

Safeguarding Children Policy

Housing Management Policy 6a

Keniston Housing Association

1. Introduction

At Keniston we believe every child and young person has the right to live in safety, free from harm, abuse, and neglect.

We work with a range of adults, children, and young people who may be at risk of abuse or neglect and so it is essential that we have mechanisms in place to minimise the risks of harm and abuse occurring and, where concerns exist, to ensure that appropriate action is taken to address them.

Safeguarding children is about people and organisations working together to prevent and stop the risks and experience of abuse, neglect, and exploitation. It is a comprehensive approach aimed at preventing harm to children, promoting their welfare, and responding effectively when concerns arise.

Legislation and statutory guidance such as Children's Act 2004; Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023; and Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 inform our approach to safeguarding children and young people.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding Adults Policy.

Other related documents:

- Whistleblowing Policy
- Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Data Protection Policy
- Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy
- Recruitment Policy
- Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Policy
- Harassment and Hate Crime Policy

2. Scope

The purpose of this Policy is to set out Keniston's approach to preventing and reducing the risk of harm, abuse, neglect, and exploitation of children and young people.

This policy applies to all staff and board members.

We expect our contractors to have their own safeguarding policy and procedures, or to adhere to Keniston's.

3. Our approach

The safeguarding of adults and children involves different legal frameworks, policies, and practices due to the unique vulnerabilities and needs associated with each group.

All Keniston staff have a duty to act upon and report actual, suspected or allegations of abuse.

Our approach reflects the statutory guidance and meets legislative and regulatory requirements.

This policy applies to children and young people that live in or visit our properties.

Keniston recognises that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and that anyone can witness or become aware of a child or young person being at risk.

Our safeguarding children and young people work is underpinned by six overarching principles:

Child-Centred Approach: The best interests of the child should be the primary consideration in all actions and decisions.

Prevention, Protection and Early Intervention: Proactive measures should be taken to prevent harm and address concerns at an early stage.

Partnership and Collaboration: Collaboration among agencies and professionals is crucial to safeguarding children effectively.

Empowerment and Participation: Children should be empowered to express their views, and their participation should be actively encouraged.

Accountability and Responsibility: Individuals and organisations involved in child safeguarding are accountable for their actions and decisions.

Proportionality: Any measures taken should be proportionate to the situation presented.

We recognise the emotional impact on staff of recognising and reporting safeguarding concerns. Employee support will be available through line managers and our Employee Assistance Programme.

4 Key terms and definitions

A **child** is defined as anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday, as defined under the Children Act 1989, irrespective of circumstances and including unborn children.

Abuse and Neglect (within the context of safeguarding children and young people)

Abuse refers to any intentional act or failure to act that causes harm, injury, or distress to a child or young person. It can take various forms, including physical abuse; emotional or psychological abuse; sexual abuse; and neglect. Abuse may be a single incident or a pattern of behaviour over time.

More information on the categories of abuse and types of harm can be found under 'Appendix A'.

Abuse cannot be excused for any cultural or religious reason and must always be reported.

Abuse may also include Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) which refers to crimes predominantly, but not exclusively, experienced by women and girls. Please refer to our Domestic Abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Policy.

5. Key responsibilities

Reporting and responding to safeguarding concerns.

We respond to safeguarding concerns, incidents, and allegations promptly in a considered and proportionate manner.

We understand and work in line with Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) procedures, ensuring that safeguarding concerns are reported in line with local arrangements.

We do not assume that someone else will pass on information critical to keeping a child or young person safe and will share the information with relevant authorities when appropriate.

We will report any incidents of abuse that we suspect are a criminal offence to the Police. We will treat any disclosures of actual historical abuse in the same way as an allegation, disclosure, or suspicion of current child abuse.

Partnership working

We work in partnership with other agencies and relevant partners to respond to suspicions or incidents of abuse or make safeguarding enquiries in accordance with statutory procedures. Where appropriate, Keniston staff will support and participate in Local Authority safeguarding investigations.

We investigate reported incidents ensuring we do not compromise Police or Local Authority investigations.

We understand information sharing, joint working and communication are essential in keeping people safe and we work to build and maintain good professional relationships to support the safeguarding process.

Where appropriate we will refer the child, or young person to additional support services.

We support staff to ask questions and challenge referral decisions or actions they do not agree with.

Recording and sharing of information.

We record incidents and allegations of abuse, harm, or neglect in a timely manner, clearly and accurately. We record and share information appropriately with other professionals and statutory agencies that safeguard children and young people.

Information sharing is permitted when it is necessary to protect a child, or young person from harm. This includes sharing information between relevant professionals, agencies and authorities involved in safeguarding. Keniston aim to strike the balance between respecting a child, or young person's privacy and sharing information to ensure their safety. Where there is a concern that a child or young person may be suffering or is at risk of abuse, neglect, or exploitation their safety must be the over-riding priority.

We maintain accurate records of safeguarding activities to document actions taken to respond to actual, suspected or allegations of abuse, harm, or neglect. These records are reported to our Board on an annual basis.

6. Children affected by domestic abuse

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 defines domestic abuse as occurring where the victim and perpetrator are over 16 years of age. Abusive behaviour directed at a person under 16 years of age would be dealt with as child abuse rather than domestic abuse.

However, the Act defines a child as a victim of domestic abuse if:

- They see, hear, or experience the effects of domestic abuse,
- They are related to a person carrying out domestic abuse or the victim of domestic abuse.

The Act defines a child being related to a person if:

- The person is a parent of, or has parental responsibility for, the child.
- or
- The child and the person are relatives.

7. Prevent

The Government Prevent programme highlights that some children or young people may be vulnerable to radicalisation and involvement in terrorism. Prevent is the Government's strategy to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism, in all its forms. Prevent works with individuals and communities by using voluntary early intervention to encourage them to challenge extremist and terrorist ideology and behaviour.

Keniston recognises that it plays a key role in supporting children or young people connected to our homes and services who may be at risk of radicalisation. We believe that community engagement is essential, and we will work closely with local voluntary and community groups as well as Local Authorities and the Police to meet their duties under the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.

8. Prevention and Awareness

Keniston will:

- Request criminal records check processed through the Disclosure and Barring Service as part of our recruitment process. This will be obtained for staff that come into personal contact with residents.
- Publicise this policy.
- Ensure dangerous offenders, as defined by the Criminal Justice Act 2003, are not offered tenancies in locations offering access to children.
- Ensure staff understand the importance of our safeguarding role and our responsibilities.
- Ensure that we record tenants who are vulnerable i.e. disability or mental health on our system.

9. Training

All staff will receive refresher training in Safeguarding every three years. Staff who are in contact with residents will attend training appropriate to their role.

10. Whistleblowing

We have a robust Whistleblowing Policy in place to use if there is a suspicion that a child or young person is being abused by a Keniston employee, or where there is a failure to respond appropriately to allegations of abuse. There are clear lines of reporting for whistleblowing concerns, including routes to use if staff feel unable to report directly to their line manager, or if they are concerned that appropriate action has not been taken in relation to a concern already raised.

11. Dealing with allegations against staff.

Any member of staff who has a concern about another member of staff, regarding safeguarding children, should report it as soon as possible to their line manager and Operations Director. Where this is either not possible or appropriate, the report should be made to the Chief Executive. The matter will be reported to the appropriate agency before an internal investigation takes place.

12. Legislation and Regulation

- Children Acts 1989 and 2004
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023
- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Child Criminal Exploitation Guidance
- Modern Slavery Act 2015
- Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking: National Referral Mechanism
- London Multi-Agency Adult Safeguarding Policy & Procedures
- Local Adult Safeguarding Board policies
- Data Protection Act and General Data Protection Regulation
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- The Equality Act 2010
- Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015

- Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003
- Children and Young Persons Act 2008

13. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Everyone at Keniston, our external partners and customers are required to:

- Treat people fairly, give equal access to jobs, homes, services and contracts without discrimination, harassment, bullying and prejudice, and meet diverse needs through reasonable adjustments whenever possible and appropriate.
- Not discriminate against any individuals or groups, not tolerate attitudes and behaviours that amount to or could result in discrimination and swiftly handle any reports of victimisation, bullying or harassment.
- Acknowledge and value the differences by recognising people's individual circumstances, unique aspirations and needs and responding appropriately.
- Comply with relevant legislation, statutory codes and guidance designed to promote equality of opportunity and eliminate discrimination, such as the Equality Act 2010, Housing and other Regulatory Standards, and the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code.

This policy was agreed by Management Team on 27th August 2024
Next review date: August 2027

Appendix A: Definitions

Child

Anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday, as defined under the Children Act 1989, irrespective of circumstances and including unborn children.

Safeguarding Duty

The local authority has a duty to promote and safeguard the welfare of children in their area. This involves identifying needs, assessing risks, providing services, forming safeguarding partnerships and generally taking appropriate actions to protect children from harm, abuse, and neglect.

Abuse and Neglect

Abuse is actions that cause, or put a child at risk of, harm. Neglect involves the failure to meet a child's basic needs, affecting their health and development. This includes care, supervision, or basic needs, leading to a child's physical or emotional harm. An act or omission does not have to be deliberate to be considered as abuse or neglect.

Physical Abuse

Inflicting physical harm on a child including assault, hitting, slapping, pushing, hair-pulling, biting, misuse of medication (e.g. over-sedation or withholding of pain medication), unauthorised or unlawful restraint, or inappropriate physical sanctions.

Sexual Abuse

Involvement of a child in sexual activities, exploitation, or exposure to inappropriate sexual behaviour. This includes rape, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, inappropriate looking or touching, sexual teasing or innuendo, sexual photography, subjection to pornography or witnessing sexual acts.

Emotional (also known as Psychological) Abuse

Any act or treatment which may diminish a child's sense of identity, dignity, and self-worth. Includes threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, cyber bullying, or isolation.

Domestic Abuse

Exposure to violence or abusive behaviour within the family, affecting the child directly or indirectly. Children can witness domestic abuse in a variety of ways and this can have many negative physical and emotional effects. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 states that children are a victim of domestic abuse in their own right if they witness, hear or have an awareness of domestic abuse happening.

Online Abuse

Harassment, bullying, or exploitation occurring through online platforms, including social media and other digital communication.

Discrimination

Unfair treatment based on factors such as race, ethnicity, religion, gender, or disability, negatively impacting a child's self-esteem and development.

Exploitation

Taking advantage of a child for personal gain, including forced labour, child trafficking, or involvement in criminal activities.

Section 47: Duty to Investigate

The local authority duty to investigate when there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child in their area is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm due to abuse or neglect.

Section 17: Provision of Services

The local authority duty to provide a range of services to children in need, including those at risk of abuse, or neglect. This emphasises the importance of preventing the need for intervention through support services.

Section 31: Care Order

If there is any suspicion of wrongdoing to a child, the Children Act 1989 Section 31 says the child can be placed in the care of, or supervised by, a specified local authority. The goal is to help the child in question feel safe and comfortable. According to the Section 31 Care Order, the Court can make the order determination if they are appropriately satisfied that:

- The child concerned is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm.
- The harm or likelihood of harm is attributable to the care given to the child, or likely to be given to him, if the Order were not made.
- The child is beyond parental control.

It's important to note that the Section 31 care order cannot be made once a child has reached the age of 17.

Child in Need

A child who needs additional support and intervention to ensure their health and development or to protect them from harm. Local authorities have a duty to assess and provide appropriate services for children in need, collaborating with parents and other agencies. Usually connected to a Section 17.

Child Protection

Child protection measures are invoked when there are significant concerns about the child's safety and well-being, necessitating more robust interventions to prevent harm. Involves thorough assessment of the risks and a child protection plan is put in place to address concerns and ensure the child's safety. Usually connected to a Section 47 or 31.

Think Family

Think Family recognises and promotes the importance of a whole-family approach with services working with both adults and children to consider family circumstances and responsibilities. Look beyond the immediate person that concerns relate to take the wider family dynamic into consideration.

County Lines

Criminal exploitation and drug trafficking involving exploitation of vulnerable adults, children and young people who are coerced and manipulated into criminal activities involving the movement of illegal drugs.

Self-harm

Self-harm is when a person hurts themselves intentionally. This is often a way of coping with difficult feelings or situations, painful memories or trauma. Self-harm can present in many forms including cutting, pinching, burning, hitting or punching oneself and hair pulling (not an exhaustive list). Excessive use of alcohol and/or drugs and people putting themselves into harmful situations, where they may be subjected to physical or sexual abuse, can also be considered a type of self-harm.

Suicide

Suicide involves a person intentionally ending their own life. Suicidal feelings can range from a person having fleeting or general thoughts of ending their own life, right through thinking of or planning ways to end their own life.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

This involves procedures that intentionally alter or injure female genital organs for non-medical reasons. The Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 makes it illegal to practice FGM in the UK, or to take girls who are British Nationals or permanent residents of the UK abroad for FGM, whether it is lawful in another country. UK communities at risk of FGM include Kenyans, Somalis, Sudanese, Sierra Leoneans, Egyptians, Nigerians, and Eritreans. Those from non-African communities that are at risk of FGM include Yemeni, Kurdish, Indonesian and Pakistani women.