

**TITLE**

Version:

Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy

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Lead officer(s) & Author:

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Approved by:

West Mercia Housing Group Board 7.12.09

This Policy relates to safeguarding issues in respect of vulnerable adults and children.**1. Policy Statement**

- 1.1 WMHG aims to take all reasonable measures to provide safe accommodation and services for its customers and users of its services, both of which may include children and vulnerable adults.

The protection and safety of children and vulnerable adults is everyone's responsibility. All staff must recognise this and must report any concerns for the well-being of children or vulnerable adults as detailed in the group's procedure. We are committed to safe recruitment selection and vetting for staff who are likely to be in contact with children or vulnerable adults.

2. Policy Purpose and Aims:

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all staff in contact with children, young people and their families, and with vulnerable adults take all reasonable measures to minimise the risks of harm to the welfare of children and young people and vulnerable adults; and where there are concerns about the welfare of children and young people, or of vulnerable adults, appropriate actions are taken to address these concerns.
- 2.2 The approach of this policy is based on and reflects the principles of both UK legislation and guidance and international agreements: WMHG will abide by existing regulatory requirements and legislation as listed:

- The Children Act [1989]
- The Human Rights Act [1998]
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- The Protection of Children Act [1999]
- No Secrets [DoH 2000]
- Every Child Matters [DoH 2003]
- The Children Act [2004]
- National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services [2004]
- Mental Capacity Act [DoH 2005]
- Working Together to Safeguard Children [DoH 2006]
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act [2006]

WMHG will act in accordance with the procedures of the relevant Local Safeguarding Board.



- 2.3 This policy covers the responsibilities of West Mercia Housing Group (WMHG) board members and staff in relation to the protection of children and vulnerable adults. On a day-to-day basis the people working with children and vulnerable adults may be either paid staff or volunteers.

Throughout the policy the term "staff" is used to refer to both board members, staff and volunteers who both come into contact with and are actually regularly working with children (including unborn children) in our accommodation or services. The law distinguishes between staff who 'come into contact with' children and vulnerable adults as those *not* needing Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks and those that are 'working closely with' children and vulnerable adults as staff who *do* need CRB checks. Information on our approach to CRB checks is found later in this policy.

In WMHG, the roles that the latter statement applies to are currently all Care and Supported Housing (CASH) and Independent Living Team staff (i.e foyers, outreach, sheltered schemes and hostels) plus Association Customer Involvement Officers, Training and Development Agency and Response team staff. From time to time there may be other posts for which a CRB check is essential where the post holders are required to work closely with vulnerable adults or children.

- 2.4 Children are taken to be up to twelve years old and young people between thirteen and eighteen years. Because of the nature of our work, it is possible that such children and young people may be either young tenants of our accommodation (16-18 years old), receiving an outreach service or the children of customers or service users. For ease of reference, the terms "child" and "children" are used throughout the policy to refer to all children and young people up to the age of 18.

"Adult" is used to refer to anyone aged 18 or over, and a "vulnerable adult" is one who is or may be in need of community care services because of frailty, learning or physical or sensory disability, or mental health issues, and who is or may be unable to take care of his or her self or to take steps to protect him or her self from significant harm or exploitation.

3. Our Policy

- 3.1 All adults and children, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial or ethnic origin, religious belief and sexual identity have a right to protection from significant harm or abuse. This is of paramount concern to us.
- 3.2 Adults and children have a right to information which could make life better and/or safer for them and we therefore will provide our service users with information about how and with whom they can share their concerns, complaints and anxieties. We also, where possible, offer a choice in working together with signposting to other agencies.
- 3.3 On 12 October 2009, new measures were introduced to help prevent unsuitable people from undertaking paid or volunteer work with children or vulnerable adults. This is called the Vetting and Barring Scheme (VBS). To help implement the Scheme a new public body called the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) has been created.

The ISA make decisions about who should be barred from working with vulnerable people. These decisions are legally binding so a barred person must not undertake certain roles under any circumstances. Failing to comply could result in both the employer and the employee or volunteer being prosecuted and even going to prison.



From July 2010 all new employees, those moving jobs and volunteers who want to work with children or vulnerable adults *can* register with the ISA. From November 2010, all new employees and volunteers *must* register before they start work. From then it will be illegal to employ people who are not ISA-registered.

- 3.4 We will continue to use CRB checks as, along with ISA-registration, they represent an extra level of protection. When used together, the ISA-registration and CRB checking process will provide employers with one of the most comprehensive assessment and review services available to date.
- 3.5 The staff mentioned in section 2.3 of this policy will not be able to work alone with children or vulnerable adults until satisfactory CRB checks have been received by the Group. If it is essential that they begin to work alone, a thorough risk assessment will be made by the Local Associations safeguarding lead as to when was the last time they had a CRB undertaken on them. Permission will need to be sought from the Group's Chief Executive or Deputy Chief Executive.
- 3.6 It is the responsibility of all boards to ensure that this policy is successfully implemented and the procedures followed. The local Director/ Assistant Director (AD) /Head of SHYPP is responsible for ensuring that all staff understand the importance of this policy and the related procedures and comply with them. It is essential to the implementation of this policy that staff know how to deal with emergencies and to express concerns to the appropriate person in the organisation. Therefore all relevant staff will be appropriately trained in using our policy and procedures and will also be made aware/receive training on the procedures of their local safeguarding boards. The level of training they receive will be considered in proportion to the role within the organisation, clients they work with and risk they are potentially dealing with.
- 3.7 Everyone working on behalf of the group is expected to behave towards customers and staff in a way that demonstrates their commitment to this policy. Failure to do so could result in disciplinary action or termination of contracts.
- 3.8 WMHG will ensure that all partnering contractors who work on behalf of WMHG and who come into contact with children or vulnerable adults are aware of and have had training on this policy and the related procedure.
- 3.9 We recognise that inter-agency co-operation is essential if children and vulnerable adults are to be protected. Staff need to recognise their responsibilities to develop awareness of issues that may cause harm to children and vulnerable adults. The procedures linked to this policy establish the need to share information about concerns with relevant agencies. These procedures complement the procedures of Local Safeguarding Boards and it is the responsibility of the Local association Director/ Assistant Director (AD) /Head of SHYPP to ensure that the Local Safeguarding Boards have an up to date copy of this policy. The procedures require the sharing of information with and involvement of children and/or parents, and of vulnerable adults, as appropriate.
- 3.10 In all circumstances WMHG staff will ensure they consider confidentiality and refer to the Groups "Access to Information and Confidentiality" policy. Where the use of photographs or filming of an activity is required for marketing purposes, the parents/carers of these children will be informed and written signed approval obtained prior to the event.



4. Equality Impact Assessment

- 4.1 We are committed to equality of opportunity and want to ensure all residents and their children, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial or ethnic origin, religious belief and sexual identity are treated fairly and in a consistent way and that no-one is discriminated against.
- 4.2 West Mercia Housing Group carry out Equality Impact Assessments to understand the impact that our policies may have on groups of people or individuals. These impacts may be positive or negative. We have reviewed our policy with a variety of safeguarding stakeholders (customers, safeguarding teams, staff etc) and found that
- 4.3 This policy, and the procedure that follows it will only bring greater awareness and protection for staff and customers and therefore the impact on equality issues is improved.

5. Performance Measures and Targets

- 5.1 We will:
- Undertake a safeguarding audit annually on all aspects of the Group
 - All staff will have mandatory training on our safeguarding policy and procedure
 - All staff will undertake local authority safeguarding training at a relevant level to their role
 - All partnering contractors will be trained on our safeguarding policy and procedure
- 5.2 Performance against the above measures will be monitored via and annual report to Boards

6. Monitoring and Review

- 6.1 This policy will be reviewed where:
- There are significant changes to legislation or regulation;
 - There are found to be deficiencies or failures in this policy, as a result of complaints or findings from any independent organisations

The next policy review is scheduled for December 2012

7. Responsibility

- 7.1 This effective implementation of this policy is the responsibility of the Head of Care Supported Housing within the group.

8.0 Associated Documents/Policies

- 8.1 The following policies also deal with issues relating to this policy:
- Access to Information and Confidentiality
 - SHYPP Boundaries Guidance
 - Health and safety Policy
 - Recruitment and selection policy
 - Whistle blowing policy