

Safeguarding Policy

	Version Control					
Version	Date drafted	Date approved	Approved by	Date Reviewed	Next review date	Owner
Final	27.08.20	17.09.20	Board	30.05.22	30.05.24	Operations Director

1. Introduction

1.1 Westmoreland Supported Housing Limited (WSHL) is a registered provider of supported social housing for adults where the care and support is usually provided by a Care Provider. Whilst our customers are primarily adults, we recognise that children and young adults may visit our customers and therefore this policy covers safeguarding for all groups.

1.2 We recognise people who live in supported housing may be particularly vulnerable to self-neglect or abuse and we have a responsibility to have safeguarding systems in place. We also recognise that our staff are well placed to identify people at risk and to work jointly with colleagues, Care Providers and other agencies to provide a co-ordinated approach to preventing and responding to abuse. Our Operations Director is our designated safeguarding lead with the Chief Executive as deputy in their absence. There will also be a nominated board member with oversight of safeguarding in WSHL.

1.3 There are 3 main ways in which we may be involved in safeguarding:

- We may have concerns about an adult or child's safety and report these to Adult or Child Safeguarding Teams and/or the Police.
- Adult Safeguarding Teams may ask us to provide them with information about an adult in relation to an assessment or investigation.
- In conjunction with the Care Provider, we may be asked to provide specific support to the adult, family or carer as part of an agreed plan and to contribute to the ongoing review of the adult's needs.

2. Legal and Regulatory responsibilities

2.1 Safeguarding adults falls under the Care Act 2014. The Statutory Guidance to the Care Act (2014)¹⁶, updated 2017, includes guidance about safeguarding adults at risk of abuse and neglect. This includes:

- Definitions of what safeguarding adults is;
- How to spot certain defined types of abuse
- Reporting and responding to abuse and neglect
- Criminal offences relating to safeguarding adults;
- Safeguarding duties and which organisations they apply to
- The role of Local Authorities and multi-agency working

- Safeguarding enquiries
- Safeguarding Adults Boards and Safeguarding Adults Reviews.

2.2 Safeguarding children falls under the Children Act 2004.

2.3 Health and Social Care Act 2008.

2.4 Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 – statutory guidance on inter-agency working.

2.5 Mental Capacity Act 2005 and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards - governs decision-making on behalf of adults who may not be able to make their own decisions.

2.6 Relevant legislation is all that legislation either by way of Common Law, Act of Parliament or Statutory Instrument which relates to this policy and is in force at the relevant date.

3. Definitions

3.1 **Safeguarding** - means protecting a person's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect. It also means people and organisations working together to prevent the risk of abuse or neglect, and to stop them from happening. It applies to children, young people and adults at risk.

A **child** is anyone who is under the age of eighteen.

A **young person** is a care leaver, a person who is 18 and over but is still receiving children's services. For example, a person who has substantial and complex needs might be supported in a residential education setting until the age of 25.

An **adult at risk** (sometimes called a vulnerable adult) is someone aged 18 or over who has needs for care and support (whether or not these needs are being met). Safeguarding applies to adults at risk who are unable to protect themselves from experiencing, or the risk of experiencing, abuse as a result of their care and support needs.

3.2 **Abuse - safeguarding** aims to protect adults and children from abuse and neglect. Guidance points out that we should not limit our view as to what constitutes abuse or neglect as they take many forms. The circumstances of each case should always be taken into account.

3.3 **Harm** – is physical and/or psychological injury.

3.4 **Neglect** - is the failure to meet the needs of a child, young person or adult who is at risk. The Children Act includes definitions specific to child neglect including emotional, physical and sexual abuse and failure to protect any child from risk of danger.

3.5 **Self-Neglect** - there is no accepted operational definition of self-neglect due to the dynamic and complexity of self-neglect. However, literature suggests:

- Persistent inattention to personal hygiene and/or environment.

- Repeated refusal of some/all indicated services which can reasonably be expected to improve quality of life.
- Self-endangerment through the manifestation of unsafe behaviours.

4. Scope

- 4.1 This policy applies to all board members, staff, contractors and volunteers including sessional staff and other agency staff.

5. Our Approach

- 5.1 We will not tolerate or collude with any form of neglect or abuse. We aim to promote and safeguard the welfare of all our customers, taking their views, wishes and feelings into account. We will make sure our customers are fully aware of what constitutes abuse and how to report it.

- 5.2 We recognise that people with care and support needs are not all vulnerable to abuse but may become so at any point due to physical or mental ill health, acquired disability, old age or environmental factors, such as poverty and anti-social behaviour.

- 5.3 The care and support statutory guidance identifies six key principles and their individual outcomes, underpinning all safeguarding work and which we will work to:

- **Empowerment** – people being supported and encouraged to make their own decisions and informed consent.
- **Prevention** – it is better to take action before harm occurs.
- **Proportionality** – the least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented.
- **Protection** – support and representation for those in greatest need.
- **Partnership** – local solutions through services working with their communities. Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse.
- **Accountability** – accountability and transparency in safeguarding practice.

- 5.4 Under the Care Act 2014 self-neglect is seen as a potential safeguarding issue for those in receipt of or in need of care and support and where their health and wellbeing or that of others is seriously compromised. In such circumstances we will be aware of any commissioning organisation's policies and procedures and local reporting arrangements. We will work in conjunction with the Care Provider, Commissioner, Safeguarding Teams and Safeguarding Adult

Boards to develop a multi-agency response that achieves the best outcome for the person who self-neglects/hoards whilst satisfying our responsibilities as a landlord.

6. Prevention of abuse

- 6.1 We will take a preventative approach to safeguarding, ensuring staff are aware of relevant risk factors and triggers. They will have the opportunity to discuss any concerns with Care Providers,

managers and colleagues. Our local practices will be aligned with the local authority safeguarding arrangements.

- 6.2 All staff are required to abide by a Code of Conduct in order to avoid situations where their actions could be mistakenly interpreted and may lead to allegations of abuse. We undertake enhanced DBS checks on any staff that have regular unsupervised contact with our customers as part of our approach to safe recruitment.
- 6.3 We aim to raise awareness of abuse and its effects and inform our customers on how to keep themselves and others safe. We will emphasise the role of neighbours and communities and encourage them to report suspected abuse to ourselves or the relevant authority.
- 6.4 We have a Whistleblowing Policy for confidential reporting where a member of staff suspects that a customer is being abused by another member of staff.

7. Responding to a Safeguarding concern

- 7.1 We recognise that because of the level of contact we have with customers, we are particularly well placed to identify vulnerable adults who may be experiencing, or at risk of, abuse. We may also come into contact with visiting children or young adults who could be at risk. We view abuse extremely seriously and will be proactive in responding to any allegation or suspicion of neglect or abuse. We will respond promptly, sensitively, proportionately and consistently in line with our procedures to all reported allegations.
- 7.2 We seek to offer customers the safest and most supportive environment in which they can report abuse. Any report or allegation of abuse will be listened to and investigated using the six key principles which underpin all adult safeguarding work. We will ensure any action we take is sensitive to and takes account of the victim's gender, age, disability, religion, culture and race.
- 7.3 We will work with other agencies in involving and supporting victims as appropriate and wherever possible, respecting their choice in the range of agencies they may wish to work with. We will cooperate with local authorities where they have concerns about one of our customers, responding in a timely manner.
- 7.4 We will have in place clearly understood and widely accessible procedures for staff to report and record centrally safeguarding concerns, actions and outcomes and to make referrals to the relevant local Safeguarding Boards in accordance with their Frameworks for Action.
- 7.5 If we consider a criminal offence has occurred, or the customer faces an imminent risk we will notify the police immediately. If we have concerns about the immediate health and welfare of a customer in relation to a safeguarding matter, we will notify the emergency services and local authority as soon as possible.

7.6 We recognise the specific focus of this Policy is adults who are 'at risk' of experiencing abuse, self-neglect or exploitation. However, we also aim to protect the rights of 'all' adults that our staff come into contact with whilst carrying out their duties. This will include those who are the subject of concern but are not classed as 'vulnerable' or are not the focus of the initial concern. This may also include those that provide a caring role to vulnerable adults.

8. Confidentiality and support

8.1 We will support customers through the safeguarding reporting and investigation process. We will always assume that an adult has the mental capacity to make decisions about their personal safety, unless we have been formally advised otherwise by an appropriate health and/or social care professional or have seen relevant documentation e.g. power of attorney. If we suspect that an adult does not have mental capacity, we refer them to the appropriate agency for an assessment.

8.2 We will ensure that an adult's wellbeing is promoted when reporting and responding to safeguarding concerns having regard to their views, wishes, feelings and beliefs in deciding on any action and where appropriate support them to share their views with other agencies.

8.3 We will maintain confidentiality in all information relating to safeguarding concerns and will only share information with partner agencies according to the protocols developed in the local Safeguarding Procedural Frameworks. If consent to share information is refused we will only share it where we are legally required to do so, where there is a significant risk to the individual or others, where we suspect a criminal offence has been or will be committed or where the person lacks capacity to make an informed decision about sharing information. Where the issue relates to a child, we do not need to seek consent to make a referral.

9. Partnership working

9.1 Local authorities have specific duties and expertise in organising and planning services in order to safeguard and promote the welfare of adults at risk, children and young people. However, we recognise responsibility for safeguarding is shared amongst a number of agencies. We understand the role we have to play in taking all reports of abuse and neglect seriously and will work other organisations to achieve our aims and recognise our legal requirements.

9.2 We recognise the importance of cooperating with the police and local Safeguarding Boards to help them protect, investigate and deter abuse. We will inform them of any serious concerns

9.3 We recognise that our customers can include perpetrators of abuse. We therefore work in partnership with other agencies to support victims of abuse and address the risks presented by perpetrators.

10. Training and support for staff

10.1 All our staff working directly with our customers will be trained to:

- Recognise the signs of self-neglect, abuse and behaviours which should give cause for concern
- Assess the risk of abuse to customers and in conjunction with care providers ensure measures are in place to minimise this as part of assessment and support planning
- Respond to self-neglect or abuse in accordance with this policy
- Refer cases of self-neglect or abuse to the local authority Adult or Child Safeguarding Team

10.2 We will ensure our staff, including new starters are appropriately trained and reviewed periodically.

10.3 We will share information about safeguarding and good practice with customers, staff, partner organisations and carers.

11. Monitoring and review

11.1 Numbers of safeguarding concerns raised and their outcomes will be reported to the Board annually.

11.2 This policy will be reviewed every two years.
