

PO34 Child Protection Policy

Approval

Approved by Tenants' Forum	DATE 24 September 2009
Approved by Board	DATE 22 October 2009
Due for Review	DATE October 2011

Review undertaken

Resident involvement.	Approved by Community Issues Sub Group 23 June 2009. Consultation with PACT Family Centres with Soha tenants in Didcot & Berinsfield April 2009.
Equality Impact Assessment	Initial EIA Maureen Adams September 2009
Other consultation	

1.0 Scope of policy

Soha 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 community. The protection offered by this policy and related procedures applies to all children and young people who are living in homes that are owned or managed by Soha Housing.

2.0 Aim

Soha Housing recognises the important role its staff can play in their day to day work, from recognising child welfare issues to working with local authorities to enable them to fulfil their duties to the vulnerable, as laid out in the TSA Regulatory Code. All staff that come into contact with children, young people and families in their everyday work has a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people.

We will apply our Child Protection policy consistently and fairly, and will not discriminate against anyone on grounds of their race, colour, ethnic or national origins, religion, sexual orientation, disability, gender, age or any other matter which may cause a person to be treated unfairly.

3.0 Policy Statement

3.1 Soha Housing will ensure all staff members are aware of their responsibility to be vigilant about child protection issues, their own conduct, and how to respond to any concerns or suspicions they may have. This policy is committed to actively preventing child abuse and setting out the course of action if any member of staff has concerns relating to child abuse. Soha Housing aims to take all responsible measures to secure the health, safety and welfare of children and young people involved in its work.

3.2 Child abuse and neglect is a generic term for all ill-treatment of children and young people. The NSPCC Definition is; 'Child abuse can take four forms, all of which can cause long term damage to a child: physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect and child sexual abuse. Bullying and domestic violence are also forms of child abuse.' Neglect is where the standard of care does not adequately support the child's health or development. Children and young people may be abused or neglected through the infliction of harm, or through the failure to act to prevent harm.

3.3 Soha Housing will ensure that:

- We are committed to listening to and acting upon any report or allegation of child abuse, in the communities where we work. This includes allegations made against members of staff or contractors. This does not mean that Soha will judge whether or not abuse has occurred, but will follow the correct procedures to ensure that they refer any concerns confidentially and sensitively to the correct agency that will be responsible for investigation. In the case of allegations against third party contractors, Soha will seek immediate clarification and refer to the appropriate Director who will authorise an investigation with Contractors, involving the necessary agencies as appropriate

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- Staff and contractors that come into contact with families with children or young people will have awareness training to understand the indicators and issues of child abuse for example:
 - What are the signs?
 - How to respond to concerns or suspicions they may have
 - How to record and report any incident or concern to social services.

4.0 Implementation

4.1 Staff training

Soha aims to ensure that we train and support all staff who work with vulnerable tenants.

- All Soha Housing staff members who have regular contact with children will be employed subject to Criminal Record Bureau enhanced checks being carried out. This requirement will also apply to their direct line managers. Until these checks are satisfactory, the member of staff must not work alone with children but may work under the direct supervision of an existing staff member who has been checked.
- The line manager of new staff members who will be working with children and young people as part of their role will ensure they are familiar with the Child Protection Policy and Procedures during their induction period.

4.2 Partnership working

The Children Act 2004 provides a legal framework for a number of key public sector reforms, including co-operation between agencies, arrangements to safeguard and promote welfare and the establishment of Local Safeguarding Children Boards. Soha will continue to take part in child protection partnerships both formally, through Service Level Agreements, and informally in multi-agency working with statutory and voluntary organisations.

4.3 Prevention of abuse

Soha will have procedures and guidelines for staff outlining:

- types, indicators and patterns of abuse
- interaction with social services
- how to report suspicions or concerns.
- child abuse in a domestic abuse situation

4.4 Code of Conduct

Members of staff will follow Soha Housing's staff code of conduct and treat children with respect in attitude, language and actions at all times, and encourage other adults and children to do likewise.

4.5 Home Visits

When visiting tenants and residents, a member of staff should show their I.D (Soha Housing or contractor's photographic identification badge) before entering the home, should not enter unless an adult is present, and should at all times where possible avoid spending time alone in a room with a child during the visit.

4.6 Images

Staff members should ensure they have written permission from the parent or carer before taking photographs or recordings of children. They must also have permission to use the photograph or recording. The staff member will explain the purpose of use (e.g. for publicity materials) and will not disclose or publish any of their contact details.

4.7 Internet

Staff members may not access any inappropriate or offensive illegal materials relating to children. Doing so constitutes gross misconduct and could lead to dismissal. If Soha is providing internet access for children to use as part of activities organised by Soha Housing the children must be supervised at all times or restrictive software used to ensure their safety. Soha Housing staff will adhere to the Soha Housing Staff's Code of Conduct at all times.

4.8 Identification and data storage

Children may be initially identified as 'vulnerable' by staff, or by a relevant agency or person. Soha will have clear procedures in place about storing this information, access to it and sharing of it. These will conform to our Data Protection and Access to Personal Information policies.

5.0 Resident Involvement

Soha will actively involve residents in a focus group for reviews of this policy. As agreed with the Tenants' Forum.

6.0 Appeals

Any person wishing to complain about any aspect of the Child Protection Policy can make a formal complaint in accordance with Soha's Complaints Policy.

7.0 Responsibility

The Director of Customer Services and Operations is responsible for the effective implementation of this policy. However, as the Policy has an implication for all areas of Soha's operation, all Directors have a responsibility.

8.0 Monitoring and review

We will monitor this policy to ensure it meets good practice and current legislation and will review it with the Vulnerable Adults Policy within no less than 2 years.

9.0 Context

Soha Housing Staff Code of Conduct.
Every Child Matters: Change for Children in Social Care
PO10 Data Protection Policy
PO11 Access to personal information Policy
PO12 Confidentiality Policy
Children Act 2004
PO28 Vulnerable adults policy
Working Together to Safeguard Children 2006