

Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy

1 Purpose

“Our organisation is committed to working with colleagues, customers and key stakeholders to make sure safeguarding is understood and good practice demonstrated throughout the organisation. We recognise the importance of safeguarding adults at risk who live in our communities, and we are committed to championing their welfare by having policy and practice which reflects statutory responsibilities, government guidance and best practice”

Geeta Nanda CEO, Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing

The introduction of the Care Act 2014 gave local authorities a statutory duty to respond to concerns regarding the safety and wellbeing of an adult who is, or may be at risk, of abuse or neglect. As community and service partners, we have a responsibility to support local authorities where concerns relate to adults at risk in our communities. In Care Quality Commission (CQC) regulated services and commissioned or externally funded services, there is also a requirement to meet compliance with regulatory standards and contracts.

We believe that all people in our communities have the right to feel safe and secure. Wherever they come into contact with us, they will be treated with dignity and respect and we will take all safeguarding concerns seriously and respond according to our procedures and best practice.

All members of our workforce have a duty to keep people safe and to help protect them from abuse or harm. As an organisation, we will ensure that anyone working for us is trained to identify and prevent safeguarding issues, understands the different aspects of safeguarding, and knows that they have a duty to report.

2 Scope

This policy sets out our approach to safeguarding adults at risk. The protection offered by this policy and accompanying procedures applies to:

- All adults at risk who live in accommodation owned or managed by us
- All adults at risk where we deliver community-based services or that we may encounter in our work

Safeguarding only applies to people who meet the definition of ‘Adults at Risk’ as set out below however, MTVH offers support to others at risk not meeting this definition. Please see the **Additional Customer Requirement Policy**.

Any concerns about safeguarding risks to children must be reported using the relevant procedures, please see our **Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedure**.

The requirements and expectations set out in this policy apply but are not limited to:

- All colleagues including agency, bank workers, students, peer mentors, volunteers, consultants, contractors, and suppliers
- All stakeholders/ partners commissioned by us

Our Commitment

We will:

- Set clear priorities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of adults at risk

- Train all colleagues to identify and report safeguarding concerns
- Require all colleagues and stakeholders/partners to make sure all suspicions of abuse and allegations are taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately
- Implement recruitment and human resources management processes which are robust, including arrangements for appropriate checks on new starters, continuing colleagues and volunteers

3 Our Approach

3.1 Definitions

Safeguarding means protecting a persons' right to live in safety, free from abuse, harm, exploitation or neglect. Working with other agencies, we safeguard adults at risk by aiming to prevent and stop the risks and experience of abuse, harm, exploitation or neglect.

Adult at Risk is someone aged 18 or over 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 of, or the experience of abuse or neglect

Abuse is mistreatment by any other person or persons that violates a person's human and civil rights. It is an act (or acts), either one-off or a pattern of abuse, to cause harm, maltreatment or distress and can vary from treating someone with disrespect in a way which significantly affects the person's quality of life, to causing physical or psychological suffering. The Care Act 2014 defines 10 main categories of abuse are:

- Physical
- Domestic
- Sexual
- Psychological
- Financial or material
- Modern Slavery
- Discriminatory
- Organisational or institutional
- Neglect or acts of omissions
- Self-neglect

Neglect is a failure to meet an adult at risk's basic needs.

Harm means ill-treatment or the impairment of health or development (including, impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another).

Modern Slavery can include; slavery, servitude, forced and compulsory labour and human trafficking. The Modern Slavery Act 2015 recognises that an adult at risk can be a victim of modern slavery. The common factors are that a victim is, or is intended to be, used or exploited for someone else's (usually financial) gain, without respect for their human rights.

Exploitation is the act of using someone unfairly to another's advantage. There is often an unequal exchange (for example, of money, sex, or work) with an adult at risk, in return for necessities, such as food, shelter or protection. This could involve coercion where an individual feels frightened of the consequences if they refuse.

Honour Based Violence is a collection of practices, which are used to control behaviour within families or other social groups to protect perceived cultural and religious beliefs and/or honour. Such violence can occur when perpetrators perceive that a relative has shamed the family and/or community by breaking their honour code. Adults who are subject to honour-based abuse and violence are at risk of significant harm through physical, sexual, psychological, emotional harm and neglect. In some cases, they are also at risk of being killed.

Honour based abuse and violence manifests itself in a diverse range of ways, it can lead to a deeply embedded form of coercive control, built on expectations about behaviour. It can be distinguished from other forms of violence, as it is often committed with some degree of approval and/or collusion from family and/or community members. Women, men and younger members of the family can all be involved in the abuse.

Forced Marriage is where one or both people do not consent to the marriage as they are pressurised, or abuse is used, to force them to do so. It is recognised in the UK as a form of domestic abuse and a violation of human rights.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is illegal in the UK under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 and is extremely dangerous. FGM causes physical, psychological and sexual harm which can be severely disabling. Female genital mutilation (FGM) is the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia for non-medical reasons. It's also known as female circumcision or cutting. FGM is often performed by someone with no medical training who uses instruments such as a knife, scalpel, scissors, glass or razor blade. Anaesthetic or antiseptic treatment are rarely used and are often forcibly restrained.

3.2 Responsibilities for our Colleagues

All colleagues have an individual responsibility to:

- Understand what we expect in terms of their own behaviour and conduct
- Be familiar with the safeguarding reporting procedure and with whom they should raise any concerns
- Access training and support to enhance their own understanding of safeguarding and request support when required
- Know how to escalate a concern in accordance with their role
- Exercise professional curiosity and judgement by asking the right questions and follow up with the appropriate actions

3.3 Internal Safeguarding Structure

The Safeguarding & Care Quality Panel has oversight and accountability on behalf of our Board for assurance of safeguarding, regulatory reporting compliance and internal performance standards across the organisation. Its membership is drawn from Board members, independent industry practitioners and senior colleagues. Its Terms of Reference are agreed by the Board and sets out our Safeguarding Agenda, agreed by the Executive Team. Following a Safeguarding, Care and Quality Panel meeting, the Chair will share any feedback with the Board.

The Executive Director, Customer Services is the named senior person in our organisation with accountability for assurance of safeguarding compliance, internal arrangements and oversight of serious safeguarding concerns and incidents. The Executive Director of Customer Services will chair the Safeguarding, Care and Quality Panel meetings.

The Head of Strategy & Support is the operational lead in our organisation with responsibility for safeguarding assurance and the management of serious safeguarding concerns and incidents. They

provide specialised advice and oversight to the organisation for its practice and liaise with partner organisations.

Safeguarding Support Manager acts as a source of support, advice, and expertise for all colleagues to enable them to mitigate risks to the customer and negotiate relationships with partners. They liaise with relevant Heads of Service or Managers to discuss and resolve ongoing issues with the support process or investigations. Provides briefings and training to colleagues to ensure safeguarding concerns are well managed, sharing learning from reviews and case studies.

The Operational Managers have the responsibility to ensure that any management, at service or team level, complete the required actions following a safeguarding alert.

The Assessment and Support Team process all safeguarding reports. They triage referrals in accordance with risk level, signpost to services, make referrals to local authorities and facilitate case conferences with relevant colleagues to agree actions and safety planning. They provide first-line assurance on the management of safeguarding cases in operational teams. Their role includes tracking safeguarding concerns to ensure all agreed actions have been completed.

The Caldicott Guardian is a senior person within our organisation who makes sure that the personal information about our customers is used legally, ethically and appropriately, and that confidentiality is maintained. They will provide support on complex matters involving confidentiality and information sharing.

3.4 Safer Recruitment

Safer practice in recruitment means the safety and welfare of our customers is paramount at every stage of the process. It starts with detailed planning at recruitment and, where the post is advertised, ensures our commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of customers and their children is clear. It also requires a consistent and thorough process. Key elements include:

- The job description for all relevant roles references the responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children/ adults at risk
- The person specification for all relevant roles includes specific reference to suitability to work with children/ adults at risk
- Comprehensive scrutiny of information from applicants, challenge and resolution of any gaps, discrepancies or anomalies in employment histories
- Obtaining independent professional references that answer specific questions to help assess an applicant's suitability to work with children/ adults at risk and follow up any concerns
- A face-to-face or virtual interview that explores the candidate's suitability to work with adults at risk as well as their suitability for the post
- Carry out an appropriate level of Disclosure and Barring (DBS) check for roles which involve working with adults and children at risk, or providing CQC regulated activity – level of DBS are defined in the **Disclosure and Barring (DBS) Policy**
- Where colleagues change roles there may be changes in their DBS requirements
- DBS checks will be renewed periodically through continuing employment, timeframes dependent upon the individual role and will be detailed in the **Disclosure and Barring (DBS) Policy**

4 Our Customers

4.1 Making Safeguarding Personal

It is important that safeguarding processes are not so prescriptive that the individual circumstances of the adults at risk affected cannot be considered. Making Safeguarding Personal is an approach to safeguarding that is person centred and outcomes focused; it recognises that the best approach to

safeguarding always involves the adult at risk in any decision making and takes their views, wishes, preferences, histories, circumstances and lifestyle into account.

We support the Local Government Association (LGA) **Making Safeguarding Personal Agenda**. The Agenda defines six principles of safeguarding which are as follows:

- **Empowerment** - Customers being supported and encouraged to make their own decisions and using informed consent by recognising their individual needs and always respecting their wishes.
- **Prevention** - It is better to take action before harm occurs, we advise customers what they can do to keep themselves safe.
- **Proportionality** – To take the least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented, making the customers involved throughout the process. We will only be involved when needed and work with the customer's interests in mind.
- **Protection** - Support and representation provided for those in greatest need, we will help customers report abuse and neglect as well as support customers to be involved throughout the process.
- **Partnership** – We will work together with services in the community as they also have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse. Personal and sensitive information will be treated in confidence, only sharing information with others when necessary.
- **Accountability** - Accountability and transparency in delivering safeguarding. We will inform customers at every stage of the process and will clearly explain the purpose of our intervention.

Customers views will be sought and welcomed in the shaping of our safeguarding policies and practice and also in the development of safeguarding resources for our customers and communities.

5 Our Colleagues

5.1 Colleague Allegations

Where there is suspected abuse by a colleague, the **Safeguarding Allegations Against a Colleague Procedure** must be followed. If an allegation is made about a colleague, we would consider a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service where appropriate.

5.2 Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing is when someone raises a concern about a dangerous or illegal activity or any wrongdoing within their organisation or externally. It is a vital process for identifying risks to people's safety, including adults at risk. Sharing information or talking through a concern can be the first step to helping an organisation identify problems and improve their practices. If a colleague feels unable to share information through usual routes, or otherwise wishes to whistleblow, they must refer to our **Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure**.

5.3 Safeguarding Concern about a Colleague

A colleague may voluntarily or due to circumstances admit experiencing abuse or neglect or may be at risk. Our aim is to safeguard the colleague and provide information about services that can help them with the aim of reducing risk. Identification of a safeguarding concern can lead to appropriate help and support being offered which can reduce prolonged or repeated suffering. It can help reduce sick absence and stress on colleagues.

A safeguarding concern about a colleague will be supported by their line manager with guidance from HR. Colleagues also have access to the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP). This gives colleagues the opportunity to request a counsellor of the same gender or ethnicity and provides 24/7 telephone helpline across a broad range of issues. A referral to the relevant local authority's social care service, if required, will be supported by the specific manager in direct liaison with HR.

Colleagues in HR may seek specific advice from senior specialist safeguarding colleagues, however line managers must always direct concerns to their HR representative in the first instance.

6 Working Together in Partnership

We are committed to working in partnership with the Police, Social Care teams, Health and Local Safeguarding Children and Adult Boards (LSCB and SAB) or their equivalent Strategic Partnership Boards in accordance with their local procedures, thresholds and information-sharing protocols. This is essential to enable these agencies to carry out their statutory duties to promote and safeguard the welfare of adults at risk and to investigate and deter abuse.

Prevent Duty

PREVENT is one of four elements in the government counter terrorism strategy (CONTEST). As a service partner, we recognise our role in Safer Partnerships, part of the government's Prevent Strategy. The strategy seeks to safeguard young people and adults at risk, against grooming or exploitation into radicalization/ extremism. Prevent training is a required module in our safeguarding training programme for colleagues in relevant roles.

7 Background Legislation

- Care Act 2014
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Mental Capacity Act 2003
- Local Government Association (LGA) Making Safeguarding Personal Agenda
- Counter-Terrorism Act 2008
- Modern Slavery Act 2015
- Employment Rights Act 1996 (as amended by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998)
- Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003
- Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007
- Marriage and Civil Partnership (Minimum Age) Act 2022
- Equality Act 2010

8 Our commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

In implementing this policy MTVH will not discriminate against any colleague, customer, or stakeholder on the grounds of their sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment status, ethnic origin, age, religious belief, disability, marital status, and pregnancy/maternity.

An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for this policy and is retained by the Policy Team.

9 Key Policy Information

Policy Owner	Director of Operational Risk and Development
Author	Safeguarding Support Manager
Approved by	Customer Services SLT
Effective from	March 2024

Approach to review	This Policy & associated Procedures will be reviewed as required by the owner for changes in legislation, regulation, and operational need. Any amendments will be appropriately consulted on and signed off before being clearly communicated to customers and colleagues. Next expected review is 3 years from the 'Effective date' of this document.
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