



PLYMOUTH COMMUNITY HOMES SAFEGUARDING ADULTS AND CHILDREN POLICY

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Lead Directorate:	Homes, Neighbourhoods and Regeneration
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1. Introduction

Plymouth Community Homes (PCH) recognises that we have a key safeguarding role to play, alongside our colleagues in social care, health and the police, in keeping people safe. We are well placed to identify people with care and support needs, share information and work in partnership to coordinate responses.

Safeguarding applies to children and adults at risk of abuse or neglect.

2. Definitions

PCH has adopted the following definitions for the purposes of this policy.

Adult safeguarding means protecting an adult's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect. It is about people and organisations working together to prevent and stop both the risks and experience of abuse and neglect, while at the same time making sure that the adult's wellbeing is promoted including, where appropriate, having regard to their views, wishes, feelings and beliefs in deciding on any action. This must recognise that adults sometimes have complex interpersonal relationships and may be ambivalent, unclear or unrealistic about their personal circumstances.

An *adult at risk* is defined as an adult who:

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

Adults are taken to be those aged 18 and over.

Safeguarding children and young people is defined as:

- protecting children from maltreatment,
- preventing impairment of children's health or development,
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care, and
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

The terms *children* and *young people* refer to people who have not yet reached their 18th birthday. (The terms *children* and *young people* are generally used interchangeably). Where someone is 18 or over, but is still receiving children's services and a safeguarding issue is raised, the matter should be dealt with through adult safeguarding arrangements.

Abuse is defined as a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person, persons or an organisation. Abuse may consist of a single act or repeated acts. It may be physical, verbal, sexual 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.

This policy covers the responsibilities of PCH Board members and staff. For the purposes of this policy, 'staff' may relate to either paid or unpaid staff.

3. Key safeguarding principles

Our policy and procedures are based on the following six guiding principles which are recognised as the basis for good practice in safeguarding adults and children. The principles are not in order of priority; they are all of equal importance.

Empowerment Adults should be in control of their own lives. This means taking action only with consent unless there is clear justification to act contrary to the person's wishes e.g. they lack mental capacity, or they and/or others are in danger. Children should also be supported and encouraged to make their own decisions.

Prevention It is better to take action before harm occurs.

Proportionality Actions taken should be taken appropriate to the risk presented.

Protection Procedures should provide a framework by which people can be supported to safeguard themselves from abuse/harm, or be protected where they are unable to make their own decisions about their safety.

Partnerships Working with others to prevent and respond effectively to incidents or concerns of abuse.

Accountability The roles of all agencies are clear, together with the lines of accountability. Staff understand what is expected of them and others. Agencies recognise their responsibilities to each other, act upon them and accept collective responsibility for safeguarding arrangements.

4. Policy statement

PCH recognises that our staff are well placed to identify people at risk of abuse and neglect and that regular and sustained joint working between housing and adult and children's social care is essential to protect people who may be at risk.

We are committed to listening to and acting upon any report or allegation of abuse in the communities where we work. This includes allegations made against Board members, members of staff and contractors.

We will have clear procedures in place to report suspected abuse and neglect to the relevant agencies in accordance with the guidelines of the local Safeguarding Adults Partnership and local Safeguarding Children Partnership.

This policy is supported by procedural guidance which should be followed when there is suspicion of abuse or an allegation of abuse has been made.

Recruitment

Our recruitment, selection, supervision and training of staff will take into account the need to promote the health and safety of residents and customers and safeguard them from abuse.

All members of frontline staff who have regular contact with adults and/or children who may be at risk of abuse will be subject to appropriate employment checks. This includes employment referencing and, where a job falls within the Disclosure and Barring Service rules, a disclosure and barring check.

Where a disclosure and barring check is required, until the check is satisfactory, staff members will not work alone with children or adults at risk but may be permitted to work under the direct supervision of an existing staff member who has been satisfactorily checked.

Raising awareness and training

We are committed to providing information and training which raises awareness of abuse for Board members, staff and residents.

All of our frontline staff will be trained on how to use our policy and procedures. The level of training they receive will be considered in proportion to the role within the organisation, the clients they work with and risks they are potentially dealing with.

Our induction process for frontline staff will ensure that all new staff are aware of the Safeguarding Adults and Children policy and procedure.

We ensure that tenants, residents, service users and their advocates have clear information available to them on how to report suspected abuse and neglect.

Any training provided will highlight the particular importance of meeting our equality and diversity commitment set out below in relation to safeguarding as we recognise that the presence of the relevant characteristics can contribute to or exacerbate safeguarding concerns.

Working with partners

PCH recognises that inter-agency cooperation is essential if adults and children at risk are to be protected. PCH will continue to develop strong links and work collaboratively with the local Safeguarding Adults Partnership and Safeguarding Children Partnership and, where appropriate, with other statutory and voluntary organisations.

Our partnerships will include working with the person at risk to support their decision making, and with relatives, friends, informal carers and other representatives (e.g. advocates) to achieve positive outcomes.

We will participate in Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements, Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences, Child Protection Conferences and Serious Case Reviews wherever appropriate or necessary.

We will actively contribute to the work of multi-agency initiatives and forums that promote safeguarding procedures and share good practice wherever possible.

Confidentiality and data storage

Appropriate records of safeguarding incidents will be kept and regularly audited.

Our staff will respect confidentiality at all times and will not share any information given in confidence unless justified by the assessed risk to the vulnerable person or required by law.

Where appropriate, confidentiality will be discussed with the customer where there are safeguarding concerns or alerts and an explanation will be given that this information may need to be shared with other people in order for the situation to be resolved. However, PCH recognises that there may be occasions when it is appropriate to report a safeguarding concern without prior discussion with the customer.

PCH will store any information in relation to safeguarding, allow access to it and sharing of it only in accordance with our Data Protection and Access to Personal Information policies.

5. Equality and Diversity

PCH will apply this policy consistently and fairly, and will not discriminate against anyone based on any relevant characteristics, including those set out in the Equalities Act 2010.

PCH will make this policy available in other languages and formats on request.

PCH will carry out an equality impact assessment on this policy, in line with our corporate procedure.

6. Monitoring and review

We will monitor this policy to ensure it meets good practice and current legislation and will review it in accordance with our review timetable for all policies. This policy will be reviewed based on up to date legislation and guidance and current good practice local and national child protection agencies.