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| Title of policy: | Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults and Children’s Policy |
| Version: | 1.5 |
| Purpose: | To set out a clearly defined policy with regards to safeguarding vulnerable adults and children |
| Updated: | September 2023 |
| Next review: | September 2025 |
| By: | Claire Teasdale – Supported Housing Manager |

# 1.0 Introduction

## 1.1 North Star is committed to safeguarding Vulnerable Adults and Children within and around the communities we serve. This policy is aimed at all employees, contractors, students on placement and volunteers delivering services on behalf of North Star.

## 1.2 As an organisation we have developed a long history of effective partnership working in the development of high quality and innovative accommodation, tailored to meet individual needs and supported by an excellent and comprehensive housing management service.

## 1.3 Much of our housing has been provided not simply to meet the identified housing needs, but to help strengthen and maintain communities.

## 1.4 This policy has been developed using the guidance from the department of health publication “no secrets” (2000) and care and support statutory guidance issued under the Care Act 2014.

# 2.0 Definition

## 2.1 “Abuse is a violation of an individual’s human and civil rights by any other person or persons.” No Secrets DoH (March 2000)

## 2.2 North Star recognises the potential for adults and children to experience abuse. Abuse may, consist of a single act or repeated acts; be an act of neglect or; be intentional or unintentional.

## 2.3 Abuse can consist of:

* **Neglect** – Not giving the help, nurturing, support or treatment needed
* **Physical** – Includes pushing, slapping, pinching, hitting, kicking, scalding, burning, misuse of medicine and restraint
* **Psychological** – threatening, intimidating, humiliating, verbal abuse
* **Financial or material** – Theft, fraud, misuse of money, possessions or benefits
* **Sexual** – forcing someone to take part in any sexual act they haven’t consented
* **Discriminatory** – including racist, sexist, ageist, homophobic abuse or abuse based on a persons disability or differences
* **Institutional** – Systematic abuse, repeated poor practice or care services that are based on the needs of staff rather than clients

## 2.4 An adult may be vulnerable or at risk of abuse if they:

* Have a learning or physical disability
* Have mental health problems
* May be old, frail or ill
* Cannot always take care of themselves or protect themselves without help

## 2.5 Definition of safeguarding – children and young people

In relation to children and young people, the definition used in the Children Act 2004  and the Department for Education (DfE) guidance document, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013 (paragraph 2),  both define safeguarding and promoting children and young people’s welfare as:

* 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, and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

## 2.6 The above statutory guidance defines child protection as part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. Child protection is the activity undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm.

# 2.7 On-line safety

Young people can be exposed to risk on line and it’s important we are aware of these risk and report them accordingly in line with safeguarding policies and procedures

## **What**is online harm?

The number of issues that could be regarded as harmful online is considerable, but they can be categorised into four areas of risk:

* being exposed to illegal, inappropriate or harmful **content**, e.g., pornography, fake news, racism, misogyny, self-harm, suicide, anti-Semitism, radicalisation and extremism (Even pre-school children may come across such content – especially on devices with voice-activated search enabled.
* being subjected to harmful online **contact** with other users, e.g., peer pressure, adults posing as children or young adults with the intention to groom or exploit them for sexual, criminal, financial or other purposes;
* personal online **conduct** that increases the likelihood of/causes harm, e.g., making, sending and receiving consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes and/or pornography, sharing other explicit images, online bullying, allowing apps/websites to access location, younger children sending (including inappropriate/indecent) images/information to a device’s contact list (e.g., their parent’s);
* **commerce**-based risks (both as victims and perpetrators), e.g., online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing and/or financial scams.

**2**.8 Self Harm and Suicide

In the UK suicide is the leading cause of death in young people accounting for 14% of deaths in 10-19 year olds.  Self-harm is a common precursor to suicide, and children and young people who deliberately harm themselves may unintentionally kill themselves by accident, but not all young people who exhibit self-harming behaviours are at high risk of suicide.  Recent studies have indicated that just over half (52%) of under 20 year olds had a known history of self harm prior to death by suicide.  Levels of self harm have risen significantly in the last 15 years with one recent study suggesting that as many as 1 in 5 (20%) young women report having self-harmed, twice the rate in young men and three times more than 15 years ago.  (Suicide by Children and Young People: University of Manchester, 2017)

Warning signs of suicide

Children or young people who are self-harming or who are contemplating suicide may display changes in behaviour, for example:

* suicide-related internet use (searching for information about suicide or posting messages with suicidal content)
* physical marks or scarring on the body
* expressions of suicidal ideation (especially to peers)
* reluctance to undress or expose specific parts of the body where injuries may be located
* changes in mood
* lowering of school grades
* becoming withdrawn
* changes in eating or sleeping habits
* expressing feelings of hopelessness or failure
* [abuse](https://westmidlands.procedures.org.uk/page/glossary?term=Abuse&g=3EzN#gl51) of drugs or alcohol
* isolation from friends and family

2.9 Bullying

Northstar works with children and young people across their services. Bullying includes a range of abusive behaviour that is

* repeated
* intended to hurt someone either physically or emotionally.

Northstar believe that

* Children and young people should never experience abuse of any kind
* We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people, to keep them safe and operate in a way that protects them

We recognise that:

* Bullying causes real distress and affects a person’s health and development
* In some instances, bullying can cause significant harm
* All children, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse
* Everyone has a role to play in preventing all forms of bullying (including online) and putting a stop to bullying.

We will seek to prevent bullying by:

* Developing a code of behaviour that sets out how everyone involved in our organisation is expected to behave, in face-to-face contact and online, and within and outside of our activities
* Holding regular discussions with staff, volunteers, children, young people and families who use our organisation about bullying and how to prevent it
* Providing support and training for all staff and volunteers on dealing with all forms of bullying, including racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic and sexual bullying • putting clear and robust anti-bullying procedures in place.

Our regular discussions with staff, volunteers, children, young people and families will focus on:

* Group members’ responsibilities to look after one another and uphold the behaviour code
* Practising skills such as listening to each other
* Respecting the fact that we are all different
* Making sure that no one is without friends
* Dealing with problems in a positive way
* Checking that our anti-bullying measures are working well

Responding to bullying

We will make sure our response to incidents of bullying takes into account

* The needs of the person being bullied
* The needs of the person displaying bullying behaviour •
* The needs of any bystanders •
* Our organisation as a whole. We will review the plan we have developed to address any incidents of bullying at regular intervals, in order to ensure that the problem has been resolved in the long term

# 3.0 Mental Capacity Act

## 3.1 Difficulties arise when it is unclear if the vulnerable person is capable of making a decision or whether the decision is made under duress.

## 3.2 “A person who lacks capacity means a person who lacks capacity to make a particular decision or take a particular action for themselves at the time the decision or action needs to be taken”

## 3.3 There is no universally accepted definition of mental capacity and the assessment of capacity. ‘making decisions’ state that there will be a new statutory definition of incapacity, based on the law commission’s proposed three definitions to ascertain whether a person lacks capacity:

1. A person is without capacity to make informed decisions if, at the time that the decision needs to be made, he or she is “unable by reason of mental disability to make decision on the matter in question; or unable to communicate a decision on a matter because he or she is unconscious or for any other reason”.
2. Mental disability is “any disability or disorder of the mind or brain, whether permanent or temporary, which results in an impairment or disturbance of mental functioning”.
3. A person is to be regarded as “unable to make a decision by reason of mental disability if the disability is such that, at the time when the decision needs to be made the person is unable to understand or retain the information relevant to the decision, or unable to make a decision based on that information”.

## 3.4 The mental capacity act 2005 provides a statutory framework to empower and protect vulnerable people who are not able to make their own decisions, it makes it clear who can take decisions, in which situations, and how they should go about this. It enables people to plan ahead for a time when they may lose capacity.

# 4.0 Prevent Strategy

4.1 North Star recognises that all members of staff have a duty under the counter terrorism and security act 2015 to have due regard to the need to prevent people to be drawn in to terrorism and to act positively in reporting concerns.

The governments prevent strategy focuses on stopping people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. Prevent recognises that vulnerable individuals of all ages may be at risk of exploitation for terrorism activities.

4.1 all front line staff will receive appropriate training to understand the prevent agenda and be clear about their role in how to recognise and report any concerns.

# 5.0 Policy Statement

## 5.1 As a housing association we have a significant role to play in safeguarding vulnerable adults within our day to day work, all employees and representatives should adopt a zero tolerance approach to abuse.

## 5.2 People who live in our accommodation or receive our support should do so in an environment safe from abuse and we will take all reasonable steps to detect and prevent abuse, raising alerts where abuse is suspected.

## 5.3 We will achieve this by ensuring all staff are aware of the policy and procedures via their induction to the organisation and by subsequent delivery of training. Compulsory bi annual training will be delivered to all staff, there will be three methods of delivery, basic level awareness, advanced for those members of staff in regular contact with members of the community and higher level for organisational designated safeguarding Managers.

## 5.4 All staff, volunteers, students and contractors delivering services direct to vulnerable clients on behalf of North Star will have relevant Disclosure and Barring checks carried out prior to a formal offer of employment or acceptance to deliver services on our behalf, this will then be monitored on a three year rolling programme in line with best practice.

## 5.5 North Star commit to having a dedicated safeguarding group with the purpose of:

- Ensuring Safeguarding is embedded across North Star

- Identify any gaps

- Review/evaluate cases

- Identify and learn from any best practice

- Identify any themes/patterns

- Ensure we have robust monitoring in place

- Ensure our policies are reviewed regularly and they are in accordance with best practice

- Be designated safeguarding leads within the organisation

## 5.6 North Star will keep up to date with changes in legislation and with local and national policy and guidance to comply with the law and best practice. We will work locally with partnerships in delivering our obligations to safeguarding vulnerable adults and children.

## 5.7 We will work with our local authority safeguarding teams and safeguarding boards, being committed to multi agency work, in order to minimise and seek resolution to safeguarding concerns.

# 6.0 Compliance with regulatory standards, legal obligations and definitions

## 6.1 This policy has been developed using the department of health publication “No Secrets 2000” and care and support statutory guidance issued under the Care Act 2014. The Care Act has instigated significant change to Safeguarding Adults, with 6 key principals outlining how we and other organisations will work with vulnerable adults to minimise safeguarding risks. North Star adheres to these principals in our commitment to working together to protect vulnerable adults.

## 6.2 The six key principles of the Care Act that underpin adult safeguarding work consist of:

**Empowerment** – Personalisation and the presumption of person lead decision and informed consent.

**Prevention** – It is better to take action before harm occurs.

**Proportionality** – Proportionate and least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented.

**Protection** – Support and representation for those in greatest need.

**Partnership** – Local solutions through services working within their communities. Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse.

**Accountability** – Accountability and transparency in delivering safeguarding.

## 6.3 The Care Act 2014 identifies a role for housing and housing support providers to play in safeguarding vulnerable adults within the six key principles.

## 6.4 Section 6 of the care act states local authorities must cooperate with each of its relevant partners, and each relevant partner must cooperate with the authority. Therefore North Star is committed to information sharing protocols. Where protocols are not agreed and in place safeguarding concerns take priority and information must be shared.

## 6.5 North Star Housing Association will work with regulatory requirements and legislation including:

* Mental Capacity Act 2005
* Supporting People Quality Assessment Framework (February 2009)
* The public interests disclosures act 1998