

Safeguarding Adults Policy

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1.0 Policy Statement

1.1 Town and Country Housing (TCH) believes that it is always unacceptable for an adult to experience abuse or neglect of any kind and recognises its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of vulnerable people.

1.2 Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. For services to be effective each professional and organisation should play their full part.

2.0 Scope of Policy

2.1 To provide protection for those who live in, or visit, our homes and communities.

2.2 To provide staff and volunteers with guidance on procedures they should adopt in the event that they suspect an adult may be experiencing, or be at risk of abuse.

2.3 The policy concerns anyone who is over 18 years old. Our safeguarding responsibilities for anyone under 18 years old, including unborn children, are outlined in our Safeguarding Children Policy.

2.4 This policy relates to any adult who lives in, or visits any of our properties or uses any of our services.

2.5 This Policy applies to all staff, board members, contractors, agents, temporary staff and volunteers or anyone working on behalf of TCH.

2.6 Partners who we commission to complete work for us should adhere to this policy, and should have a safeguarding policy of their own.

3.0 Policy Aims

3.1 This policy aims to provide clear guidance on how we go about reducing risk, preventing harm and protecting residents who are experiencing or are at risk of neglect and abuse.

3.2 TCH are committed to a person-centered approach to safeguarding. We aim to support a person to make their own informed choices.

4.0 Policy Objectives

We will achieve our aims by:

- Providing regular training for staff on how to spot safeguarding concerns, and what to do next.
- Ensuring that the Safeguarding Champions provide clear lines of accountability for reporting abuse.
- Working within and keeping up to date with government legislation, guidance and regulation.
- Ensuring that when in contact with vulnerable people all necessary health and safety risk assessments are carried out by appropriately trained staff.
- Treating those we aim to safeguard with respect and dignity. Putting their welfare at the forefront of whatever we do.

- Working closely with relevant agencies to ensure the safety of the person being safeguarded.
- Ensuring all staff are aware of the vital importance of safeguarding vulnerable adults and children, and how their role fits in to this.

5.0 Definitions

What does 'Safeguarding Adults' mean?

5.1 We use the updated definition of 'safeguarding adults' from the Care and Support Guidance 2014:

"Adult safeguarding means protecting a person's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect."

5.2 The Care Act 2014 determines that safeguarding duties will apply to an adult who:

- has needs for care and support (whether or not the Local Authority is meeting any of those 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, or experience, of abuse or neglect.

5.3 We are aware that just because a person has care and support needs this does not necessarily mean that they are at particular risk of abuse or neglect, but they may become so at any point due to physical or mental ill-health, acquired disability, advancing age, financial circumstances or social isolation.

5.4 There are various terms used to describe an adult with care and support needs who is at risk or experiencing abuse. In this policy we will refer to them as the 'adult at risk'

What do abuse and neglect mean?

5.6 The Care Act 2014 has expanded the types of abuse and neglect, please refer if necessary.

5.7 All staff need to have an understanding of the different types of abuse and how they may be presented. This abuse includes physical, psychological/emotional, sexual, neglect, financial, institutional, discriminatory and self neglect.

5.8 Any of these types of abuse may take place as the result of deliberate intent, negligence or ignorance. Multiple forms of abuse can occur simultaneously.

5.9 Abuse cannot be excused for any cultural or religious reason and should always be reported. Specific consideration should be given to Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and child marriage. These practices may be considered to be acceptable in other cultures but not so in this country.

Mental Capacity

5.10 We recognise that capacity and consent are central themes in safeguarding adult work and that every adult has the right to make their own decisions, a person is assumed to have capacity to do so unless it is proved that they do not.

5.11 The Mental Capacity Act (MCA) is designed to protect and empower individuals who may lack the mental capacity to make their own decisions about their care and treatment. It is a law that applies to individuals aged 16 and over.

5.12 A referral will be made to the local Social Care Team where there are concerns that a person being abused lacks mental capacity a Mental Capacity Assessment can be made and that person will be informed of this referral.

5.13 For further guidance please refer to The Mental Capacity Act 2005.

6.0 Safeguarding Principles

6.1 Our safeguarding work and the safeguarding work of all our partners, is underpinned by the following six key principles set out in the Care and Support Statutory Guidance. These are empowerment, prevention, proportionality, protection, partnership and accountability.

7.0 Information sharing

7.1 Where there are concerns an adult at risk is in significant or immediate harm, reports should be made directly to the police by calling 999. A safeguarding report should also be made to the Local Safeguarding Board as a priority.

7.2 Effective sharing of information between professionals and local agencies is essential for effective identification, assessment and service provision. We will work in partnership with statutory agencies and other relevant partners, to respond to concerns or actual incidents of abuse or make safeguarding enquiries.

7.3 TCH have arrangements in place which set out clearly the processes and the principles for sharing information between each other, with other professionals and with the Kent and Medway Information Sharing Agreement. When sharing information about adults at risk all staff must follow the TCH Data Protection Policy.

7.4 Nobody should assume that someone else will pass on information which they think may be critical to keeping an adult safe. If anybody has concerns about an adult's welfare and believes they are suffering or likely to suffer harm, then they should share the information with the Local Authority.

7.5 We will record and refer all concerns, suspicions or allegations of abuse or neglect to the lead agencies or team responsible for carrying out safeguarding assessments and enquiries, specifically the Local Authority in line with section 42 of the Care Act 2014. We will do this only with consent from the adult at risk, unless they lack capacity or there is an overriding public interest consideration.

7.6 We will work with the adult at risk wherever we can, to involve them in the safeguarding process. There are times when this is not possible. We will work with the statutory agency involved, alongside the family/friend/carer as appropriate.

7.7 We will provide timely and relevant information when this is requested by any statutory agencies. We may do this by attending meetings, or providing written reports.

8.0 Staff Responsibilities

8.1 All staff have a duty and responsibility to swiftly act upon and report actual, suspected and any allegations of abuse.

8.2 Allegations, suspicions and concerns of abuse will be referred to the appropriate agency, such as the police (where there is evidence of a crime, or there is an immediate risk identified) and the Local Authority, so that they are able to undertake their investigations and safeguarding processes. Referrals may also be made to teams within TCH as appropriate.

8.3 Information will be recorded within the appropriate case management system (ReAct), by the case officer (who may or may not be the initial person who raised the alert). This case will then be under regular monitoring. Only members of the Community Safety Team, Neighbourhood Housing Management, Tenancy Sustainment Team and Tenancy Sustainment Team (Sheltered), as well as Love Living Homes, have access to record cases on this system.

8.4 The appointed Strategic Safeguarding Lead (Operation Director), who will be trained with appropriate knowledge, experience and skills will be responsible for an annual review of safeguarding – including monitoring implementation, inter-agency response, training records and a review of policy and procedures.

8.5 HR are responsible for implementing training for safeguarding to all staff, and board members. Further training should be considered for staff depending on their role within TCH, and would be the responsibility of their line manager.

8.6 Each manager is to ensure that staff and volunteers are aware of Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.

8.7 Staff who regularly come into contact with vulnerable people may be required to undergo DBS checks.

8.8 It is recognised that witnessing, or becoming aware of, abuse of children and adults can be very distressing. Staff wellbeing is very important to TCH and as such staff are offered wellbeing support via their line manager and HR Business Partner

9.0 Monitoring

9.1 The Executive Management Team will report to Board where there have been incidents of significant abuse reported to statutory agencies. All reports going to Board will be anonymous.

9.2 The day to day monitoring of safeguarding cases is the responsibility of the Community Safety Team, Neighbourhood Housing Management, Tenancy Sustainment Team, Tenancy Sustainment Team (Sheltered) and Love Living Homes.

9.3 Regular monitoring of cases will be undertaken by the Community Safety Manager and the Neighbourhood Services Managers.

9.4 The number of safeguarding cases are reported via the ASB KPIs on a monthly basis.

9.5 Reports on safeguarding cases will be presented to the Operations Director twice yearly. This will be one report for both Children and Adults.

9.6 The Executive Management Team will report to Board where there have been incidents of significant abuse reported to statutory agencies. All reports going to Board will be anonymous.

9.7 The Operations Director will be the senior lead on safeguarding at TCH and will be the owner of ReACT where all reports and alerts made by staff are recorded.

10.0 Record keeping

10.1 Record keeping is vitally important. Accurate notes of any safeguarding concerns and incidents are to be recorded appropriately and on the correct system (ReAct) as soon as possible. In addition staff will be made aware of the requirement under this policy to record:

- The reason for the concern;
- What was said or witnessed;
- Dates and times of incidents;
- Date and time when notes were made.

11.0 Confidentiality and consent

11.1 Staff cannot keep confidential a disclosure of abuse and must refer the matter on to the relevant person. If uncertain the member of staff should consult with the Community Safety Team for further advice. This should be done as soon as is reasonable, and within the 24hr guidelines.

11.2 TCH works within the guidelines of GDPR. Consent to make a referral is not required where a crime has taken place, there is an immediate risk, or where it involves an employee of TCH - Please see the Whistleblowing Policy.

12.0 Partnerships

12.1 TCH will work in partnership with Local Authorities, Social Services, Police and other relevant agencies, sharing appropriate information to assist the investigative process. TCH will contribute to any subsequently agreed plan.

13.0 Resident Consultation

13.1 The policy will be shared with the strategy & policy digital consultation group to check understanding and obtain feedback about language and tone.

14.0 Equalities Statement

An equalities impact screening assessment has been undertaken to determine any potential negative impacts on the nine protected characteristics. None have been identified.

15.0 Policy Review Period

This policy will be reviewed every five years. The review may take place earlier in line with any legislative, regulatory, best practise development or to address operational issues.

16.0 Cross Reference

- TCH Data Protection Policy
- TCH Anti Social Behaviour Policy
- TCH Safeguarding Children Policy
- TCH Hoarding Policy
- TCH Self Neglect Policy
- TCH Allocations Policy
- TCH Whistleblowing Policy
- TCH Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
- Safeguarding and Vulnerable Group Act 2006
- Care and Support Guidance 2014
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Care Act 2014
- Criminal Justice Act 2003
- Health & Social Care Act 2012