



Safeguarding Policy

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POLICY SUMMARY

Please note that where we use EPIC within this policy, we refer to EPIC Housing Limited.

This Policy outlines our responsibilities and approach in identifying and reporting cases of actual or potential abuse upon children and vulnerable adults with whom we come into contact.

1. APPLICABILITY

1.1 Representatives of EPIC include all staff, board members and contractors. In terms of tenants/residents this applies to:

- all children with whom we come into contact.
- tenants, leaseholders, household members, applicants and their household members – who are known or believed to be vulnerable.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 As a registered provider of social housing, we work with a wide range of people, some of whom are vulnerable. Our staff and contractors may, from time to time, become aware of or suspect situations where abuse of a child/children or a seemingly vulnerable adult may be taking place. We must report cases where we suspect abuse is occurring, no matter the identity of the perpetrator or victim. We will also respect and support anyone who whistle blows because they believe abuse is taking place.

3. AIMS OF THIS POLICY

3.1 The key aim of this policy is to protect children and vulnerable adults.

4. WHO ARE CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS?

4.1 Children are any individuals under the age of 18.

4.2 Vulnerable adults are those aged 18 and over, at risk of abuse or neglect and who may be:

- vulnerable and already in receipt or in need of community care services, by reason of mental or other disabilities, age or illness; and
- unable to take care of themselves or unable to safeguard themselves against significant harm or exploitation.

4.3 Adult client groups may include:

- People with learning disabilities.
- People with mental health problems.
- Elderly persons.
- People with physical disabilities.
- People with visual and sensory impairment.
- People who rely on others for care and/or support.

5. WHAT IS ABUSE?

5.1 Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by another person or persons, or by an institution, and may result in significant harm to, or the exploitation of, the person subjected to it. Abuse may:

- Consist of a single act or repeated acts.
- Be an act of neglect or an omission to act.
- Be deliberate or unintentional or result from lack of knowledge.
- Be physical and/or sexual.
- Be verbal, psychological or emotional.
- Be financial or material.
- Occur when a person is persuaded to enter into a financial or sexual transaction to which they had not consented or cannot consent.

6. PROCESS FOR RAISING CONCERNS

6.1 All EPIC staff, Board members or contractors who witness any actual or suspected abuse to either children or vulnerable adults, must:

A) Call 999 immediately if an individual is believed to be in actual or imminent danger.

B) Report the case to the relevant statutory body listed below within one working day:

Children

(in Stoke-on-Trent)

https://www.stoke.gov.uk/info/20009/children_and_families/391/stoke-on-trent_safeguarding_children_partnership

or

<https://safeguardingchildren.stoke.gov.uk/>

(in Staffordshire)

<https://staffsscb.org.uk/>

Vulnerable Adults

(in Stoke-on-Trent or Staffordshire)

Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Adult Safeguarding Board

<https://www.ssaspb.org.uk/Reporting-abuse/Reporting-abuse.aspx>

C) Notify the Housing Manager of any reported cases within one working day.

D) Within one working day the Housing Manager will:

- i. Log every case reported to a statutory body on to our internal monitoring sheet.**
- ii. Notify the respective patch Housing Officer of the safeguarding report, so that any follow-up actions (support, tenancy enforcement) can be conducted.**

7. CONFIDENTIALITY

7.1 Our staff will respect victims' confidentiality, however a person's right to confidentiality is not absolute and may be overridden where there is evidence that sharing information is necessary to protect the individual's welfare, to support an investigation or where there is a risk to others (e.g., in the interests of public safety, or a criminal investigation). EPIC representatives may share information without consent if, in their judgement, that lack of consent can be overridden in the public interest. Staff will need to base their judgement on the facts of the case and may need to discuss with the relevant staff and colleagues outlined above.

7.2 Documents relating to an individual's safeguarding will be stored in a secure electronic file which will only be accessible by the Executive Team, Housing Manager and Housing Officers.

8. APPLICABLE LEGISLATION & GUIDANCE

8.1 The Care Act 2014

The Care Act 2014 sets out six key principles which should underpin all adult safeguarding work:

- Empowerment – Personalisation and the presumption of person-led decisions and informed consent.
- Prevention – It is better to take action before harm occurs.
- Proportionality – A proportionate and the least-intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented should be taken.
- Protection – Support and representation should be given for those in greatest need.
- Partnership – Local solutions should be sought 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 delivering safeguarding.

8.2 Housing providers have a duty to co-operate with local authorities implementing their statutory duties around safeguarding. This may include carrying out enquiries into incidents, information sharing and participating in statutory local Safeguarding Adults Boards. Housing providers are expected to make staff familiar with the principles of safeguarding, train staff to be vigilant, recognise signs of abuse and know what to do if they see those signs.

8.3 Other relevant legislation includes:

- **Children Act 1989**
- **Domestic Abuse Act 2021**
- **Equality Act 2010**
- **Mental Capacity Act 2005**
- **Modern Slavery Act 2015**

9. RESPONSIBILITIES

The roles and responsibilities for staff and key stakeholders across EPIC are detailed below.

The Board – each quarter our Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) will be notified of the number of safeguarding cases we have referred to the relevant authorities.

The **Chief Executive** holds the overall corporate responsibility for the implementation of this Policy.

The **Housing Manager** is the overall safeguarding lead for EPIC and will ensure that both themselves, the Housing Officers and any other staff receive appropriate training in safeguarding. They will also represent EPIC on local safeguarding boards and review cases with the Housing Officers during monthly case-review meetings, to ensure appropriate actions have been taken.

Housing Officers are responsible for spotting potential signs of abuse (in line with the training provided) and making any referrals under the Child Protection procedures. They will also attend any case conferences or 'MARAC' meetings relating to our residents.

All EPIC staff and contractors have a duty to immediately raise any concerns with the relevant staff and/or safeguarding bodies in line with section 6 above.

10. TRAINING

All staff will receive regular training on safeguarding awareness, recognising signs of abuse and neglect, and how to report any concerns.

11. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

We recognise that persons can become vulnerable as a result of disability or old age. We are committed to ensuring and promoting equality of opportunity for all. We are opposed to discrimination on any grounds,

including race, religion, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, age, or any unjustifiable criteria.

We are committed to developing a culture that values people from all sections of society and the contribution which everyone can make, and we will adhere to the Equality Act 2010.

An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed to accompany this, Policy.

12. MONITORING / REVIEW

This Policy will be reviewed every three years unless there is a major change in legislation or circumstances in the meantime.

13. ASSOCIATED POLICIES

Anti-Social Behaviour & Tenancy Enforcement Policy

Domestic Abuse Policy

Tenancy Management Policy

Whistleblowing Policy

Version Control

Date of Review	Reviewer	Version Number	Changes	Date of Next Review	Approved By
November 2023	Chris Panting	v0.1	<p>Combining of separate policies for children and vulnerable adults.</p> <p>Review of terminology and updating with current practice.</p>	November 2026	Executive Team
May 2024	Chris Panting	V1.1	Amending the Process for Raising Concerns, to request EPIC staff who witness a potential issue to notify the relevant agency themselves.		