

# Safeguarding policy

**Department:** Housing & Environment (housing management)

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## 1. Scope

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 Act 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.

London Borough of Ealing's housing service fully recognises its responsibilities for safeguarding vulnerable adults and children. Safeguarding is paramount and it is the duty of all Ealing Council

housing staff and volunteers working with, or in contact with children and vulnerable adults, to recognise signs of abuse, protect them from abuse and be alert to the possibility of abuse.

This policy applies to all housing staff who work at the London Borough of Ealing. This policy applies to all housing stock, including:

- general needs properties
- leasehold properties
- supported housing
- sheltered housing

The policy sets out how Ealing Council's housing services, children and families services and adult social care will work in partnership in order to respond appropriately to concerns of abuse, harm or neglect of adult residents or children and improve outcomes for adults and children at risk. The policy is to assist staff in understanding their responsibilities and duties to ensure that the welfare of vulnerable adults and children is responded to and addressed.

## **2. Aims and objectives**

This policy 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. Legislative and regulatory context**

Responsibilities for safeguarding are enshrined in international and national legislation. This policy takes account of all of the council's statutory requirements as at the date of implementation including:

- Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Mental Health Act 2007
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Modern Slavery Act 2015
- Mental Capacity (Amendment) Act 2019
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Prevent Duty 2023
- Care and Support Statutory Guidance- Section 14 Safeguarding
- Adult Safeguarding: Roles and Competencies for Health Care Staff 2018
- Care Act 2014
- Working Together to Safeguard Children – Multi Agency Guidance 2018 (updated 2022)
- London Safeguarding Children Procedures Updated September 2023

### **4. Definition:**

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.

### **4.1 Safeguarding children.**

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
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

### **4.2 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.

### **4.2 How we identify children or adults 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**

A child is defined as being anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. 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 antisocial 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 need 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

## 5. 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
- **self-neglect** - covers a wide range of behaviour including neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings and behaviour such as hoarding
- **hoarding** - hoarding may be an aspect of self-neglect. Compulsive hoarding (more accurately described as 'hoarding disorder') is a pattern of behaviour characterised by the excessive acquisition of and inability or unwillingness to discard large quantities of objects that cover the living areas of the home and cause significant distress. An 'adult at risk' may also be living with a hoarder in a property. There may be a safeguarding

concern about that adult if they are at risk of harm due to the hoarding

- **discriminatory abuse** - including racist, homophobic, transphobic or sexist remarks or comments based on a person's impairment, disability, age or illness, gender reassignment, sex and sexual preferences, religious beliefs/domination, race, marriage/civil partnership, pregnancy and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatments
- **organisational abuse** - involves the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to vulnerable people. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour that amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and stereotyping. It includes a failure to ensure the necessary safeguards are in place to protect vulnerable adults and maintain good standards of care in accordance with individual needs, including training of staff, supervision and management, record keeping and liaising with other care providers
- **cyber abuse** - involves using the internet and mobile technologies with the intention of bullying or threatening another person with the possible intention of harm
- **mate crime** - happens when someone is faking a friendship in order to take advantage of a vulnerable person. Mate crime is committed by someone known to the person. They might have known them for a long time or met recently. A 'mate' may be a 'friend', family member, supporter, paid staff or another person with a disability
- **hate crime** - is defined as any crime that is perceived by the victim, or any other person, to be racist, homophobic or due to a person's religion, belief, gender identity or disability. It should be noted that this definition is based on the perception of the victim or anyone else and is not reliant on evidence
- **modern slavery** - encompassing slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude. Traffickers and slave masters use whatever means they

have at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment

- **honour based violence** - is a crime or incident, which has or may have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or community. It is a collection of practices, which are used to control behaviour within families or other social groups to protect perceived cultural and religious beliefs and/or honour. Such violence can occur when perpetrators perceive that a relative has shamed the family and/ or community by breaking their honour code
- **forced marriage** - is a term used to describe a marriage in which one or both of the parties are married without their consent or against their will. A forced marriage differs from an arranged marriage, in which both parties' consent to the assistance of their parents or a third party in identifying a spouse. Forced marriage can be a particular risk for people with learning difficulties and people lacking capacity
- **female genital mutilation (FGM)** - involves procedures that include the partial or total removal of the external female genital organs for cultural or other non-therapeutic reasons. The practice is medically unnecessary, extremely painful and has serious health consequences, both at the time when the mutilation is carried out and in later life. The age at which girls undergo FGM varies enormously according to the community. The procedure may be carried out when the girl is new-born, during childhood or adolescence, just before marriage or during the first pregnancy. FGM constitutes a form of child abuse and violence against women and girls and has severe physical and psychological consequences. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the practice is illegal under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003
- **radicalisation** - involves the exploitation of susceptible people who are drawn into violent extremism by radicalisers. Violent extremists often use a persuasive



rationale and charismatic individuals to attract people to their cause. The aim is to attract people to their reasoning, inspire new recruits and embed their extreme views and persuade vulnerable individuals of the legitimacy of their cause

- **cuckooing** - the practice where professional drug dealers/crime gangs take over the property of an adult at risk and use it as a place from which to run their drugs business/ crime activity. The criminals will target those who are vulnerable, potentially as a result of substance abuse, mental health issues, learning disability or loneliness, and befriend them or promise them drugs in exchange for being able to use their property. The gangs can send vulnerable children and adults from their own area to stay at a house and distribute the drugs, again often intimidating and threatening them to stay. The impact of this is that vulnerable individuals become indebted to gang/groups and are forced into labour, slavery and exploitation to pay off debts

### 5.1: 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 issues 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 Ealing housing service will respond to suspected or alleged abuse or neglect:**

We recognise that abuse, neglect or harm can arise in a 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. We will endeavor to safeguard children, young people and adults at risk in the following ways:

### **6.1: 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.

### **6.2: 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.

### **6.3: 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 council 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.

### **6.4: 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 shared 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 of what we have shared.

### **6.5: Working with others:**

We recognise that safeguarding is achieved through good interagency and multidisciplinary working with other organisations and across local authority boundaries. As a provider of social housing and support services we will build and maintain partnerships and effective referral procedures with internal partners (adult social care and children services) and other local authorities and agencies to safeguard children and adults at risk.

### **6.6: 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.

## **7. Governance**

Ealing Council's cabinet has overall responsibility for ensuring that this policy is implemented to enable compliance with the law.

In practical terms, the chief executive reports to cabinet to demonstrate accountability for corporate safeguarding children and safeguarding adults across the council. The chief executive will also ensure that safeguarding compliance management duties in Ealing Council's landlord function are properly assigned and managed.

## **8. Diversity and inclusion**

Ealing Council will ensure that all information about safeguarding adults and children is shared with tenants' leaseholders and other occupiers in a form that is easily understood.

## **9. Implementation**

This policy will be implemented in conjunction with the policies that relate to the safeguarding of adults and children. The policies include:

- Damp, mould and condensation
- Aids and Adaptations
- Antisocial behaviour
- Income recovery
- Resident engagement strategy
- Repairs