



CHILDRENS SAFEGUARDING POLICY

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Rochdale Boroughwide Housing Limited is a charitable community benefit society.

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1. General Considerations & Context

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to protect and promote the welfare of children and young people using or receiving services provided or commissioned by Rochdale Boroughwide Housing (RBH). RBH recognises that safeguarding children is ‘everyone’s business’ and it is the responsibility of all employees, volunteers and contracted service providers to play a role in keeping children safe.
- 1.2 The policy objectives are to:
- Set out how RBH will meet its legal obligations and what it will do to protect and safeguard children and young adults
 - Set out how RBH will work in partnership with Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Children’s Board (RBSCB) and other partners on safeguarding issues
 - Ensure that robust reporting, recording and monitoring processes are in place and reports of abuse or potential abuse are dealt with in a serious and effective manner
 - Support All RBH employees, volunteers and contractors to deal effectively with safeguarding issues and ensure that they receive appropriate training
 - Ensure that robust safer recruitment processes are in place
- 1.3 Local authorities have overarching responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children. They have a number of statutory functions under the 1989 and 2004 Childrens Act. This includes specific duties in relation to children in need and children suffering or likely to suffer, significant harm, regardless of where they are found, under section 17 and 47 of the Childrens Act.
- 1.4 Whilst local authorities play a lead role, safeguarding children and protecting them from harm is everyone’s responsibility. Section 11 of the Children’s Act 2004 places duties on a range of organisations to ensure their functions and any services they contract out to others, are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. RBC and RBH recognise that as the main social housing provider in the Rochdale Borough, RBH employees, volunteers and contractors working in its communities may become aware of conditions that could have an adverse affect on children and takes this statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children seriously.
- 1.5 **Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013** is intended to provide a national framework within which agencies and professionals at a local level – individually and jointly – draw up and agree their own ways of working together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. RBH is committed to working together with all partners, including RBC, and has signed up to be a key partner on the RBSCB.
- 1.6 The Strategic Lead for Health and Wellbeing will oversee the development and review of safeguarding policies and procedures to ensure they remain relevant operationally and are reflective of national and local legislation. This lead, with support from the Director of Customer Services and Head of Income and Housing Access will provide a link to the Board, Representative Body, Executive Management Team and the Nominated Officers group .

- 1.7 We will continue to engage with RBH Young Voices steering group to become a recognised organisation of trust amongst young people.
- 1.8 The Corporate Strategy 2015/18 - Our Mutual Future - sets out the priorities of RBH as a unique mutual society with tenant and employee members at its heart. It is designed to set out the future direction of the new mutual RBH, our values, our vision and our mission, followed by the objectives and specific targets, projects and plans which will support these.
- 1.9 We have established a Nominated Safeguarding officer group, consisting of representatives from across the society who are fully trained in safeguarding. They are responsible for flagging up safeguarding concerns to RBC, who are then responsible for investigating these concerns. The role of the Nominated Officer group and structure will be overseen by the Community Safety Co-ordinator.
- 1.10 This policy relates to all RBH service provision and delivery. This includes all employees from across the society at all levels. All safeguarding activity will encompass Rochdale Councils statutory responsibility and will link to RBH's mutual values.

2. Introduction

2.1 For the purpose of this policy children are defined as;

Anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. The fact that a child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently or is in further education, is a member of the armed forces, is in hospital or in custody in the secure estate, does not change his/her status or entitlements to services or protection.

2.2 Safeguarding Children is everyone's responsibility. RBH recognises the rights of every child to protection from abuse of any kind and is committed promoting and safeguarding the welfare of children in its communities. This policy has been developed in line with this commitment. It reflects current legislation and accepted best practice in line with Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013. This policy supports the policies, procedures, principles and values of the Greater Manchester Safeguarding Partnership.

2.3 Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined for the purposes of this policy as:

- Protecting children from maltreatment
- Preventing impairment of children's health and development
- Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

2.4 These aspects of safeguarding and promoting welfare are cumulative and all contribute to the five outcomes that are key to children and young people's wellbeing, namely:

- Stay safe
- Be healthy
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic wellbeing

2.5 Child Protection is part of safeguarding and promoting welfare and is defined in the Children's Act 1989 as the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of children. This Act defines four main categories of significant harm and all can have a major long term effect on a child's health, development and wellbeing.

2.6 Abuse

Abuse is defined as a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely by others (e.g. via the internet). They may be abused by an adult or adults or another child or children

2.7 The four main categories of abuse are:

Physical abuse – A form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness to a child.

Emotional abuse – The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's 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 and 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 over protection 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. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Sexual abuse – Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities 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. They may also include non contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to

behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Neglect – the persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical and/or psychological needs likely to result in the serious impairment of the child’s health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- Protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers)
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child’s basic emotional needs.

Abuse is never acceptable in any community, in any culture or under any circumstance.

3. Methodology

3.1 RBH developed a Safeguarding Children Policy in 2012 and this has now been reviewed for various reasons:

- RBH becoming a mutual organisation
- RBH are now members of Rochdale Boroughwide Safeguarding Children Board (RBSCB), Rochdale Quality Assessment Performance Steering Group and Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Training sub group
- Following the publication of Rochdale Council’s updated Safeguarding Policy
- Following the findings of the recently published Ofsted Report regarding Safeguarding in Rochdale Borough December 2014.

3.2 This policy has been developed via a sub group of the Safeguarding Nominated Officers group and by consideration of the findings of RBH’s section 11 Audit on how we demonstrate compliance with the Children’s Act 2004. It has involved consultation with members through the Services for All group, RBH Young Voices, discussions with nominated officers, best practice by other registered providers and analysis of the Section 11 Audit.

4. Aims and Objectives

4.1 The aims and objectives of this policy (and associated procedures) are to clearly define the responsibility of RBH as a housing provider for monitoring and reporting safeguarding concerns. There is a network of safeguarding nominated officers who ensure the correct processes are followed and where necessary report the concerns to the statutory authorities. The safeguarding responsibility will be overseen by the The Strategic Lead for Health and Wellbeing and operational responsibility will be overseen by the Community Safety Co-ordinator..

4.2 The policy is based on the following mutual values.

Responsibility – All employees from the Chief Executive down will take responsibility for safeguarding children. All employees who come into contact with children at risk have responsibility for ensuring that they are confident to observe, monitor and report safeguarding concerns to a nominated officer who will ensure the statutory authorities are made aware of concerns at the earliest possible time.

Equity – the Safeguarding Policy has been developed in a fair and unbiased way giving due regard to legislative requirements and requirements identified within the Council's safeguarding children policy framework. An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken for this policy. This highlighted the need for effective equality monitoring of the application of the safeguarding process.

Democracy – members have been involved in the development of this policy and it has been reviewed by RBH's Service for All and Young Voices groups prior to being approved by RBH Executive Management Team.

Pioneering

RBH wish to have a pioneering role in safeguarding children. RBH is a key partner in working with RBSCB to ensure that its policies work in conjunction with RBC's policy framework.

Openness & Honesty – The policy is open and honest in its approach to safeguarding and will be published so all employees have access to review the policy and have a clear understanding of the society's commitment to safeguarding children. Should the policy need a review ahead of the normal timescales because it is thought it needs to be improved, RBH will inform the Representative Body of such. RBH's approach to safeguarding will be open and honest wherever possible taking into consideration the child's wellbeing and potential safeguarding concerns.

Caring – Taking an effective safeguarding approach is vital to help protect children in need or at risk of harm, so this is an integral part of caring for children within RBH neighbourhoods and their families, and working with partners to meet their needs.

Championing

We encourage all employees to take responsibility for safeguarding children and to have confidence in the reporting mechanisms and follow-up procedures. Nominated Officers group will champion safeguarding across RBH.

Vision for Safeguarding:

'To use our exceptional position as a mutual to promote safeguarding as everyone's business'. RBH will ensure people feel supported and confident in dealing with safeguarding concerns through a heightened awareness and greater confidence in alerting and reporting through the correct channels.

Mission for Safeguarding:

To meet the aspirations of our communities and tenants by providing inclusive robust policies around safeguarding therefore enabling employees and tenants to be protected and kept safe within their own communities.

5. Scope of the Policy

5.1 This policy has been designed to protect and safeguard children and young people at risk of harm and / or who may be suffering harm, neglect or abuse living in our homes or communities. There is a separate Safeguarding Adults policy running parallel to this policy.

5.2 Whilst it is recognised that members, employees, volunteers and contracted service providers are likely to have varied levels of contact with children and young people as part of their duties and responsibilities RBH expects everyone to be aware of the potential indicators of abuse and neglect and be clear about what to do if they have concerns.

5.3 It is important to remember the following:

- It is not the responsibility of any RBH member, employee, volunteer or contracted service provider to determine whether abuse is actually taking place

However,

- It is the responsibility of any RBH member, employee, volunteer or contracted service provider to follow the RBH Safeguarding Children Procedure if they are concerned abuse is taking place or children or young people are at risk of harm, abuse or neglect.

6. Policy Statement

6.1 Rochdale Boroughwide Housing recognises the rights of every child to protection from abuse of any kind and is committed to promoting and safeguarding the welfare of children in the communities it serves. RBH will ensure that:

- The welfare of the child is paramount
- All children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and / or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately
- All employees have a responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate Nominated Officer
- Employees and volunteers will be trained to recognise symptoms of abuse and to be able to deal with situation where abuse is suspected or has occurred
- All children and young people will be listened to and treated fairly with dignity and respect

- RBH will promote robust safeguarding procedures to support this policy

Accountability

- 6.2 Safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility and RBH has established strategic leads at both Board and EMT level. The Chair of the Board and the Director of Customer Services are the nominated Champions for Safeguarding. The Strategic Lead for Health and Wellbeing will be responsible for the strategic direction of Safeguarding Adults and children whilst The Head of Income and Housing Access is the Senior Management Lead for Safeguarding Children.
- 6.3 RBH will be represented and work with the Rochdale Borough Safeguarding Childrens Board(RBSCB) and other safeguarding sub groups to ensure that effective partnership working is in place at both strategic and operational level.
- 6.4 The Society has developed and trained a team of employees to support Safeguarding across the society. These are Nominated Officers and are the point of contact for front line employees to raise safeguarding concerns and the liaison officers with statutory agencies making referrals to the Child Care Services.
- 6.5 Contracted Service Providers, Sub Contractors or other organisations funded by or on behalf of RBH will be responsible for applying for the appropriate Disclosure and Barring Service checks, delivering appropriate Safeguarding training for their level of contact with children and young people and ensuring their employees comply with the Society's Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.

Recruitment and Training

- 6.6 All appointments will be subject to a range of pre employment checks and a comprehensive induction programme. Reference checks for internal appointments may include referring to recent Personal Development Reviews, 1 to 1 and attendance records. Any appointments where the post falls within the definition of a regulated activity, working closely and regularly with children/vulnerable adults will be subject to the Disclosure and Barring Service checking process.
- 6.7 RBH has developed and rolled out a comprehensive and role specific training programme for employees for Safeguarding Children. Any training needs or requirements will be identified through the RBH PDR process.

Information Sharing

- 6.8 RBH recognises and understands that information is vital to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people.
- 6.9 Under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 key people and bodies have the duty to make arrangements which ensure their functions are discharged with regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. As a member of RBSCB, RBH is committed to sharing information in compliance with this statutory requirement.

Allegations

Safeguarding Children Policy

- 6.10 Where an RBH employee has a Safeguarding concern, allegation or encounters a case of alleged or suspected child abuse or neglect they should raise this with a Nominated Officer and they can consider whether a safeguarding referral should be made to RBC.

RBH is working with the RBSCB to ensure that children are aware of information about how to keep safe and know where to go if they need help or are worried about a friend. A child may make an allegation either via Rochdale Children's Social Care team or may choose to tell an adult including an RBH employee or volunteer. An allegation can be made against an RBH employee, volunteer or person seconded to the society.

- 6.11 Any allegations made by a child will be heard and taken seriously. An allegation should be immediately made known to the Head of Income and Customer Support or the Head of HR who are the lead LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) liaison officers. Both Senior Managers are able to provide information and support to an employee receiving an allegation involving another RBH employee. The LADO Officer will be notified and contact will be maintained to update progress. RBH's disciplinary procedures will be followed with fairness, honesty and respect throughout the process. They will be clearly informed about the procedures being followed unless doing so would prejudice the external investigation or the right to confidentiality of the alleged victim or concerned party. The RBH employee will have their rights detailed in RBH's Disciplinary Procedures.

Safe Working Practices

- 6.12 RBH employees will talk to and treat children with respect at all times and encourage other adults and children to do the same. Adults working with children are responsible for their own actions and behavior and should avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions.

RBH employees, volunteers and employees of contracted service providers must take reasonable care to consider the health and safety of others who may be affected by their actions or omissions. If lone working is an integral part of their role then they must ensure that the appropriate risk assessments have been conducted and agreed. This will also apply to home visits.

7. Equality and Diversity

- 7.1 The Safeguarding Children Policy has been subject to a 'Relevance Test' and as a result a full Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken.
- 7.2 The outcome of the assessment is that this policy has a medium impact on our customers.

8. Consultation

- 8.1 Whilst Section 11 of the Childrens Act 2004 places a duty on local authorities that provide children's and other types of services including childrens and adult social care services, public health, housing, sport, culture and leisure services, licencing and youth services. The Safeguarding Children Policy reflects RBH's priority to support RBC as a partner organisation and is committed protecting children living in our communities. This policy has been developed through effective consultation with Young Voices members and it has been circulated to the Services for All Group and the RBSCB Lead at RMBC for consultation prior to going to RBH EMT for approval. It has been developed through a sub-group of the nominated officers group, so has significant employee engagement.

9. Monitoring and Review

- 9.1 All RBH strategies, policies and procedures are reviewed on a regular basis in order to ensure that they are 'fit for purpose' and comply with all relevant legislation and statutory regulations.
- 9.2 RBH completes a section 11 Self Assessment annually submitted to RBSCB. RBH is then invited to attend a Challenge Panel meeting to verify and review outcomes and actions highlighted in the section 11 Self Assessment.
- 9.3 This policy including any other related procedures will be reviewed annually by the relevant lead officer and updated where necessary to ensure its continued appropriateness and formally reviewed and submitted to the appropriate approving body at least once every three years.

10. Links to other RBH Policies and Procedures

- 10.1 The Safeguarding Children Policy will underpin all activity the society and its employees undertake to ensure that children at risk are kept safe within RBH communities and supported by RBH services. The policy links into the RBH Corporate Strategy – Our Mutual Future.
- Objective 2 – Supporting People and Place. Our values mean that we care about others and look for opportunities to support vulnerable people, creating opportunities for the young and championing communities.
- 10.3 The Safeguarding Children Policy will protect children at risk of harm living in our homes within our communities. RBH will work with partners to ensure children and young people are kept safe from abuse and the risk of abuse, and that statutory agencies are alerted quickly to ensure that help and support is received as soon as possible. It will be fully supported by robust Safeguarding Children procedures.

10.4 Other policies which link into Safeguarding Children are:

- RBC Allocations Policy
- RBC Safeguarding Policy
- RBH Income Policy
- RBH Safeguarding Adults Policy
- RBH HR Policy
- Procurement and associated contracts

10.5 In addition to RBH policies and procedures this policy links into Greater Manchester safeguarding children's board procedural guidance:

<http://greatermanchesterscb.proceduresonline.com>