

Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy

Policy ref:

Policy author /holder Director of Neighbourhoods

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Approved by: Board

Effective date: November 2024

Review date: November 2027

1 Purpose and anticipated outcomes

1.1 This policy sets out our commitment to promoting safeguarding and the protection of children and young people at risk. It provides a framework from which our colleagues and other workers including volunteers, Board members, contractors and agents can understand their responsibilities (including those under the Care Act 2014) to promote the prevention and protection of individuals and groups from abuse and neglect by:

- Understanding our commitment and their duties in safeguarding children.
- Understanding what constitutes abuse.
- Knowing when and how to report it.
- Safeguarding individuals in a way that supports them in making choices and having control in how they choose to live their lives.

1.2 The anticipated outcomes of the policy are that we provide services in an environment which safeguards the welfare of at-risk individuals and groups. We ensure our workforce are suitably trained in recognising types of safeguarding concerns and report them following procedures consistently and undertake mandatory training when inducted into the organisation with annual refresher sessions through our training system. We are committed to working collaboratively in a Coordinated Community Response, making safeguarding personal and compliant with the requirements of statute and good practice to protect individuals from harm, abuse and neglect.

2 Scope and definitions

2.1 This policy applies to all employees, Board and committee members, volunteers, agency workers, students on work placements, agents and contractors carrying out work with our customers or in their homes.

2.2 For the purposes of this policy and associated procedures the words “child” or “children” are used to refer to anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday.

2.3 Child protection guidance points out that even if a child has reached 16 years of age and is:

- Living independently
- In further education
- A member of the armed forces
- In hospital; or
- In custody in the secure estate

They are still legally children and should be given the same protection and entitlements as any other child (Department for Education, 2018a).

2.4 **Safeguard or protect?**

Safeguarding includes, protecting children from abuse and maltreatment, preventing harm to children's health or development, ensuring children grow up with the provision of safe and effective care, as well as taking action to enable all children and young people to have the best outcomes.

Protection refers to activities undertaken to prevent children suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm. It encompasses statutory responsibilities (such as those resting with the Local Authority or the Police) to stop or limit abuse once it has taken place.

3 **About this policy**

3.1 **General policy statement**

- The welfare of children is paramount.
- All individuals, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity, have the right to protection from abuse and neglect.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse or neglect will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.

3.2 An Alerter is a person who identifies and raises concerns about the safety or well-being of a vulnerable individual. The role of an Alerter is to notice signs of harm or abuse, and act promptly by reporting it to the Safeguarding Manager. LiveWest provides a secure reporting system and a dedicated Safeguarding Manager who works closely with Case Owners to ensure protection measures are implemented. The Safeguarding Manager also conducts trend analysis and identifies key learnings from each case to continuously improve our approach.

3.3 The key principles that underpin the safeguarding work that we do are:

- **Empowerment:** People are supported and encouraged to make their own decisions and give informed consent
- **Prevention:** It's better to act before harm occurs
- **Proportionality:** The least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented
- **Protection:** Support and representation for those in greatest need
- **Partnership:** Local solutions through services working with their communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting, and reporting concerns of abuse and neglect.
- **Accountability:** Accountability and transparency in delivering safeguarding

3.4 As part of this policy, we aim to:

- Actively research good practice and promote what we learn to our partners.
- Ensure that the services we provide directly to children offer appropriate safety and protection.
- Enable us to make informed and confident responses to safeguarding issues.

3.5 We aim to ensure that we can respond effectively by:

- Raising awareness throughout our organisation.
- Mandatory safeguarding training for all customer facing colleagues which is regularly refreshed.
- Actively encouraging good practice amongst all our agents.
- Creating a safe and healthy environment within all our services, to minimise or manage situations where abuse/neglect or allegations of abuse/neglect may occur.
- Respecting and promoting the rights, wishes and feelings of children and young people.
- Minimising dangers and working closely with other agencies to provide a Coordinated Community Response.
- Recruiting, training, supervising and supporting those of us who work with vulnerable groups to adopt best practice to safeguard and protect children from abuse and neglect.
- Ensuring we all know how to protect ourselves against false allegations.
- Responding to any allegations appropriately and implementing the appropriate disciplinary and appeals procedures.
- Reporting abuse or possible abuse/ neglect that is observed during the course of our work.
- Ensuring all colleagues are required to adhere to our Safeguarding policy, alongside the procedures available on the OurSpace Safeguarding page. This includes following best practice, which will be updated and shared as needed.
- Identifying those individuals and agents that require Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checks

4 Responding to a safeguarding concern

- 4.1 Recognising abuse and neglect is not easy and it is not the responsibility of anyone working on behalf of LiveWest, in a paid or unpaid capacity, to investigate whether abuse or neglect has taken place. The responsibility is to raise a concern to enable conversations to happen within LiveWest and relevant professionals to investigate appropriately if a formal escalation happens.
- 4.2 We have a responsibility to provide training, advice and support to employees regarding safeguarding. The organisation also has a responsibility to provide leadership and support to employees in carrying out their responsibilities.
- 4.3 The Alerter will follow our procedures and complete the internal process and if required follow the formal escalation process. For IMS and non-customer facing staff, the Safeguarding Manager will assign the task of escalating a formal safeguarding concern to a Local Authority to a Case Owner within the Neighbourhood or Supported Housing teams.
- 4.4 If you have a safeguarding concern, you are required to:
- Raise your concerns through the secure Assure Safeguarding Portal to the Safeguarding Manager where you believe a child/young person is at risk of harm, in line with our standard operating procedure.
 - Report your concerns clearly, and keep the Safeguarding Manager updated.
 - Cooperate with any fact finding or local investigation.
 - Work collaboratively with other agencies to provide a Multi-Agency Risk Management process where required (MARM).
- 4.5 In all cases, the raising of a concern through the Safeguarding Portal on Assure will be completed, once confirmed as a safeguarding matter, a generic safeguarding case will be opened on the housing system and an agreement reached on involving Children's Social Care, or going directly to Police if there is immediate danger.
- 4.6 Where the concern is escalated to the Local Authority they will decide if the referral has reached the safeguarding threshold. The Local Authority must make enquiries, or ensure others do so, if it believes a child is subject to, or at risk of, abuse or neglect. An enquiry should establish whether any action needs to be taken to stop or prevent abuse or neglect, and if so, by whom.
- 4.7 If the concern or allegation is about an employee, a Board member or agent then we will fully support and protect anyone who reasonably believes that they are making a disclosure in the public interest. Further detail can be found in our Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure.

5 Monitoring and review

- 5.1 There is an appointed Safeguarding Manager across the business who is responsible for receiving reports of suspected abuse through the Safeguarding Portal. They will check how each case has been identified and managed, provide advice to colleagues who raise concerns and agree next steps on how protective factors can be achieved, or if a formal escalation is required. Together the Alerter/Case Owner and the Safeguarding Manager oversee the case through to successful conclusion.
- 5.2 The Safeguarding Manager provides accurate anonymised data on a monthly, quarterly, and annual basis to inform the Health and Safety Scrutiny Group and the Executive Team and Board on:
- The numbers of cases received.
 - The number of formal escalations.
 - The number of escalations acted on by the Local Authority.
 - The number escalated and not acted upon (invoking Professional Differences procedures).
- 5.3 Other responsibilities for the Safeguarding Manager include:
- Representation for Children Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR).
 - Representation for Safeguarding Adult Review (SAR), and
 - Representation for Domestic Abuse Related Death Review (DARDR) for LiveWest where customers have been the focus of the review.
- 5.4 There is a Safeguarding Leads of Business Areas Group who stay informed by the reports of cases raised in their respective business teams, and any additional learning required from formal CSPRs, SARs and DARDRs.
- 5.5 The Board is responsible for the oversight of Safeguarding and receive an annual update on this as part of the annual health and safety report. Quarterly reporting of safeguarding is considered by the Customer Services Committee who provide assurance to the Board. Our policy review and compliance with our Safeguarding Policy and procedures shall be periodically assured via an internal audit.
- 5.6 The Board (or appropriately devolved committee) will review an annual report which includes but is not limited to the information identified by the Safeguarding Leads of Business Areas Group to aid the development of Safeguarding and learning from experience by the organisation.
- 5.7 In the case of services provided directly to vulnerable groups, Service Managers ensure that local work instructions are regularly reviewed including amendments to reflect relevant changes in procedure and personnel within Local Authority Social Services teams.
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- 5.8 We work in several different Local Authority areas and provide our colleagues with digital access to respective safeguarding reporting platforms on Our Space:
<https://ondomain.sharepoint.com/sites/OurSpace/SitePages/Safeguarding.aspx>
- 5.9 It is essential that colleagues raising concerns know how to raise a safeguarding concern and familiarise themselves with this.
- 5.10 Customers can access safeguarding information on the LiveWest website:
<https://www.livewest.co.uk/safeguarding>

6 Legal considerations

- 6.1 We aim to carry out the policy in-line with:
- Specific legal obligations and regulatory requirements, including the Data Protection Act 2018, General Data Protection Regulations 2018
 - Information Sharing: Advice for Practitioners 2018
 - The Children Act 1989
 - Children Act 2004
 - Children and Social Work Act 2017
 - Working Together to Safeguard Children Statutory framework: July 2018
 - The Safeguarding of Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
 - The Care Act and Children and Family Act 2014
 - Care and Support Statutory Guidance
 - Domestic Abuse Act 2021
 - Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards and Code of Practice 2024
 - Human Rights Act 1998
 - Modern Slavery Act 2015
 - Equality Act 2010
 - Mental Capacity Act 2005 with the Mental Capacity (Amendment) Act 2019 (Gillick Assessment under 16's)
 - Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (amendments to Mental Capacity Act)
 - Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (Section 29 – Prevent)
 - Disclosure and Barring service (DBS)
 - Health & Safety legislation

7 Version control

Version ref	Date of change	By whom	Reason
1	Nov 2018	Board	Approval
1.1	May 2019	Policy Officer on behalf of Safeguarding group	Change from one safeguarding lead to a group of leads to receive alerts for specific service areas.
1.2	Jan 2020	Policy Officer on behalf of Safeguarding group	Desktop review. Full review to take place once all on same system.
2	Dec 2020	Safeguarding Lead	Full review and change of process to the Safeguarding Assure Portal. Inclusion of recommendations from Plymouth City Council – Adult Education.
3	July 2021	Director of Supported Housing	Following external review of Safeguarding processes current policy and procedure separated. Further revisions to be incorporated as recommendations are reviewed. EqIA carried out.
4	April 2023	Director of Neighbourhoods	Policy now separated into Adults and Children to recognise different approaches
5	Nov 2024	Board	Annual Review