

Safeguarding Children Policy

September 2020

1 Policy statement

- 1.1 Through providing support services we will enable tenants of the Rooftop and the wider community to lead active and independent lifestyles.

2 Statutory and Regulatory context

- 2.1 The Regulator of Social Housing document 'Regulating the Standards – April 2018' sets out how it will regulate to support the implementation of the revised framework, published in April 2015. This guidance makes no specific reference to 'safeguarding'. However, the guidance states that when a provider fails to meet one or more of the consumer standards, it can use its powers if they judge that there are reasonable grounds to suspect:

- That the failure has resulted in serious detriment to the provider's tenants (or potential tenants).
- That if no action is taken by the regulator, there is a significant risk that the failure will result in a serious detriment to the provider's tenants (or potential tenants).

- 2.2 Annex B to the above goes on to give Consumer Regulation Guidance that includes the following:

- "Our assessment of serious detriment is based on the degree of harm or potential harm that may be caused to tenants by a breach of standards. The judgement is formed on the regulator's opinion of the actual or potential impact on tenants, irrespective of the nature of the issue that gives rise to the concern".

- 2.3 The Annex goes on to say that the regulator will require evidence of harm or potential harm, in relation to a number of areas, including health and safety.

- 2.4 In the consumer standards subject to regulation, the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standards updated July 2017 requires registered providers to demonstrate that they understand the different needs of their tenants, including in relation to the equality strands and tenants with additional support needs. The Tenancy Standard 2012 states that registered providers shall develop and provide services that will support tenants to maintain their tenancy and prevent unnecessary evictions.

3 Policy outline

- 3.1 We recognise that safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility but acknowledge that the lead role will be taken by the relevant Local Authority Children's Services.
- 3.2 We understand our role to be that of prevention and early detection, with reference to lead agencies when there are suspicions or allegations of abuse.

- 3.3 This policy and associated procedures applies to all paid staff, contractors, volunteers and Board Members.
- 3.4 This policy statement is formulated under the guidance of Gloucestershire and Worcestershire Safeguarding Children Boards and statutory guidance on making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children under section 11 of the Children Act 2004 and 'Working together to safeguard children' (HM Government 2015).
- 3.5 This policy takes account of the Housing Act 2004 and acknowledges that as such Rooftop must take account of the impact of health and safety hazards in housing on vulnerable occupants, including children, when deciding on the action to be taken by landlords to improve conditions. Housing authorities also have an important role to play in safeguarding vulnerable young people, including young people who are pregnant, leaving care or a secure establishment. (WT 2015).
- 3.6 Multi agency procedures for Safeguarding Children can be found for Gloucestershire at <http://www.proceduresonline.com/swcpp/gloucestershire/contents.html>
- 3.7 Multi agency procedures for Safeguarding Children can be found for Worcestershire at <http://westmerciaconsortium.proceduresonline.com/>

4 General principles

4.1 Adhering to multi-agency principles

- 4.1.1 Staff have a duty to report without delay any concerns or suspicions that any child is being or is at risk of being abused.
- 4.1.2 We will ensure that all staff and volunteers are familiar with policies relating to safeguarding children, that they know how to recognise abuse and how to report and respond to it.
- 4.1.3 We will make the dignity, safety and wellbeing of the child our priority, and also respect the rights of the person causing or alleged to be causing harm albeit recognising that the welfare of the child is paramount.
- 4.1.4 We will ensure that staff and volunteers have access to training that is appropriate to their level of responsibility and will receive advice that allows them to reflect on their practice and the impact of their actions on others.
- 4.1.5 We will contribute to effective inter-agency working, multi-disciplinary assessments and joint working partnerships in order to provide the most effective means of safeguarding children.
- 4.1.6 We will share information about children who may be at risk from abuse where appropriate, with due regard to confidentiality and information sharing protocols.

5 Our role as a housing and support provider

- 5.1 All those who come into contact with children (irrespective of whether they are living at home with their families and carers or away from home) and families in their everyday work, have a duty and responsibility to report any concerns. This includes staff who do not have a specific role in relation to safeguarding children. We will report any allegations or concerns of a child protection nature

which comes to our attention, in order to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

- 5.2 In some cases, we will be contracted to provide services funded by county councils and in such cases, we will adhere to the relevant safeguarding procedure as agreed as part of our contractual obligations.

6 Definitions

6.1 What is a child?

- 6.1.1** A 'child' means, under the Children Act 1989, a person under the age of 18 and in addition (a) a person aged 18, 19 or 20 who has been looked after by a local authority at any time after attaining the age of 16; or (b) has a learning disability.

6.2 What is a child in need?

- 6.2.1** Children who are defined as being 'in need', under Section 17 of the Children Act 2004, are those whose vulnerability is such that they are unlikely to reach or maintain a satisfactory level of health or development, or their health and development will be significantly impaired, without the provision of services plus those who are disabled. The critical factors to be taken into account in deciding whether a child is in need under the Children Act 2004 are what will happen to a child's health or development without services, and the likely effect the services will have on the child's standard of health and development.

6.3 Transitions (care leavers)

- 6.3.1** Where someone is over 18, but still receiving children's services and a safeguarding concern is raised, this should be dealt with as a matter of course through adult safeguarding procedures. Where appropriate, they should involve the local authority's children's safeguarding colleagues as well as any relevant partners (for example, police or NHS) or other persons relevant to the case. This also applies where someone is moving to a different local authority area after receiving a transition assessment but before moving to adult social care.
- 6.3.2** Robust joint working arrangements between children's and adults' services should be in place to ensure that the medical, psychosocial and vocational needs of children leaving care are assessed as they move into adulthood and begin to require support from adult services.

6.4 Safeguarding and promoting welfare is:

- 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.

- 6.5 Abuse and neglect** are forms of maltreatment. This includes inflicting harm and failing to prevent harm. This could take place within the family, an institutional or community setting, by an adult or adults, child or children known to the child or less frequently a stranger.

- **Physical abuse** is causing physical harm to a child which also includes fabricating or inducing illness in a child.
- **Emotional abuse** is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on emotional development. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment though it may occur alone.
- **Sexual abuse** involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activity including prostitution whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.
- **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. This can include failure to provide food, clothing and shelter, protection from harm, adequate supervision and access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

Prevent agenda

- 7.1 The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 contains a duty on specified authorities to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. Whilst Rooftop is not a specified authority, it is expected to cooperate with local authorities through local safeguarding adults and children arrangements, in particular with local Prevent co-ordinators, the police and local authorities, and co-ordination through existing multi-agency forums, for example Community Safety Partnerships.
- 7.2 In accordance with local authority partners, we will ensure that frontline staff:
- 7.2.1 Understand what radicalisation means and why people may be vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism as a consequence of it.
- 7.2.2 Are aware of what is meant by the term "extremism" and the relationship between extremism and terrorism.
- 7.2.3 Know what measures are available to prevent people from becoming drawn into terrorism and how to challenge the extremist ideology that can be associated with it.
- 7.2.4 Understand how to obtain support for people who may be being exploited by radicalising influences.
- 7.2.5 Receive training relevant to their role:
- 7.2.5.1 Read and understand the Safeguarding Policy and Procedure
- 7.2.5.2 Safeguarding eLearning for all front-line employees
- 7.2.5.3 Enhanced eLearning for specifically identified senior roles
- 7.3 Where staff member has informed concerns regarding a vulnerable adult or child, s/he must raise them with a Safeguarding Lead, who will then make a recommendation to the Homes and Communities Director regarding a referral to the on-duty adult or children's safeguarding team.
- 7.4 In sharing information with local authority partners, we will take account of:

- 7.4.1 Necessity and proportionality: personal information will only be shared where it is strictly necessary to the intended outcome and proportionate to it, according to the potential risks to an individual or the public.
- 7.4.2 Consent: wherever possible the consent of the person concerned will be obtained before sharing any information about them.
- 7.4.3 Data Protection and GDPR: we will ensure that we comply with our responsibilities under the Data Protection Act and any confidentiality obligations that exist.

8 Role of the Safeguarding Children Boards

- 8.1 Local Authorities were required to establish a Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) by 1 April 2006 after the Children Act 2004 introduced it as the key statutory mechanism for agreeing how partner agencies will co-operate to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and ensuring the effectiveness of local safeguarding children arrangements in the local area.
- 8.2 The Local Safeguarding Children Board has a range of statutory functions which include the following:
- Developing thresholds, policies and procedures for responding to safeguarding and welfare concerns about individual children.
 - Communicating and raising awareness of safeguarding children issues.
 - Making recommendations for commissioning bodies and participating in local planning/commissioning of services for children.
 - Undertaking Serious Case Reviews and ensuring implementation and monitoring of action plans.
 - Improving local ways of working in light of learning from local and national experience.
- 8.3 The core objectives of the LSCB involves the coordination of local work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and to ensure the effectiveness of what the member organisations do individually and together. Specifically, this involves developing and agreeing the inter-agency policies and procedures for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, consistent with 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (2015). They will also communicate the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child to professionals and agencies.

9 Our duty to refer

- 9.1 Professionals, employees, managers, helpers, carers and volunteers in all agencies must make a referral to Local Authority Children's Social Care:
- If it is believed or suspected that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm.
 - Where a professional has identified an unmet need in relation to a child in need.
- 9.2 A referral must be made as soon as possible when any concern of significant harm becomes known - the greater the level of perceived risk, the more urgent the action should be.

- 9.3 If you are worried about a child, you have a duty to refer. The belief or suspicion about significant harm may be based on information which comes from different sources. It may come from a member of the public, the child concerned, another child, a family member or other professional staff. It may relate to a single incident or an accumulation of lower level concerns. The information may also relate to harm caused by another child, in which case both children, for example the suspected perpetrator and victim, must be referred. The suspicion or allegation may relate to a parent or professional or volunteer caring for or working with the child. A referral must be made even if it is known that Children's Social Care are already involved with the child/family.
- 9.4 Advice and consultation may be sought about the appropriateness of the referral by contacting the local Children's Social Care or, if the case is open, from the allocated social worker. Alternatively, advice may be sought from the Police on crime or child protection issues, or the Safeguarding Lead within Rooftop.

10 Confidentiality

10.1 The safety and welfare of the child overrides all considerations, including the following:

- Confidentiality
- Gathering of evidence
- Commitment or loyalty to relatives, friends or colleagues

10.2 The overriding consideration must be the best interests of the child - for this reason, absolute confidentiality cannot and should not be promised to anyone.

10.3 Rooftop's responsibilities

10.3.1 We are in a position to identify children who are vulnerable and at risk of abuse, neglect and exploitation. We will ensure that there are named people within Rooftop who have the responsibility to link with statutory organisations in the area of protection. We will also incorporate protection responsibilities in staff job descriptions and/or terms and conditions of appointment and employment.

10.4 Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks

10.4.1 We will seek enhanced DBS checks for all staff who are likely to come into contact with children. Clearance will be conducted every three years.

10.5 Inform and train our staff

10.5.1 We will inform our staff and contractors about protection issues and procedures, emphasising their mandatory nature and will train all workers who are in regular contact with customers so that they are aware of, and understand, the law, guidance and any new initiatives relating to safeguarding so that they are able to identify and act appropriately on any cases of possible harm or abuse.

10.6 Report allegations of harm of abuse

10.6.1 We recognise the duty to report any allegations or suspicions of abuse to the relevant authority, and will ensure notification is within stipulated time limits,

and will inform, as appropriate, any other authorities who have an interest in the service involved.

10.7 Work in partnership with other agencies

10.7.1 We will work co-operatively with other local agencies to recognise, report, investigate and prevent harm or abuse of any person with whom we have contact. We will, as appropriate, participate in, and contribute to, local forums concerned with protection issues, and liaise with and report to such bodies on a regular basis. We will avoid compromising or obstructing any investigation by statutory agencies.

10.8 Be child centred in our approach to safeguarding children

10.8.1 We will ensure our services are based on a clear understanding of the needs and views of children.

10.9 Respect diversity

10.9.1 We will take due account of people's age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage status and pregnancy and maternity status in any investigation or assessment of harm or abuse, ensuring this is carried out in an appropriate setting, manner and language.

10.10 Respect confidentiality

10.10.1 We will maintain confidentiality relating to protection issues where it is practical, sharing personal information with other agencies only with the permission of the individual concerned, or in line with what is permitted by the law and local policy or protocols.

10.11 Avoid collusion

10.11.1 We will ensure that our whistle-blowing policy and procedure can be used if an employee thinks that their line manager is colluding with an alleged abuse or not taking it seriously. We will also ensure that our disciplinary procedures are compatible with the responsibility to protect children and adults.

10.12 Monitor protection issues

10.12.1 We will specifically monitor any issues relating to protection so that we can maintain an overview and recommend action where this is needed.

10.13 Ensure robust record keeping

10.13.1 All safeguarding incidents will be recorded in the appropriate system by all employees in order to maintain a record of incidents and complaints.

10.13.2 Good record keeping is a vital component of professional practice. Whenever a complaint or allegation of abuse is made, we will keep clear and accurate records in line with Rooftop's complaints procedures on receipt of a complaint or allegation, to record all action taken.

10.13.3 When abuse or neglect is raised managers need to look for past incidents, concerns, risks and patterns. We know that in many situations, abuse and neglect arise from a range of incidents over a period of time. We will give staff clear direction as to what information should be recorded and in what format.

10.13.4 Records will be kept in such a way that the information can easily be collated for local use and national data collections.

10.14 Managers' roles and responsibilities

10.14.1 Managers are responsible for:

- Having an operational knowledge of this policy and associated procedures.
- Ensuring that staff and volunteers have the appropriate support, training and supervision to carry out their role within this policy and procedure in a competent manner.
- Ensuring that all staff and volunteers are aware of how to access both the internal and multi-agency procedures.
- Discussing and referring, if necessary, any concerns to the Rooftop Safeguarding Leads.
- Conducting regular reviews of the safeguarding log and ensure follow up work is carried out, including staff training and inter agency reviews.

10.15 Role and responsibilities of staff and volunteers

- To alert an appropriate manager, without delay, to any concerns, suspicions or evidence of abuse that they may see or hear about.
- To co-operate with any investigation of concerns of abuse by providing all the evidence that may be known.
- Never prevent or persuade another person from raising concerns, suspicions or presenting evidence.
- To record all factual information accurately and clearly, in line with internal requirements.
- To follow the Local Authority's multi-agency procedure and our internal procedures.

10.16 Safeguarding Leads

10.16.1 We will appoint Safeguarding Leads with the appropriate knowledge and experience to support and advise staff who may encounter potential safeguarding issues.

10.16.2 The Housing and Communities Director is the overall strategic lead across the organisation for safeguarding.

11 Contact numbers

11.1 Local Authority Children's Social Care:

- Gloucestershire 01452 426565
- Worcestershire 01905 822666
- Helpdesk 01452 426565

12 Review

12.1 This policy will be reviewed every three years unless there are major changes in legislation or good practice.

13 Consultation

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| 13.1 | Leadership Team (Head of Business Improvement, Head of Support and Employability, People Director and Asset Manager as a Safeguarding Champion) | September 2019 |
| 13.2 | Executive Team | September 2019 |
| 13.3 | Other (for example, customers) | N/A |
| 14 | Responsibilities | |
| 14.1 | Responsible body | Board of RHG |
| 14.2 | Formulation and approval of policy | Board of RHG |
| | Amendments to policy | Leadership Team |
| | Monitoring of policy | Leadership Team |
| | Operational management of policy/policy author | Head of Support and Employability |
| 14.3 | Date of formulation of policy | September 2009 |
| 14.4 | Dates of policy reviews | September 2019 |
| | | April 2019 |
| | | March 2016 |

Associated documents

Internal – Rooftop policies and procedures

- Safeguarding procedures
- Safeguarding Adults policy
- MAPPA guidance
- Confidentiality procedure
- Disclosure of information procedure
- Recruitment and Selection policy
- Staff Learning and Development policy
- Domestic violence policy
- Whistleblowing policy and procedure
- Fraud policy
- Disciplinary policy
- Risk Assessment policy and procedures
- Health and Safety policy
- Social media policy
- Support and Care associated procedures
- Staff Handbook
- Equalities and Diversity policy
- Grievance policy
- Volunteering policy

External

- The Children Act 2004
- The Housing Act 2004
- Multi agency procedures for Safeguarding Children