

Policy

Title: **Safeguarding Children**

Date of Issue: July 2010

Issue Number: 1

Date of next review: July 2013

Author: Mike McCue

Service Area applies to: All Service Areas

Approved By: Customer Services Committee

Electronic Storage: Sharelt / Published Documents

A policy should be a short statement which describes in general terms or objectives what a service area's principles and key objectives are on a particular subject and should be no longer than a 2 pages in length. The aim of the policy is to give practical effect of the strategy it supports.

Translations available on request by phoning 0151 510 5000

যদি আপনি এই তথ্য অন্য ভাষায় পেতে চান, তাহলে দয়া করে 0151 510 5000 নম্বরে ফোন করুন।

यह सूचना यदि आपको किसी अन्य भाषा में चाहिये तो कृपया नंबर 0151 510 5000 पर फोन करें।

یہ معلومات اگر آپ کو کسی دیگر زبان میں چاہیے تو براۓ مہربانی نمبر 0151 510 5000 پر فون کریں۔

如果你需要其他語文版本的本資訊，請致電 0151 510 5000

Jeśli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać powyższe informacje w innym języku prosimy zadzwonić pod numer 0151 510 5000

This document is also available in Braille, large print and on tape



Halton
Housing Trust
Delivering quality and excellence for all

CONTENTS PAGE

INTRODUCTION	4
AIMS / OBJECTIVES	4
SCOPE	4
POLICY STATEMENT	5
RESPONSIBILITY	7
SERVICE STANDARDS	7
PERFORMANCE MEASURES / MONITORING	7
CONSULTATION ARRANGEMENTS	7
BENCHMARK ANALYSIS	8
REGULATORY AND/OR LEGAL COMPLIANCE	8
KLOES AFFECTED	8
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS	9
LINKS TO STRATEGIES, PROCEDURES AND ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS	9
BUSINESS IMPACT	9
SELF ASSESSMENT COMPLIANCE STATEMENT (SACS) CONSIDERATIONS	10

Introduction

The Trust recognises the right of every child to be protected from abuse of any kind, and is committed to safeguarding the welfare of children in the communities it serves.

Over the years a number of incidents have been reported which have shown serious harm and abuse being caused to children, and in the worst cases children have died. A number of enquiries have taken place following such cases and a common thread in the resultant reports make it clear that it is the responsibility of all agencies to safeguard and protect the welfare of any child they come into contact with. The Trust recognises that it can play a large part in identifying issues within families who live on its estates.

Having a safeguarding policy and procedure in place within an organisation not only protects and promotes the welfare of children but also enhances the confidence of employees, customers, parents and the general public.

A separate 'Safeguarding Children' Procedure guide has been developed to accompany this policy which describes in detail the processes to be used when any concerns about a child's safety or welfare arise.

Aims / Objectives

This policy has been developed so that all employees of the Trust are aware of their responsibilities in safeguarding children.

The ultimate aim of this policy is to ensure that all employees who come into regular contact with children and young people have safeguarding and their welfare as an integral part of any interaction with them.

It is intended that by having a correct policy and procedures in place, it will create an open environment for employees, which will give them the confidence to speak out if they have any concerns about a child or young person, or feel that they may be a victim of neglect, physical, sexual or emotional abuse, including bullying or racial abuse.

Scope

This policy will mainly affect those employees who have regular contact with customers and their children in their homes as part of their normal working routine, e.g. housing officers carrying out home visits or operatives carrying out day to day repairs.

However, it will also apply to those employees who come into contact with families in their homes on a less frequent basis.

Policy Statement

Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, the word 'children' is used to refer to those under the age of 18, in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Safeguarding – in relation to children -can be defined as:

- All agencies working with children, young people and their families taking all reasonable measures to ensure that the risks of harm to children's welfare are minimised.
- Where there are concerns about children and young people's welfare, all agencies are to take appropriate actions to address these concerns.

This can involve working to agreed local policies and procedures in full partnership with other local agencies.

The Process

As mentioned above, the 'Safeguarding Children' Procedure guide gives full details of how employees should deal with any concerns they encounter in their day to day work with customers and children. This will include definitions and examples, where possible, of physical/emotional/sexual abuse and neglect; as well as details of the referral process and the standard forms to be used etc.

The main features of the process are as follows:

1. Employees should be alert to the possibility of child abuse in all families, cultures and communities.
2. Any concern identified may be actual but may also include likely abuse or neglect of a child.
3. The employee may see signs of abuse or neglect for themselves, but may be told about something that someone else has seen or heard, or even be told by the child what is happening to them.
4. Whatever the source of the concern, the employee should discuss the issue with a designated officer within the Trust in the first instance.
5. If employees have any concerns that a child is suffering or is at risk of significant harm, the child's safety and welfare is the most important consideration. There should be no delay in discussing the need for a possible referral and employees are expected to act quickly in seeking advice/consulting with the designated officer.
6. Employees will be expected to collate as much information as possible before discussing the possible referral with the designated officer. (The type of information required is set out in the Procedure guide)
7. Following this initial discussion, the designated officer:
 - may consult and discuss the case with a relevant person in the Children's Social Care team before a referral is made;

- may make a formal referral if further action is deemed to be necessary straight away.
8. Employees must **not** make their own referrals.
 9. Employees should not discuss their concerns directly with the child or the family. Any necessary investigation will be carried out by Children's Social Care.
 10. Accurate records will be kept of all referrals made.
 11. If a decision is made not to make a referral, this will also be recorded by the designated officer, giving the reason(s) why.
 12. Once it has been decided that a formal referral is to be made, this should be done within 1 working day, via a standard referral form which will be forwarded to the relevant person in the Children's Social Care team.
 13. It is expected that any written referral will be acknowledged within 1 working day by the Children's Social Care team. If the designated officer does not receive an acknowledgement within 3 working days, they will make contact again to ensure that the referral was received and acted on, and written confirmation will be requested for the Trust's records.
 14. Records will be updated accordingly with details of any follow-on action, or in cases where no further action is deemed to be necessary by the Children's Social Care team, the reasons for this.

Training

The Trust appreciates the importance of appropriate training being given to employees in this area and this will look to be carried out in accordance with the guidance given in the Department for Children, Schools and Families publication - 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (Chapter 4) – issued in March 2010.

All Trust employees will receive training on this policy and associated procedure.

Information Sharing and Confidentiality

The Trust is aware that in general the sharing of personal information with other agencies can be regarded a breach of the Data Protection Act 1989. However, in implementing this policy, the Trust will rely on exceptions under the Act which state that personal information may be disclosed due to a genuine need to protect the interests of the child.

In order to meet the conditions set down in the Act, the Trust will ensure that:

- any personal information disclosed will be to no more people than is strictly necessary on a 'need to know basis';
- personal details of individuals will only be given at the formal referral stage, once it has been established that there is a concern about the safeguarding of the child in question.

The Trust is also aware of its obligation to provide personal information to any enquiries made by Social Services etc under sections 27 and 47 of the Children Act 1989.

Responsibility

The Director of Customer Services will ultimately be responsible for the effective implementation of this policy, and for ensuring that all employees it impacts on receive appropriate training.

There will be a designated officer - and a deputy who can assume this role to cover for periods of absence etc - within the Trust who will act as the key liaison point for employees who have any concerns regarding children. This designated officer will be responsible for deciding if any concerns raised will require a formal referral being made to the Children's Social Care team.

Service Standards

The following service standards will apply to this policy:

- Discussions between the designated officer and the employee who has identified any concerns should take place as soon as possible after the initial identification, and wherever possible within 1 working day..
- Any formal written referral by the Trust should be made within 1 working day after the decision to refer has been made.
- Children's Social Care should acknowledge receipt of any formal written referral from the Trust within 1 working day.
- If this acknowledgement is not received within 3 working days, the designated officer will contact Children's Social Care again.

Performance Measures / Monitoring

Clear and accurate records will be kept of all concerns raised under this policy. These will be strictly factual, and include specific dates and times of incidents or disclosures, the names of anyone consulted or involved, and the decision made to refer or not, and any follow-on action.

Anonymised, summary reports of all cases recorded under this policy will be reported to Customer Services Committee on a six monthly basis

Consultation arrangements

The Trust's Board received a presentation on issues relating to Safeguarding Children in September 2009, and fully supported the development of a policy and procedure for this area.

Employees have been consulted in this policy's development.

The Trust has not yet consulted with customers in the preparation of this policy but will consult with customers at the next appropriate Customer Forum meeting. Any resultant comments will then be incorporated into the policy.

Benchmark Analysis

The Trust has reviewed the policies of a number of other housing associations in this area. The Trust's policy is comparable to the housing associations that it has consulted.

The policy has also been developed to take account of current good practice in this area and has taken account of advice and guidance from such areas as:

- Halton Safeguarding Children Board,
- The Department of Children, Schools and Families' publication (March 2010) – 'Working Together to Safeguard Children',
- Safe Network (which is jointly managed by the NSPCC and Children England).

Regulatory and/or Legal Compliance

One of the TSA's six Regulatory Standards that came into force in April 2010 relates to Neighbourhood and Community. One of the required outcomes of this Standard is that:

- *'Registered Providers shall work in partnership with other public agencies to prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour in the neighbourhoods where they own homes.'*

Part of the specific expectation 3.2 relating to this outcome states that:

- *'In their work to prevent and address ASB, registered providers shall demonstrate:*
 - *a strong focus exists on preventative measures tailored towards the needs of tenants and their families,*
 - *provision of support to victims*

The effective implementation of this policy would contribute to achieving these requirements.

The Children Acts of 1989 and 2004 state that people who work with children have to try to keep them safe. In addition, The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which the UK is a signatory, sets out the rights of children to be free from abuse.

KLOEs Affected

The Audit Commission's cross cutting KLOE on Diversity poses a number of questions within the section that deals with harassment (and domestic violence) which in a broad context are linked to this policy.

For example, some of the question posed are:

- *Does the organisation have an effective approach to dealing with harassment, domestic violence and hate crimes?*
- *Are there effective means of offering support to residents who suffer harassment?*
- *Is there a clear message to residents on the stand that the organisation takes against those who harass and in support of those who suffer harassment?*
- *Does the organisation encourage a partnership response against harassment where appropriate?*

Two of the descriptors used as an indication of how an excellent performing organisation would meet these questions state that:

- *(it) **identifies different types of harassment** and offers fast and effective action including support to those suffering harassment.*
- ***all staff understand their responsibilities in relation to harassment** and domestic violence and their actions are monitored on a regular basis.*

The effective implementation of this policy would contribute to achieving the highlighted parts of the above requirements.

Equality and Diversity Considerations

An Equality Impact Assessment was carried out on this policy on 1st September 2010. As with all such assessments, the Trust will ensure that any issues or actions arising from this exercise are addressed and any changes to the policy made accordingly.

Links to Strategies, Procedures and Associated Documents

Anti-Social Behaviour Policy & Procedure Guide
Harassment & Hate Crime Policy & Procedure Guide
Domestic Abuse Policy
Data Protection Policy
Safeguarding Children Procedure Guide

Business Impact

It is not expected that this policy will have a direct impact on the Trust's Business Plan. However action via this policy may have a positive impact on its reputation and business activities in general. By safeguarding children this way it will help to contribute towards sustaining tenancies. This will also have a less tangible but positive impact of improving satisfaction with the Trust's homes and the communities it serves.

Self Assessment Compliance Statement (SACS) Considerations

It is not envisaged that this policy will have any impact on the SACs document or that any changes/amendments will be required.