



Safeguarding Children Policy

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Contents

Items	Page No
Introduction	3
Aims and objectives	3
Scope	4
Definitions	4
Responsibility for safeguarding	6
Sharing Information and confidentiality	6
Performance review and monitoring	7
Contacts	7
<u>Appendices</u>	
Associated policies, strategies and procedures	8

Introduction

Harrogate Housing Association Limited (HHA) has a key safeguarding role alongside other partners in social care, health and the police. HHA are committed to acting when our staff become aware of/or suspect situations where abuse of a child/children may be taking place. We will not knowingly ignore or allow any situations to continue unreported, no matter whom the perpetrator is, and no matter whom the victim is. All staff have a duty to ensure that children and young people are protected from harm.

This policy uses the government strategy 'Working together to safeguard children' March 2015 and uses guidance from the Department of Children, Schools and Families on 'Every Child Matters'. The policy sets out the principle that everyone who comes into contact with children and families has a role to play in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. For the purposes of this policy this is defined as:-

- Protecting children from maltreatment.
- Preventing impairment of children's health or development.
- Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

The Children's Act 2004 section 10 requires relevant bodies to co-operate with Local Authorities to promote the well-being of children. This co-operation should exist and be effective at all levels of the organisation, from strategic levels through to operational management.

Aims and objectives

The aim of this policy is to be clear about what HHA staff, contractors or board members need to be aware of to ensure effective safeguarding of children living or visiting our properties. That HHA staff, contractors and board members are clear about their role and responsibility on what to do if they suspect abuse of or harm to a child/children is occurring.

HHA will ensure that it has a child centred and co-ordinated approach with external agencies.

Through this policy we will

- Identify a nominated officer for staff, board members and contractors to report any suspicions of a child/young person being at risk of harm/abuse.
- Ensure that staff, contractors and board members are aware that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and understands their role in taking action.
- Ensure that staff are trained on spotting the signs of abuse and harm.

For the purposes of this policy a child is anyone who has not reached their 18th birthday.

Scope

This policy covers the responsibilities of Harrogate Housing Association staff, board members and contractors working in our homes.

Definitions

Abuse commonly occurs within a relationship of trust or responsibility and is an abuse of power or a breach of trust. It can happen to a child regardless of age, gender, race or ability. There are 4 main types of abuse as indicated below:-

- **Physical abuse** may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.
- **Emotional abuse** is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.
- **Sexual abuse** involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including rape, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. It may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

- **Neglect** is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:
 - provide adequate food and clothing, shelter, including exclusion from home, or abandonment.
 - protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger.
 - ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers).
 - ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Anyone can be the perpetrator, they can be adults, members of the child's family or other young people and are usually known to and trusted by the child and family.

Abuse may result from a deliberate intention to cause harm but may also occur where a provider of a service lacks the knowledge or skills to respond to a child's needs appropriately.

Where can abuse take place?

Abuse can take place anywhere including:

- In a child's own home.
- In the homes of family and friends.
- In public places/the community.
- Places of child care e.g. Nursery and /or School
- In a residential or hostel setting.
- On social media and /or the internet

What are the effects of Child Abuse?

The effects of abuse are wide ranging and usually long lasting, and can include:

- Low self esteem
- Problematic behaviours
- Educational problems, e.g. slow to develop speech
- Relationship difficulties
- Mental health problems
- Substance (drug and alcohol) abuse
- Self-harm including actual or attempted suicide
- Difficulty in parenting their own children
- Permanent disability
- Death as a result of the abuse (particularly if physical abuse or neglect)
- Failure to thrive and achieve the best of their ability

Responsibility for safeguarding

HHA is committed to its responsibility and duty on safeguarding and will make clear to its staff, contractors and board members what that responsibility means. It is HHA's responsibility to

1. Understand the importance of safeguarding by having in place a strategy for raising awareness amongst staff, contractors and members about the risks of abuse.
2. Ensure that staff are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities.
3. Ensure that the child's best interest must be the overriding concern.
4. Develop good communication links with partners and stakeholders to ensure good safeguarding practices are maintained.
5. Support staff if they need to raise concerns with the Safeguarding teams.

In support of safeguarding children HHA will:-

1. Appoint a Safeguarding Lead – with the appropriate skills and knowledge to provide help and support to staff and act as a lead on safeguarding issues. This will be the Operations Manager.
2. Ensure that staff, board members and contractors sign up to the Safeguarding Children Policy.
3. To provide training for staff on identifying safeguarding issues.
4. Notify the Local Authority Child Safeguarding team if abuse is identified or suspected.
5. DBS check all employees/members that have access to work within people's homes where children reside/visit.
6. Adopt a proactive preventative approach to safeguarding.
7. Keep a record of decisions and the reasons for them.

Sharing information and Confidentiality

Sharing information between HHA and other partners and stakeholders about known or suspected risks may help to prevent abuse taking place. HHA will work with multi agency safeguarding hubs to improve;-

- Identification of risk leading to early intervention.
- Case management, preventing things getting lost in the system.
- Efficiency through better resource allocation and a reduction in duplication.
- Ensure that information shared is necessary for the purpose for which we are sharing it, is shared only with those people who need to have it, is accurate and up to date, is shared in a timely fashion
- Information is shared securely

Performance review and monitoring

HHA will report the number of Safeguarding Children referrals to HHA Board on a quarterly basis if appropriate cases are raised.

Contacts

Safeguarding Key Contacts in North Yorkshire and Links to Key Information

Early Help Service (replaced the old Prevention Service).	To support this there are nine Locality North Yorkshire Council (NYC) Early Help Consultants based across North Yorkshire. Their role is to offer support, advice and guidance to all Practitioners in the Early Help system.
Dedicated Early Help webpage	https://www.safeguardingchildren.co.uk/professionals/early-help/
North Yorkshire Council Customer Contact – Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)	01904 551900 (Mon -Fri 8.30am – 5pm) Follow Link for a written referral https://safeguardingchildren.co.uk/professionals/procedures-practice-guidance-and-one-minute-guides/making-a-referral/
Emergency Duty Team (EDT)	0300 131 2 131
Duty Local Authority Designated Officer – LADO	lado@northyorks.gov.uk or 01904 551900 within office hours.

In an Emergency call North Yorkshire Police on 999 or for non urgent enquiries call them on 101.

Appendix 1 Associated policies, strategies and procedures

- Whistleblowing Policy
- Tackling Anti- Social Behaviour Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy
- Staff Handbook
- Safeguarding Adults Policy