

TUNTUM HOUSING ASSOCIATION

DOCUMENT CONTROL	
Policy Name	Child Safeguarding Policy
To be read in conjunction with which procedure:	Child Safeguarding Procedure
Author:	Delores Vassell Head of Specialist Housing
Approved by:	March 2025 Board (virtually)
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Date of next review:	March 2027
Customer facing:	Yes

1 Introduction

1.1 This policy has been produced to set out the guidelines and expectations for all staff in relation to safeguarding children and young people. The procedures have been designed to ensure the welfare and protection of any child and/or young person with whom we have contact. This policy must be applied in all situations in which we come in to contact with children, regardless of the frequency of contact or reason for contact.

1.2 It is acknowledged that all Board members, employees and volunteers have the potential to be involved in identifying and potentially preventing abuse. Therefore, clear procedures are provided to assist and support them in this potentially difficult process.

2. Policy Statement

2.1 Tuntum Housing Association is committed to ensuring that all children and young people are protected and kept safe from harm whilst engaged in services organised and provided by us. Tuntum Housing Association will also safeguard the welfare of children and young people who use our services by protecting them from abuse. Tuntum Housing Association acknowledges its duty to act appropriately to any allegations, reports, or suspicions of abuse.

2.2 Children and young people have the right to be safe in the services provided for them and the activities they choose to participate in.

2.3 All children and young people have the right to live their lives to the fullest potential, to be protected, to have the opportunity to participate in and enjoy any activity and to be treated with dignity and respect.

Tuntum Housing Association recognises its responsibilities under the terms of the Children Act 2004, earlier Children's Acts and other relevant legislation to decide for ensuring that its functions are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of Children and young people.

3. Policy Implementation

3.1 In implementing this safeguarding policy Tuntum Housing Association will:

- a. Ensure that all Board members, employees and volunteers understand their legal responsibility to protect children and young people from harm, abuse and exploitation.
- b. Ensure that all Board members, employees and volunteers are aware of the need to prioritise the safeguarding of children over the safeguarding and support of vulnerable adults where a conflict may arise.
- c. Ensure that all Board members, employees and volunteers understand their responsibility to work to the standards that are detailed in the organisation's *Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures* and work at all times towards maintaining high standards of practice.
- d. Ensure that all Board members, employees and volunteers understand their duty to report concerns that arise about a child or young person, or a worker's conduct towards a child/young person, to the designated Senior Worker.
- e. Ensure that the Senior Worker understands their responsibility to refer any child safeguarding concerns to the statutory child safeguarding agencies (i.e. Police and/or Social Care).
- f. Ensure that any procedures relating to the conduct of employees and volunteers are implemented in a consistent and equitable manner.
- g. Provide opportunities for all Board members, employees and volunteers to develop their skills and knowledge particularly in relation to the safeguarding of children and young people.
- h. Ensure that children and young people are enabled to express their ideas and views on a wide range of issues and will have access to the organisation's *Complaints and Compliments Procedure*.
- i. Abide by the relevant authority's Child Protection Procedures, and all other protocols issued by local Safeguarding Children Boards in each area we operate in, including encouraging full participation by clients in processes (e.g. Child Protection Conferences, and family group conferences where applicable).
- j. Ensure that clients are encouraged to be involved in the work of the organisation and, when requested, have access to all guidelines and procedures.
- k. Keep up to date with local and national developments relating to the safeguarding of children and young people, by circulating local and national updates and good practice guidance.
- l. Ensure that Safeguarding is treated as a key organisational priority by ensuring that appropriate resource is made available and senior managers are responsible and accountable for the implementation of policy and procedure across the organisation.
- m. Ensure that recruitment and human resources management take account of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people, including arrangements for appropriate checks on new staff and volunteers, which will be clearly stated in all adverts and application packs.

3.2 The policy affects and applies to every Tuntum Housing Association board member, staff member, volunteer, students and anyone working on behalf of and/or representing Tuntum Housing Association.

3.3 This policy should not be confused with the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) but should be read in conjunction with the Working Together to Safeguard Children Procedures for each Local Authority.

4. Definitions

4.1 **Children:** In this document, as in the Children Acts 1989 and 2004, a **child** is anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. 'Children' therefore means 'children and young people' throughout. The fact that a child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently or is in further education, is a member of the armed forces, is in hospital, in prison or in a Young Offenders' Institution, does not change his or her status or entitlement to services or protection under the Children Act 1989.

The following definitions are taken from Working Together 2023

4.2 **Safeguarding and Promoting Welfare** is defined as:

- protecting children from maltreatment
- providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge.
- preventing impairment of children's health or development
- ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care undertaking that role so as to enable those children to have optimum life chances and to enter adulthood successfully

4.3 **Child Protection** is part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. The term is used to refer to the activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering or are at risk of suffering significant harm.

4.3.1 The terms children or young person is used to refer to anyone under the age of 18 years. Please note: vulnerable adults such as people over 18 with learning difficulties are covered by a companion policy on the safeguarding of vulnerable adults. The term parent is used as a generic term to represent anyone with legal parental responsibility.

4.3.2 The terms board members, staff and volunteers are used to refer to board members, employees, volunteers, students and anyone working on behalf of and/or representing Tuntum Housing Association: this includes temporary, agency and contractors.

4.3.3 All children and young people irrespective of their age, class, religion, culture, disability, gender, ethnicity or sexual preference have the right to safeguarding.

4.4 **Children in need** are children who are defined as being 'in need', under s17 of the Children Act 1989 and are those whose vulnerability is such that they are unlikely to reach or maintain a satisfactory level of health or development, or their health and development will be significantly impaired, without the provision of services (s17(10) of the Children Act 1989), plus those who are disabled.

4.4.1 The critical factors to be considered in deciding whether a child is in need under the Children Act 1989 are:

- What will happen to a child's health or development without services being provided and
- The likely effect the services will have on the child's standard of health and development.

4.4.2 Local Authorities have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need. All areas should have a 'continuum of need' to identify the different levels of support required depending on the different situation of each child.

5. Legislation / Regulatory Requirements

The following key legislation and regulations inform this policy:

- Children Act 1989 & 2004
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Children and Families Act 2014
- The Care Act 2014
- The Children's Homes Regulations 2015
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (Statutory Guidance, updated 2018)

6. Aims of the policy

6.1 Tuntum Housing Association accepts the moral and legal responsibility to: implement procedures, to provide a duty of care for children and young people, safeguard their well being and protect them from abuse when they are engaged in services organised and provided by Tuntum Housing Association or when they come into contact with Tuntum Housing Association staff, those on work experience/students, board members and volunteers.

6.2 Board members, employees and volunteers need to be able to identify where there may be a problem. It is not within the remit of Tuntum Housing Association employees and volunteers to prove there is a problem.

6.3 Board members, employees and volunteers need to know how to obtain fast and professional advice and refer any concerns to relevant specialists and designated officers. The welfare of children/young people is the primary concern.

7. Principles of child safeguarding

7.1 All children/young people whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, ethnic origin, religious belief, sexual orientation or Transgender status have the right to protection from abuse.

7.2 All Board members, employees and volunteers have a legal duty and responsibility to report concerns and suspected abuse. This includes concerns about other members of staff, volunteers or contractors. Poor practice that has the potential to impact negatively on clients, their children or members of the public should also be raised with a line manager. It is the responsibility of all Board members, employees and volunteers to work to avoid the need for a Serious Case Review by taking early preventative action.

7.3 Staff are required to abide by Tuntum Housing Association's Code of Conduct and the Child Safeguarding Procedures issued by local Safeguarding Children Boards in each area that we operate in.

7.4 Professionals working in housing services may become aware of conditions that could have an adverse impact on children and are obliged under Section 11 of the Children Act (2004) to comply with certain duties in the provision of services to children and young people.

7.5 Confidentiality shall be upheld in line with current UK Data Protection and Human Rights legislation. However, this legislation and any potential confidentiality issues should never be a barrier or reason not to report child abuse or neglect.

7.6 All Board members, employees and volunteers who have lone working contact, or potential for lone working contact, with any client will be subject to an enhanced DBS check (see Lone Working procedure).

8. Child Centered Approach to Safeguarding

8.1 A child centred approach means keeping the child in focus when making decisions about their lives and working in partnership with them and their families. This child centred approach is fundamental to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of every child.

8.2 All staff should follow the principles of the Children Acts 1989 and 2004 - that state that the welfare of children is paramount and that they are best looked after within their families, with their parents playing a full part in their lives, unless compulsory intervention in family life is necessary.

8.3 Children may be vulnerable to neglect and abuse or exploitation from within their family and from individuals they come across in their day-to-day lives. These threats can take a variety of different forms, including sexual, physical and emotional abuse; neglect; exploitation by criminal gangs and organised crime groups; trafficking; online abuse; sexual exploitation and the influences of extremism leading to radicalisation.

8.4 Whatever the form of abuse or neglect, practitioners should put the needs of children first when determining what action to take.

8.5 The Children's Social Care National Framework (2023) brings together the purpose of local authority children's social care, the principles by which children, young people and families should be supported, the enablers that should be in place so the system is effective, and the outcomes that should be achieved so that children and young people can grow up to thrive.

8.6 The National Framework puts the voices of children, young people and families at the heart of practice, so they can have a say in how they are supported.

9. Children's Commissioner (England)

9.1 The Children's Commissioner promotes and protects the rights of children, especially the most vulnerable, and stands up for their views and interests.

9.2 Dame Rachel de Souza, the Children's Commissioner for England (March 2021) has stated that her priorities will be:

- To Listen
- To deliver
- Support the wellbeing and aspirations of children in care, and supporting care leavers to achieve their full potential

9.3 Tuntum Housing Association aims to do this by:

- a) Raising an awareness throughout Tuntum Housing Association and beyond of the statutory "duty of care" relating to children and young people and actively encourage good practice amongst all staff, board members and volunteers.
- b) Creating a safe and healthy environment within all its services, avoiding situations where abuse or allegations of abuse may occur.
- c) Respecting and promoting the rights, wishes and feelings of children and young people. Listening to children and young people, minimising dangers and working closely with other agencies.
- d) Recruiting, training, supervising and supporting staff, Board members and volunteers who work with children and young people to adopt best practice to safeguard and protect children and young people from abuse, and themselves against false allegations. Staff and volunteers who work with children and young people will be subject to the appropriate level Criminal Records Bureau check.
- e) Responding to any allegations appropriately and implementing the appropriate disciplinary and appeals procedures.
- f) Requiring staff, Board members and volunteers to adopt and abide by the Tuntum Housing Associations' Child Safeguarding Policy together with Procedures and Good Practice Guidelines that may be published from time to time.

10. Action to achieve these aims

10.1 The general safety and wellbeing of children and young people will be promoted within all Tuntum Housing Association services and Good Practice Guidelines developed so that good working practices are maintained.

- a) Training will be given to staff, Board members and volunteers across the Tuntum Housing Association on Child Safeguarding Procedures and Good Practice and further training to enable them to recognise the potential signs and indicators of abuse and to improve good practice.
- b) Procedures will be provided for staff, Board members and volunteers describing the actions they should take if they have concerns or encounter a case of alleged or suspected child abuse.
- c) Assessment processes to ensure senior managers (Heads of Service / Directors) are aware of the extent to which people under their responsibility have contact with children and young people and an assessment of risk to the safety of children and young people in specific activities or situations.

11. The promotion of the safety of children and young people

Tuntum Housing Association recognises its staff could have the potential to abuse children or young people. Tuntum Housing Association will therefore ensure that unsuitable people are prevented from working with children and young people for the following actions:

11.1 Recruitment and Selection

The following procedures will be adhered to for the safety of children and young people:

- a) All staff with access to children and young people, whether voluntary or paid, must provide at least two references, which must be received and accepted as satisfactory to Tuntum Housing Association before employment commences. One referee must be current, or if the applicant is not employed, the most recent employer.
- b) References must cover the last three years of employment and if in education be provided by the course tutor. Referees must be previous employers, not friends and must not be related to the applicant.
- c) All new staff with access to children and young people are to be advised that the Tuntum Housing Association will require them to complete pre-employment enhanced DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks.
- d) Confirmation of employment will be subject to the receipt of necessary clearance.
- e) Existing staff who have changed jobs and in the opinion of the Line Manager / Personnel, new duties bring them into contact with young people must complete DBS checks.
- f) DBS disclosures should be renewed every 3 years.
- g) Where applicable, all appointments that involve substantial contact with children and young people, both paid and voluntary, will be subject to a probationary period and will not be confirmed unless the Line Manager is confident that the applicant can be safely entrusted with children and young people.
- h) It will be made clear to applicants that have a substantial contact with children and young people that the position is exempt from the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.

11.2 Work Experience

Tuntum Housing Association, when requested, occasionally offers work experience placements across the Tuntum Housing Association. Although primarily designed to help young people become familiar with the workplace, it is also beneficial to Tuntum Housing Association as it provides a direct link to an important part of the community we serve. Any person who has been banned from working with children has the duty to inform a manager of this fact before they can work in direct contact with a work experience person. Staff should not travel alone with a work experience student unless the school has approved this.

Tuntum Housing Association works through personnel to provide forwardly planned and structured work experience placements. When the Tuntum Housing Association offers a work experience placement to students, line managers have a responsibility for their health, safety, and welfare. Under health and safety law, these students will be regarded as employees.

11.3 Use of Contractors

Tuntum Housing Association and its staff, Board members and volunteers should take care that contractors doing work on behalf of the Tuntum Housing Association are monitored appropriately. Any contractor or sub-contractor, engaged by the Tuntum Housing Association in areas where workers are likely to come into contact with children and young people, should have a similarly robust Child Safeguarding Policy, or failing this, must comply with the terms of this policy.

Contractors will be monitored by the Officer responsible for the contract and record the degree of compliance with this policy.

11.4 Induction and Training

- a) Appropriate training will be given to enable staff, Board members and volunteers to recognise their responsibilities with regard to their own good practice and the reporting of suspected poor practice and concerns or allegations of abuse and to inform members of staff of expected conduct and situations to avoid in order to protect themselves from allegations.
- b) This will include the following:
 - All staff will receive an introduction to this policy.
 - All staff with some possible contact with children and young people will receive follow-up training on best practices.
 - Staff who regularly come in contact with children and young people will attend appropriate Child Safeguarding training on a regular basis.

Information for Residents/Tenants

Residents can report concerns about children's safeguarding through several channels. They can contact their local dedicated safeguarding helpline, which is available 24/7 for confidential support and advice. Additionally, concerns can also be reported directly to the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC). Children themselves can contact Childline (0800 1111). Information on safeguarding will also be placed on notice boards within our respective buildings, on our website and through our newsletter. For non-urgent concerns, residents can follow this safeguarding policy.

12 Monitoring & Review

12.1 Quarterly and annual reviews of all safeguarding incidents will be undertaken by the Head of Specialist Housing and reported to the Customer Excellence Committee.

12.2 In addition, the Head of Supported Housing will monitor all open safeguarding cases on a regular basis and follow up with the respective managers or chase up actions as required.

13. Policy Review

13.1 This policy will be reviewed every three with the next review in March 2028, in accordance with broader guidance and legislation, and considering feedback from staff and service users.

13.2 The Tuntum Housing Association Board will ultimately be responsible for ensuring that the policy is reviewed, although they may wish to delegate the review process.

13.3 Any changes to the policy will need the authorisation of the Tuntum Housing Association Board. Until such authorisation is given the existing policy will continue to apply unless the existing policy contradicts any new legal requirements or responsibilities.

14. New Legislation

14.1 In its final report, the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse recommended that the government introduce a legal requirement for certain people to report child sexual abuse when:

- they are told about it by a child or perpetrator
- they witness it happening
- they observe recognised indicators of child sexual abuse

14.2 The government announced in January 2025 that it will introduce mandatory reporting legislation in the spring. Mandatory reporting of child abuse will become a legal requirement that requires people to report child abuse to the relevant authorities.

14.3 This policy will be updated as required to reflect any new legal requirements.

APPENDIX 1

1. Definitions of Abuse

New Guidance

1.1 Where applicable, 'abuse and neglect' has been changed throughout the document to 'abuse, neglect and exploitation'.

1.2 The definition of 'abuse' has been changed to clarify that harm can include children witnessing the ill treatment of others and that this is particularly relevant when children **see, hear or experience** domestic abuse and its effects.

1.3 The Care Act identifies ten forms of abuse:

1.3.1 Physical Abuse

Including hitting, shaking, slapping, female genital mutilation, punching smacking, burning, scalding, hair pulling, biting, choking, poisoning, mutilating, attempted suffocation or drowning, pushing or kicking.

1.3.2 Domestic Abuse and Coercive Control

Including an incident or pattern of incidents, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse by someone that is or has been an intimate partner or family member regardless of gender or sexuality. It also includes psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional abuse and so called "honour" based violence and forced marriages of those under the age of 18.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 now recognises children impacted by domestic abuse as victims in their own right.

1.3.3 Sexual Abuse

Including sexual intercourse, rape, buggery, digital penetration, penetration with a foreign object, child pornography, genital stimulation, touching, stroking, oral sex, forcing a child to witness sexual acts and fondling. Non-contact activities could include looking at or involvement in pornographic materials, watching sexual activities or one or more children engaging in sexual discussion inappropriate for their age. This includes Child Sexual Exploitation that started when they were a child but has carried on into adulthood.

1.3.4 Psychological (or Emotional) Abuse

Including emotional abuse, terrorising a child with threats of physical injury or abandonment, forced to watch domestic violence, harm including self-harm, suicidal thoughts, deprivation of access to social contact, exclusion, malicious taunting, racial abuse, humiliation, continuous shouting, swearing threats or verbal abuse blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, cyber bullying, harassment. Gang activity, youth violence and criminal exploitation through street gangs, movement and selling drugs across the country using power, violence, threats to family members to taking over the home for drug distribution. Isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks. Extremism opposed to British values, democracy law, liberty, mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths/beliefs and calls for death of armed forces members, and radicalisation and support of terrorism.

1.3.5 Financial or Material Abuse

Including theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits, internet scams

1.3.6 Modern Slavery

Encompasses slavery, human , 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.

Human trafficking involves the recruitment or movement of people for exploitation by the use of threat, force, fraud, or the abuse of vulnerability. Trafficking is a crime that can occur across international borders or within a country. It often crosses multiple geographic and legal boundaries. (definition taken from www.gov.uk)

1.3.7 Discriminatory Abuse

Including racist, sexist, or based on a person's disability or culture and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment.

1.3.8 **Organisational Abuse** (previously known as institutional abuse). It may take the form of isolated incidents of poor practice at one end of the spectrum, through to pervasive ill treatment or gross misconduct at the other. It can occur when the routines, systems, communications and norms of an institution compel individuals to sacrifice their preferred lifestyle and cultural diversity to the needs of that institution. It can also be through neglect or poor professional practice as a result of the structure, policies, processes and practices within an organisation.

1.3.9 Neglect and Acts of Omission

Including failing to meet the essential needs of a child or protect from danger, failure to provide physical and developmental needs such as warmth, clothing, food or consistent care, educational or medical needs ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.

1.3.10 **Self-Neglect** covers a wide range of behaviours - neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings including hoarding. It should be noted that whilst self-neglect may not prompt a section 42 enquiry, it should still be referred and assessed on a case-by-case basis.

2. Two new categories to be taken into consideration

2.1 Child Sexual Exploitation (form of child abuse)

Sexual exploitation involves exploitative contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person/persons) receive "something" e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts money) as a result of performing and/or others performing on them, sexual activities. Child sexual exploitation can occur through use of technology without the child's immediate recognition for example, the persuasion to pose sexual images on the internet/mobile phones without immediate payment or gain. In all cases those exploiting the child/young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender intellect, physical strength and/or economic and/or other resources. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative

relationships being characterised in the main by the child or young persons limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability.

2.2 Online Abuse

This can occur anywhere that allows digital communication such as social networks, text messages and messaging apps, email and private messaging, online chats, comments on live streaming sites and voice chat in games and may include bullying/cyberbullying, emotional abuse, sexting (sexual requests via technology), sexual abuse and sexual exploitation. Further abuse can be experienced when abusive content is recorded, uploaded or shared by others online irrespective of whether the original abuse happened online or offline.