



Safeguarding children and at-risk adults' policy

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5	March 2024	AD Housing	Updated	Board	Mar 2024

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Two Rivers Housing

Safeguarding children and at-risk adults' policy

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to outline TRH Group's (TRHG) commitment to safeguarding as well as provide clarity on its approach.
- 1.2 Safeguarding means protecting people's health, wellbeing, and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse, and neglect. TRHG recognises that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, and that it has an important role to play within its communities, as our customers can often include children and adults at risk. TRHG is committed to ensuring customers, communities and colleagues are safe and protected and that its statutory safeguarding responsibilities to protect children and at-risk adults are complied with and effective.
- 1.3 TRHG has a duty to safeguard collaboratively and in partnership with external agencies, particularly local authorities and statutory services, and support the multi-agency protocols and procedures that are in place. These include MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessments Conference – information sharing on high-risk domestic abuse cases) and MAPPA (Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements – to manage risks posed by sexual and violent offenders).
- 1.4 This policy is also intended to help create a common understanding of safeguarding issues, develop good practice across the diverse and complex areas in which TRHG operates and increase accountability in this aspect of its work.
- 1.5 This policy also highlights areas in the management and reporting of safeguarding for both children and at-risk adults to ensure that TRHG meets its legal obligations.
- 1.6 This Policy sets out:
 - How TRHG works to protect children and adults who are at risk and have needs concerning care and support from abuse and/or neglect.
 - The roles and responsibilities of colleagues and the Group Board in relation to safeguarding.
 - The systems of monitoring and reviewing reports of safeguarding concerns.
 - How TRHG will ensure its contractors and managing agents are fully integrated into its safeguarding policies.
 - How TRHG ensures its colleagues are appropriately trained and supported to carry out their role in safeguarding.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy sets out how colleagues, board members, stakeholders, consultants, sub-contractors, partners, customers, and any other agencies working on behalf of TRHG should report concerns of actual, suspected or alleged abuse of an at-risk adult or child and the steps TRHG will take to tackle safeguarding issues.
- 2.2 This policy applies to all occupants of and visitors to TRHG properties in directly managed accommodation, accommodation managed on its behalf by other agencies, and directly managed accommodation where support or care is provided by another agency.
- 2.3 It also applies to applicants for a TRHG property and to any incidents of abuse or neglect witnessed by its colleagues while carrying out TRHG business.
- 2.4 TRHG recognises the legislation regarding the safeguarding of children and at-risk adults. This policy has been developed to meet the following requirements:
- Working Together to safeguard children 2023: statutory guidance.
 - Domestic Abuse Act (2021).
 - The Care Act 2014.
 - The Children Act (2004).
 - The Modern Slavery Act (2015).
 - Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (2006).
 - Mental Capacity Act (2005).

3. Roles and Responsibilities

- 3.1 TRHG will aim to protect and maintain customers safety and wellbeing through its approach to safeguarding children and at-risk adults. TRHG will achieve this by working with partners to apply its policy standards to the six principles as defined in The Care Act (2014) Statutory Guidance (**empowerment, prevention, proportionality, protection, partnership, and accountability**), which underpin safeguarding work.
- 3.2 Although, all colleagues have a responsibility in respect of reporting safeguarding, the key roles and responsibilities are as follows:

Role	Responsibilities
Executive Director of People and Neighbourhoods; in their absence it will sit	Strategic lead Accountable overall to the Group Board and Executive team for all safeguarding matters

temporarily with the Chief Executive	
Assistant Director of Housing	Operational Lead Accountable for policy and processes being updated in line with relevant legislation and good practice. Oversees in the event of serious safeguarding incident. Overseeing performance report and monitoring.
Head of Tenancy Services	Safeguarding & Partnership lead Main contact point for colleagues reports and queries. Work with external organisations in respect of safeguarding and represent TRHG at multi-agency meetings. Monitor case referrals, support and guidance to colleagues.
Tenancy Support manager	Safeguarding Point of contact Act as the organisational point of contact for all safeguarding reports. Report all safeguarding cases to the relevant statutory services.

- 3.3 In addition, Heads of/Managers will
- Support a culture whereby safeguarding is a key issue for all colleagues.
 - Ensure that safeguarding is regularly discussed at team meetings and in one-to-one meetings and put in mechanisms to monitor how often cases are reported from their service area(s).
 - Promote safeguarding generally across the organisation.
 - Ensure the Head of Tenancy Services and Assistant Director of Housing are made aware of any issues which may lead to concerns of ‘Serious Detriment’.
- 3.4 All colleagues are responsible for:
- Be aware and report any safeguarding concerns immediately to their line manager, the Safeguarding & Partnership lead and/or the Safeguarding Point of Contact.
 - Work with Safeguarding & Partnership lead and/or the Safeguarding Point of Contact in their safeguarding investigations and actions.
 - Complete safeguarding training as required.
- 3.5 In undertaking its role to report and manage safeguarding concerns, TRHG will:
- Ensure colleagues and contractors are aware of this policy and the relevant procedures.
 - Ensure colleagues and contractors are aware of the signs and indicators of abuse and while providing services to adults, which may also impact upon children in some circumstances, endeavour to identify and report abuse where it is reasonable to do so.

- Ensure all allegations of abuse of a vulnerable adult or child are treated seriously; ask employees exercise professional curiosity, avoiding assumptions and stereotypes, and testing out information rather than taking anything at face value.
- Have procedures for alerting, reporting, investigating, and managing safeguarding.
- Ensure all action taken will be carried out sensitively, taking account of the vulnerable person's individual needs, including race, culture and ethnicity, age, gender, religion, disability, or sexuality.
- Ensure, by working with other agencies (where appropriate), that the views of the vulnerable adult or voice of the child is represented, and these are taken on board when dealing with matters affecting their tenancy.
- In terms of ensuring protection of a vulnerable person's best interests in relation to consent and mental capacity, we will at all times operate in accordance with the Mental Capacity Act 2005.
- Ensure employees respectfully challenge service users and other agencies where they feel that action is not sufficient or appropriate.
- Ensure confidentiality is respected at all times and will not share information given in confidence unless this is justified by the assessed risk to the vulnerable person or as required by law.
- Appoint a "Safeguarding Lead", with appropriate knowledge, experience and skills, to provide help and advice to employees and to act as lead on safeguarding issues.
- Keep confidential and secure records of all safeguarding issues, with access and responsibility limited to the Safeguarding Lead, Champion(s) and nominees.
- Ensure its recruitment and selection procedures take account of the need to protect vulnerable adult and children. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks will be made if necessary subject to employee working arrangements. Where appropriate, referees will be asked to comment on the applicant's suitability to work with vulnerable people.
- Review safeguarding cases and learn from these reviews to ensure that safeguarding is managed within a culture of continuous improvement.
- Put in place performance measures to capture our response to safeguarding.
- Raise awareness of safeguarding with customers and tenants.
- Inform the Regulator of Social Housing if issues such as 'serious detriment' occur, where these risks have not been mitigated.

3.6 TRHG is cognisant the impact safeguarding cases can have on colleagues. It will always support colleagues reporting concerns in good faith and will encourage them to challenge and report where they are not satisfied that a concern is being treated appropriately.

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Colleagues are also encouraged to share their experiences, and any associated feelings or wellbeing issues in the way they find most comfortable. This may be in the following ways:

- Debriefing and discussion with line manager.
- Debriefing and discussion with Safeguarding and Partnership lead.
- Discussion with People team.
- Utilising Employee Assistance Programme to access the 24-hour support line or to access counselling where needed.

3.7 TRHG also understands there may be instances where a colleague may feel they could be at risk of reprisal if they report a concern. As professionals cannot report anonymously, TRHG recognises that some colleagues may be more at risk of repercussions than others. These include staff that live nearby to the property where the concern had been raised, those who are well-known in the local area and/or colleagues likely to visit a property as part of their role where their ability to do this may be compromised if they make a report (e.g. Centigen operative or Welfare, Benefit & Debt Advisor). In these circumstances, the individual colleague should discuss their concerns with either the Safeguarding & Partnership lead or the Safeguarding Point of Contact.

4. Definitions

4.1 TRHG recognises both the similarities and differences between children and adults with care and support needs and/or at risk. This policy is designed to focus on its safeguarding responsibilities as a whole and will recognise the similarities and differences.

4.2 The Government defines vulnerability as “*in need of special care, support, or protection because of age, disability, risk of abuse or neglect*” (March 2022).

4.3 Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023

Child protection is part of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and is defined for the purpose of this guidance as activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suspected to be suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm. This includes harm that occurs inside or outside the home, including online.

Child safeguarding is defined as:

- Protecting children from maltreatment.
- Preventing impairment of children’s health and development.
- Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.
- Taking actions to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

A child is anyone who has not yet reached their eighteenth birthday and includes unborn children. Due to their immaturity and dependency on others, all children are at risk of abuse.

Working Together to Safeguard Children has introduced the concept of Contextual Safeguarding, which recognises that as well as threats to the welfare of children from within their families, children may be vulnerable to abuse or exploitation from outside their families.

These extra-familial threats might arise at school and other educational establishments, from within peer groups, or more widely from within the wider community and/or online.

These threats can take a variety of different forms and children can be vulnerable to multiple threats, including, exploitation by criminal gangs and organised crime groups such as county lines, trafficking, online abuse, sexual exploitation, and the influences of extremism leading to radicalisation.

Everyone who comes into contact with children has a role to play in safeguarding and should adopt a child centred approach. For services to be effective they should be based on a clear understanding of the needs and views of children.

4.4 **Safeguarding Adults (Care Act 2014)**

An adult who is aged 18 years or over who:

- Has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs) and,
 - is experiencing, or is 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 of or the experience of abuse or neglect.

This includes adults with physical, sensory, and mental impairments and learning disabilities, whether present from birth or due to advancing age, illness, or injury. It also includes people with a mental illness, dementia or other memory impairments, and people who misuse substances or alcohol (where this has led to impaired physical, cognitive, or mental health).

Authorities in England and Wales believe an adult at risk is experiencing or at risk of experiencing abuse or neglect, must make enquiries (this is not necessarily an investigation), or cause others to do so. This is a duty under s.42 of The Care Act (2014).

The Care Act (2014) also states:

“Making safeguarding personal means it should be person-led and outcome-focused. It engages the person in a conversation about how best to respond to their safeguarding situation in a way that enhances involvement, choice, and control, as well as improving quality of life, wellbeing, and safety.” (p.233).

4.5 Differences between children and adults

Adults:

- Have their own rights and responsibilities.
- Can choose to live independent lives.
- Have a legal right to consent to participating in safeguarding concerns being progressed (with some exceptions, including lacking mental capacity, significant risk of harm or a crime could be prevented).
- There are specific agencies involved in safeguarding adults.

Abuse or neglect in relation to safeguarding adults includes:

- Physical abuse.
- Domestic violence.
- Psychological abuse.
- Sexual abuse.
- Financial or material abuse
- Modern slavery.
- Discriminatory abuse.
- Neglect or acts of omission.
- Self-neglect.
- Organisational abuse.

Children:

- Do not have the same freedoms and choices as adults.
- May lack the physical and emotional maturity to understand the risk, harm, or abuse they may be a victim of.
- We must always consider their wishes and feelings, BUT authorities will have a duty to act in the best interests of the child, which may contradict their wishes and feelings.
- Our colleagues typically have less interaction with children within the course of their work.

Abuse or neglect in relation to safeguarding children include:

- Physical Abuse.
- Sexual Abuse.
- Emotional/Psychological Abuse.
- Neglect and/or acts of omission.

Other categories or specific acts of abuse and neglect may be categorised differently by other organisations and TRHG is aware that abuse may also include, but is not limited to:

- Acts such as online abuse
- Child sexual exploitation
- Female genital mutilation
- Bullying and cyberbullying
- Domestic abuse, child trafficking
- Grooming
- Harmful sexual behaviour

In addition to the definitions outlined above, a number of other factors also need to be considered when deciding whether a vulnerable person may have been abused or is at risk: "Abuse may consist of a single act or repeated acts. It may be physical, verbal, or psychological, it may be an act of neglect or an omission to act, or it may occur when a vulnerable person is persuaded to enter into a financial or sexual transaction to which he or she has not consented or cannot consent. Abuse can occur in any relationship and may result in significant harm to, or exploitation of, the person subjected to it." 'No Secrets' Department of Health 2000.

5. Policy statements

- 5.1 TRHG works within but is not captured by the following statutory context:
- 5.2 Sections 42-47 and 68 of The Care Act (2014) defines safeguarding adults, provides a definition of adults at risk, details the roles and responsibilities of a range of organisations and how they must work together to respond to adult safeguarding concerns. This includes Registered Providers.
- 5.3 The Act sets out a statutory basis for safeguarding adults and the legal duties that local authorities will have to fulfil in their lead and coordination roles. The supporting Statutory Guidance on adult safeguarding replaces previous 'No Secrets' official guidance.
- 5.4 The Children's Act 2004 created Local Safeguarding Children Boards and places duties on a range of statutory organisations.
- 5.5 As a Registered Provider, TRHG is not a statutory partner under these Acts, but is expected to:
 - Report cases of concern regarding safeguarding to the local authority. These may result in TRHG taking action to protect the person(s) from any risk of or actual abuse or neglect as part of a safeguarding plan.
 - Attend and provide information to Local Safeguarding Boards if necessary.

- Attend and participate in relevant Safeguarding Case and Serious Case Reviews.
- Co-operate with Local Authorities in enquiries of suspected safeguarding concerns.
- Have a safeguarding policy and procedure.
- Keep clear and accurate records of safeguarding allegations, responses, and actions, and share these with appropriate organisations when in the best interest of the person(s).
- Have safe recruitment practices and provide training relevant to safeguarding.
- Have a safeguarding lead for the organisation.

6. TRHG's approach to safeguarding children and adults with care or support needs

6.1 **Investigation:** TRHG's colleagues are **not** responsible for the investigation of suspected abuse or neglect. In cases where a criminal offence is suspected, this is the role of the police and/or the Local Authority Social Services Teams, overseen by the Safeguarding Adults and Children's Boards. TRHG colleagues and contractors will fully assist and co-operate with these investigations and will attend case conferences and review meetings when required.

6.2 **Consent adult:** Consent to share information about abuse and/or neglect should always be sought from the adult at risk unless:

- The person may lack mental capacity as defined within The Mental Capacity Act (2005).
- A criminal offence is taking place or could be prevented.
- There is significant risk of harm to the individual or any other person.

6.3 **Consent child:** Consent in respect of child safeguarding should be gained from the parent or guardian of the child prior to making a safeguarding referral unless this would put the child at further risk of harm.

6.4 **Historic abuse:** Abuse that took place when a person was under 18 years old is not an adult safeguarding issue but, dependant on the concern, could be a child safeguarding issue, irrespective of how old that person is now.

In certain cases, the relevant Children's Social Care department may need to be informed, if for example, the person who caused harm, is considered as a continued risk to other children.

Adults who disclose historical childhood abuse can be advised that this is a crime and that they can still report this to the police, if they want to do this.

- 6.5 **Confidentiality:** Colleagues have a duty to share information regarding suspected abuse to the statutory agencies and with their immediate line manager. Colleagues will always respect confidentiality and will seek advice from line managers when considering sharing information if there is any doubt.
- 6.6 **Professional boundaries and whistleblowing:** TRHG has a Professional Boundaries Policy that depicts acceptable behaviours and a Whistleblowing Policy that depicts how to raise a concern, which could be a matter about safeguarding or situations where there is a perceived risk. This may be used by colleagues to highlight more general problems with unacceptable practice, performance, or behaviour. The Group has a culture that enables issues about safeguarding and promoting welfare to be addressed through the Whistleblowing Policy. It is a mechanism to enable colleagues to voice concerns about breaches or failures in a reasonable and effective manner.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act (1998) gives workers legal protection against being dismissed or penalised as a result of publicly disclosing certain serious concerns.

- 6.7 **Data protection and document storage:** Referral documents and other correspondence relating to safeguarding referrals will be kept securely within TRHG's IT systems. The documentation will only be available to those with responsibility as set out in the roles and responsibilities section of this policy.
- 6.8 **Contractors:** TRHG will aim to ensure that all contractors working in tenant's homes do not pose a safeguarding risk. Contractors will be expected to have robust and well managed policies and procedures for safeguarding in place, or to adopt the Group's policy and reporting procedures. TRHG will also work with its contractors to ensure there are clear channels of communication whereby contractors can report any safeguarding concerns they have encountered in the course of their work in TRHG properties to the Group.
- 6.9 **TRHG colleagues:** TRHG recognises that its colleagues are often in positions of power and influence and work regularly with children and adults needing care and support. Relevant Disclosure and Barring Service checks will take place for colleagues that have contact with tenants and will have to sign to evidence that they understand professional boundaries and will maintain these in their work.

TRHG recognises the impact that safeguarding issues can have on colleagues, and will ensure that appropriate support such as counselling, team meetings and training is provided. Where a TRHG team member is implicated in suspected abuse, the Disciplinary and/or Whistleblowing Policy and procedures will be followed.

Where an allegation of abuse is made against a colleague, they may be suspended while the allegation is investigated. If allegations of abuse or neglect committed by a colleague are substantiated, appropriate action will be taken, and TRHG will inform the Disclosure and Barring Service/Regulator as required.

- 6.10 **Training:** All colleagues will be given appropriate training on adult and children's safeguarding. This will form part of the core training of front-line colleagues, be part of colleague induction and all colleagues will receive regular refresher training. Designated Safeguarding Leads/Champions, both strategic and operational, will receive enhanced safeguarding training.
- 6.11 **Partnerships with statutory agencies:** TRHG colleagues will be aware of, and ensure they comply with, the policies and procedures of the Safeguarding Boards for their locality.

7. Monitoring and review

- 7.1 This policy will be reviewed every two years by the Assistant Director of Housing.
- 7.2 The implementation of this policy will be monitored by:
- Monthly reviews of safeguarding referrals as part of one-to-one supervision meetings.
 - Quarterly reviews by the Executive Team of Safeguarding Referrals, by number, type, and region, number of escalations and outcomes.
 - An annual report to the Group Board summarising safeguarding referrals by number, type, and region, and outcomes.
 - Any investigation of abuse implicating a colleague, contractor or managing agent will be reported to the Executive Team and Group Board as appropriate.
 - Informing the Regulator of Social Housing if issues such as 'serious detriment' occur, where these risks have not been mitigated.

8. Equality impact assessment

- 8.1 Attached as Appendix One.

Appendix 1: Equality impact assessment

Group	Could the service / document have different impact on this group? If yes, detail how.	Response to potential adverse impacts	How will this be monitored?
Disability	Yes – heightened potential for abuse	Colleague training Clear procedures for reporting suspected abuse or neglect	Monitoring and reporting of referrals by group, type of abuse or neglect and outcomes
Race	Yes – heightened potential for abuse	Colleague training Clear procedures for reporting suspected abuse or neglect	Monitoring and reporting of referrals by group, type of abuse or neglect and outcomes
Age	Yes – heightened potential for abuse	Colleague training Clear procedures for reporting suspected abuse or neglect	Monitoring and reporting of referrals by group, type of abuse or neglect and outcomes
Gender	Yes – heightened potential for abuse	Colleague training Clear procedures for reporting suspected abuse or neglect	Monitoring and reporting of referrals by group, type of abuse or neglect and outcomes
Gender re-assignment	Yes – heightened potential for abuse	Colleague training Clear procedures for reporting suspected abuse or neglect	Monitoring and reporting of referrals by group, type of abuse or neglect and outcomes
Sexual orientation	Yes – heightened potential for abuse	Colleague training Clear procedures for reporting suspected abuse or neglect	Monitoring and reporting of referrals by group, type of abuse or neglect and outcomes
Marriage and civil partnership	Yes – heightened potential for abuse	Colleague training Clear procedures for reporting suspected abuse or neglect	Monitoring and reporting of referrals by group, type of abuse or neglect and outcomes
Pregnancy and maternity	Yes – heightened potential for abuse	Colleague training Clear procedures for reporting suspected abuse or neglect	Monitoring and reporting of referrals by group, type of abuse or neglect and outcomes
Religion / belief	Yes – heightened potential for abuse	Colleague training Clear procedures for reporting suspected abuse or neglect	Monitoring and reporting of referrals by group, type of abuse or neglect and outcomes