allegations
- Have adequate systems in place to take appropriate disciplinary action.

- 13.2 The Safeguarding Team will support our main contractors by providing training and a range of resources.
- 13.3 Any breach of this Policy will be dealt with under the Disciplinary Policy or Breach Procedure for Governance Members.

14.0 Review

- 14.1 We will review this Policy to address legislative, regulatory, best practice or operational issues.

Policy controls

Effective from	16 December 2022
Approved by	Designate Executive Team
Approval date	23 November 2022
Policy owner	Director of Housing
Policy author	Naomi Keyte, Head of Care & Supported Housing Services (SHG)

Version history		
Version no.	Summary of change	Author and approver
1.0	New policy	Naomi Keyte, Head of Care & Supported Housing Services (SHG) Designate Executive Team