Safeguarding Children Policy

Title: Safeguarding Children Policy
Author/Lead Officer: Clare Eccles/Paul Tuckey
Position: Safer Estates Manager
Department/Section: Neighbourhood Services
Contact details: clare.eccles@cheltborohomes.org
paul.tuckey@cheltborohomes.org
Office: 01242 775914

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1. Policy Introduction

“The support and protection of children cannot be achieved by a single agency…every service has to play its part.”


Everyone who works for Cheltenham Borough Homes (CBH) has a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This will be relevant to CBH employees, Volunteers, Apprentices and Casual Staff (hereby referred to as members of staff).

‘Safeguarding’ incorporates not only the protection of children but also includes prevention of possible harm.

CBH carries out a number of services for and with children. It is important that children can enjoy these services and make the most of the opportunities provided in complete safety.

We also carry out activities within the community, in our offices and in people’s homes where children may be present, and staff have a duty to report any concerns they may have for the welfare or safety of children.

It is also important that as a company we have procedures in place to protect members of staff who work with children, as well as the children themselves.

Members of CBH staff have working procedures to assist them in delivery of this work. This is accessible to staff on ERIC - our CBH intranet.

2. Aims and Objectives

CBH is committed to safeguarding the welfare of children when we come into contact with them through the services that we provide, directly or indirectly.

At CBH our aim is:

To help protect and promote the welfare of children.

Our policy objectives are to ensure that:

- Raise awareness of child protection issues amongst our staff and help partner agencies understand the role housing can have in safeguarding;
- We implement procedures for identifying and reporting cases, or suspected cases, of abuse in line with those recommended by Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children's Board;
- We actively encourage good practice whilst working with children;
- We practice safe recruitment in checking the suitability of staff to work with children;
• We adopt a child centred approach in that we do not lose sight of the needs and views of children.

To ensure effective child protection measures are in place, we work closely with the Children and Young People’s Directorate (CYPD) of Gloucestershire County Council, the Police, and Cheltenham Borough Council (CBC) and with the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children’s Board (GSCB). This policy is designed to function within their Child Protection policies and procedures. From time to time we will make amendments to this policy based on recommendations arising from the GSCB.

3. Policy Scope

For the purpose of this policy:

A ‘child’ is
Anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. ‘Children’ therefore means ‘children and young people’ throughout, including unborn children. 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, in prison or in a Young Offenders’ Institution, does not change his or her status or entitlement to services or protection under the Children Act 1989.

‘Child abuse’ is
The term used when an adult harms a child or a young person under the age of 18.

This policy applies to all staff (full-time, temporary, casual or part-time), volunteers and those working on behalf of CBH whose work involves contact with children. Board members share a responsibility with staff when representing CBH therefore all aspects of this policy apply equally to Board Members.

‘Working Together to Safeguard Children 2006 ’ and ‘Section 11 of the Children Act 2004’ places a statutory duty on all Contractors ‘who provide services for, or work with children or young people’, to ‘safeguard and promote the welfare of children.’ This policy therefore also applies to these types of contractors and/or those providing a service on behalf of CBH.

4. Context

‘People, Places, Homes’ the current CBH Business Plan up to 2020, recognises the need to work closely with young people, particularly those with support needs. Our Business Plan underpins the importance of working in partnership to improve the lives of our customers.

This policy also works in conjunction with a number of other policies, procedures and strategies which are as follows:

• Anti-Social Behaviour Policy (October 2014)
• Safeguarding Children Working Procedures (2014)
• Neighbourhood Management Strategy (2012-2015)
• CBH Disciplinary and Dismissal Policy and Procedure (July 2012)
This is not an exhaustive list and further guidance is available from the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children's Board (GSCB) website www.gscb.org.uk.

5. Legislation & Guidance

There is no single piece of legislation that covers child protection, but rather a number of laws that are constantly being amended and updated.

The legislation and guidance that CBH should have regard to is listed below.

- Children’s Act 1989 and 2004
- Sex Offenders Act 1997
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Protection of Children Act 1999
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- The Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003
- The Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005
- Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 (Amendments 2012)
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- The Forced Marriage Act (Civil Protection) 2007
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Working Together to Safeguard Children
- “A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.” (March 2013- HM Government)

6. Partnership working and the Sharing of Information

CBH supports information sharing and will work with the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children’s Board (GSCB), the Children’s and Young Peoples Department (CYPD) of Social Services and Gloucestershire Police to ensure effective partnership working which can help with the safeguarding of children.

There is an increasing emphasis on integrated working across services and CBH plays an important role within this as a provider of front line services. When sharing information CBH will have regard to the provisions within the Data Protection Act 1998 and will ensure that information is shared and stored correctly.

CBH has a key role to play in sharing information with those statutory agencies that deal with child protection matters. The sharing of information can help enable early intervention and also help prevent abuse from occurring. The document ‘Information Sharing: Guidance for Practitioners and Managers’ (HM Government March 2009) gives clear guidance to organisations such as CBH in how to share information legitimately.

CBH will ensure that any child protection concerns raised will be dealt with discreetly and sensitively with the staff member raising the concern, and information passed onto agencies will be kept securely. They will also ensure that the information shared is necessary, proportionate, relevant, accurate and timely.

If there is any doubt as to whether the information should be shared, advice can be sought from the Business Support Team at CBH.

7. Safer Recruitment

CBH have a robust recruitment checking and vetting process and all candidates need to satisfy the Baseline Personnel Security Standard. This includes verification of the candidates identity, employment history (3 years with 28 day gap verification,) basic criminal disclosure and the right to work in the UK checks.

While currently no posts at CBH fall within a ‘regulated activity’ this is regularly considered and employees will have an enhanced disclosure check if required.

8. Reporting a Safeguarding Children Concern

It is not the responsibility of CBH staff to decide whether a child is being abused, but it is the responsibility of all members of staff to be aware of and alert to indicators of abuse and to report all concerns and suspicions immediately, in accordance with the approved procedures.

CBH have working procedures which detail how staff can report concerns/suspicions of abuse to the Children’s Helpdesk at Social Services. CBH has appointed and trained a number of Safeguarding Champions, to help deal with any concerns raised by staff, volunteers, contractors or Board Members.

Guidance for staff that advises on how to raise safeguarding concerns is available on ERIC.

9. Training

This policy will be available to all staff and training will be provided. All managers have a responsibility to identify staff for training as well as any additional child protection training that their staff need that is relevant to their areas of work.

Staff who are front line and those staff appointed as Safeguarding Champions will receive more in-depth training (as recommend by GSCB) every 3 years.

All other staff will receive general awareness training.
Safeguarding Champions and the HR team will be jointly responsible for maintaining records of staff training and for ensuring that new staff are made aware of their safeguarding responsibilities during the induction process.

All employees are responsible for updating their individual training records on Learning Gateway to record any Safeguarding Training they have received.

The forum is held quarterly and looks at best practice, training requirements of staff and reviews policies and procedures. Some forum members are now accredited and approved trainers and can deliver in-house training to CBH staff as per the guidelines from the Gloucestershire Children’s Safeguarding Board.

10. Accountability and Monitoring

Corporate accountability for ensuring that CBH fulfils its safeguarding duties is the responsibility of the Chief Executive. In terms of operational responsibility, this sits with the Safeguarding Champions who are suitably trained and will be responsible for:

- Implementing the actions set out within this policy
- Receiving and recording information regarding child protection concerns
- Consulting with the relevant statutory agencies regarding any child protection concerns raised
- Making formal referrals to the relevant statutory agencies regarding any child protection concerns.
- Assisting in the provision of training to new and existing staff
- Review of referrals made to statutory agencies
- Developing and implementing the Safeguarding Forum action plan (includes review of policies and procedures).

All members of staff are responsible for ensuring that the activities that they are involved in during the course of their work are carried out in accordance with this policy and also in line with the Safeguarding Children’s working procedures.

Managers are responsible for ensuring that the activities and services they provide have appropriate procedures to protect and safeguard children. Managers are also responsible for ensuring that procedures are followed by their staff.

The Housing Services Manager and the Safer Estates Manager will carry out the review of this policy every 3 years and will ensure it is updated more often if required as per any recommendations form GSCB.

11. Further information

For further information, guidance and support on the implementation of this Safeguarding Children Policy, please contact Clare Eccles/Paul Tuckey - Safer Estates Managers.