



**SAFEGUARDING
CHILDREN
POLICY**

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1. Policy Statement

1.1 Safeguarding Children and Young People: Our Commitment at Eastlight Community Homes

1.1.1 At Eastlight Community Homes (hereafter ‘Eastlight’), we take our responsibility to ensure the safety of our residents seriously. We are firmly committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who may be at risk of harm. We believe that safeguarding is a collective responsibility, and everyone at Eastlight plays a crucial role in ensuring the safety of children.

1.2 A Collaborative Approach to Safeguarding

1.2.1 We understand the importance of working together to protect children and young people. We fully support Local Authorities in their duty to establish Local Children's Safeguarding Boards. Eastlight is committed to complying with their framework and meeting all legal, statutory and regulatory requirements under UK law.

1.3 Defining Our Safeguarding Approach

1.3.1 This Policy outlines how Eastlight safeguards children and young people at risk of harm, abuse or neglect. We have established clear safeguarding procedures and provide specialised training to support our commitment.

2. Scope

2.1 This Policy applies to:

- Children living in our properties;
- Children visiting our properties; and
- Staff, Board Members, contractors, subcontractors and agents working for us.

2.2 Everyone at Eastlight shares responsibility for safeguarding vulnerable children and must promptly act on concerns of abuse and/or neglect.

3. Our Guiding Principles

3.1 Eastlight aligns with the principles of safeguarding children as defined in the Care Act 2014 Statutory Guidance:

- **Empowerment** – People being supported and encouraged to make their own decisions and informed consent;
- **Prevention** – It is better to take action before harm occurs;
- **Proportionality** – The least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented;
- **Protection** – Support and representation for those in greatest need;
- **Partnerships** - Local solutions through services working with their communities. Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse; and
- **Accountability** - Accountability and transparency in safeguarding practice.

3.2 We will take a child-centred approach to safeguarding, prioritising children’s needs when making decisions about their lives and working in partnership with them and their families.

4. Definitions

4.1 Children

4.1.1 In England, a child is defined as anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday and is therefore considered inherently vulnerable.

4.2 Care Leavers

4.2.1 The Children Act 1989 places duties on Local Authorities towards ‘looked after’ and previously ‘looked after’ children as they exit the care system. The Children Act 2004 further developed principles from the Children Act 1989 that those working with children have a responsibility to help safeguard them and promote their welfare.

4.2.2 All children who are over the aged of 16 and leaving care fall into one of the following categories:

- Eligible child;
- Relevant child;
- Former relevant child; or
- Other qualifying care leavers.

- 4.2.3 If, at the age of 21, the young person is still being helped by the responsible authority with education or training, then they remain a ‘former relevant child’ until a maximum age of 25. Their programme of education or training will be set out within their Pathway Plan.
- 4.2.4 Eastlight considers a safeguarding concern where a child is suspected to be experiencing:
- Physical abuse;
 - Sexual abuse;
 - Emotional or psychological abuse;
 - Neglect and acts of omission;
 - Online abuse;
 - Child sexual exploitation;
 - Female genital mutilation;
 - Bullying and cyberbullying;
 - Domestic abuse;
 - Child trafficking; and/or
 - Grooming.
- 4.2.5 Details of the relevant legislation, including statutory and regulatory requirements, can be found under Section 11.

5. Reporting Concerns of Abuse

- 5.1** All staff have a duty to report any incident of alleged, suspected or witnessed abuse and take appropriate action.
- 5.2** If a member of staff suspects that a child is being abused by another member of staff, they should immediately speak to their Head of Service, the Operational / Strategic Lead or the Human Resources Department. Serious allegations against staff members will also be reported to the Executive Team and reported to the Board.
- 5.3** Accurate and timely record-keeping is essential when managing allegations of abuse. (Please see the Safeguarding Children Procedure for details).

6. Eastlight Staff – Roles & Responsibilities

6.1 All staff and contractors who work on Eastlight’s behalf are expected to:

- Complete safeguarding training as required by the organisation;
- Be vigilant for signs of abuse and neglect;
- Report all suspected cases of abuse or neglect following the organisation's procedures; and
- Be mindful of their actions and situations that may pose risks and manage them responsibly.

6.2 Eastlight’s strategic and operational roles and responsibilities are as follows:

Board Lead

Eastlight will designate a Non-Executive Board member to ensure the Board is given the necessary information to enable it to discharge its responsibilities and that safeguarding matters are properly considered at Board level

Strategic Lead

The Housing Services Director is responsible for providing oversight of Eastlight’s approach to safeguarding and reporting to the Board. Ensuring the service is compliant with our legal, statutory and regulatory requirements.

Operational Lead

The Safeguarding and Sustainment Manager is responsible for the operational management and delivery of Eastlight’s Safeguarding service

Safeguarding Champions

Safeguarding champions are responsible for ensuring that policies and procedures regarding safeguarding are adhered to in their departments and relevant concerns are appropriately raised

Tenancy Sustainment Coordinators
Intervention & Enforcement Coordinators
Tenancy Management Coordinators

These teams within Housing Management are responsible for managing safeguarding concerns in line with our organisational procedures, including making referrals to the relevant Local Authorities

Managers

All Eastlight Managers are responsible for ensuring their teams are aware of Eastlight’s safeguarding policies and procedures, and that they have completed mandatory safeguarding training.

Managers are expected to discuss safeguarding regularly as part of 1:1s and team meetings to ensure awareness

All Staff

All Eastlight staff are expected to report all cases of suspected abuse or neglect in line with Eastlight procedures.

All staff are expected to attend Safeguarding training as and when required (frequency dependent on role).

7. Eastlight Contractors – Roles & Responsibilities

- 7.1 Contractors working with Eastlight must follow the same expectations for reporting safeguarding concerns as Eastlight staff.
- 7.2 Contractors are expected to undertake safeguarding training which will be provided by Eastlight as stipulated as part of the Procurement process.

8. Confidentiality & Information Sharing

- 8.1 Information will be shared on a need-to-know basis to safeguard children at risk while respecting confidentiality laws and regulations.
- 8.2 Eastlight will ensure that our service supports the work of any statutory organisation involved in dealing with issues of neglect or abuse. This will include data sharing in line with relevant legislation, policy and protocols. We will work closely with local Safeguarding Children Boards to share information and promote the safety and well-being of children at risk.

9. Review

- 9.1** Eastlight will formally review this Policy every three years, considering any changes and making amendments accordingly. In addition, amendments considered of sufficient magnitude or importance will be implemented in between review dates, where appropriate.

10. Equality Impact Assessment

- 10.1** An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was completed and approved in September 2023.

11. Statutory & Regulatory Requirements

11.1 Care Act 2014 (and Care & Support Statutory Guidance issued under the Care Act):

11.1.1 As a Registered Provider of Social Housing, Eastlight is not a statutory partner under this act, but are obliged to:

- Have a safeguarding lead;
- Attend and provide information for Local Safeguarding Adults Boards if necessary. Housing providers will also be asked to participate in relevant Safeguarding Adult Reviews;
- Co-operate with local authorities in enquiries of suspected child safeguarding concerns - these may result in Eastlight needing to take action to protect a child from any actual or risk of abuse or neglect as part of a safeguarding plan;
- Have a Safeguarding Policy and procedure;
- Keep clear and accurate records of child safeguarding allegations, responses and actions, then share these with appropriate organisations when in the best interest of the child; and
- Have safe recruitment practices and training relevant to safeguarding.

11.2 Sexual Offences Act 2003

11.2.1 This Act strengthened measures to protect the public from sexual offending.

11.2.2 Part One of the Act:

- Sets out that any sexual activity involving children under the age of 16 is unlawful, even with consent - this includes exploitation; and
- Provides specific protection from abusive sexual activity for those adults with an ‘arrested or incomplete development of mind, psychiatric disorder and any other disability of the mind’.

11.3 Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

11.3.1 This Act sets out the responsibility we have for vetting and barring people working with children and vulnerable adults.

11.4 Children and Young Persons Act 2008

11.4.1 This Act sets out the statutory framework for children in care in England and Wales and to ensure that such young people receive high-quality care and services that are focused on and tailored to their needs.

11.5 Working Together to Safeguard Children (Updated March 2018)

11.5.1 This is a guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. It states that, ‘children are best protected when professionals are clear about what is required of them individually, and how they need to work together’.

11.5.2 This encourages Registered Providers to:

- Put the child’s needs at the heart of their safeguarding approach;
- Be alert to the risks of harm that individual abusers, or potential abusers, may pose to children;
- Make a referral to local authority children’s social care or the police if necessary;
- Share appropriate information in a timely way and discuss any concerns about an individual child with colleagues and local authority children’s social care; and
- Contribute to whatever actions are needed to safeguard and promote a child’s welfare.

11.6 Children Act 1989

11.6.1 Under the Children Act 1989, local authorities are required to provide services for children in need for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting their welfare.

11.6.2 **Section 47** of this act requires local authorities to undertake assessments of the needs of individual children to determine what services to provide and action to take. The police, health professionals, teachers and other relevant professionals (such as Registered Providers) should help the local authority in undertaking its enquiries.

11.7 Data Protection Act 2018

11.7.1 The regulation controls how personal and sensitive information is used by organisations, such as Registered Providers.

11.7.2 Organisations must ensure data is:

- Used fairly and lawfully;
- Used for limited, specifically stated purposes;
- Used in a way that is adequate, relevant and not excessive;
- Accurate;
- Kept for no longer than is absolutely necessary;
- Handled according to people's data protection rights;
- Kept safe and secure; and
- Not transferred outside the UK without adequate protection.

11.8 Protection of Freedoms Act 2012

11.8.1 Part Five of this act created the current disclosure, vetting and barring scheme, which applies to people working with or has access to children and vulnerable adults.

11.8.2 The Disclosure and Barring Service is now responsible for assisting employers, such as Registered Providers, in England and Wales to make safer recruitment decisions and prevent unsuitable people from working with vulnerable groups.

11.9 Modern Slavery Act 2015

11.9.1 The Modern Slavery Act is a globally leading piece of legislation. It sets out a range of measures on how modern slavery and human trafficking should be dealt with in the UK. Whilst not all of the Act is directly relevant for business, **Section 54** entitled 'Transparency in Supply Chains' impacts the corporate sector. The Act came into force on 29 October 2015 and requires many businesses to disclose a 'slavery and human trafficking statement'.

11.10 Human Rights Act 1998

11.10.1 The Human Rights Act 1998 sets out the fundamental rights and freedoms that everyone in the UK is entitled to. It enshrines the rights set out in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) into British law. Human rights are increasingly being considered in safeguarding cases, so it is important that all staff understand how a person's human rights can be compromised when dealing with a safeguarding case.

11.10.2 The following are particularly relevant to Safeguarding Adults from abuse:

- **Article 3** provides: 'No-one shall be subjected to torture, or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment'. This is an absolute right: inhuman or degrading treatment is unlawful, whatever the situation. We must act if an adult at risk is subject to degrading treatment or living in inhuman conditions.
- **Article 6** entitles everyone to a 'fair hearing' when a decision is made about their civil rights and obligations. This includes the right to be consulted before decisions are made, and to be given reasons for decisions.
- **Article 8** ECHR provides: 'Everyone has the right to respect for (their) private and family life, (their) home and correspondence'. Public authorities may only interfere with in the interests of:
 - Public safety;
 - The prevention of disorder or crime;
 - The protection of health or morals; or
 - The protection of the rights and freedoms of others.
- The interference by public authorities must be proportionate to the risk or other reason for acting.
- **Article 14** prohibits discrimination on any ground in the way that people access their rights under the Convention.

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