
Author**Title of policy**

Head of Housing

Safeguarding Children and
Vulnerable Adults Policy**Section**

Housing

Updated: September 2024

1 Policy statement

- 1.1 Our Mission is to build Great Homes and support Successful Lives by being a Better Business. It is why we exist and guides everything we do.
- 1.2 This Policy sets out our approach to the safeguarding of vulnerable adults and children.
- 1.3 Safeguarding is a fundamental principle within the UK's social care and legal frameworks. It involves a series of measures and procedures designed to protect the health, well-being, and human rights of children and vulnerable adults at risk, enabling them to live free from abuse, neglect, and harm.
- 1.4 Rooftop Housing Group (Rooftop) believes that all children and vulnerable adults have the right to protection from abuse, neglect and exploitation, that safeguarding children and vulnerable adults is everybody's responsibility, that doing nothing is not acceptable and working in partnership with relevant agencies, in conjunction with local safeguarding procedures, has demonstrable results.
- 1.5 We believe that safeguarding prevention work is based on our ability to raise awareness of our customers to what constitutes abuse, neglect and exploitation, and our knowledge and understanding of the circumstances of individual customers and households where their wellbeing is at risk. To this end, we will support and monitor the welfare of vulnerable households to ensure that we make appropriate referrals to statutory agencies as required.

2 Statutory and Regulatory context

- 2.1 The Care Act 2014 is the cornerstone of safeguarding legislation in England, setting out the responsibilities of local authorities, service providers, and other agencies to protect children and vulnerable adults at risk. Key aspects of the Act include:
 - Making Safeguarding Personal (MSP):** This principle emphasizes that safeguarding should be person-centred and outcome-focused, involving the person at risk in decisions and actions taken to protect them.
 - The Duty of Enquiry:** Local authorities are required to make enquiries, or cause others to do so, when they suspect that a child or vulnerable adult is at risk of abuse or neglect.
 - Inter-agency Cooperation:** The Act mandates that organisations and agencies work together to safeguard children and vulnerable adults, ensuring that there is a coordinated approach to the prevention, identification, and response to abuse and neglect.
- 2.2 In addition to the Care Act, other relevant legislation includes the Mental Capacity Act 2005, which provides a framework for making decisions on behalf of children and vulnerable adults who lack the mental capacity to do so themselves, and the Human Rights Act 1998, which underpins the right to protection from inhumane or degrading treatment.
- 2.3 Rooftop complies with relevant legislation and regulation, including:

- Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Children's Act 2004
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Care Act 2014
- Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015
- Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) regulations
- Guidelines in "No Secrets" publication

2.4 In addition, the Regulator of Social Housing document 'Regulating the Standards April 18' sets out that when a provider fails to meet one or more of the consumer standards, it can use its powers if they judge that there are reasonable grounds to suspect:

- That the failure has resulted in serious detriment to the provider's tenants (or potential tenants).
- That if no action is taken by the regulator, there is a significant risk that the failure will result in a serious detriment to the provider's tenants (or potential tenants).

3 Policy outline

3.1 Rooftop recognises that abuse and welfare concerns affect people of all ages, so this Policy applies to all children and vulnerable adults in all types or tenures of RHG accommodation and support services, applicants and visitors to our services. It supports the safeguarding processes of local authorities in whose areas we work and ensures that we have clear and effective joint working arrangements and defined areas of responsibility with all relevant agencies and partners.

3.2 The Policy and its accompanying procedure and guidelines recognise that the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults who live in our properties and use our services is the responsibility of all colleagues, contractors and volunteers, working together with other professionals and agencies in promoting their welfare and safeguarding them from abuse and neglect.

3.3 We understand our role to be that of prevention and early detection, with reference to lead agencies when there are suspicions or allegations of abuse or serious welfare concerns. We recognise that safeguarding adults is everyone's responsibility and understand that the lead co-ordinating role will be taken by the relevant Safeguarding Board in the case of potential abuse.

3.4 This Policy is in accordance with the safeguarding policies for Gloucestershire County Council and Worcestershire County Council, national legal frameworks, statutory and voluntary best practice guidance and local protocols. This Policy should be read in conjunction with Rooftop's safeguarding procedures and the multi-agency policy and procedure for the relevant local authority.

4 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: Principles

4.1 At Rooftop we are committed to creating and sustaining a diverse and inclusive environment achieving positive outcomes for potential and existing customers, our colleagues and the wider community. Our commitments to our customers,

colleagues and communities are detailed in our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy. We are an organisation that values diversity, champions equality and inclusion. We demonstrate this through the activities and the services we provide. This means living by, working to and acting on our Values.

5 Vulnerability: Reasonable Adjustments

- 5.1 There are occasionally circumstances where we need to consider working outside of the parameters of this Policy. This may be where there are several complexities present, or where customers have vulnerabilities that may lead us to make reasonable adjustments to the way we apply this Policy. In such cases, a referral should be made to the Complex Cases Review Group via the Head of Housing, where any approach outside of this Policy (and potentially other policies) will be considered and recorded, if agreed. This will always be considered in the context of the Assessing and Supporting Vulnerability Policy.

6 Data Protection

- 6.1 Rooftop recognises the importance of protecting the personal data of our customers, colleagues, contractors and other stakeholders and our commitment to compliance with data protection laws and managing personal data responsibly. As an organisation, we are committed to ensuring everything we do with personal data follows the principles of lawfulness, transparency, fairness and accuracy whilst minimising the amount of data we collect and only using it for specific, explicit and legitimate purposes until we no longer need it.

7 Definitions

- 7.1 Safeguarding is the right of every child and vulnerable adult accessing our services - to be protected from any form of abuse. Abuse occurs when the child's or vulnerable adult's rights are not respected.
- 7.2 **Abuse** is any behaviour towards a person that deliberately or unknowingly causes them harm, endangers life or violates their rights. It includes not only physical, emotional and psychological ill treatment but also neglect (including self-neglect), financial or sexual abuse, and the impairment of physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development. It concerns the misuse of power, control and/or authority and can be perpetrated by an individual, a group or an organisation.
- 7.3 A **child** is any individual who has not yet reached their 18th birthday.
- 7.4 A **vulnerable adult** is someone of 18 years or over 'who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness' and 'who is or maybe unable to take care of him or herself or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation' (*No Secrets' Guidance 2000).
- 7.5 **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.
- 7.6 The definition of abuse includes Domestic Abuse and forced marriage.
- **Domestic Abuse** is 'any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between adults who are, or have been intimate partners or between family members, regardless of gender or sexuality.
 - **Forced marriage** is one in which one or both of the spouses do not consent to the marriage and some element of duress is involved, including the use of physical and emotional pressure. Forced marriage is not sanctioned within any culture or religion.

- 7.7 Some incidents of abuse could also be relevant to any domestic abuse policy and procedures, and we will be clear how we propose to manage any such incident.
- 7.8 **Alert:** external referral to Safeguarding Board of a person or household where the harm caused meets the statutory definition of abuse.
- 7.9 **Concern:** internal referral of a person or household where the harm caused does not meet the statutory definition of abuse, but whose wellbeing is significantly compromised.
- 7.10 **Case Manager:** the RHG colleague making an internal referral of a person or household of concern and/or making an external referral to the appropriate local Safeguarding Board or statutory agency.

8 General principles

- 8.1 All children and vulnerable adults, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial or ethnic origin, religious beliefs and sexual identity have a right to protection from abuse.
- 8.2 Rooftop deliver the principles of this Policy through the application of procedures which clearly distinguish between the safeguarding requirements for vulnerable adults and for children.
- 8.3 We will not tolerate abuse in any circumstances. Doing nothing is not an option, so we will introduce checks to ensure that our colleagues and contractors are making appropriate referrals.
- 8.4 The welfare of the child or vulnerable adult is the paramount consideration.
- 8.5 We will promote the empowerment, wellbeing, security and safety of children and adults at risk of abuse consistent with their rights, mental capacity and personal choices.
- 8.6 We will work with relevant agencies, on individual cases and reviewing best practice and new legislation so that we develop appropriate strategies for responding to the needs of our customers and clients.

9 Preventative work

- 9.1 We will maintain a culture and standards that prevent the development of poor care and support practices.
- 9.2 Our procedures recognise that we have responsibilities as an employer of individuals who work with children and with vulnerable adults. They also recognise that any colleague may identify potential abuse or welfare concerns in their daily work.
- 9.3 Rooftop's recruitment and selection procedure requires references, proof of identity, and for our front-line services enhanced disclosure and three yearly re-checks for every colleague who works with vulnerable adults and children.
- 9.4 Our employment policies prevent barred persons from being employed in any position that involves working with vulnerable adults or children, Where DBS checks reveal any previous convictions that are not subject to barring, a risk assessment will be used to evaluate any potential threat.
- 9.5 All colleagues will work within the procedures that accompany this Policy and will receive training on this Policy at induction, customer facing colleagues will receive annual safeguarding training and in their on-going personal development training, through:
- Reading and understanding the Safeguarding Policy and Procedure

- Workshops as required to update on changes to policy and practice
- Safeguarding eLearning for all customer facing colleagues
- Enhanced eLearning for specifically identified senior roles.

9.6 Colleagues will receive advice and support that allows them to:

- reflect on their practice
- action to take in the case of referring a person of concern
- regular reviews of any cases they are being asked to monitor.

9.7 We will use all reasonable measures to make customers aware of our approach to safeguarding, how abuse is defined, and the most appropriate officer to contact if they have concerns, complaints or anxieties about themselves or others.

10 Principles on responding to disclosure of potential abuse or serious harm

10.1 We will share information about individuals who may be at risk from abuse or serious harm where appropriate, with due regard to confidentiality and information sharing protocols.

10.2 Rooftop will deliver the principles of this Policy through the application of procedures which clearly distinguish between the safeguarding requirements for vulnerable adults and for children.

10.3 Individuals have the right to be in control of their life, make decisions according to their capacity to do so, be treated with respect and consideration and have their confidentiality respected.

10.4 All children and vulnerable adults have a right to intervention, support and/or information which could make life better and/or safer for them and be involved in decisions that are made about them.

10.5 We will monitor and report on the protected and demographic characteristics of all individuals referred through our internal process, to ensure that we are minimising the risk of abuse by being sensitive to cultural, gender and individual needs in our service delivery.

10.6 Rooftop recognises that inter-agency cooperation is essential if children and vulnerable adults are to be protected effectively from abuse. We will work closely in partnership with key agencies and professionals, sharing information and developing appropriate strategies to respond to the needs of our tenants and customers.

10.7 All colleagues will be aware of, and comply with, local guidelines in relation to reporting concerns about children or vulnerable adults at risk. Where no such local procedures exist externally, we will provide our own.

10.8 All unexplained deaths of vulnerable adults should be internally referred to the Safeguarding Lead for the records and preparation of relevant information for the Safeguarding Board Adults Review where required.

10.9 The most appropriate colleague (the Case Manager) will report every instance of disclosed or suspected abuse to the appropriate social care contact in accordance with the appropriate Safeguarding Board procedures and will alert the Police or other emergency services as required. Where appropriate, we will also report concerns to the Disclosure Barring Service or the Care Quality Commission. The Safeguarding Lead will provide support and guidance to the Case Manager as required.

10.10 In sharing information with local authority partners, we will take account of:

- Necessity and proportionality: personal information will only be shared where it is strictly necessary to the intended outcome and proportionate to it, according to the potential risks to an individual or the public.
- Data Protection and GDPR: we will ensure that we comply with our responsibilities under data protection law and any confidentiality obligations that exist. Where there is an urgent situation where a child's or vulnerable adult's life or immediate wellbeing is at risk you should share information regardless of these obligations and make use of Information Sharing Protocols or Data Sharing Agreements which set out what information we will share, how that will happen and demonstrate that we are responsible for complying with data protection law.

10.11 Rooftop actively encourages and supports reporting of concerns and will protect colleagues disclosing malpractice from the risk of victimisation provided the disclosure is made in good faith.

10.12 Rooftop will review new legislation as it arises and continually review our procedures in line with good practice.

11 Principles of intervention

11.1 In 2011 the Government outlined six key principles which sought to increase the protection for vulnerable people. These principles are now incorporated into the Care Act (2014) and underpin all safeguarding work. Rooftop colleagues should do all they can to ensure these are applied to our customers where safeguarding is an issue. The six Key Principles are:

- Empowerment – Victims should be supported in making their own decisions and choices as far as they are able to do so, including those related to risk and their own perceived vulnerability. If decisions are made without taking account of the victims' views this may infringe their human rights and jeopardise other qualities of life.
- Protection – Support and representation for those in greatest need.
- Prevention – It is better to act before harm occurs.
- Proportionality – Safeguarding must be built on proportionality and a consideration of people's human rights.
- Partnership – Local solutions through services working with their communities.
- Accountability – Safeguarding practice and arrangements should be accountable and transparent.

12 Application of this Policy

12.1 The procedures that deliver this Policy complement Safeguarding Board procedures and will ensure that all colleagues engaged in delivering our services:

- Are alert to the possibility of abuse of a vulnerable adult or child in our services
- Are alert to abuse of a customer or applicant to any RHG service
- Know how to recognise potential signs of abuse
- Understand the need to share information about concerns with agencies that need to know
- Understand professional boundaries

- Identify risks associated with lone working
 - Know and use Safeguarding Board guidance
 - Know how and where to report concerns
 - Are aware of good practice.
- 12.2 Serious incident reporting procedures ensure that the Board is made aware of serious allegations involving Rooftop colleagues.
- 12.3 Where there is potential significant risk to the wellbeing of a vulnerable individual or household, colleagues are expected to make an internal referral of concern to the Safeguarding Lead, to follow up any recommendations for action to be taken in respect of the individual, and to review and report on the individual's circumstances at a frequency determined by the procedure.
- 12.4 The application of this Policy recognises the key principles of the Mental Capacity Act 2005 which sets out the right for everyone covered by the Act to make decisions and for any decision made on their behalf to be in their best interests.
- 12.5 Colleagues will always act in accordance with the principles of that Act when they believe that someone is being abused and in determining how to report that abuse.
- 12.6 We will ensure multi-departmental liaison and oversight of safeguarding practice through the Safeguarding Panel, comprising representatives from customer facing teams, to:
- Scrutinise and sign-off of proposed corporate and departmental Safeguarding Policy and processes for approval by the Executive Team and the Board.
 - Make practice-based recommendations for the safeguarding induction and training curriculum.
 - Contribute to Safeguarding Board Safeguarding Reviews and other meetings.
 - Analyse and disseminate "lessons learnt".
 - Oversee departmental response to audit reports.
 - Produce annual reports to the Audit and Risk Committee to review performance, analyse data on the incidence of internal referrals and on those suffering from abuse or serious welfare concerns.
- 12.7 The annual Safeguarding report to the Audit and Risk Committee will:
- Review the operation of safeguarding processes against the Policy and procedure.
 - Review the performance of safeguarding processes against the six key principles in the Care Act.
 - Evaluate the preventative approach of monitoring wellbeing concerns in preventing escalation to safeguarding alerts.
 - Analyse the characteristics of individuals and households and consider whether our approach requires amendment to meet the needs of different communities.
 - Gather feedback from Safeguarding Boards on Rooftop performance.
- 12.8 We will inform customers of our services for vulnerable adults and children of our Policy and procedures on vulnerable adults and children through the sign-up procedure, meetings with housing officers and in our service handbooks.

- 12.9 Safeguarding is a standard agenda item for service delivery team meetings and operational management team meetings.
- 12.10 Our procedures ensure that colleagues know the arrangements and contact details for reporting concerns to Safeguarding Board teams.

13 Roles and responsibilities

- 13.1 It is the responsibility of all colleagues to support the organisation's commitment to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults and attend training as required.
- 13.2 It is the responsibility of Rooftop's Board, Executive Team, Leadership Team and all managers to ensure compliance and the effectiveness of the procedure accompanying this Policy.
- 13.3 Rooftop's Safeguarding Lead is the Supported Housing Manager.
- 13.4 Rooftop's Safeguarding Lead is responsible for maintaining, updating and delivering appropriate procedures to deliver policy objectives, and that these are available and understood by all teams.
- 13.5 It is the responsibility of managers and all customer-facing colleagues to ensure that they understand the importance of this Policy and related procedures and receive training at induction and in their on-going training plan.
- 13.6 The Safeguarding Lead will provide guidance and support to any colleagues acting as Case Manager for an individual or household.
- 13.7 Failure to report suspected harm or abuse in line with the procedure that accompanies this Policy may be regarded as colluding with the harm or abuse and be in breach of conditions.
- 13.8 All customer facing colleagues are responsible for familiarising themselves with this Policy and its associated procedures.

14 Role of Safeguarding Boards

- 14.1 Safeguarding Boards are multi-agency boards established in each local authority promote, inform and support Safeguarding work. They ensure that priority is given to the prevention of abuse and that safeguarding is integrated into other community initiatives and services.
- 14.2 The Care Act requires local authorities to set up a Safeguarding Boards in their area, giving these Boards a clear basis in law for the first time. The Act says that the Safeguarding Board must:
- Include the local authority, the NHS and the police, who should meet regularly to discuss and act upon local safeguarding issues.
 - Develop shared plans for safeguarding, working with local people to decide how best to protect adults in vulnerable situations.
 - Publish this safeguarding plan and report to the public annually on its progress, so that different organisations can make sure they are working together in the best way.
- 14.3 The Care Act sets out the Safeguarding Board's responsibility for protecting children and adults with care and support needs from abuse or neglect for the first time in primary legislation. Safeguarding Boards must make enquiries, or cause another agency to do so, whenever abuse or neglect are suspected in relation to a child or adult, and it is deemed necessary to enable it to decide what (if any) action is needed to help and protect the adult. This function cannot be delegated.

- 14.4 The Safeguarding Board retains the responsibility for ensuring that the enquiry is referred to the right place and is acted upon. In its lead and coordinating role, it should assure itself that the enquiry satisfies its duty under section 42 of the Care Act to decide what action (if any) is necessary to help and protect the adult and by whom, and to ensure that such action is taken when necessary. In this role if the Safeguarding Board has asked someone else to make enquiries, it is able to challenge the body making the enquiry if it considers that the process and/or outcome is unsatisfactory.
- 14.5 Where the local Safeguarding Board takes responsibility for undertaking an enquiry, it may agree with the Safeguarding Lead that Rooftop no longer needs to monitor the case, in which circumstances, the Case Manager will be advised that the case will be closed.

15 Review

- 15.1 This policy will be reviewed every three years unless there are major changes in legislation or good practice.

16 Consultation

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|-------------|
| Executive Director – Operations and | | |
| 15.1 | Supported Housing Manager (as Safeguarding Lead) | August 2024 |
| 15.2 | Executive Team | August 2024 |

17 Responsibilities

- | Responsible body | | |
|-------------------------|--|-----------------|
| 16.1 | Formulation, amendment and approval of policy | Board of RHG |
| | Monitoring of policy | Leadership Team |
| | Operational management of policy/policy author | Head of Housing |
| 16.2 | Date of formulation of policy | September 2022 |
| 16.3 | Date of policy reviews | September 2022 |
| | | September 2024 |
| 16.4 | Date of next review | September 2027 |

Associated documents

Internal – Policies and procedures

- Safeguarding procedures
- MAPPA guidance
- Confidentiality procedure
- Disclosure of information procedure
- Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Learning and Development Policy
- Domestic Abuse Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy and procedure
- Anti-Fraud Policy
- Disciplinary Policy and procedure
- Risk Assessment Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Support and Care associated procedures
- Colleague Handbook
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Grievance Policy and procedure
- Volunteering Policy (for non-staff volunteers)
- Colleague Code of Conduct

External

- Care Act 2014
- Care and Support Statutory Guidance Chapter 14 (October 2014)
- Serious Crime Act 2015
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Equality Act 2010
- Home Office Prevent Strategy June 2011
- Safeguarding Adults, ADASS, 2005
- The Mental Capacity Act (including DoLs) 2013
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Safeguarding Adults – National Framework of Standards for Good Practice and Outcomes in Adult Protection Work (2010)