



City of London Housing Services

**Safeguarding Policy
Children &
Adults at Risk**

1. Introduction

Local authorities have a statutory responsibility for safeguarding adults at risk of abuse or neglect and safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and young people in their area. The Care Act 2014 and the 1989 and 2004 Children Acts make it clear that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and that professionals, organisations and local authorities must work in partnership when carrying out their duties under the legislation. The City Corporation's overall approach to these requirements is set out in its corporate safeguarding policy and overseen by the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Board and the City and Hackney Safeguarding Adults Board.

2. Safeguarding policy for housing

This policy complements the corporate safeguarding policy. It draws on and reflects the relevant legislation and guidance on safeguarding for both children and adults at risk and sets out the housing service's aims, role and responsibilities in ensuring effective safeguarding in partnership with other agencies. It includes:

- definitions of safeguarding and those who may be at risk;
- types of abuse and neglect;
- how the housing service may be involved in identifying instances of abuse or neglect;
- how we will respond to instances of abuse and neglect;
- how we will share information and work with others.

The policy is supported by guidance and procedures for staff. These are documented separately.

3. Definitions

For the purposes of this policy safeguarding is taken to mean protecting children and adults at risk from abuse, neglect, maltreatment or significant harm. The following, more detailed definitions of safeguarding reflect the relevant legislation or official guidance.

Safeguarding children

In the Government's guidance 'Working together to safeguard children' (March 2015) safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children 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
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

Safeguarding adults

The Care Act 2014 defines safeguarding as protecting an adult's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect and promoting the adult's wellbeing. It is aimed at people with care and support needs who may be in vulnerable circumstances and at risk of harm, abuse, neglect or exploitation. Harm includes not only ill treatment (including sexual abuse and forms of ill treatment which are not physical) but also the impairment of, or an avoidable deterioration in, physical or mental health; and the impairment of physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development.

4. How we identify children or adults who may be at risk

Government guidance provides examples of the personal circumstances or care and support needs of children and adults which may help identify them as needing early help or being particularly at risk.

Children who may be at risk

Government guidance in 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' 2015 defines a child as being anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. It indicates that providing early help is crucial in safeguarding children and requires all staff to understand their role in identifying emerging problems and sharing information with other professionals. We will ensure housing staff are alert in particular to the potential need for early help for a child who:

- is disabled and has specific additional needs
- has special educational needs;
- is a young carer;
- is showing signs of engaging in anti-social or criminal behaviour;
- is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as substance abuse, adult mental health problems and domestic violence;
- has returned home to their family from care;
- is showing early signs of abuse or neglect.

Adults who may be at risk

An adult at risk is a person aged 18 years or over who has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those) and is at risk of and unable to protect themselves from abuse or neglect. These care and support needs may include for example a person who:

- is elderly or frail due to ill health;
- has a physical disability, sensory impairment or a long-term illness/condition;
- has a mental health needs including dementia or a personality disorder;
- has learning disability;
- is unable to demonstrate capacity to make a decision and is in need of care and support;
- has a dependency on alcohol, illegal drugs or medication;
- is unable to take care of themselves safeguard themselves against significant harm or exploitation.

Types of abuse

We recognise that abuse and neglect can take many forms. Our approach to safeguarding will take include the following types of abuse and neglect:

- **physical abuse** – including hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint, inappropriate sanctions;
- **sexual abuse** – including rape, sexual assault, sexual acts to which a person has not consented, could not consent or was pressurised into consenting;
- **psychological abuse** – including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation, withdrawal from services or supportive networks;
- **financial or material abuse** – including theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits;

- **neglect and acts of omission** – including ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life such as medication, adequate nutrition, and heating;
- **discriminatory abuse** – including racist, sexist, that based on a person's disability and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment;
- **institutional abuse, neglect and poor professional practice** - this may take the form of isolated incidents of poor or unsatisfactory professional practice at one end of the spectrum, through to pervasive ill treatment or gross misconduct at the other.

5. How the Housing Service may be involved in the prevention of abuse

Safeguarding issues may be brought to the attention of staff directly by residents, neighbours, contractors or other agencies in contact with residents or their families. In addition, housing staff working with residents or entering residents' homes to carry out inspections or interviews may encounter situations causing concern for someone's welfare. For example:

- children or adults at risk whose care needs appear to be neglected or who appear to be subject to deliberate mistreatment.
- children or adults who say they are being abused.
- signs of self-neglect in adults living alone such as hoarding, unsanitary conditions, or alcohol or substance misuse.
- neglect of a person's needs because those around them are unable to be responsible for their care, for example if a carer has difficulties caused by debt, alcohol or mental health problems;
- difficulties in maintaining tenancy such as arrears or neighbour problems or harassment which may be linked to a learning difficulty or mental health problems and giving rise to exploitation, financial abuse or harassment;
- Where there is known or suspected domestic abuse.

We will ensure staff are trained to identify the wide range of circumstances in which potential victims of neglect or abuse may present.

6. How we will respond to suspected or alleged abuse or neglect

We recognise that abuse, neglect or harm can arise in range of settings and may be perpetrated by a wide range of people including relatives and family members, professional staff, volunteers, other service users, neighbours, friends and associates, or strangers. The Housing Service will endeavour to safeguard children, young people and adults at risk in the following ways:

Agreed procedures

We will provide guidance and appropriate safeguarding procedures for housing staff to ensure the timely reporting, management and referral of concerns or suspicions of abuse and neglect of children, young people and adults at risk. Procedures will include guidance and arrangements for supporting children and adults at risk and working with different agencies across different local authority areas.

Recruitment, induction and training of staff

We will ensure the selection and recruitment of staff, contractors and agencies takes into account the need to promote the safeguarding of children and adults. All members of frontline staff who have

regular contact with adults at risk or children will be subject to employment checks and Disclosure and Barring Service checks, where appropriate. As part of their induction into the Housing Service, all appropriate staff will be required to read and understand this policy and related guidance and procedures. Staff will receive training in the legal responsibilities and duties in relation to safeguarding and how to identify signs of abuse and neglect, recognise harm and make appropriate referrals.

Management and supervision

We will provide direction about the service's responsibilities and the promotion of effective practice in relation to safeguarding through regular management and supervision of staff and contractors, the monitoring of performance, reporting, complaints and annual review of policy and notable practice. Managers will ensure through regular supervision that policy and procedure is adhered to and that adequate arrangements with other parts of the Corporation and other agencies are in place to ensure effective safeguarding and communication. We will ensure that all staff are enabled to challenge inappropriate behaviour in others, are able to access whistle blowing procedures and that any issues relating to the conduct of staff are addressed through appropriate procedures.

Sharing information

We will ensure that all housing staff understand government guidance for sharing information with other professionals and that information is shared effectively and efficiently to support early identification and assessment of any concerns. We will ensure the information we share is necessary for the purpose for which we are sharing it, is shared only with those who need to have it, is accurate and up-to-date and shared securely. We will be open about what and with whom information will, or could be shared, seeking consent and respecting confidentiality except where we consider safety or well-being to be at risk. Staff will seek advice if in any doubt about sharing the information concerned, without disclosing the identity of the individual where possible. We will keep secure records of information we what we have shared.

Working with others

We recognise that safeguarding is achieved through good interagency and multidisciplinary working with other organisations and across local authority boundaries. This is an important consideration for the Corporation which owns and manages housing in a number of London local authority areas. As a provider of social housing and support services we will build and maintain partnerships and effective referral procedures with other local authorities and agencies to safeguard children and adults at risk.

Monitoring and review

This policy and its related guidance and procedures will be kept under review and amended to reflect any change in legislation, national guidance or local practice as necessary.

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