



Title of policy:	Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults and Children's Policy
Version:	1.6
Purpose:	To set out a clearly defined policy with regards to safeguarding vulnerable adults and children
Updated:	September 2024
Next review:	September 2026
By:	Supported Housing Manager

1.0 Scope of Policy

This policy sets out how North Star employees and anyone acting on our behalf, including contractors, volunteers, managing agents, understands the obligations placed upon us to maintain a safe environment for our customers and employees within our homes.

North Star provides services to a wide range of individuals and organisations and recognises that some of its customers will be vulnerable adults and children. We have a responsibility to pass information to relevant agencies where abuse is suspected, and a child or vulnerable adult may be at risk.

2.0 Policy Statement

North Star is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of vulnerable adults and children and are aware that, from time to time, we could potentially become aware of, or suspect, a situation where abuse of a vulnerable person maybe taking place.

North Star recognises that we have a significant role to play in safeguarding adults and children as part of our day-to-day work. It is our aim to develop an environment in which abuse is not tolerated in any form.

We own a large portfolio of properties across a wide geographical area. We expect all our managing agents to have appropriate arrangements in place to provide for the safeguarding of adults, children, and young people.

This policy is supported by a number of safeguarding procedures which must always be read in conjunction with this policy.

This policy is an overarching policy, applying across the group.



3.0 Background

In addition to the broad safeguarding aims set out above in the Policy Statement, North Star is expected to have appropriate arrangements in place.

In operating this policy, we will comply with all legal and regulatory requirements including, but not exclusive to, the following:

- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- Care Act 2014
- Modern Slavery Act 2015
- Mental capacity Act 2005
- Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation
- Supporting People Quality Assessment Framework (February 2009)
- The Public Interests Disclosures act 1998
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)
- Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015
- This policy complies with the Supported Accommodation Regulations 2023, The regulation is to ensure that young People aged 16 to 17 years old who are looked after children or care leavers and for whom the LA has a duty to accommodate are provided with safe, nurturing and supportive living environments as they transition to full independence.

Related Policies

- Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Whistle blowing Policy.
- Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy
- Domestic Abuse policy
- Grievance Policy
- Vulnerable and Reasonable Adjustment Policy
- Disclosure and Barring Policy
- Hate Crime Policy
- Aids and Adaptations



4.0 Policy Detail

We will establish clear lines of responsibility and accountability for the detection, recording and reporting of Safeguarding concerns. This includes clear robust processes and timescales for sharing information with lead agencies and local safeguarding boards. We will, where appropriate, discuss individual cases within the Safeguarding Group meetings and will undertake regular audits to ensure processes are followed.

Some aspects of safeguarding apply only to adults, others only to children and young people and some apply to both. We will set this out in the policy accordingly.

Safeguarding Adults

We are committed to improving outcomes for those experiencing abuse or neglect. We will use the six key priorities that underpin all safeguarding work as required by Care Act 2014 statutory guidance.

These principles consist of:

Empowerment – Personalisation and the presumption of person-led decision and informed consent.

Prevention – It is better to take action before harm occurs.

Proportionality – Proportionate and least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented.

Protection – Support and representation for those in greatest need.

Partnership – Local solutions through services working within their communities. Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse.

Accountability – Accountability and transparency in delivering safeguarding.

Mental Capacity

The Mental Capacity Act 2005 applies to everybody who has dealings with people who may lack capacity, and particularly if they have a professional relationship with the person.

We will comply with the requirements set out in the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and will consider the Act's five key principles during interactions with customers.

A presumption of capacity

Every adult has the right to make his or her own decisions and must be assumed to have capacity to do so unless it is proved otherwise.

Supporting individuals to make their own decisions.

A person must be given all practicable help before anyone treats them as not being able to make their own decisions.

Unwise decisions

Just because an individual makes what might be seen as an unwise decision, they should not be assumed to lack capacity to make that decision.



Best interests

An act done, or decision made under the Act for or on behalf of a person who lacks capacity must be done in their best interests.

Least restrictive option

Anything done for or on behalf of a person who lacks capacity must consider whether it is possible to decide or act in a way that would interfere less with the person's rights and freedoms of actions, or whether there is a need to decide or act at all.

We will usually take the opportunity to confirm capacity at either the referral or at the tenancy sign up stage.

Safeguarding Children

This policy is also for the protection of children and young people who may be at risk.

Due to the wide-ranging nature of North Star's housing portfolio, young people may be tenants or children of customers or visitors to our homes/properties.

We are committed to safeguard children and young people who use or are connected to our services and protect them from abuse. In doing so, we will act in accordance with the two key principles of the Children Act by making safeguarding "everyone's responsibility" and adopting a "child-centred approach". We will always act in the best interests of the child where there is a safeguarding concern, even if this means going against their wishes.

Definition of safeguarding – children and young people

In relation to children and young people, the definition used in the Children Act 2004 and the Department for Education (DfE) guidance document, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013 (paragraph 2), both define safeguarding and promoting children and young people's welfare as:

- Protecting children from maltreatment
- Impairment of children's health or development
- Ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care, and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

On-line safety

Young people can be exposed to risk online and it's important we are aware of these risks and report them accordingly in line with safeguarding policies and procedures

What is online harm?

The number of issues that could be regarded as harmful online is considerable, but they can be categorised into four areas of risk:

- being exposed to illegal, inappropriate or harmful content, e.g., pornography, fake news, racism, misogyny, self-harm, suicide, anti-Semitism, radicalisation



and extremism (Even pre-school children may come across such content – especially on devices with voice-activated search enabled).

- being subjected to harmful online contact with other users, e.g., peer pressure, adults posing as children or young adults with the intention to groom or exploit them for sexual, criminal, financial or other purposes;
- personal online conduct that increases the likelihood of/causes harm, e.g., making, sending and receiving consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes and/or pornography, sharing other explicit images, online bullying, allowing apps/websites to access location, younger children sending (including inappropriate/indecent) images/information to a device's contact list (e.g., their parent's);
- commerce-based risks (both as victims and perpetrators), e.g., online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing and/or financial scams.

Self-Harm and Suicide

In the UK suicide is the leading cause of death in young people accounting for 14% of deaths in 10-19 year olds. Self-harm is a common precursor to suicide, and children and young people who deliberately harm themselves may unintentionally kill themselves by accident, but not all young people who exhibit self-harming behaviours are at high risk of suicide. Recent studies have indicated that just over half (52%) of under 20-year olds had a known history of self-harm prior to death by suicide. Levels of self-harm have risen significantly in the last 15 years with one recent study suggesting that as many as 1 in 5 (20%) young women report having self-harmed, twice the rate in young men and three times more than 15 years ago. (Suicide by Children and Young People: University of Manchester, 2017)

Warning signs of suicide

Children or young people who are self-harming or who are contemplating suicide may display changes in behaviour, for example:

- Suicide-related internet use (searching for information about suicide or posting messages with suicidal content)
- Physical marks or scarring on the body
- Expressions of suicidal ideation (especially to peers)
- Reluctance to undress or expose specific parts of the body where injuries may be located
- Changes in mood
- Lowering of school grades
- Becoming withdrawn
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Expressing feelings of hopelessness or failure
- Misuse of drugs or alcohol
- Isolation from friends and family

Bullying

North Star works with children and young people across their services. Bullying includes a range of abusive behaviour that is

- Repeated
- Intended to hurt someone either physically or emotionally.

North Star believes that

- Children and young people should never experience abuse of any kind
- We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people, to keep them safe and operate in a way that protects them

We recognise that:

- Bullying causes real distress and affects a person's health and development
- In some instances, bullying can cause significant harm
- All children, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse
- Everyone has a role to play in preventing all forms of bullying (including online) and putting a stop to bullying.

We will seek to prevent bullying by:

- Developing a code of behaviour that sets out how everyone involved in our organisation is expected to behave, in face-to-face contact and online, and within and outside of our activities
- Holding regular discussions with staff, volunteers, children, young people and families who use our organisation about bullying and how to prevent it
- Providing support and training for all staff and volunteers on dealing with all forms of bullying, including racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic and sexual bullying
- Putting clear and robust anti-bullying procedures in place.

Our regular discussions with staff, volunteers, children, young people and families will focus on:

- Group members' responsibilities to look after one another and uphold the behaviour code
- Practising skills such as listening to each other
- Respecting the fact that we are all different
- Making sure that no one is without friends
- Dealing with problems in a positive way
- Checking that our anti-bullying measures are working well.



Responding to bullying

We will make sure our response to incidents of bullying takes into account

- The needs of the person being bullied
- The needs of the person displaying bullying behaviour
- The needs of any bystanders
- Our organisation as a whole. We will review the plan we have developed to address any incidents of bullying at regular intervals, in order to ensure that the problem has been resolved in the long term

Safeguarding Group

North Star has a dedicated Safeguarding Group. Members of the group provide advice and support to staff relating to safeguarding concerns.

The purpose of the group is to:

- Ensure Safeguarding is embedded across North Star
- Identify any gaps
- Review/evaluate cases
- Identify and learn from any best practice
- Identify any themes/patterns
- Ensure we have robust monitoring in place
- Ensure our policies are reviewed regularly and they are in accordance with best practice
- Be designated safeguarding leads within the organisation

5.0 Prevent Strategy

The Government Prevent programme highlights that some adults 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.

All front-line staff receive appropriate training to understand the Prevent Agenda and be clear about their role in how to recognise and report any concerns.

6.0 Training and Recruitment

All front-line staff receive mandatory level one adult and children safeguarding training every 18 months alongside mental health and domestic abuse training every two years.

Staff that have wider contact with vulnerable customers alongside members of the Safeguarding Group receive a higher level of training.



Safeguarding is included in North Stars induction for new staff alongside all relevant Disclosure and Barring checks and updates in line with best practice. These checks include anyone who is acting on North Stars behalf including volunteers, contractors, students.

7.0 Reporting and Referrals

We will record and refer concerns, suspicions and allegations of abuse, harm, or neglect to the lead statutory agency responsible for the safeguarding assessments and enquiries. In most cases, this will be the local authority. We will record all decisions made not to refer a concern and the reason why.

We will ensure that all safeguarding referrals that staff/customers have made are recorded appropriately and we will also record any incidents where we refer to another agency. Referrals will be monitored by the Safeguarding Group.

Resolving Professional Difference/Escalation

Challenge is essential in effective safeguarding practice. When escalating a safeguarding concern to the Local Authority, staff should utilise the escalation procedure provided by that service.

8.0 Information Sharing

The Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation allows sharing of information without the consent of the individual in a safeguarding context where certain conditions are met:

- The public interest served outweighs the public interest served by protecting confidentiality.
- There is a lawful basis to do so which includes “safeguarding of children and individuals at risk” and sharing the information is necessary to protect an individual from neglect or physical, mental, or emotional harm, or to protect the physical, mental, or emotional wellbeing of an individual.

9.0 Monitoring

Implementation of the policy will be managed by the Safeguarding Group and issues of safeguarding will also be managed through North Stars risk register.

Safeguarding will be reported to Board each year through the Annual Performance Report.



10.0 Review of this Policy

This policy will be regularly reviewed in accordance with legislative and regulatory changes and best practice.

11.0 Complaints

We will use our complaints procedure for anyone who feels they have been treated unfairly.

