

Shropshire Rural Housing Association



**SHROPSHIRE
RURAL HOUSING**
ASSOCIATION

Safeguarding Policy

Date Considered by Committee	16.07.26
Date Approved by Board	30.07.26
Scheduled date for Review	2029
Lead Officer	CE

1. Policy Statement

Shropshire Rural Housing Association (SRHA) is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk. We seek to ensure that our tenants, applicants and their families are able to live safely within their homes and communities. Safeguarding is a fundamental part of our approach to tenant safety, wellbeing and service delivery, and we will take all reasonable steps to prevent, identify and respond to abuse, neglect and exploitation.

This policy supports compliance with the Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards, particularly the Safety and Quality Standard, the Neighbourhood and Community Standard and the Tenancy Standard. It reflects our commitment to creating safe communities and ensuring that safeguarding considerations are embedded within our services.

Our approach to safeguarding is underpinned by the 6 key principles of safeguarding as defined in the Care Act 2014. (See Section 5)

2. Legal and Regulatory Framework

This policy is informed by relevant legislation, statutory guidance and regulatory requirements, including the Children Act 1989 and 2004, the Mental Capacity Act 2005, the Care Act 2014, the Modern Slavery Act 2015, the Equality Act 2010, the Human Rights Act 1998, the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR, together with the Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards and Awaab's Law. SRHA will keep its safeguarding arrangements under review to ensure continued compliance with changes in legislation, regulation and best practice.

3. Purpose and Scope

As a social landlord, SRHA recognises its responsibility to help protect individuals from harm. The purpose of this policy is to set out how the organisation responds to safeguarding concerns involving children, young people and adults at risk who may be experiencing, or may be at risk of experiencing, abuse, neglect or exploitation.

The policy aims to ensure that safeguarding concerns are recognised and reported appropriately, that legal and regulatory responsibilities are fulfilled, and that effective partnership working takes place with local authorities and other agencies that have safeguarding responsibilities. SRHA considers the abuse of any individual to be unacceptable and acknowledges the significant impact that abuse can have on victims, their families and the wider community.

This policy applies to all individuals living in SRHA homes, as well as applicants and members of their household. It also applies to all employees, Board Members, contractors and subcontractors acting on behalf of the Association. Safeguarding concerns may arise from events that occur both within and outside an individual's home environment. This policy should be read alongside SRHA's, Domestic Abuse Policy and Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.

4. Definitions

Safeguarding means protecting an individual's right to live safely and free from abuse and neglect. It includes working with other organisations to prevent harm, reduce risks and support individuals who have experienced abuse or neglect.

A **child** is any person under the age of eighteen.

A **young person** is a care leaver or a person aged eighteen or over who continues to receive children's services.

An **adult at risk** is a person aged eighteen or over who has care and support needs and who may be unable to protect themselves from abuse or neglect because of those needs.

Abuse is the violation of an individual's human or civil rights by another person or persons. Neglect refers to the failure to meet a person's basic physical, emotional or care needs. Harm may be physical, psychological or emotional in nature.

Key definitions of the types of adult and child abuse are at appendix 1&2.

5. Six Key Principles of Safeguarding (Care Act 2014)

Principle	What this means for our tenants, residents and applicants?	What we promise to do
Empowerment – People being supported and encouraged to make their own decisions and informed consent.	They are asked what they want as the outcomes from the safeguarding process and these directly inform what happens.	Engage directly with them and ask for input on our approach, to help them make informed decisions.
Prevention – It is better to take action before harm occurs.	They receive clear and simple information about what abuse is, how to recognise the signs and what they can do to seek help.	Be proactive to reduce the risk of serious harm and allows us to have a stronger voice with regards to safeguarding.
Proportionality – The least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented.	They can remain sure that the professionals will work in their interest and will only get involved as much as needed.	Appropriate training to enable our staff to respond in the proper way to a concern and help them determine when a concern becomes a safeguarding concern.
Protection – Support and representation for those in greatest need.	They get help and support to report abuse and neglect. They get help so that they can take part in the safeguarding process to the extent to which they want.	Liaise with local user led groups and getting their views on how to best support them with safeguarding concerns and identifying those in need
Partnership – Local solutions through services working with their communities. Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse.	Staff treat any personal and sensitive information in confidence, only sharing what is helpful and necessary.	Seek partnerships with other local providers and creating strong links with local authorities and safeguarding boards.
Accountability – Accountability and transparency in delivering safeguarding.	They understand the role of everyone involved in their life and so do staff	Ensure that our systems are reliable and transparent, and that requests for information are dealt with in accordance with statutory requirement.

6. Reporting Safeguarding Concerns

SRHA treats all allegations, disclosures and suspicions of abuse, neglect or exploitation seriously. Because employees and contractors often have regular contact with residents, they are well placed to identify signs of vulnerability or potential harm.

All safeguarding concerns must therefore be reported without delay in accordance with agreed procedures. Contact details for Safeguarding concerns in Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin are at appendix 2.

Where appropriate, concerns will be referred to the relevant local authority safeguarding team through established referral processes. If there is reason to believe that a criminal offence has been committed, or that an individual faces an immediate risk of harm, the police will be contacted immediately. Where urgent concerns arise regarding the health, safety or welfare of a resident or family member, emergency services and relevant safeguarding agencies will be notified as soon as possible.

SRHA also recognises the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism. Any concerns of this nature will be managed through safeguarding procedures and, where appropriate, referred to relevant statutory partners.

7. Responding to Safeguarding Concerns

SRHA seeks to minimise the risk of abuse occurring and will take prompt action whenever concerns are identified. Individuals who raise concerns will be treated respectfully and their concerns will be taken seriously. We aim to create an environment in which residents feel safe to disclose abuse and seek support.

When responding to safeguarding concerns, SRHA will work collaboratively with local authorities and other statutory agencies. The organisation will respond promptly to requests for information and support safeguarding enquiries where required. Actions taken and decisions made will be recorded accurately and retained securely in accordance with data protection requirements. Information relating to safeguarding concerns will be shared only where it is lawful, necessary and proportionate to do so.

Concerns involving employees will be managed through safeguarding procedures and, where relevant, disciplinary procedures. Where allegations are substantiated and legal thresholds are met, referrals will be made to the Disclosure and Barring Service. Concerns involving contractors or subcontractors will be addressed through safeguarding processes and contractual arrangements.

8. Making Safeguarding Personal

SRHA is committed to a person-centred approach to safeguarding. We will seek to promote the wellbeing of adults at risk and take account of their views, wishes, feelings and beliefs when determining what action should be taken. We recognise that individuals may have complex personal circumstances and may require support to express their wishes or engage with safeguarding processes.

The Association recognises that its residents may be victims, perpetrators, or both. We will therefore work with relevant agencies to support victims and address the risks presented by perpetrators. Where appropriate, support and intervention will be provided to help reduce harm and improve outcomes.

In cases involving children, SRHA will work with families and partner agencies to identify solutions that promote the welfare and best interests of the child while taking account of the needs of the wider family.

9. Partnership Working

Safeguarding is a shared responsibility and effective outcomes depend on strong partnership working. SRHA recognises the important role played by local authorities, the police, health services, safeguarding partnerships and voluntary sector organisations in protecting vulnerable individuals.

The Association will cooperate fully with relevant agencies, share information appropriately and support safeguarding investigations and interventions where required. We recognise the statutory responsibilities of local authorities in relation to safeguarding children, young people and adults at risk and will work constructively with them to achieve positive outcomes.

Where concerns arise regarding radicalisation, SRHA will work with appropriate partners and, where necessary, make referrals to the Channel programme to ensure that individuals receive suitable support and intervention.

10. Consent, Capacity and Information Sharing

SRHA will assume that adults have the mental capacity to make decisions about their own safety and wellbeing unless there is evidence to suggest otherwise. Where concerns exist about a person's capacity to make informed decisions, the matter will be referred to the appropriate health or social care professionals for assessment.

Information relating to safeguarding concerns will be handled sensitively and shared on a lawful, proportionate and need-to-know basis. Wherever possible, consent will be obtained before information is shared. However, there may be circumstances where information must be shared without consent in order to protect an individual or others from harm, where a criminal offence is suspected, where a person lacks capacity, where coercion is suspected or where there is a legal obligation to disclose information. In matters relating to child safeguarding, referrals may be made without obtaining parental or individual consent where this is necessary to protect the child.

11. Roles and Responsibilities

The Chief Executive is the Safeguarding Lead and has overall responsibility for safeguarding within SRHA. This includes:

- Ensuring that appropriate governance, assurance and accountability arrangements are in place.
- Reviewing policies and procedures to ensure they remain effective,
- Ensuring staff receive appropriate training and support.
- Providing the Board with suitable assurance regarding safeguarding performance.
- Creating a culture in which safeguarding is understood, valued and openly discussed, and for supporting employees who raise concerns.
- promoting effective safeguarding practice throughout SRHA,
- ensuring that referrals are made to relevant agencies where appropriate,
- overseeing safeguarding training and monitoring safeguarding activity across the organisation.

All employees are responsible for remaining alert to safeguarding concerns, acting in accordance with this policy and reporting concerns promptly. Unauthorised investigations must not be undertaken by employees, and all concerns should be managed through approved safeguarding processes.

12. Training, Assurance and Continuous Improvement

SRHA is committed to ensuring that employees have the skills, knowledge and confidence necessary to fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities. Safeguarding training will be mandatory and proportionate to role requirements, with refresher training provided at regular intervals.

The effectiveness of the Association's safeguarding arrangements will be monitored through management oversight, case reviews, complaints analysis, incident learning and Board assurance processes. Learning from safeguarding cases, regulatory developments and external feedback will be used to strengthen practice and support continuous improvement.

13. Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years, or sooner where changes in legislation, regulation, guidance or organisational requirements make this necessary. The review process will ensure that the policy remains effective, compliant and aligned with best practice.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Types of adult abuse

Appendix 2 – Types of child abuse

Appendix 3 – Safeguarding Contact Details Shropshire Council and Telford and Wrekin Council

APPENDIX 1 – Types of adult abuse

The Care Act 2014 Statutory Guidance identifies the following main categories of safeguarding related abuse.

Physical Abuse – including assault, hitting, slapping, pushing, misuse of medication, restraint or inappropriate physical sanctions.

Domestic Violence – including psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional abuse, so called ‘honour’ based violence and SET procedures have expanded this to include controlling behaviour, coercive control, Female Genital Mutilation, forced marriage.

Sexual Abuse – including rape, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, inappropriate looking or touching, sexual teasing or innuendo, sexual photography, subjection to pornography or witnessing sexual acts, indecent exposure and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the adult has not consented or was pressured into consenting.

Emotional and Psychological abuse – including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, cyber bullying, isolation or unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal of services or supportive networks.

Financial or Material Abuse – including theft, fraud, internet scamming, coercion in relation to an adult’s financial affairs or arrangements, including in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.

Modern Slavery and Exploitation – encompasses slavery; human trafficking; forced labour; and domestic servitude. Traffickers and slave masters use whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment.

Discriminatory Abuse – including forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment; because of race, gender and gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion.

Organisational Abuse – including neglect and poor care practice within an institution or specific care setting such as a hospital or care home, for example, or in relation to care provided in one’s own home. This may range from one off incidents to on-going ill-treatment. It can be through neglect or poor professional practice as a result of the structure, policies, processes and practices within an organisation.

Neglect and Acts of Omission – including ignoring medical, emotional or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, care and support or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.

Self-neglect – this covers a wide range of behaviour neglecting to care for one’s personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding.

It is important to note that these categories should not limit our view of what constitutes abuse or neglect, as they can take many forms and the circumstances of the individual case should always be considered. Exploitation, in particular, is a common theme across the types of abuse and neglect listed above.

APPENDIX 2 – Types of child abuse

HM Government's Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023) defines Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children 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.
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

There are four broad categories of abuse which are used by professionals working in child protection. These are: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional/psychological abuse and neglect. These categories overlap and a child may suffer more than one type of abuse.

Physical abuse: Physical abuse may take many forms, such as, hitting (including, with an object) or punching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating a child or young person. It may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health to, a child or young person.

Sexual abuse: Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Child Sexual Exploitation: is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology. This can include child sexual exploitation related to gangs and/ or child trafficking.

Emotional/psychological abuse: The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child, such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Neglect: The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to: provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment); protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers); or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

The Statutory Guidance Update December 2023

The statutory expectations for how organisations and professionals should work together to keep children safe and promote their welfare emphasises a broader and more detailed understanding of harm and risk, including factors that may contribute to abuse or neglect, which includes multiple disadvantage and poverty:

- Domestic abuse
- Parental mental illness
- Parental problem drug misuse (in particular heroin and crack)
- Parental problem drinking
- Parents with a learning disability
- Emerging threats including online harm, grooming, exploitation and radicalisation

Appendix 3 – Safeguarding Contacts

Contacts for Reporting Child or Young Person Safeguarding Concerns

Shropshire Council

If you think a child or young person is being harmed or at risk of being harmed you must contact our **First Point of Contact (FPOC)** service and tell them your concerns. Don't delay, please contact us straight away - we're here to help you.

- Please report your urgent concerns to FPOC on **0345 678 9021**
- If you need to report urgent concerns out of office hours please contact the [Emergency Social Work Team](#) on 0345 678 9040 selecting option 1
- If you have a non-urgent safeguarding concern please visit our [Children's Referral Portal](#)
- For help using the Children's Referral Portal, please see [our training video](#) which also provides answers to frequently asked questions.
- Alternatively, you can report your concerns online to the NSPCC via [their website](#)

Telford and Wrekin Council

We are all responsible for reporting concerns about a child's welfare. Don't wait until you're certain, if you are worried about a child, call **Family Connect** now:

- **01952 385385 option 1**
- **01952 676500 (out of hours)**
- [Report your concern online](#) (Professional Referral Form)
- [Report your concern online](#) (Customer Referral Form)
- [Report your child exploitation concern online](#) (Customer Referral Form)

For more information about Safeguarding Children please visit the [Telford & Wrekin Safeguarding Partnership website](#).

Contacts for Reporting Adult Safeguarding Concerns

Shropshire Council

First Point of Contact (FPOC) 0345 678 9044 option 1 *Adult Social Care and Safeguarding Concerns - state you are raising a safeguarding adults concern*

Emergency Social Work Team (out of hours): 03456 789040

Telford and Wrekin Council

Telford and Wrekin Adult Social Care Portal ([Telford & Wrekin Council | Telford & Wrekin Adult Social Care Portal](#)) for Family Connect **01952 385385 option 2** *state you are raising a safeguarding adults concern*

Out of hours Emergency Duty Team 01952 676500