



How to...

*promote good adult
safeguarding practice*



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1 Adult safeguarding is the process of protecting adults with care and support needs from neglect or abuse. The Care Act 2014 introduced this as a statutory duty for local authorities. Although it does not provide an explicit definition, it requires local authorities to make enquiries where an adult in their area:

- has care and support needs (not dependent on whether the local authority is meeting them)
- is experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect
- is unable to protect him/herself from that, due to care and support needs.

The Care Act and statutory guidance set out clear expectations of partner organisations that are in contact with adults with care and support needs who are or may be at risk of abuse or neglect – including housing organisations and staff.

Why is safeguarding an issue for housing professionals?

Adults who may be at risk live in all forms of social housing, not just specialist accommodation. Increasingly tenants in general as well as specialist housing are older, or disabled, or experience long term limiting illness, or have current or previous dependencies. Whilst not of itself making a person vulnerable, this may increase the potential risk of abuse or neglect. The examples below illustrate some of the reasons why safeguarding is important for housing:

- research on adult serious case reviews has shown 21 social housing tenants died due to abuse or neglect (see useful resources)
- according to Women's Aid, two women each week are murdered by their partner or former partner, many in their homes
- research for the Mental Health network found 43 per cent of homeless people suffered from mental health conditions
- older people with a disability will double from 2.3 million in 2002 to 4.6 million by 2041, and those with dementia will increase to 1 million by 2025
- adult safeguarding links with other core agendas: tackling anti-social behaviour, hate crime and crime reduction, domestic abuse and health and wellbeing.

Housing professionals that are in contact with adults with care and support needs, who are experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect, have a responsibility to be aware of how to identify them, and how to raise any concerns they may have in the appropriate way with relevant authorities.

Key facts

- Adult safeguarding will be a statutory function from April 2015, as established by the Care Act 2014.
- Local authorities will be required to set up a Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) in their area which must include the authority, the NHS and the police.
- Other duties include undertaking enquiries, safeguarding adult reviews, appropriate information sharing and independent advocacy.
- Expectations of partner organisations include: Leadership by a senior staff member; clear policies and procedures, including arrangements to work with other agencies; staff trained and able to identify signs of abuse and respond to concerns appropriately.

Adult safeguarding is built on 6 key principles (balancing safety from/ prevention of harm with an adult's capacity to choose and control their behaviour):

- empowerment - supporting adults to take decisions and informed consent

- prevention – taking action before harm occurs
- proportionality – taking the least intrusive appropriate response
- protection – support and representation
- partnership – services working with communities
- accountability – and transparency (see [Care and support statutory guidance](#), p232).

For more information on the wider implications of the Care Act for housing see: [CIH housing health and support pages](#).

Expectations of organisations in contact with adults at risk

Housing organisations should have clear, comprehensive policies and procedures in place. Both staff and contractors need to be aware of their role and ensure that processes are built into their working practices.

Safeguarding issues may be identified when addressing housing management matters such as rent arrears or complaints of anti-social behaviour (by or against the adult with care and support needs) and repairs. Clear cross referencing between key housing management policies and procedures will help to embed safeguarding as part of standard housing practice. This applies also to policies to address domestic violence and harassment.

Getting safeguarding right

Effective safeguarding is not an add-on but needs to be embedded in the ways of working for all staff members, especially those in contact with tenants. However, it is a complex and sensitive issue to address, so it is important that there are clear mechanisms for staff to raise their concerns, robust recording and follow-up processes, and support from managers. The following checklist will help you identify how to get safeguarding right.

1. Know your tenants and understand risk factors for abuse. The starting point for identifying and helping adults experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect is collecting appropriate information to generate a profile of your residents and their needs. Many organisations have developed this to support tenants affected by welfare reform. This tenant insight can be a starting point for mapping out households where there are potential concerns.

Further information on tenant profiling can be found in CIH's [New Approaches to Tenant Insight](#) and [Tenant Insight - a toolkit for landlords](#)

However, people can develop safeguarding issues at any point in their life, for example, after an accident or bereavement. So it is important that staff are alert to this, and aware of the value of updating tenant data as a normal course of events in their ongoing interactions with tenants, for example in:

- tenancy sign ups
- tenancy reviews
- arrears interviews
- ASB interviews in response to complaints
- estate inspections.

2. Equip and empower front line staff to identify adult abuse and take a proactive approach to adult safeguarding. Housing officers, surveyors and repairs contractors are the staff most likely to visit people's homes and see action or evidence that gives cause for concern. Training in what abuse is, how to recognise it, and clear internal referral routes will help staff to confidently raise their concerns.

Learning from others

Alongside a robust safeguarding policy, **Knightstone** has a flow chart tracking the reporting mechanism for staff, and an internal referral form. Every referral is reviewed by their safeguarding lead within 24 hours; appropriate action is taken and feedback given to staff. An annual review of all referrals is used to inform procedures, and a staff safeguarding group uses Yammer to communicate and highlight the profile of safeguarding.

An audit of existing staff training led to a tiered approach according to the level of interaction with residents. All staff go through e-learning, with multi agency training for front line staff and more intensive training for managers. All contractors have a 20 minute toolbox talk as part of the induction to working with Knightstone.

The framework was developed by the support and community empowerment teams, and resident forums are involved in learning programme. Senior staff are linked into local SABs, either on the boards or through provider fora.

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The training and policies should enable staff and contractors to:

- know what abuse is, the symptoms and signs

There are many forms of abuse including: physical; psychological; sexual; exploitation; financial or material; discriminatory; organisational; neglect or acts of omission; self-neglect; domestic violence; modern slavery.

Social Care Institute for Excellence's guidance on Adult safeguarding for housing staff has comprehensive lists of the signs of the forms of abuse.

- act on their concerns: how to report the concern, refer to appropriate staff, and record decisions on action

Learning from others

Gentoo's staff are trained to spot the signs of neglect and abuse and they have easy ways to report their concerns in a safe environment. Repairs and maintenance staff carry a hand-held device with an in-built reporting mechanism. Where they see something of concern on a visit, they can record it immediately. This will alert specialist support staff who can follow up and investigate.

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- know what action has been taken, and outcomes (within bounds of confidentiality). It is important that staff are also kept informed of resulting action so that they are reassured about the person's wellbeing, and aware that their intervention was of value.

3. Have senior management and board champions to ensure safeguarding is a high profile issue. Senior management and board members acting as champions for safeguarding reinforces the priority that the organisation gives to this as part of its core purpose and values. A senior manager acting as a champion should influence their organisation to:

- make sure that safeguarding is a priority at the highest level in the organisation
- ensure that training for front-line staff enables them to identify signs of abuse and provide mechanisms to report concerns

- ensure safeguarding links to other 'anti-crime' agendas e.g. tackling hate incidents
- ensure there is housing representation linked to the local safeguarding adults board (SAB), Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) and Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)
- ensure adequate and confidential data collection and analysis mechanisms are in place to make sure safeguarding is monitored and reviewed
- review concerns raised by housing staff and decide on a course of action.

4. Have policies and procedures for dealing with safeguarding. Clear policies and procedures will support staff to be confident in identifying abuse and take action on their concerns. Procedures should include when it is appropriate to raise concerns outside of the internal routes, and signpost to the appropriate external source on the local SAB.

Care and support guidance advises that procedures should help staff to:

- understand the purpose of safeguarding; promoting wellbeing, preventing harm and responding effectively
- understand internal roles and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding, and levels of decision making and accountability
- deal effectively with allegations of abuse or neglect
- identify internal and external referral points, and sources of expert advice
- know how to record allegations, enquiries and subsequent actions
- know processes for inter-agency communication and procedures for decision making
- understand how disagreements are resolved e.g. on making enquiries.

Learning from others

Adactus Housing has developed a comprehensive safeguarding adults policy. This includes guidance on identifying abuse, dealing with issues relating to confidentiality, professional responsibility to tackle adult abuse, whistleblowing, performance standards and monitoring and review.

Visit: www.adactushousing.co.uk/Information/421

5. Work with tenants to raise their awareness of adult abuse and safeguarding. Tenants and local communities can play a key role in identifying and raising concerns about people at risk of abuse. Housing providers can support this through training and enabling easy access to staff to whom they can report their concerns.

Learning from others

Riverside-ECHG developed a training course to educate residents about the signs of abuse and how to report their concerns. Tenants have been trained to deliver the course, which includes a DVD of possible abuse scenarios. These examples were developed by residents and the staff team.

Visit: www.riverside.org.uk/corporate/our_services/care_and_support_services/whats_new/press_releases/tenant_safeguarding.aspx

A booklet aimed at BME older people, which has been produced in six community languages was delivered through a Lottery-funded Project, jointly run by the **Trust Housing Association, Hanover (Scotland) Housing Association** and **Bield Housing and Care**, in partnership with Age Scotland it aims to generate wider awareness of these issues, and to help identify signs of elder abuse or neglect within BME communities.

Visit: www.equalityscotland.com/5/22/News/Elder-Abuse-Raising-Awareness.html

6. Become an effective partner for SABs and build strategic and operational links. Apart from the expectations to be aware of and work with the local SAB, housing organisations are valuable partners for SABs because of their local networks with communities that often extend beyond their own tenant base. They can help to raise awareness of abuse and safeguarding measures, as well as enabling better connections to work taking place on domestic violence, harassment and hate crime, and more general identification of and support to adults who may be at risk of abuse or neglect.

However, the number of housing providers in a local area can make navigating the sector difficult for partner agencies. Housing organisations can enable better relationships with SABs by looking at how a new or existing forum could be used as a sub group, or regular contact point for SABs, with housing representation through a local district (in two tier areas) or housing association officer from that group.

This group could facilitate shared training and the development of information sharing protocols. It could also support engagement with health and wellbeing boards and multi-agency groups (MARACs, MAPPA and multi agency safeguarding hubs [MASHs]).

Housing and SABs

- **Sutton Housing Partnership** represents housing on the London Borough of Sutton safeguarding adults board
- **Thurrock Council** has a housing safeguarding subgroup to the safeguarding adults board
- **Kirklees Council**, among others, has a housing forum that has safeguarding as a standing item on the agenda and representation to the safeguarding adults board
- **Knightstone Housing Association** represents supported housing providers on the South Gloucestershire Safeguarding Adults Board.

7. Develop protocols for sharing information and making this work both ways, for the adult's safety. Effective information sharing is a two way process. Although there are clear expectations set for housing organisations, their role as a partner can be more effective where there is a useful sharing of information to enable them to put in place appropriate support, and to participate effectively in making enquiries. The requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 need to be taken into account here as well. The protocol should cover:

- the purpose for sharing information and guiding principles
- the legal framework, security of information (how it will be stored and used), the importance of consent and when action can be taken without consent, how any breach of the protocol will be tackled
- the practical processes for sharing information including named contacts within each partner organisation, and how disputes about sharing information will be resolved.

Learning from others

Wolverhampton City Council's information sharing protocol has been established with statutory partners such as the local police and NHS Trust, plus key housing partners in its local area. It has a three tiered approach in its information sharing protocol, from an overarching protocol setting out the objectives and legal context, through to service specific operational processes for sharing, including for adult safeguarding

Visit: www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=2307&p=0

Birmingham Safeguarding Adult Board has an agreed protocol that includes housing support providers who deliver commissioned services

Visit: www.bsab.org/media/Information-Sharing-Protocol-October-2013FINAL1.pdf

Learning from others

The **Birmingham Social Housing Partnership** also has a Safeguarding group that meets to share good practice, develop a common approach to safeguarding and support shared training

Visit: www.housing.org.uk/in-your-area/birmingham-shp/about-bshp/bshp-portfolios/safeguarding-group/

Aligning safeguarding with mental capacity and human rights

Policies and advice for staff need to be clear about the interaction of safeguarding with key legislation, including:

- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Human Rights Act 1998.

Mental Capacity Act (MCA)

People should be assumed to have capacity unless there is clear evidence that there is a lack of capacity; making an unwise decision is not of itself an indicator of lack of capacity (in line with the empowerment principle of safeguarding). The adult should be able to understand the information and retain it sufficiently to make an informed decision which they can then communicate. When interacting with adults, officers should make every effort to support and maximise a person's capacity e.g. in the way they convey information.

Where an adult is found to lack capacity, the person making decisions for them must act in the best interests of that adult, and should look for the least restrictive solution or intervention to meet the need.

Mental capacity is assessed by considering at that time:

- if there is an impairment or disturbance in the functioning of a person's mind, and
- if that impairment/ disturbance is sufficient to mean the person lacks capacity to make a particular decision.

Data Protection Act 1998

There are clear requirements about how and when someone's personal information can be shared, and how this should be done.

Only information that is relevant and necessary should be shared, and only with those who have a need for it. There are also restrictions on how it can be stored and destroyed.

CIH will be providing a series of tools for housing professionals on how to meet data protection requirements between January and April 2015. This will include checklists, frequently asked questions, blogs and so on. To keep up to date, see [How safe is your data](#) on CIH's website.

Human Rights Act 1998

The Act states that where legislation is unclear, it should be interpreted in a way that is consistent with the European Convention, which includes a right to respect for a private life (Article 8). But even that can be passed over where intervention can be justified and for a clear purpose e.g. the prevention of crime or the protection of the rights of others.

Useful resources and information

Parry, I. (2014) 'Adult Serious Case Reviews: lessons for housing providers' Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law

www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09649069.2014.895506

Parry, I. (2013) 'Adult safeguarding: the need for all staff to engage', in CIH's Learning Today, Leading Tomorrow

www.cih.org/resources/PDF/Policy%20free%20download%20pdfs/Learning%20today%20leading%20tomorrow/05%20Adult%20safeguarding%20Parry.pdf

CIH is a member of the Housing and Safeguarding Adults Alliance which has checklists and tools to help housing organisations

www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/HousingOlderPeople/Safeguarding/?parent=9016&child=8914

SCIE have produced guidance for housing managers, frontline housing staff and local authorities, and more tools will be forthcoming e.g. on information sharing

www.scie.org.uk/publications/guides/guide53/

SCIE also have a toolkit on the Mental Capacity Act 2005

www.scie.org.uk/publications/mca/index.asp

EHRC, Hidden in Plain Sight – report from inquiry into disability related harassment

www.equalityhumanrights.com/legal-and-policy/our-legal-work/inquiries-and-assessments/inquiry-into-disability-related-harassment/hidden-in-plain-sight-the-inquiry-final-report

EHRC, Out in the Open: Manifesto for change

www.equalityhumanrights.com/legal-and-policy/our-legal-work/inquiries-and-assessments/inquiry-into-disability-related-harassment/out-in-the-open-manifesto-for-change

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