

**Lighthouse Hostel Policies & Procedures**

**Safeguarding Children Policy**

**Version 4**

**November 2020**

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**Audited by**

**Residents Committee**

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## **Introduction**

Whilst it is parents and carers who have primary care for their children, local authorities, working with partner organisations and agencies, have specific duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area. A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children July 2018 was developed to give organisations like ourselves guidance on how to safeguard children visiting or known to our service. This policy has been developed in line with this guidance.

### **The key messages for the hostel:**

- safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.
- a child-centred approach is required.
- we need to have a range of safeguarding measures in place.
- work closely with social services.
- paid and volunteer staff need to be aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and how to report concerns.

### **Organisational safeguarding requirements**

The Working Together document states that Voluntary providers should have in place:

- a clear line of accountability for providing safeguarding services for children
- a senior board level safeguarding lead
- a culture of listening to children
- arrangements for information sharing
- Clear whistle blowing procedures
- a designated safeguarding lead (this role explicitly defined in job description)
- safe recruitment practices, including Access NI checks
- supervision and support for staff including safeguarding training, a mandatory induction, and regular reviews
- clear policies to deal with allegations of people who work with children including reporting to the social services and referral to Safeguarding Board Northern Ireland when appropriate

- **Our commitment to Safeguarding children**

The staff and volunteers of the Lighthouse are committed to practice which promotes the welfare of children and young people and safeguards them from harm. Staff and volunteers of the Lighthouse accept and recognise our responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues that cause harm, and to establish and maintain a safe environment. We will not tolerate any form of abuse wherever it occurs or whoever is responsible.

We will endeavour to safeguard children by:

- Adhering to our safeguarding policy and ensuring that it is supported by robust procedures;
- Carefully following the procedures laid down for the recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers;
- Providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training;
- Implementing clear procedures for raising awareness of and responding to abuse within the organisation and for reporting concerns to statutory agencies that need to know, while involving family members and children appropriately;
- Developing strong links with external agencies to ensure effective information sharing and reporting;
- Ensuring general safety and risk management procedures are adhered to;
- Promoting full participation and having clear procedures for dealing with concerns and complaints;
- Managing personal information, confidentiality and information sharing;
- Safeguarding children by implementing a code of conduct and professional boundaries policy for all involved with the organisation, including visitors.

We will review our policy, procedures, code of behaviour and practice every 3 years to ensure the effectiveness of the policy and its implementation.

### **What is safeguarding**

It might be difficult to accept, but every child can be hurt, put at risk of harm or abused, regardless of their age, gender, religion or ethnicity.

Safeguarding legislation and government guidance says that safeguarding means:

- 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.
- taking action to enable all children and young people to have the best outcome

### **Children's Rights**

The United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) applies to all children and young people aged 17 and under. The convention is separated into 54 articles: most give children social, economic, cultural or civil and political rights, while others set out how governments must publicise or implement the convention. From 15 January 1992, when the treaty came into force, every child in the UK has been entitled to over 40 specific rights.

These include:

- the right to life, survival and development
- the right to have their views respected and to have their best interests considered at all times
- the right to a name and nationality, freedom of expression and access to information concerning them
- the right to live in a family environment or alternative care and to have contact with both parents if possible
- health and welfare rights - including rights for disabled children - the right to health care and social security
- the right to education, leisure, culture and the arts
- special protection for refugee children, children in the juvenile justice system, children deprived of their liberty and children suffering economic, sexual or other forms of exploitation

The rights in the convention apply to all children and young people, with no exceptions.

### **Lighthouse Duty of Care**

There is first and foremost a moral obligation on anyone who is involved with children to provide them with the highest possible standard of care. There is secondly a legal responsibility, under the common law Duty of Care, for all organisations to take reasonable steps to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the children in their care. Although we do not provide services for children, they can, and do, visit our service meaning that we are obliged morally and legally to ensure they are safe when in our building. Reporting any concerns we have to social

services and working closely with residents, children and statutory bodies such as social services.

It is important to note that our duty of care goes further than overseeing safety when in our premises and reporting concerns. As an organisation whose residents may have children who are on the at risk register we are involved in Looked after child (LAC) reviews. While we have a duty of care to our residents to support them through the process, we need to ensure that the safety of the child is at the forefront of all that we do. Therefore we have a duty of care to report back all relevant factual information to social services.

### **Procedures for Effective Safeguarding**

As an organisation which has children visiting the service, we are committed to good practice when safeguarding children, keeping them safe from harm and exploitation, and upholding their rights; that is, always acting in their best interests and with their consent. The procedures set in this policy will give guidance to staff and volunteers on how this will be maintained. There are a number of values and principles which underpin the Lighthouse safeguarding practices:

#### **a. Staff training and Supervision**

All staff and volunteers should have the knowledge from the safeguarding children policy, required to carry out their role, explained to them and be provided with a copy or made aware of the availability of the policy for use to further develop an effective knowledge or to confirm processes. For new staff and volunteers this will be done as part of their induction.

As part of all staff induction they follow the process as laid out in the Induction/Probation policy. This policy details the policies and procedures, guidelines, activities and ethos of the organisation

All staff should attend training on Safeguarding. Regular training should be held in-house to refresh staff knowledge and ensure consistency in responding to situations. Records must be kept of all training sessions. Staff will be expected to develop the skills required to deliver the Safeguarding policy, such as, active listening and dealing with challenging behaviour.

Staff will receive regular supervision, which will be recorded. This should address problem areas and identify training and development areas. Staff will also be supported through any cases of abuse that they are a part of.

#### **b. Joint working**

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, and in particular protecting them from significant harm, depends upon effective joint working. Sharing information is essential to enable early identification to help children young people and families who need additional services to achieve positive outcomes. It is the responsibility of the Safeguarding champion to develop and maintain effective lines of reporting and communication with the local gateway teams and social services

departments. Support staff will work alongside social services and residents in implementing actions from case conferences and LAC reviews.

### **Professional Confidentiality**

Staff should never guarantee confidentiality to a child as information received may need to be passed to the relevant authorities, as the protection of the child is ultimate. Staff asked by a child to keep a secret, should advise the child that the information may need to be shared with others but that they are supported and information will only be shared with those needing to know it.

When working with residents whose child/ren visit the service staff should explain the role which we play in child protection and the responsibility we have to report concerns. If the resident has a child/ren currently on the at risk register staff should explain our involvement with social services in attending case reviews and/or LAC reviews. Ensuring that residents are aware that we cannot keep information shared at 1-1's which involves the child/ren confidential as all concerns will be reported to social services. Also that we will keep social services informed with the relevant information about their stay in the hostel.

In the case where a parent/carer may be suspected of causing harm to a child, staff should be aware that information of this nature should not be reported to the parent/carer but reported to the staff member with responsibility for child protection who will then determine the appropriate course of action. Similarly staff should not discuss any information with others but report it to the Safeguarding Champion. This ensures people's protection and most importantly the child's. Steps may need to be taken to ensure the child's immediate safety and where possible this will be done in consultation with the designated officer.

### **Reporting and recording**

Well-kept records are essential to good safeguarding practices. The Lighthouse is clear about the need to record any concerns held about a child/ren within the hostel, the status of such records and when these records should be passed over to other agencies. Such records should be made at, or as early as possible, to the events arousing concerns using the abuse report form (see appendix F). This report should be forwarded to the Safeguarding Champion or their appointed person as soon as possible. (See appendix D Flow chart for reporting abuse).

The record should be clear and factual since any information you have may be valuable to professionals investigating the incident and may at some time in the future be used as evidence in court. This kind of information should always be kept in a secure place (including electronic filing) and shared only with those who need to know about the concerns, disclosures, allegations or suspicions of abuse.

There may need to be some initial 'checking out' with the child who has disclosed information to you in order to ensure his safety, for example, if a staff member/volunteer notices a bruise on a child's arm, it would be appropriate to ask, 'I see you have a bruise on your arm. How did that happen?' However, be careful not to start investigating. It is important that staff/volunteers understand the clear distinction between 'checking out' and an investigation. Staff/volunteers should **not begin to investigate alleged or suspected abuse** by asking questions that relate to the detail, or circumstances of the alleged abuse, beyond initial listening, expressing concern and checking out. Investigation and discovery of how an event occurred is not the Lighthouse Hostel's responsibility. Care will be taken not to make the child feel unsupported or guilty or to interfere with possible later required evidence. This will include not removing any clothing if allegations of abuse are made but to leave this to the relevant experts.

A Safeguarding log is maintained by the manager, who is the appointed Safeguarding champion, or the appointed person. The Safeguarding protection log is retained in a locked cabinet accessible only by the Manager (Safeguarding Champion) or the representative member of the Trustee Management Team and Living Rivers Trust.

### **Handling an allegation of abuse against a staff member or volunteer**

Initially, all details of the incident should be recorded fully by the Safeguarding champion, who will inform the head of operations, Dr Harvey Grahame Smith. The Safeguarding champion will then take the actions outlined below. It is possible that the actions outlined will occur virtually simultaneously and not necessarily sequentially.

- consult with the HSC Trust and/or PSNI to ensure that any subsequent action taken by you does not prejudice the HSC Trust or PSNI investigation;
- following the above consultation, inform the staff member/volunteer that an allegation has been made against him/her and provide them with an opportunity to respond to the allegation. His/her response should be recorded fully.
- refer to the Designated Officer in the HSC Trust, who will liaise with the Police Liaison Officer in the PSNI to agree the most appropriate way forward.
- Take protective measures, which may include suspending the staff member/volunteer or moving him or her to alternative duties. It should be noted that suspension is a neutral act to allow the investigation to proceed and to remove the employee/volunteer from the possibility of any further allegations. Where suspension is considered necessary, it should be dealt with as quickly and sensitively as possible.

All actions taken should be in accordance with the disciplinary procedure, and have due regard to guidance from the HSC Trust or PSNI so as not to prejudice any HSC Trust or PSNI investigation.

### **Support for individuals who report concerns, victims and perpetrators**

Staff/ volunteers who have witnessed abuse or have had a disclosure of abuse made to them will also be subjected to a range of emotions. The Lighthouse recognises that they too will need to be supported. Management will endeavour to do this through supervision, where staff will be given the opportunity to discuss any concerns they have and reflect on their practice and to help them to deal with the emotions involved when dealing with abuse cases. Staff on shift during an incident of abuse may be offered a few days off to rest, depending on their shift plan and the nature of the incident. (see Traumatic Incident Support Policy for more info)

Staff/ volunteers of the Lighthouse will be supportive to any individual who reports concerns of abuse. Any resident, child, staff member or volunteer who is subjected to abuse will be supported and where appropriate be referred counselling or support from outside agencies.

### **Responsibilities of Safeguarding lead officer and deputy**

All persons working with or on behalf of children have a responsibility to safeguard. However, the Lighthouse will ensure that the role and responsibilities of the Manager (Safeguarding champion) of the Lighthouse Hostel project in regard to this policy are to:

- Adhere to the Safeguarding statement.
- Adhere to legal requirements, enact provisions of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007 , Working Together 2018 and The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 (UK wide)
- Ensure all staff and volunteers are effectively screened by Access (NI).
- Carry out responsibilities of Safeguarding champion
- Ensure the policy implementation [all policy procedures contained herein]
- Organise regular and revised training for all staff in regard to Safeguarding
- Ensure all appropriate records are maintained and checked
- Liaise co-operatively with all relevant agencies, including the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland and Supporting People
- Responsible for reporting to the trustees' board, via the management team, on any issues relating to the policy or its implementation. Final legal responsibility for implementation of the policy rests with the trustees of Living Rivers Trust.

When the Safeguarding Champion, or the appointed person in his absence is alerted to concerns about a child, s/he should act promptly and in accordance with the agreed reporting procedure (see appendices C & D).

The procedure is as follows:

- Ensure that the child is in no immediate danger and that any medical or police assistance required has been sought;

- Consider whether the concern is a safeguarding issue or not. This may involve some 'checking out' of information provided but being careful not to stray into the realm of investigation. If it is not considered a safeguarding issue, and it is decided that there should be no referral made to a statutory authority, a record should be made of the concern; details kept on file, including any action taken; the reasons for not referring; and the situation monitored on an ongoing basis. In these circumstances, the situation should be monitored so that a referral can be made if the situation deteriorates. Again, the decision to monitor the situation and the outcome of monitoring, e.g. further concerns coming to light, should be recorded. It is important to remember that while there may not be a safeguarding concern at this point, the local HSC Trust might be able to offer other services.
- Consult with the Designated Officer in the local HSC Trust, where there is any doubt or uncertainty. Where a discussion has taken place with the HSC Trust Designated Officer, and it is decided that a referral should not be made, this should be recorded and the situation monitored. Again, the decision to monitor should be recorded. This is important in case further concerns are raised which, when taken together, indicate that the vulnerable adult/ child is being harmed and protective action is required.
- Make a formal referral if the Designated Officer in the HSC Trust considers the concern to be a safeguarding issue. In cases of alleged or suspected criminal abuse, the Designated Officer for the HSC Trust should discuss the case with the relevant Police Liaison Officer in the PSNI, who will help determine whether a crime may have been committed.
- Be available, as required, to the investigation undertaken by the HSC Trust and/or the PSNI (with input from Supporting People if needed).

#### **Reporting concerns outside of the Lighthouse**

If staff, volunteers, residents or visitors have followed the procedures as set out within this policy and are unhappy with the outcome they can raise their concern with the Director of Operations [Dr Harvey Grahame-Smith 14A Grange Road, Ballymena, Co. Antrim, BT42 2DS] . If they feel they are unable to raise the matter at this level they should raise the matter, in writing, to Living Rivers Trustees.

If the above steps have been followed and they still have concerns or they feel that the matter is so serious that they need to raise it externally then they should contact the PSNI or local Social Services Team, contact details are available in appendix H of this policy.

#### **Review of Policy**

Management will be responsible for reviewing this policy every 3 years or in response to any incidents or changes in legislation relating to Safeguarding. The review will include input from Residents, Staff, Social Services and PSNI when possible and will seek to identify and address the effectiveness and implementation

of the policy, any disincentives to reporting abuse and the practice when dealing with suspicion/cases of abuse.

This policy should be considered alongside all other related Lighthouse policies such as Health and Safety, Lone working, Positive Risk Taking, Support Process, Risk assessment, Termination of Services, GDPR policies, Code of Conduct, Code of Confidentiality, Complaints Procedure, Appeals Procedure and Statement of Rights and Responsibilities, Key Working policy and Supervision policy.

This policy has been written in accordance with:

- The Safeguarding Groups (NI) Order 2007 ( Commencement date October 2009)
- Working Together To Safeguard Children 2018
- The Children (NI) Order 1995
- The Protection of Freedom Act 2012 (UK wide)
- Safeguarding Board Act (NI)2011
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The United Kingdom Ratified the UNCRC (Convention on the rights of a child)
- Equality Act 2010