



## Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy

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Policy Author(s):	Operations Manager and Support Manager, Community Safety and Safeguarding
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For the full version history of this policy, see the back page	

Please avoid referring to printed versions of this policy.

Printed versions may quickly go out of date – the latest version will be on the Policy Hub or contact the Governance Team. For support and advice regarding the policy, please contact the policy owner

## 1.0 Introduction and Scope

1.1 This document covers our policy on safeguarding adults at risk and it should be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding Adults at Risk Toolkit. The policy and toolkit provide clear directions on how we will provide a safe environment for adults at risk whilst carrying out our work and how we intend to provide support and assistance to those who we would consider to be at risk of abuse.

1.2 The policy and toolkit cover the following areas:

- How we will ensure the welfare of adults at risk by preventing and deterring abuse
- Responding to suspicions of harm, neglect and/or abuse, including those made against employees, volunteers, tenants and board members.
- Recruitment and background checks of staff/volunteers who will work with adults at risk.
- Supporting victims of abuse

1.2 The purpose of the policy and toolkit is, therefore, to ensure that safeguarding concerns and referrals are handled sensitively, professionally and in ways that support the needs of adults at risk.

1.3 The National Housing Federation (NHF) Code of Governance 2020 outlines that Boards should seek assurance on the requirements in relation to Safeguarding. This policy forms part of that assurance.

1.4 The scope of this policy applies to:

General Needs rented properties	X
Supported Housing	X
Sheltered Housing	X
Leasehold/Shared ownership	X
Rent to Buy properties	X
Market rented properties (domestic)	X
Temporary Accommodation	X
Stock owned but not managed by the Group	X
Communal Areas, including those relating to Leasehold/Shared Ownership properties	X
Commercial Property (offices, depots etc)	X
Stock managed by Gentoo on behalf of a third party	X
Garages and outbuildings	X
Remote plant (district heating, electrical pumps etc)	
Curtilage	

## 2.0 Our core purpose and vision and priorities

Our core purpose is to provide safe and decent homes for our customers of today and tomorrow.

Our vision is to provide great homes, strong communities, and inspired people for Sunderland.

The safety of our customers and colleagues will always be our number one priority.

We have identified six further priorities which will guide the delivery of our services.

We live our values in everything we do from the boardroom to the front room, to deliver our priorities for our customers.

- We know our customers.
- We provide great homes.
- We help communities to thrive.
- We are a great place to work.
- We spend our money wisely.
- We are well governed.

Our values are what we stand for and what we want to be known for. They are what makes us, us.

- We care about people.
- We take accountability.
- We shape the future.
- We bring leadership.
- We deliver.

2.1 This Policy operates within our Vision and Values and links to the Safeguarding Children Policy and Toolkit, Vulnerability Toolkit, Hoarding Toolkit, Data Protection Policy, Domestic Abuse Policy, Community Safety Toolkit, Equipment and Adaptations Policy and Hate Incidents Toolkit. This policy has due regard to the Group's risk register and sets out to mitigate the following risk:

- Failure to protect vulnerable customers

### 3.0 Regulation and Legislation

- 3.1 The Executive Director of Housing will ensure this policy has regard to all legislation, regulation and best practice. The regulation and legislation applicable to this policy is attached in Appendix 1.

### 4.0 Our Policy Statement

- 4.1 Gentoo regards the safety and protection of adults at risk as paramount within all of its activities whether this involves direct or indirect contact.
- 4.2 Staff and volunteers may regularly come into contact with adults at risk as part of the Group's organised activities e.g. during volunteering programmes, as part of the regular housing, neighbourhood management and repairs service, or during our support role.
- 4.3 The Group will ensure that its activities, staff and volunteers, as well as its procedures take account of the welfare of adults at risk.
- 4.4 Gentoo does not operate in isolation. Safeguarding adults at risk is the responsibility of everybody, especially those working with adults at risk.
- 4.5 Gentoo staff are encouraged to **recognise, respond to and record** anything that does not seem right, and this will be sent to the relevant team for further investigation if necessary.
- 4.6 Gentoo's aim is to help protect the adults at risk for whom we have responsibility as part of our group functions and work consistently and appropriately with safeguarding agencies/authorities.
- 4.7 We will ensure we are making safeguarding personal and will follow this sector led initiative to ensure that safeguarding concerns and referrals are handled sensitively, professionally and in a way that supports the need of adults at risk.
- 4.8 We will involve adults at risk in any safeguarding decisions. However, where someone is judged as not having capacity to make an informed decision about their own wellbeing, these will be made on their behalf in accordance with the requirements of the Mental Capacity Act 2005,

and in liaison with the necessary statutory services and agencies, involving carers and family members as appropriate.

- 4.9 This policy and toolkit takes account of the Sunderland Safeguarding Adults Procedural Framework. The Group recognises that many adults at risk today may have experienced neglect or abuse within their lives however this policy and toolkit focusses more on safeguarding adults who may be at risk of abuse or are being abused.
- 4.10 The work undertaken by Gentoo is increasingly diverse and of a cross boundary nature. The policy and toolkit therefore acts in accordance with national legislation, guidance and good practice implemented locally by the Sunderland Safeguarding Adults Board (SSAB).
- 4.11 Whilst SSAB has a role in co-ordinating and ensuring the effectiveness of local individuals and organisations working to safeguard and promote the welfare of adults at risk, it is not accountable for their operational work. This means that Gentoo Group retains accountability for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of adults at risk through our services.
- 4.12 Gentoo is committed to respond in accordance with the SSAB procedures in all cases where there is a concern about Significant Harm.
- 4.13 This policy and accompanying toolkit covers the range of interactions the group has with adults at risk and recognises the six key principles of safeguarding, **Empowerment, Prevention, Proportionality, Protection, Partnership, Accountability.**
- **Empowerment** - Victims should be supported in making their own decisions and choices, including those related to risk and their own perceived vulnerability. If decisions are made without taking account of the victims' views this may infringe their human rights and jeopardise other qualities of life.
  - **Protection** - support and representation for those in greatest need.
  - **Prevention** - it is better to take action before harm occurs.
  - **Proportionality** - safeguarding must be built on proportionality and a consideration of people's human rights.
  - **Partnership** - local solutions through services working with their communities.
  - **Accountability** – safeguarding is everyone's business and everyone in contact with an adult at risk should be responsible for noting any risks. Practice and arrangements should be accountable and transparent.

- 4.14 As part of our ongoing commitment and our presence within the Sunderland Safeguarding Adults Partnership we actively seek to ensure these principles are realised.
- 4.15 Gentoo take a zero tolerance approach to slavery and human trafficking, please see our [Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement](#) for further information.
- 4.16 We are committed to the principles of diversity and inclusion throughout the organisation and aim to:
- Meet the needs and choice of people from all backgrounds
  - Ensure that our services are relevant, responsive and sensitive to the needs of our existing and future customers
  - Ensure that all sections of the community in which we work have equal access to our services.
- 4.17 Our Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy and Toolkit will ensure that customers are treated as individuals with fairness and respect. An Equality Assessment has been completed on this policy.

## **5.0 Roles and Responsibilities**

- 5.1 As a Housing Association, we have a statutory responsibility to comply with all relevant regulation and legislation in relation to safeguarding adults at risk.
- 5.2 The Board is responsible for seeking evidenced assurance that the way the Group operates its Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy is in line with what is set out in the policy.
- 5.3 The Executive Director of Housing is accountable for ensuring this policy has regard to all legislation, regulation and best practice and for ensuring implementation of this policy effectively.
- 5.4 The Executive Director of Housing is accountable for adequate resourcing and having effective processes in place to implement the policy.
- 5.5 The Associate Directors of Housing and Heads of Operations are responsible for the day-to-day delivery of this policy but more specifically, the Operations Manager (Community Safety and Safeguarding) is the operational lead and represents the Group within SA multi agency forums.
- 5.6 All Gentoo staff are responsible for familiarising themselves with this policy and accompanying toolkit and for reporting any concerns they have around safeguarding adults at risk.
- 5.7 Gentoo staff should attend meetings where relevant and see cases

through to their conclusion.

## 6.0 Monitoring and Review

- 6.1 This policy will be reviewed every 3 years or in line with business need.
- 6.2 This policy may be subject to an audit in line with the internal audit plan.
- 6.3 The toolkit will be regularly reviewed and updated where appropriate.

## 7.0 Definition of Safeguarding Adults

- 7.1 People's wellbeing is at the heart of the care and support system under the Care Act 2014. Safeguarding Adults means protecting an adults right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect.
- 7.2 In the context of the legislation, specific adult safeguarding duties apply to *any* adult over 18 who:
  - has care *and* support needs (whether or not the authority is meeting any of those needs)
  - is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect
  - as a result of those needs, is unable to protect themselves against the abuse or neglect or risk of it.
- 7.3 Safeguarding duties apply regardless of whether a person's care and support needs are being met, whether by the local authority or anyone else. They also apply to people who pay for their own care and support services

## 8.0 Types of Abuse

- 8.1 The commonly recognised forms of abuse are listed below. The accompanying toolkit contains more detailed definitions, examples and possible indicators of abuse.
  - **Domestic** – Including an incident or a pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse, by someone who is, or has been an intimate partner or family member regardless of gender or sexual orientation. This includes psychological/emotional, physical, sexual, financial abuse; so called 'honor' based violence, forced marriage or Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

- **Physical** – Punching, hitting, slapping, pinching, pushing and shaking
- **Psychological / Emotional** – Humiliation, intimidation, indifference
- **Sexual** – Non – contact i.e. voyeurism, involvement in viewing or making pornography, indecent exposure, harassment, serious teasing and innuendo.  
Contact i.e. touching breasts, genital, anus, mouth, masturbation of either or both persons, penetration or attempted penetration of the vagina, anus or mouth with penis fingers or other objects
- **Financial or Material** – Misuse or exploitation of the adults at risks money, property, inheritance, possessions, theft
- **Neglect or Acts of Omission** – Administering too much or too little medication, failure to access appropriate health care, social care or educational services. Withholding or failing to provide the necessities of life such as adequate nutrition, heating or clothing. Failure to intervene in situations that are assessed as being dangerous to the person concerned or to others, particularly where the person lacks capacity
- **Self-neglect** – Includes a person neglecting to care for their personal hygiene, health or surroundings; or an inability to provide essential food, clothing, shelter or medical care necessary to maintain their physical and mental health, emotional wellbeing and general safety. It includes behaviour such as hoarding
- **Modern Day Slavery** – encompasses slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude. Traffickers and slave masters use whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment
- **Discriminatory-** Motivated abuse by oppressive and discriminatory attitude towards the person's disability, race, gender, age, religion, cultural background, sexual orientation
- **Organisational or Institutional-** Inflexible routines being imposed e.g. bed time, bathing/washing, meals, using toilet etc

## 9.0 Confidentiality

- 9.1 We will treat all information received in a private and confidential manner.
- 9.2 We will only disclose information to perpetrators, legal representatives, or other third parties once we have the consent of the adult to do so.
- 9.3 We may however, have a legal obligation to pass information on, for example to the Police or Adult Services.

## **10.0 Data Protection**

10.1 This policy fully complies with the Group's Data Protection Policy.

## **11.0 Policy outcomes**

11.1 Our policy aims to achieve the following outcomes:

- Safeguard the welfare of all adults at risk who come into contact with the Group, by providing clear guidance on roles and responsibilities to staff and partners.
- Establish and maintain an ethos where adults at risk feel secure, are encouraged to talk and are listened to.
- Ensure that safeguarding issues are recognised as an integral part of all of the Group's work which involves adults at risk.
- Promote individual wellbeing, including protection from abuse and neglect.
- Provide timely and effective procedures to respond to any cases of abuse that may arise, ensuring the safety and security of those involved.
- Work in partnership with statutory, voluntary and other organisations to maintain effective safeguarding of adults, as well as assisting in meeting the needs of anyone experiencing, or likely to experience adult abuse.
- Provide staff with clear and practical guidance to ensure the Group recognises, responds and records any safeguarding issues relating to those we come into contact with.

## **12.0 Escalation**

12.1 Where the Board has concerns about significant issues in any area of compliance with safeguarding adults at risk they must escalate these concerns to the Executive Director of Housing.

12.2 Where a member of staff has concerns about significant issues in any area of compliance with safeguarding adults at risk they must escalate these concerns through their line management structure, ultimately to Group Executive Team.

12.3 Where a member of staff continues to have concerns about significant issues in any area of compliance with safeguarding adults at risk they should refer to the Group Whistleblowing Policy for further guidance.

## **13.0 Records**

13.1 All safeguarding referrals and information relating to attendance at meetings is recorded on Streetwise. This information is not available for all staff to see but is limited to the Safeguarding Team and the local

management teams at NOM level and above. All correspondence with agencies regarding safeguarding should be forwarded to the Safeguarding Team who will ensure that a copy is stored in a central location (Streetwise). This includes sending the team copies of any minutes and actions from safeguarding meetings so that all information is kept in one place. Please remember that the Safeguarding Team may not be aware that frontline staff have attended a safeguarding meeting if the request to attend has not come via the team, and particularly if we haven't been the referring agency.

## **14.0 Qualifications and training**

- 14.1 All new staff will be given initial induction training on our Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy and Toolkit. Staff training is carried out annually to relevant staff (including depot staff) to remind them of their obligation to alert the Safeguarding Team to any concerns they may have and how they should communicate this alert.
- 14.2 Staff have access to the [SSAB website](#) which provides information associated with safeguarding adults at risk and includes advice and guidance for staff working with adults at risk.
- 14.3 Managers across the group have received guidance from the Community Safety Team to assist them identify staff who will have interaction with adults at risk within their job role. It is the managers' responsibility to ensure that their staff receive the necessary training. Human Resources deal with staff who require a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, see DBS Policy for further information.

## **Appendix 1- Regulation and Legislation**

In fulfilling its obligations under this Policy, the organisation will comply with all legislation and regulations as appropriate. This section aims to highlight the different areas of law, which may be of particular significance to safeguarding adults at risk.

This is a general overview and should not be used as a substitute for seeking legal advice in specific cases. If there is any doubt about the law relevant to a particular case, legal advice should be sought from the Legal Team

- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- The Equality Act 2006 & 2010
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- The Care Standards Act 2000
- The Care Act 2014
- Hate Crime: The Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Data Protection Act 2018
- The Public Interest and Disclosure Act 1998
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Housing Act 1988 & 1996
- National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990
- Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation & Representation) Act 1986
- The Mental Health Act 1983
- Modern Slavery Act 2015
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Counter-terrorism and Security Act 2015
- FGM Act 2003

- Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Health and Social Care Act 2012
- Sex Offenders Act 1997

In addition to the above, further guidance can be found from:

- Independent Safeguarding Authority
- Association of Directors of Adult Social Services

Gentoo has a suite of complementary policies and procedures which staff may refer to in cases where there are cross cutting concerns, these include (but are not limited to):

- Safeguarding Children Policy and Toolkit
- Community Safety Policy and Toolkit
- Domestic Abuse Policy and Toolkit
- Hate Incidents Toolkit
- Vulnerability Toolkit
- Hoarding Toolkit
- Whistle Blowing Policy
- Forced marriage toolkit.

## Version Control

Version	Reason	Issuer	Date
2.1	Initial draft	Sarah Treadwell	08/17
2.2	Amended	Sarah Treadwell	08/12/17
2.3	Included Julie Lister's amends	Sarah Treadwell	19/03/18
2.4	Included Kirsty Collin's amends	Sarah Treadwell	01/06/18
2.5	Included Paul Sandersfield's amends	Sarah Treadwell	04/06/18
2.6	Included Julie Lister's amends	Sarah Treadwell	23/08/18
2.7	Included Julie Lister's amends	Sarah Treadwell	21/09/18
2.8	Included Julie Walker's amends	Sarah Treadwell	27/09/18
2.9	Included Lucy Malarkey's amends	Sarah Treadwell	22/10/18
2.10	Included Lucy Malarkey's amends	Sarah Treadwell	29/10/18
2.11	Included Julie Walker's amends	Sarah Treadwell	09/11/18
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3.1	Changed names to job titles and added accountable exec director to front page	Sarah Treadwell	07/10/19
4.0	Updated job titles and any changes to legislation and processes. Incorporated changes from Julie Walker. Sent to Tenants Voice team for comment. No comments to change anything or add anything.	Julie Lister	19/10/2021
4.1	Updated core purpose and vision and priorities	Catherine Loftus	31/08/2023