



Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy

Reference	Safeguarding	Version	1
Staff affected	All staff	Issue date	Nov 2021
Approved by		Review Date	Nov 2023
Lead Officer	Leah Montia		

1. Scope

This policy applies to all staff (including temporary staff), volunteers, contractors and agents who work for or on behalf of Arches Housing. Arches Housing also expects partners who we work, including those managing agents for supported housing, to follow this policy or have their own safeguarding policy and procedures in place.

We will also use our Disciplinary policies and procedures alongside this policy where an allegation relates to member of staff.

2. Policy Statement

This policy outlines our approach to Safeguarding Children under the age of 18, which may include an unborn child, young people, vulnerable adults or any adult deemed to be at risk of significant harm.

We are committed to a zero tolerance policy against any form of abuse or neglect of any person. We recognise that we all have a responsibility to prevent, recognise and act on abuse and neglect in a timely way, and anyone raising a safeguarding alert or concern will always be listened to, believed, and assured that we will act on their concern.

We acknowledge and apply the six key principles from the Care Act 2014 that underpin all adult safeguarding work:

- a) **Empowerment** – take a person-centred approach and supporting people to make their own decisions and informed consent.
- b) **Prevention** – it is better to act before harm occurs.
- c) **Proportionality** – proportionate and least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented.
- d) **Protection** – Support and representation for those in greatest need.
- e) **Partnership** – Personal and sensitive information is shared appropriately, and the person is involved.
- f) **Accountability** – accountability and transparency in safeguarding practice.

We observe each Local Safeguarding Children's Board's (LSCB) Child Protection Procedures and the requirements of any Commissioning Body and

Adult Safeguarding Partnership. We will report instances of suspected or known abuse or neglect to them in accordance with their procedures and timescales.

3. Our Responsibilities

We have a statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and we will comply with all relevant legislation. Furthermore, we are committed to helping adults at risk stay safe from significant harm.

It is our responsibility to:

- Respond promptly and appropriately to concerns
- Pass information to Children's Social Care, Adult Social Care and the Police
- Co-operate with statutory child protection procedures and criminal enquiries.

It is not our responsibility to:

- Decide whether children or adults are suffering or are likely to suffer abuse or significant harm. This is the responsibility of local authority.
- Investigate any allegations or concerns: these must be referred to the local authority and/or police who have the duty to investigate allegations of significant harm and a criminal offence respectively.

4. Abuse, Harm and Significant Harm

4.1 Abuse

We use the following definitions of abuse

- 'Forms of maltreatment of a child or adult'; or
- 'A violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons which results in significant harm'

There are many different types of abuse that can cause significant harm. Abuse can happen in any family or caring relationship, regardless of class or cultural background. It includes familial violence, 'honour' based violence and harmful cultural practices, such as forced marriage or female genital mutilation. We will be sensitive and informed when assessing an individual's needs, but will never

accept abuse for religious or cultural reasons: everyone has an absolute right to be protected from harm.

Not all abusive behaviours are violent and include neglect, emotional abuse and financial abuse, which can both cause severe and persistent effects on an individual's emotional and physical development and wellbeing.

4.2 Harm and significant harm

Harm is defined as ill treatment or impairment of health and development. It includes impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another person. There are no absolute criteria on which to rely when judging what constitutes significant harm but it can be determined "significant" by comparing a child's health and development with what might be reasonably expected of a similar child, and making a professional judgement based on the information available.

Significant harm is a statutory threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in the best interest of children, and gives local authorities a duty to make enquires to decide whether they should take action to safeguard or promote the welfare of a child who is suffering, or likely to suffer significant harm.

4.3 Forms of abuse and harm

Ways in which harm or abuse can occur include:

- Neglect, such as lack of food or failure to protect a child;
- Self-neglect, such as poor hygiene or hoarding;
- Emotional or psychological abuse, such as bullying
- Controlling behaviour, such as restricting what someone else does;
- Coercive behaviour, such as threats to harm or frighten someone;
- Physical abuse, such as hitting or slapping someone;
- Financial abuse, such as theft or pressuring someone into giving them or withholding money;
- Sexual abuse, such as making someone do things they don't want to do

- Discriminatory abuse, such as treating somebody differently due to their beliefs;
- Domestic abuse, such as hitting a partner or family member;
- Modern day slavery and human trafficking, such as forced labour or withholding documents
- Radicalisation and extremism, such as people influencing others to develop extremist views;
- Organisational abuse, such as neglect or poor practice;
- Online abuse, such as cyber-bullying, including social media
- Child sexual exploitation, such as grooming and giving 'gifts' in return for sex;
- Forced marriage
- Female genital mutilation

5. Our Approach to Safeguarding Children

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined as:

- Protecting children from maltreatment;
- Preventing the 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 children in need to have optimum life chances.

It is for the local authority to determine whether there is actual or a risk of significant harm but there is a legal requirement for all professional agencies with contact with children and members of their family to make a referral to local authority's children's social care if there are signs that a child (including an unborn baby):

- Has suffered significant harm through abuse or neglect; or

- Is likely to suffer significant harm in the future.

We acknowledge that effective early help for children and families relies on agencies working together to identify children and families who would benefit from early help, assessing their early help needs, and providing targeted early help services focused on addressing the identified needs of the children and family. We recognise that Arches Housing has a legal responsibility to promote inter-agency co-operation to improve the welfare of all children, and families.

6. Our Approach to Safeguarding Adults

The Care Act 2014 defines adult safeguarding as protecting an adult's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect.

Safeguarding adults is about people and organisations working together to prevent and stop both the risks and experience of abuse or neglect. Safeguarding balances the right to be safe with the right to make informed choices, while at the same time making sure that the adult's wellbeing is promoted including, taking into consideration their views, wishes, feelings and beliefs in deciding on any action.

In the context of the legislation, specific adult safeguarding duties apply to any adult who:

- has care and support needs; and
- Is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect; and
- Is unable to protect themselves because of their care and support needs.

We define a vulnerable adult as an individual who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of disability, age or illness; and is or may be unable to take care or unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation.

We acknowledge that harm can be perpetrated towards vulnerable adults and can be defined as the ill treatment or impairment of health and development. It includes impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another person.

We consider residents or members of their household to also be 'at risk' if they experience difficulties with day to day living due to health, learning, language, behaviour, family, financial, social radicalisation or other circumstances or a

combination of these circumstances. Examples of 'at risk' and adults with care and support needs may be:

- People who are frail due to old age;
- A person with a physical disability, a learning difficulty or a sensory impairment that makes them vulnerable;
- Someone with mental health needs, including dementia or a personality disorder that makes them vulnerable;
- A person with a long-term health condition;
- Someone who misuses substances or alcohol to the extent that it affects their ability to manage day-to-day living;
- Those individuals who are housed within one of our supported housing schemes.
- Anyone known to have a social worker, Community Psychiatric Nurse or other mental health support drug or alcohol worker;
- Anyone known to have a Community Support Worker;
- Women under 19 who are pregnant;
- Anyone known to have a probation officer or Youth Offending Team worker;
- Refugees;
- People leaving hospital, prison or care;
- Survivors of domestic abuse;
- Anyone accepted as statutory homeless in the last 2 years.

7. Staff Responsibilities

7.1 All Staff

It is every member of staffs' responsibility to:

- Understand this policy, the associated procedure and complete the mandatory training on Safeguarding.
- Monitor for any signs or signals of abuse or harm.
- Report a concern if they have reason to believe that a child or vulnerable adult is suffering abuse or significant harm, and also if

they have concerns that someone is likely to suffer abuse or significant harm.

- Act promptly and appropriately when they have a concern, including following the correct reporting timescales.
- Ensure that all information about concerns or incidents are accurately recorded and stored confidentially.
- To carry out actions as instructed by the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and line managers and in line with Arches Safeguarding Procedure.
- Contribute to a fair and open culture of safeguarding awareness.

All staff must follow this policy, and anyone failing to follow this policy will be subject to investigation and potential disciplinary action, including gross misconduct.

7.2 The Executive Leadership Team

The Executive Leadership team are responsible for ensuring that all staff are aware of safeguarding issues, are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and that this policy is implemented.

7.3 Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is responsible for coordinating and monitoring safeguarding referrals, and in this capacity they provide advice to managers and front line staff should a safeguarding concern arise and decide whether to report concerns to the relevant external body after considering the merits of the concern raised. Their responsibilities include:

- Assessing information promptly and carefully, clarifying or obtaining more information and establishing the facts regarding the concern(s) as appropriate.
- Check that all appropriate actions have been taken and that all activities are completed.
- To take the lead role on allegations and safeguarding concerns made against Arches Staff or Contractors
- Monitor and review Arches Safeguarding Policy, Procedures and Reporting.

- To ensure that the Executive Leadership Team are aware of any concerns that are raised regarding reputational risk.

7.4 Managers

Managers have an important role to take responsibility for the quality of safeguarding in their teams and encourage staff to raise alerts appropriately. This includes acting immediately when an alert is raised, taking the concern seriously and support staff to take the appropriate steps.

7.5 Contractors

Contractors are expected to comply with our Safeguarding policy by ensuring that their employees are able to report risk concerns regarding children and vulnerable adults. Contractors must inform us when such concerns involve our customers.

8. Our Commitments

8.1 Awareness

We will ensure that all staff, contractors, agents and any third party working on our behalf:

- Understand this policy;
- Are aware of the signs of abuse; and
- Know what to do if they have reason to believe that abuse is taking place.

We will empower our customers with information with what constitutes abuse and how to report it.

8.2 Training & Learning

All staff will receive training related to this policy and complete annual mandatory Safeguarding Children and Adults training which may be in the form of e-learning.

All staff working with children and their families will receive additional training to help them carry out their duties. This may include training provided by the relevant local authority.

We will learn from previous situations and continually improve how we manage our safeguarding concerns.

8.3 Reporting

We will ensure we have a fair and open culture of safeguarding awareness to allow any concerned person to raise concerns without fear.

We have clearly understood and widely accessible reporting procedures for staff to raise any concerns to:

- Ensure a prompt and appropriate response when it appears that a child or vulnerable adult may be suffering harm; and
- Keep the interests of the child or vulnerable adult at the centre of any safeguarding activity.

8.4 Partnership working

We are committed to working swiftly and productively with all relevant agencies to take action to protect a child or vulnerable adult who may be experiencing or is likely to experience significant harm.

We are committed to meeting the multi-agency working requirements set out in statutory guidance and local authorities' policies and procedures. This policy should be read alongside those of the relevant local authority. We will work closely with our supported housing partners and request copies of their safeguarding policies.

We realise that good information keeping and sharing with partners is key. We will engage with local MAPPAs (Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements) and MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) work and contribute to Serious Case Reviews when required by the lead authority or agency.

We recognise that local authorities (Children's Social Care) are the lead agency when co-ordinating safeguarding investigations in relation to children. We recognise that local authorities (Adult Social Care) are the lead agency when co-ordinating safeguarding investigations in vulnerable adults.

We have an important role to play with local authorities and the police in the prevention; detection and reporting of concerns and will always support them with their investigations in the best way possible.

8.5 Support

Being a witness to, hearing about, or supporting someone through abuse can be very distressing. We will support all staff involved in a safeguarding case at every stage of the process through regular supervision meetings and any other relevant support mechanisms.

When we identify a vulnerable adult where there is no indication of significant harm or abuse, we will contact all relevant support providers to discuss and arrange appropriate support.

9. Confidentiality and Sharing Information

The needs of the child or adult at risk must come first and any actions we take will reflect this.

Where possible we will comply with the principles of the Data Protection Act 2018 and our Data Protection policy to maintain confidentiality. However, these should not be a barrier to sharing information but provides a framework to ensure that personal information is shared in a lawful way.

Where possible, professionals working directly with children, their families and vulnerable adults should seek to discuss their concerns with the individual and or their parents and seek their agreement to making a referral to Social Care. However, if such a discussion would place the child or adult at an increased risk of significant harm (for example, the parent is the alleged perpetrator) then this discussion should not take place.

We reserve the right to make the referral to Children's Social Care, Adult Social Care or the Police without the permission of the child, parent or vulnerable adult where the situation and the provisions of the Data Protection Act (and any other relevant legislation) justify it. This includes where there is reason to believe that an individual is suffering, or at risk of suffering significant harm, or to prevent or detect a criminal offence.

10. Review

This Policy shall be reviewed and updated by the Designated Safeguarding Lead every two years or if there are any significant changes to current legislation, regulations or codes of practice or guidance. It will also be reviewed after any serious incident or if any reason comes to light to suggest that the Policy is inadequate.

11. Governance and Assurance

Compliance with Arches legal responsibility in relation to Safeguarding will be reported to board annually.

12. Equality and Diversity

All involved will recognise their ethical and legal duty to advance equality of opportunity and prevent discrimination on the grounds of; age, sex, sexual

orientation, disability, race, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership.

13. Publicising this Policy

This policy will be publicised on the Arches Website.