

A close-up photograph of a woman with blonde hair, wearing a grey cardigan over a blue top, holding the hand of a young child with blonde hair wearing a green quilted jacket. The background is a soft-focus green field.

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE POLICY

Freebridge
COMMUNITY HOUSING



Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy			
Last Reviewed	March 2023	Next Review	April 2026
Responsible Officer	Director of Operations		

Policy Statement: Freebridge believe that safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility and that everyone who comes into contact with children and families has a role to play to protect children and young people under the ages of 18 from abuse or neglect. Freebridge shall effectively work with statutory and partner agencies to proactively prevent abuse and/or neglect and ensure that any such abuse is responded to promptly and effectively.

Freebridge is committed to taking all reasonable measures to safeguard children and young adults who live in our accommodation from abuse and neglect. We are not an investigative or intervention agency; however, our staff and contractors are in regular contact with children and young people and are therefore in a position to potentially observe signs of abuse and to alert the appropriate agencies.

Policy Detail:

We consider anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday to be a child or young person (Working Together, 2013), including unborn children.

General Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of:

- Every member of customer-facing staff to be aware, and have a clear understanding, to remain alert, and respond appropriately, to indications of possible abuse and neglect.
- The responsibility of the Director of Customer & Communities, acting as Freebridge's Designated Officer, and the Head of Housing & Community Services as deputy for the implementation of this policy.
- The Designated Officers to maintain an up-to-date awareness and understanding of good practise, and the legislative & regulatory requirements which may impact this policy and the service provided; and
- Members of Leadership Team to maintain an overview of safeguarding practices, and an awareness of the operation of the policy.

What is Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children & young people?

- Protecting children from maltreatment.
- Preventing impairment of children's health or development.
- Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of

- safe and effective care.
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

(Extract from: *Working Together* - 2018)

Throughout this policy the term 'child' or 'children' is used to mean either child or young person as relevant.

What is Child Protection?

Child protection is part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. It is an activity undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm.

What is abuse?

Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child; someone 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 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.

Abuse can take many forms please refer to Appendix 1.

What is neglect?

Neglect is 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.

Our commitment

We shall:

- Adopt the two key principles:
 - Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.
 - A child-centred approach.
- Be alert to, and take seriously all potential safeguarding issues, reporting anything of concern to the relevant statutory agency for further investigation.
- Work jointly with other agencies and professionals to protect children, through sharing and analysing information to inform assessment.
- Work in conjunction with other agencies to contribute to appropriate actions and to

- offer appropriate support.
- Embrace the good practise principle of professional challenge, in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children.
- Work in the spirit of the principles of the 'Signs of Safety' framework, through an open, coaching approach to conversations with families that we are concerned about.

Recruitment

We will take appropriate legal advice to determine what level of Disclosure and Barring Service checks apply to all roles across the organisation. The requirement for a DBS check is clearly stated in any job advertisement and all applicants are required to complete a rehabilitation of offenders form which is reviewed prior to job offers being made. More information on our recruitment and selection procedures, relating to DBS, can be found under section 8 of our recruitment policy.

All offers of employment will be made subject to a satisfactory Disclosure and Barring Service check. Any volunteers working with us will be required to consent to the same level of check, deemed appropriate for the position they are volunteering for, that a paid member of staff would be.

We will also undertake quarterly reviews of staffing and job role changes within the organisation, in order to ensure that all post holders continue to have the relevant level Service check.

We require staff to keep us informed of any changes to their circumstances which could affect their Disclosure and Barring Service check results, and checks will be renewed every three years. Our Employee Handbook provides more information.

Training

We shall:

- Brief all newly appointed customer-facing staff on safeguarding awareness & our own procedures within 3 months;
- Provide appropriate refresher training every three years for all customer-facing staff in all relevant aspects of safeguarding

Contractors

We will:

- Require contractors working on our behalf to have their own policies and procedures in place (or agree to comply with ours).
- Provide information to support their staff to report any concerns they have directly to our Designated Officers.
- Require contractors to evidence that they have appropriate procedures in place to assess the need for Disclosure and Barring Service checks of their own staff, and to carry out those checks if determined necessary.

Awareness

In promoting and raising awareness of safeguarding, we will work with residents to ensure that they are aware of how to report any concerns they have, through regular promotion in tenants newsletters etc. and ongoing campaigns.

Safeguarding will remain a corporate priority and at the forefront of all that we do through building an awareness culture.

Working with Partners and the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership

In promoting and raising awareness of safeguarding, **we shall:**

- Participate in Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements and Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferencing case conferences as appropriate, where they involve concerns for a child or young person that we are working with, as well as engaging with Child Protection Conference arrangements where new concerns arise.
- Ensure all relevant staff have an awareness of, and work in accordance with the principles for professionals working with children & families in West Norfolk, as determined by the Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership
- Recognise Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership as the primary source of best practice advice, and
- Maintain our membership to the Safer Programme to ensure that our practices remain current.
- Assist in preventing difficulties in family life escalating which may subsequently lead to the abuse, neglect or the significant harm of a child if not resolved.
- Be alert to identifying any emerging problems and potential unmet needs for individual children and families through our involvement with them, and actively participate in the provision of early help interventions, such as through the Family Support Process Model.

Reporting

Where concerns do exist regarding possible abuse, neglect or risk of significant harm to children, **we shall:**

- Work closely with the statutory agencies, the Children's Advice and Duty Service, and in cases of immediate risk to life or on suspicion of a criminal offence, with Norfolk Constabulary, to ensure their statutory involvement with the child at risk.
- Support staff to take a child centred approach in listening, accurately recording and reporting all concerns, seeking professional advice from the Children's Advice and Duty Service when in doubt.
- Maintain comprehensive and easily accessible procedures for all customer-facing staff to support them in making referrals to the Children's Advice and Duty Service via the following process [CADS Flowchart.pdf \(fch.local\)](#)

Our Director of Customer & Communities (Sophie Bates 01553 667725) and Head of Housing & Community Services (Ross Edwards 01553 667796) are Freebridge's Designated Officers for safeguarding, and are responsible for:

- Providing advice and guidance to staff in relation to potential safeguarding concerns.
- Liaising with the Children's Advice and Duty Service and Social Care Teams to ensure that referrals are dealt with robustly and that communication between organisations is effective.
- Promoting safeguarding awareness across the organisation, and that procedures and current knowledge remain up to date and relevant.

The Designated Officers are also responsible for:

- Reporting any allegations promptly to the Local Authority's Designated Officer Team (within one working day); and ensuring cooperation with any subsequent investigation should any concerns arise regarding the conduct of staff or contractors that have:
 - Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;
 - Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child; or
 - Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children.

Alternatively, staff can raise their own concerns directly via our [Whistleblowing Policy](#).

We understand that involvement in cases of abuse and neglect can be distressing for staff, and we will provide all appropriate support throughout their involvement, including through access to our Employee Support Line.

Information Sharing

We recognise the importance of treating all information with appropriate caution and have procedures in place to ensure that our staff comply with all relevant legislation when handling data. See also our [Data Protection Policy](#).

With regards to safeguarding issues, we believe that we have an overriding responsibility to report all concerns, with the welfare of the child being of paramount importance.

We will work closely and openly with families to advise of and discuss our concerns. Whenever possible our staff will inform families before sharing information with the Children's Social Care Team.

Where this is not possible, or it is considered that this may potentially increase the risk to the child concerned, then an undisclosed referral will be made.

Appendix One – Definitions

Abuse can take many forms including, but not limited to:

- **Physical 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 in a child.
- **Emotional abuse** is 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 or 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 overprotection 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** involving 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 of 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). Adult males do not solely perpetrate sexual abuse. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.