



## Women's Pioneer Housing Safeguarding Policy

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### **Purpose of this Policy**

The purpose of this policy is to set out how Women's Pioneer Housing will seek to safeguard children and adults at risk.

### **Our commitment**

Women's Pioneer is committed to ensuring that concerns about safeguarding are reported to designated officers and acted on effectively.

We will take preventive action where possible, identifying abuse, acting on our own concerns and reports from others and liaising with the relevant agencies.

All employees have a duty to be alert to any and all signs of abuse or potential abuse and to act, without delay, by escalating their concern to one of the designated safeguarding leads.

We expect partners from whom we commission external services to adhere to this policy. However, we expect them to have appropriate safeguarding procedures of their own in place.

## **Safeguarding duties**

As defined in the Care Act 2014, safeguarding duties will apply to an adult (someone over the age of 18) who:

- has needs for care and support (whether or not the Local Authority is meeting any of those needs);
- is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect; and
- as a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk, or experience, of abuse or neglect.

We will apply the Department of Health's six key safeguarding principles when working with adults at risk of abuse: empowerment, protection, prevention, proportionality, partnership and accountability.

A child is a person under 18. All children are considered to be in need of protection.

## **Recognising abuse**

Abuse can be defined as "a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons which results in significant harm" (Department of Health, 2000). Abuse may be a single act or repeated acts; an act of neglect or a failure to act; or multiple acts, such as an adult at risk of being neglected and also financially abused.

Abuse can take many forms, including but not limited to :

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Psychological and emotional abuse
- Financial abuse
- Neglect
- Discriminatory abuse
- Institutional abuse

Annex A gives further details.

## **Policy**

All WPH employees have a duty to act upon and report actual or suspected allegations of abuse.

We will work in partnership with agencies such as Social Services, the health services and schools and with multi-agency partnerships, co-operating where concerns are raised with us and making referrals where we identify causes for concern. We will be open to and supportive of individuals outside the association who raise concerns with us.

We will record and refer all concerns, suspicions or allegations of abuse or neglect to the lead agencies responsible for carrying out safeguarding assessments and enquiries,

specifically the Local Authority in line with section 42 of the Care Act 2014. We will do this only with consent from the adult at risk, unless they lack capacity or there is an overriding public interest consideration.

We will report any incidents of abuse that we suspect are a criminal offence to the Police. We will treat any disclosures of actual historical abuse in the same way as an allegation, disclosure or suspicion of current abuse.

We will share information for the purposes of safeguarding, and will comply with the statutory duty to provide information where requested.

We will handle data in accordance with the Data Protection Act, General Data Protection Regulation, and the WPH Data Protection Policy. Where there is a concern that a child may be being abused, is at risk of abuse, or where seeking consent to share information would place the child at further risk, the law allows for the sharing of information without consent.

We will involve adults at risk of abuse in any safeguarding decisions. However, where someone is formally assessed as not having capacity to make an informed decision about their own wellbeing, these decisions will be made in their best interests on their behalf. These decisions will be made in liaison with statutory authorities, involving carers and family members as appropriate.

We will meet our responsibilities in the safe recruitment, selection and vetting employees by using the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) where appropriate.

We will develop and implement internal procedures for employees that establish clear lines of accountability, responsibility and processes for reporting safeguarding concerns.

We will provide support for employees creating a safe environment in which they feel able to report safeguarding issues, including where they have concerns about the behaviour of another WPH employee in line with our *Raising Concerns At Work* policy. We recognise the emotional impact on staff of recognising and reporting safeguarding concerns. Employee support will be available through line managers and through our Employee Assistance Programme.

We will provide employees with appropriate training so that they understand their roles and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding and are enabled to identify and report the signs of abuse in accordance with safeguarding procedures.

We will address any allegations of abuse, or suspected abuse, by WPH employees through formal statutory investigative procedures and our own internal disciplinary procedures.

We will raise awareness of safeguarding issues in our communities through information and advice. We will develop and communicate procedures to enable Residents to report potential safeguarding issues, and to support them when they do so.

## **Annex A**

### **Recognising abuse**

**Abuse and neglect may** include, but is not limited to physical, sexual, psychological or emotional, financial or material, discriminatory, domestic and organisational abuse; neglect (including acts of omission); self-neglect; radicalisation and enforced gang membership.

### **Some examples of specific types of abuse**

#### **Domestic abuse**

Women are more likely to experience domestic abuse, and much more likely to experience violent assault over a long period.

Our domestic abuse policy covers any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.

This can include:

- Physical assault
- Sexual assault, rape, incest and child sexual abuse
- Emotional or psychological abuse - e.g. intimidation, isolation, verbal abuse, humiliation, degradation etc.
- Coercive or controlling behaviour
- "Honour" based crimes
- Female genital mutilation (FGM)
- Forced and child marriages
- Financial control

#### **Physical abuse.**

A form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, not giving adequate food or drink, burning or scalding, drowning, the misuse or illegal use of restraint, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm. Physical harm may also be caused when an abuser fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in the person being abused.

#### **Sexual abuse.**

Some examples of sexual abuse include the direct or indirect involvement of victim in sexual activity or relationships which they do not want or have not consented to. They may have been forced into sexual activity with someone else or may have been required to watch sexual activity. Sexual abuse 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 clothing. It may include non-contact activities, such as the production of sexual images, forcing adults at risk or children to look at sexual images or

watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet).

When considering children, remember that sexual abuse is any sexual activity with a child under the age of 16 by an adult; if the child is between 16 and 18, sexual activity may or may not be a safeguarding issue as the activity may be consensual. Contrary to some perceptions, sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult men. Women can commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

### **Psychological and emotional abuse.**

This is behaviour that has a harmful effect on the person's emotional health and development or any form of mental cruelty that results in: mental distress; the denial of basic human and civil rights such as self-expression, privacy and dignity; negating the right of an adult at risk to make choices and undermining their self-esteem; isolation and over-dependence that has a harmful effect on the person's emotional health, development or well-being. It can include isolating a person, controlling their movements or how they dress.

When considering children, it can also be the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on their 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.

### **Financial abuse.**

Financial abuse is a crime. It is the use of a person's property, assets, income, funds or any resources without their informed consent or authorisation. It includes:

- Theft
- Fraud
- Exploitation
- Undue pressure in connection with expenditure, wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions
- The misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits
- The misuse of an enduring power of attorney or a lasting power of attorney, or appointeeship.

As children are not considered to be financially independent, this category of abuse tends not to be relevant from their point of view.

## **Neglect and acts of omission.**

Neglect is the failure of any person who has responsibility for the charge, care or custody of an adult at risk or a child to provide the amount and type of care that a reasonable person would be expected to provide. Behaviour that can lead to neglect includes including ignoring medical or physical needs, failing to allow access to appropriate health, social care and educational services, and withholding the necessities of life such as medication, adequate nutrition, hydration or heating.

Unintentional neglect could result from a carer failing to meet the needs of an adult at risk because they do not understand their needs, may not know about services that are available or because their own needs prevent them from being able to give the care the person needs. It may also occur if the individuals are unaware of or do not understand the possible effect of the lack of action on the adult at risk.

Neglect may occur if a parent becomes physically or mentally unable to care for a child. A parent may also have an addiction to alcohol or drugs, which could impair their ability to keep a child safe or result in them prioritising buying drugs, or alcohol, over food, clothing or warmth for the child. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal drug or alcohol abuse.

## **Discriminatory abuse.**

Discriminatory abuse exists when values, beliefs or culture result in a misuse of power that denies opportunity to some groups or individuals. It can be a feature of any form of abuse, but can also be motivated because of age, gender, sexuality, disability, religion, class, culture, language, race or ethnic origin. It can result from situations that exploit a person's vulnerability by treating the person in a way that excludes them from opportunities they should have as equal citizens, for example, education, health, justice and access to services and protection.

## **Institutional abuse.**

Institutional abuse is the mistreatment, abuse or neglect of an adult at risk by a regime or individuals within settings and services that adults at risk live in or use, that violate the person's dignity, resulting in lack of respect for their human rights.

Institutional abuse occurs when the routines, systems and regimes of an institution result in poor or inadequate standards of care and poor practice which affects the whole setting and denies, restricts or curtails the dignity, privacy, choice, independence or fulfilment of adults at risk.

Although it is unlikely that we will be present to witness institutional abuse of our tenants in other institutions, we should listen to any concerns they may raise about locations where they receive care, and also guard against and be mindful of the possibility that WPH itself is responsible for institutional abuse.