



Safeguarding and Vulnerable Adults Policy and Procedure 2022-2025



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DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT	
<p><i>Approved by: EMT</i></p> <p><i>Date of approval 24.5.2022</i></p>	<p>Next Review Date: April 2025</p> <p><i>Version 1</i></p>
	<p>Contact Officer: Director of Housing</p>

INTRODUCTION

Northampton Partnership Homes (NPH) takes the Safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults seriously and is committed to helping to protect them from abuse, neglect, exploitation, or harm.

We recognise our responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children, young people and vulnerable adults by a commitment to a practice that protects them.

NPH will ensure through its recruitment and selection policy suitable people are selected for working with children and vulnerable adults.

NPH will take any concern raised by employees or its agents and contractors about Safeguarding seriously and sensitively.

NPH will work in cooperation with West Northants Council. It will comply with all relevant Safeguarding Boards and their procedures and will respond positively to any recommendations they make.

As an organisation, NPH commits to:

- Work together to resolve issues where the individual may not be eligible for social care support, refuses support or self-neglects
- Ensure links between public protection forums such as safeguarding boards, multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs), multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPAs), health and wellbeing boards and community safety partnerships
- Help partner agencies to understand the role of housing staff in safeguarding
- Develop a common understanding of language and definitions regarding people with care and support needs and safeguarding
- Provide clarity for staff on the law relating to sharing information, confidentiality and data protection
- Ensure inclusion of housing staff in strategy meetings and investigations, internally within the organisation and with our partners.
- Processes will be in place for keeping referrers informed of progress on safeguarding referrals.
- Ensure all staff receive safeguarding training as part of their induction and existing staff receive regular updated safeguarding training

CONTEXT

This Policy links into NPH's corporate objectives.

VISION

NPH provides homes which enable people to live happy and healthy lives in enriched communities

MISSION

We improve lives by sharing a common purpose

We improve and maintain the quality of our homes

We provide services which endeavour to meet the needs and aspirations of all tenants and residents

We will provide the opportunity for people to influence the immediate and long-term futures for themselves and their communities

VALUES

Open and Strong

Listen and Respond

Achieving more with others

Aim High and Deliver

AIMS and OBJECTIVES.

NPH employees are well placed to identify people at risk of abuse during their day-to-day work whilst visiting people in their homes. The Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children's Board have issued the following guidance: -

<https://www.nctrust.co.uk/help-and-protection-for-children/Documents/NSCB%20Thresholds%20Guidance.pdf>,

This document can help officers to clarify the referral process, with regard to Children.

When the term "children" is used this includes young people and young persons.

The phrase "children, young people and vulnerable adults" refer to:

- a) Anyone under the age of 18 years or
- b) A person aged 18 years or over who may be unable to take care of themselves, or protect themselves from harm or from being exploited

This Policy supports NPH's commitment to assisting vulnerable people in line with the Tenancy Sustainability Strategy. All our processes will ensure that vulnerable people can be identified at the point of housing application, or when there are difficulties in an existing tenancy. Services will continue to be undertaken for key functions such as rent arrears collection and dealing with anti-social behaviour.

All tenants have a tenancy agreement which sets out their responsibilities, and some tenants will need support to meet these obligations.

If a tenant is supported then the tenancy has a much higher chance of being sustained and NPH will focus on four main themes.

- Early identification of potential problems, both at application and once a tenancy is running. Risk assessments to ensure all issues are captured.
- Help tenants and applicants to gain the skills necessary to manage their tenancy once support stops.
- Ensure referrals are made to statutory agencies where appropriate
- Assist tenants and applicants to link into services which can help them to improve their life chances.

KEY PRINCIPLES OF THE POLICY

- The welfare of children and vulnerable adults is paramount
- All children and vulnerable adults (whatever their background and culture, maternity or pregnancy status, age, disability, gender, racial origin, religious belief, sexual orientation and/or gender identity) have the right to participate in society in an environment which is safe and free from violence, fear, abuse, bullying and discrimination.
- All children and vulnerable adults have the right to be protected from harm, exploitation and abuse and to be provided with safe environments to live and play
- Working in partnership with children, their parents, carers and vulnerable adults and other agencies is essential in promoting children and vulnerable people's welfare
- NPH has a duty to promote the well-being of children and young people and to cooperate with the Council in delivering its safeguarding duties
- NPH is responsible for establishing appropriate policies and procedures to ensure that its activities promote the safety and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults, e.g., safe recruitment policies, safe working practice

WHO MIGHT BE AT RISK?

- The elderly
- A person with a physical disability or cognitive impairment
- A person with a learning disability
- A person with mental health needs which can include dementia
- A person with a long-term illness or condition
- Those misusing substances or alcohol
- Carers, including young people providing unpaid care to a family member or friend
- Those unable to demonstrate the capacity to make a decision as defined by the Mental

Capacity Act and is in need of care and support.

Assessment before a Tenancy starts

Applicants who apply to the housing register and have been identified as being a potentially vulnerable person/household will be referred to the Rehousing and Resettlement Officers who will complete a visit or interview to assess the applicant's needs and identify areas where support will be required once a property is offered. These assessments will concentrate on:

- Discussing with the applicant the skills they will need to manage a successful tenancy
- Assessing any risks to the customer and business
- Referring to statutory services where appropriate
- Ensuring the right person is allocated the right home that is appropriate for their needs by way of its size and type, taking into account the need for adaptations.
- Promoting a rent payment culture
- Undertaking an affordability assessment

A full verification process will also be undertaken prior to the applicant being made an offer of housing.

The officer will consider the specific needs of the applicant when completing the assessment and how much engagement is required whilst they are waiting for the offer to be made.

The applicant will be supported in all areas of the rehousing process including how to place bids and advice on how to maximize their opportunities of being successfully housed.

A plan will be drawn up prior to the applicant taking up the offer to assist them in the moving process. Helping a new tenant to set up their new home is a good tenancy sustainment opportunity. Assisting people through the rehousing process and supporting them in areas that could cause them difficulties can reduce the number of new tenancies failing.

Where the customer has been identified as having very low support needs, the resettlement officer will provide a 6-week re-settlement period and then close the case. They will ensure that the tenant is aware that further support can be provided if necessary and how to access that support.

Where longer term support needs are identified, the case will be referred to a Housing Support Officer who will meet with the tenant within the 6-week period to draw up a Support Plan.

Tenants managed by NPH

Lots of information will be known about the tenant if they have been rehoused via the Housing Register. The Support Plan will be drawn up and agreed areas of support identified. The tenant will be expected to engage in that Support and the Support Officer will engage in partnership working where other agencies are involved. The length of support will be estimated at the time of the Support Plan being drawn up.

Where the tenant is elderly, and has been placed in older persons housing, the officers will ensure that all relevant information is passed to Call Care. Officers will make sure that the

tenant understands the equipment that is available to them and where appropriate how to test it. In cases where the tenant is frail and elderly then the Welfare Officer will arrange to test the equipment and complete the welfare checks.

Referrals for support for vulnerable tenants will be considered from all other areas of the business and outside agencies. Referrals should be made as soon as a tenant is identified as vulnerable and where the tenancy is failing.

Serious Case Panels

NPH has two panels designed to discuss and plan cases/tenancies which are causing a concern.

- The Domestic Abuse Panel – discusses cases where Domestic Abuse is the primary vulnerability. Plans will be agreed, in line with the Domestic Abuse Policy and a register kept
- The Serious Case Panel – will discuss cases where there is a concern regarding the tenant’s wellbeing or a risk to staff. Actions will be agreed, and a register kept

The panels are attended by officers from the Rehousing and Support and Tenancy Management Teams. This allows a joined-up approach to managing risk, and also to provide the most appropriate outcome for the tenant/applicant.

Hoarding/Serious Neglect

Hoarding has been identified as being a growing problem with serious and costly implications for housing providers. The risks include risk management challenges, health and safety concerns, escalating legal costs and safeguarding issues. Hoarding disorder is a complex psychological problem that has been recently classified as a diagnosable mental health disorder in its own right.

A procedure for dealing with tenants who have this disorder is covered in the Hoarding Policy.

GUIDANCE FOR FRONTLINE HOUSING STAFF AND CONTRACTORS

All employees of NPH have a responsibility in the ‘safeguarding’ of vulnerable adults and children. Everyone should ensure they have read the understood the Policy and undertake when required the on-line training.

Identifying if a child or person is at risk is not always easy to spot, but there are some things to look out for:

- ❖ Poor appearance and hygiene
- ❖ Signs of physical injury
- ❖ Children left alone in the house with no adult present
- ❖ Changes in behaviour over a period of time
- ❖ Signs of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour from one person to another within a household
- ❖ Locks on the outside of bedroom doors
- ❖ Unexplained spending/lack of finances/rent arrears

- ❖ Unwanted people staying in a property
- ❖ Hoarding

Abuse can include any, but is not limited to, some of the following:

- ❖ Physical – this can include hitting, shaking, throwing, burning or causing deliberate ill health to another person
- ❖ Mental and Emotional – this can include feeling frightened, in danger, unloved, inadequate and persistent ill treatment
- ❖ Sexual – this can include being forced to take part in sexual activities, to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or sexual exploitation
- ❖ Bullying – which can include deliberately causing harm
- ❖ Financial – this can include the deliberate withholding of finances or stealing from a child, young adult or vulnerable person
- ❖ Neglect – this can include lack of bathing, care or clothing

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF ABUSE IS SUSPECTED?

1. In an emergency, and where there is an immediate risk of abuse call **999**
2. Report all your concerns to your Manager or Team Leader, and for trades employees ensure that a concern card is completed immediately

Concern card process – Concern cards are completed by trade employees only and have been set up to ensure all safeguarding risks are being effectively managed by NPH.

The concern card has two levels of risk, the first relates to safeguarding, domestic abuse and other high-risk situations. The second is related to tenancy and environmental related issues which have a much lower risk.

Concern cards completed that relate to potential high-risk situations such as suspected Domestic Abuse or other safeguarding matters should be sent directly to the safeguarding mail in box. Safeguarding.nph@nph.org.uk. This box will be managed by the Housing Support Team Leaders. The trades operatives will be contacted by one of the Team Leaders within 48 hours to discuss in further detail what the operative has seen and the concerns that they have. The operative should ensure they are able to be contacted within the 48 hours following the submission of a high-risk concern card.

The Housing Support Team Leader will outline what actions they will take for example: making a safeguarding referral, making contact with the MASH team etc. It will not be possible to provide any further information regarding any possible outcome due to GDPR regulations.

Concern cards completed that relate to low-risk situations, such as poor condition of tenancy, low level concerns around tenant welfare, fire safety breaches in communal areas, should be sent directly to the Housing Management inbox: neighbourhoods.nph@nph.org.uk.

These concerns will then be reviewed by the Tenancy Team Leaders, and if required will contact the officer who completed the card to obtain further information. Often these concerns will be

followed up by the Housing Officer who will complete a follow up visit. It will not be possible to provide any further information regarding any possible outcomes due to GDPR regulations.

All other employees should make a safeguarding referral to West Northants Council by calling [0300 126 700](tel:0300126700) or by visiting the 'report a concern' on the West Northants website – you will need to specify if you are reporting a safeguarding concern for an adult or child.

What should you do if a tenant or third party discloses abuse?

Assure the person that the matter will be taken seriously. Listen and be non-judgemental.

Explain the process for reporting the allegation.

Don't promise confidentiality – explain how and why the information might need to be shared.

Don't question the person, other than for clarification – formal enquiries and investigations will allow the person to give a full account of their concerns.

Safeguarding Leads:

Nicky McKenzie – Director of Housing – 01604 837419 – nicky.mckenzie@nph.org.uk

Darren Berwick - Area Manager – 01604 838106 – darren.berwick@nph.org.uk

James Clarke – Area Manager – 01604 838602 – james.clarke@nph.org.uk

Equality and Diversity

We monitor all those with protected characteristics to ensure that we can identify service delivery quality to all.

Policy Review

The Policy will be monitored by the Director of Housing with regular updates provided to Operations and Resources Committee.