



# Safeguarding Children policy

## **1. Purpose and scope**

To protect children who are at risk of or experiencing abuse and/or neglect. In addition, this policy will ensure that legislation and relevant safeguarding guidance is complied with.

This policy applies to all Selwood Housing residents and properties, including communal areas, domestic properties, sheltered schemes, care homes, supported housing, shops, and Selwood Housing's offices.

In exceptional circumstances where work is not covered by regulations, the principles and good practices within the regulations should be applied where possible.

## **2. Policy details**

### **Introduction**

This policy sets out Selwood Housing's approach towards safeguarding children at risk from harm and abuse. It is supported by safeguarding procedures, training, and related policies such as Selwood Housing's safeguarding vulnerable adults' policy and procedure.

The safeguarding children policy will:

Define Selwood Housing's organisational and management responsibilities, including the roles and responsibilities of contractors working on behalf of Selwood Housing.

Detail the potential signs of abuse and neglect to children and guidance in identifying signs of abuse.

Detail the processes staff will follow, including how Selwood Housing will ensure a multi-agency approach to reporting and dealing with safeguarding concerns and incidents.

Failure to comply with this policy may result in a risk to the health and safety of customers as well as negative reputational and financial impact to the organisation.

This policy applies to all staff and agents working on behalf of Selwood Housing and any person who accesses our services. This will include non-residents of Selwood Housing, for example, attendees at estate open days or visitors to Selwood Housing properties.



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### Background

Selwood Housing interacts with children in their day-to-day activities and is legally required, as well as guided by their regulator and organisational objectives, to have clear policies and procedures for safeguarding and collaborating with local agencies. These requirements are detailed in **Appendix A: Legal and Regulatory Provisions.**

Local authorities hold overarching responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and young people in their area. Under the Children Acts of 1989 and 2004, they have several statutory functions, including specific duties related to children in need and those suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, as outlined in sections 17 and 47 of the Children Act 1989. The Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children's Services are the key points of professional and political accountability, ensuring the effective delivery of these functions.

Local authorities are also mandated to run Local Safeguarding Children's Boards. As the lead agencies, they coordinate safeguarding efforts and conduct case management reviews. They possess expertise in handling abuse cases, providing support and counselling to victims, and assisting the police with criminal investigations.

### **3. Legal and regulatory framework**

#### **The Children Act 2004**

This act created Local Safeguarding Children Boards and places duties on a range of statutory organisations. Although Registered Providers of Housing such as Selwood Housing are not subject to this act, they are expected to mirror organisations that are by:

- Having a designated lead person for child safeguarding matters
- Sharing information with other professionals
- Having safe recruitment practices and whistleblowing procedures
- Training their staff on child safeguarding
- Having a clear child safeguarding policy; and
- Having a procedure for responding to child protection concerns, including making referrals to local authorities or the police.



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### Working together to safeguard children 2018

The statutory guidance issued under the Children's Act, on inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children applies to statutory bodies such as the police, schools, and local authorities. However, the guidance and expectations detailed in this guidance will be reflected by Selwood Housing throughout this policy and the procedure.

#### 4. Definitions

Selwood Housing will adopt the following definitions:

##### **Child**

A child is anyone who has not yet reached their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and includes unborn children. Due to immaturity and dependency on others, all children are at risk of abuse.

##### **Parent**

The term parent includes carers or guardians. It means, in usual circumstances, someone who is legally entitled to take decisions on behalf of the child.

##### **Abuse and neglect**

Abuse and neglect take many forms and can be caused by single or repeated acts or a failure to act by any other person or persons, or in the case of self-neglect, the victim themselves. The circumstances of each individual case will be considered as to not limit what constitutes abuse or neglect. However, Selwood Housing will reference the *Working Together* definition for abuse:

*A form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others (e.g. via the internet). They may be abused an adult or adults, or another child or children.*

Guidance on the types of abuse and neglect is detailed in the Safeguarding procedure. Selwood Housing will treat as a child safeguarding concern where a child is suspected to be involved in any of the following categories:



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- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional or psychological abuse
- Neglect and acts of omission
- Involved in modern slavery

Other categories or specific acts of abuse and neglect may be categorised differently by other organisations, and we will be aware that abuse may also include but is not limited to acts such as online abuse, child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation, bullying and cyber bullying, domestic abuse, child trafficking, grooming and sexual behaviour. Staff will receive training which covers the indicators of abuse and neglect, and these categories will be explored.

### **Safeguarding children**

Safeguarding in regard to Selwood Housing means protecting our customers' right to live safely, free from abuse and neglect through Selwood Housing working with our partners and other organisations to prevent and stop both the risks and the experience of abuse or neglect, whilst at the same time making sure their wellbeing is promoted and their preferences taken into account.

### **5. Promoting Welfare**

Safeguarding forms of the requirement of statutory authorities to promote the overall welfare of a child by:

- Protecting children from maltreatment
- Preventing impairment of children's health or development
- Ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best life chances.

This means local authorities may need to take significant decisions in the best interests of a child, for example, removal from their current housing situation.

### **6. Differences and similarities between safeguarding adults and safeguarding children**

Selwood Housing acknowledge the universal similarities in safeguarding practice irrespective of whether the vulnerable group are adults or



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children. However, we will remain conscious of the essential differences that exist between safeguarding children and safeguarding adults. The key difference is that adults have their own rights and responsibilities and can make their own decisions and live independent lives. This means that they have a legal right of consent and participation in progressing safeguarding concerns.

For children, consideration must be given to the wishes and feelings of a child as far as reasonable before making decisions on what services to provide or action to take. However, authorities have a duty to act in the best interests of the child which may mean contradicting their wishes.

### **7. Policy statement**

Selwood Housing will aim to protect and maintain a child's safety and wellbeing through their approach to safeguarding children. Selwood Housing will achieve this by working with their partners by applying the following policy standards:

#### **Taking a child centred approach to prevention and empowerment**

- We will place a child's needs at the forefront, which means listening, and understanding what we are told, and respecting their needs and views in how we respond to ensure that every child receives the support they need before a problem escalates.
- We will aim to ensure our customers are aware of how to report safeguarding concerns, and the support we can provide
- Allocations will be undertaken in line with the **allocations policy**.
- Where a resident is proven to have committed child abuse, Selwood Housing will consider legal action where a breach of the terms and conditions of the tenancy has occurred or other appropriate action relevant to the circumstance.

#### **Enabling our staff and taking proportionate actions**

- We will ensure safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone who works for us and works on our behalf and that staff who meet children and families are alert to their needs and of any signs of abuse, including any risks abusers or potential abusers may pose to children.
- We will undertake relevant disclosure and barring checks on employees that have access to, or work with children. Anyone found to have been convicted of a sex offence or abuse of a child will not be permitted to



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work or volunteer in a position that provides access to children under the age of 18.

- Staff must comply with all policies that govern the appropriate use of IT. Access to chat rooms or news groups without expressed permission to do so is not permitted. Email must not be used to distribute pornographic material, and the internet must not be used to access such material. Breaches of the policies in this respect will be regarded as gross misconduct and managed through the disciplinary procedures for staff. In the case of temporary staff or volunteers this may be regarded as breach of contract. In all cases where it is proven the employee has undertaken such actions full details of the activity will be reported to the appropriate authorities, which may include the police.

### **Working with partners**

- We will co-operate and develop strong relationships with safeguarding partners who investigate allegations of harm, abuse, and neglect to a child, and take actions to safeguard that child. This includes:
  - Appropriately referring our safeguarding and wellbeing concerns to the relevant local authority, and/or if necessary, the police
  - Supporting and contributing to enquiries and assessment as directed by our statutory partners after a referral has been made
  - Taking swift action to ensure the safety of the child and taking appropriate action against the perpetrators of abuse
  - Participating in Local Safeguarding Children Boards
  - Supporting and learning from serious case or child death reviews
  - Keep accurate, confidential, and secure records of all safeguarding concerns and associated actions; and
  - Sharing information with relevant safeguarding partners.

### **Accountability and transparency**

- We will ensure our policy and processes that we put in place provide accountability and transparency in delivering safeguarding including:
  - Identifying a 'Safeguarding Lead' within Selwood Housing to ensure that this policy and our procedures are effective, kept up to date, delivered in a timely manner and disseminated to all staff
  - Identifying designated safeguarding officers within each of our departments to co-ordinate our responses to safeguarding concerns.



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- Convening regular Safeguarding Panels which will co-ordinate investigations, share best practices and improvement.
- Ensuring that all staff receive suitable safeguarding training and understand their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding
- Learning from incidents and case reviews, revising, and improving work practices, induction, training, policy, and procedure as appropriate and reporting to board to maintain transparency and governance.

### **8. Key responsibilities of all staff**

Selwood Housing expects all staff to:

- Be alert to welfare concerns and indicators of abuse and neglect.
- Report all suspected abuse or neglect cases to the appropriate individual within the organisation. Designated Safeguarding Officers (DSOs) will monitor incidents, report concerns, and consult with relevant local safeguarding teams, as necessary.
- Maintain vigilance in their actions to avoid misinterpretation and adhere to appropriate behaviour standards when working with residents (e.g., maintaining appropriate boundaries of personal contact).
- Attend safeguarding training and refresher courses as required.
- Be aware of and manage situations that may present risks (e.g., considering the location when allocating a property to a registered offender).

Whilst safeguarding responsibilities sit with all staff, the responsibility structure at Selwood Housing is as follows:

#### **Strategic Lead**

The organisation is not required by law to have a safeguarding lead at executive team level, but Selwood Housing want to ensure safeguarding is given appropriate levels of consideration at all levels.

The strategic lead is the group operations director and ensures safeguarding is considered independently of operations.

The strategic lead is responsible for:



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- Ensuring that safeguarding is appropriately considered by the Board during relevant meetings, and that members are aware of the governance and reputational risks of failing to safeguard children and vulnerable adults.
- Presenting an annual report to the Board on Selwood Housing's management of safeguarding during the year, including the number of referrals made to relevant agencies.

### **Operational Lead**

The neighbourhoods team manager is the operational safeguarding lead.

The role of the operational lead is to:

- Ensure that any changes to legislation or good practice lead to corresponding policy and procedure updates.
- Ensure that Selwood Housing provides appropriate resource each year to adequately train and supervise staff managing and/or reporting safeguarding concerns.
- Set the terms of reference and chair Selwood Housing's safety panel meetings, which will be used as the platform for discussing issues, monitoring incidents and performance in relation to safeguarding.
- Notify the strategic lead in the event of a serious safeguarding incident and/or pending serious case review for report to the Board on an annual basis. Assisting the operational lead in learning lessons following serious case reviews
- Report to the group board of directors on a regular basis.
- Review the safeguarding Children policy and procedure on an annual basis and ensure other policies have regard to safeguarding as appropriate.
- Ensure processes are in place to see that training is undertaken for new staff within their probation period and refreshed every three years or earlier if there are significant changes to legislation or good practice which result in changes to Selwood Housing's policies and procedures.
- Report to the board in relation to any issues of note, as part of health and safety papers.





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- Ensure systems are in place to accurately and appropriately record and monitor safeguarding cases.
- Measure Selwood Housing's performance in relation to safeguarding vulnerable adults.
- Promote awareness and understanding of safeguarding within the organisation.
- Work with external organisations as appropriate in relation to safeguarding of vulnerable adults.

### **Designated Safeguarding Officers (DSOs)**

Each customer-facing department will have Designated Safeguarding Officers (DSOs) to support the operational lead.

Responsibilities of DSOs:

- Ensure staff record and report safeguarding cases for Children in accordance with procedures.
- Provide appropriate supervision for staff.
- Regularly discuss safeguarding in team meetings and one-to-one sessions.
- Set staff objectives related to safeguarding Children.
- Attend quarterly safety panel meetings to discuss safeguarding issues.
- Represent Selwood Housing at external multi-agency meetings.
- Promote safeguarding within the organisation.

### **9. Recording and reporting**

Full details on recording and reporting allegations of abuse are in Selwood Safeguarding Children procedure.

When managing any allegations of abuse, it is essential that information is recorded accurately and in a timely manner. In addition, staff may also be called upon to complete relevant forms for the local authority, the local safeguarding team, and/or the police.



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### **10. Recruitment of staff**

During the recruitment and selection of staff, recruitment managers and human resources must apply safe recruitment practices and determine the appropriate level of check new staff and volunteers require, for example, through Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks.

### **11. Agency managed properties**

Agencies providing support services will be expected to have their own equivalent safeguarding policies in place. Their responsibilities in this regard will be managed through Selwood Housing's contractual relationship with them. Agencies are required to report safeguarding concerns to the police, their service regulator if a registered activity (e.g. Care Quality Commission) and to Selwood Housing.

### **12. Contractors and agents**

Contractors working on behalf of Selwood Housing and visiting homes may encounter evidence of abuse and neglect within the property. Residents may also choose to disclose incidents directly to contractors, so awareness in sensitively preserving or taking evidence and handling reports will be necessary. Contractor organisations will be expected to ensure they comply with Selwood Housing's safeguarding practices by signing up to the sub-contractor or sole trader agreements. This will also require them to:

- Ensure staff are DBS checked
- Ensure staff are suitable for the capacity employed
- Ensure staff receive suitable training on how to deal with residents, including how to report any concerns they have
- Cooperating with Selwood Housing and their statutory partners regarding any concerns and allegations received
- Having systems in place that enable disciplinary action to be taken where appropriate

Contractors should ensure that their employees are able to raise concerns where they see that a child has suffered, is suffering or potentially could suffer harm. Selwood Housing will support all contractors that report a concern in good faith, where there is the belief that a child has been abused, is at risk of abuse or believe that a colleague may pose a risk to children.



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Contractors are not to knowingly enter a property alone where the sole occupant(s) is or appears to be, under 18 years of age. An appointment will be rearranged at a time where an appropriate adult is present.

Selwood Housing will monitor the performance of their contractors, compliance with the policies and procedures shared with them through regular contract meetings.

### **13. Whistleblowing**

If a member of staff suspects that a child is being abused by another member of Selwood Housing staff, they should immediately speak to their Designated Safeguarding Lead, the head of service or the human resources department. Where there is a failure to respond appropriately to allegations of abuse, or where staff have concerns that a colleague or superior is responsible for the abuse, staff must follow Selwood's whistleblowing policy.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act (1998) protects workers from detrimental treatment or victimisation from their employer if they blow the whistle on wrongdoing, such as the abuse of customers. Staff who whistle blow can remain anonymous, however, this cannot necessarily be guaranteed if it results in a criminal investigation.

### **14. Confidentiality**

We will always respect confidentiality and will not share any information given in confidence unless justified by the assessed risk to the vulnerable adult at risk or required by law.

We will discuss our approach to confidentiality with the customer where there are safeguarding concerns. We will be honest and explain that information might need to be shared with other organisations in order to respond or resolve a safeguarding issue.

### **15. Complaints**

Residents that do not feel satisfied with our service in relation to Safeguarding may wish to make a formal complaint. Selwood Housing has a complaints policy providing information about how to complain about our services. Alternatively, a resident may also wish to contact the relevant Local Authority Safeguarding Adults Board if they feel that we have not provided an adequate service.



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### **16. Training**

Selwood Housing will ensure that staff across the organisation receive training to give them an understanding of children safeguarding and enable them to fulfil the requirements of our policy and relevant procedures.

Training will be appropriate to individual roles and the requirements of these roles in relation to adult safeguarding. Training will be refreshed every three years or earlier if there is a notable change to legislation or good practice which result in changes to Selwood's policy and procedures.

We will also provide training to board members, volunteers, and contractors, as appropriate.



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### **Appendix A – other legislation and regulations**

#### **Sex Offences Act 2003**

This act strengthened measures to protect the public from sexual offending.

Part 1 of the act:

- Sets out that any sexual activity involving children under the age of 16 is unlawful, even with consent – this includes exploitation; and
- Provides specific protection from abusive sexual activity for those adults with an 'arrested or incomplete development of mind, psychiatric disorder and any other disability of the mind.'

#### **Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006**

This act sets out the responsibility we have for vetting and barring people working with children and vulnerable adults.

#### **Children and Young Persons Act 2008**

This act sets out the statutory framework for children in care in England and Wales and to ensure that such young people receive high quality care and services that are focused on and tailored to their needs.

#### **Working Together to Safeguard Children (updated March 2018)**

This is a guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. It states that 'children are best protected when professionals are clear about what is required of them individually and how they need to work together.'

This encourages registered providers:

- Put the child's needs at the heart of their safeguarding approach;
- Be alert to the risks of harm that individual abusers, or potential abusers, may pose to children;
- Make a referral to local authority children's social care or the police if necessary;
- Share appropriate information in a timely way and discuss any concerns about an individual child with colleagues and local authority children's social care; and



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- Contribute to whatever actions are needed to safeguard and promote a child's welfare.

### **Children Act 1989**

Under the Children Act 1989, local authorities are required to provide services for children in need for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting their welfare.

Section 47 of this act requires local authorities to undertake assessments of the needs of the individual children to determine what services to provide and action to take. The police, health professionals, teachers, and other relevant professionals (such as registered providers) should help the local authority in undertaking its enquiries.

### **General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA)**

The regulation controls how personal and sensitive information is used by organisations, such as registered providers.

Organisations must ensure data is:

- Used fairly and lawfully;
- Used for limited, specifically stated purposes;
- Used in a way that is adequate, relevant, and not excessive;
- Accurate;
- Kept for no longer than is absolutely necessary;
- Handled according to people's data protection rights;
- Kept safe and secure; and
- Not transferred outside the UK without adequate protection.

### **Protection of Freedoms Act 2012**

Part 5 of this act created the current disclosure, vetting and barring scheme, which applies to people working with or has to children and vulnerable adults.

The Disclosure and Barring Service is now responsible for assisting employers, such as Registered Providers, in England and Wales make safer recruitment decisions and prevent unsuitable people from working with vulnerable groups.



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### **Signpost**

- The Care Act 2014.
- Data Protection Act 2018
- UK-GDPR
- Modern Slavery Act 2015.
- Equalities Act 2010.
- Mental Capacity Act 2005 & Deprivation of Liberties Safeguards 2007
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006.
- Prevent Duty (Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015).
- The Public Interest Disclosure Act (1998).
- The Crime and Disorder Act 1998.
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012.
- Health & Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated activities) Regulations 2014.
- The Children Act 1989 & 2004 including section 11 duties.
- Children and Families Act 2014.



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### Decision making record

<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting / Minute Reference</b>	<b>Version / Amendment</b>
24.04.2013	Adrian Walshe	1
26.01.2016	Verena Buchanan	2
10.07.2017	Ria Bristow	3
18.09.2017	Fee Nunn	4
04.06.2021	Fee Nunn	5
17.08.2023	Fee Nunn	5
23.09.2024	Updated role and responsibilities, moved to Housing Directorate from Health & Safety.  Neighbourhood team manager as the operational lead for safeguarding.  Remove Safeguarding Children procedure (now a standalone document).  Approved at Board meeting 2/10/24	6





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