



The Langstane Group
Child Protection Policy

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1. Introduction

Langstane Housing Association is a Co-operative and Community Benefit Society, and a registered social landlord with charitable status.

The Langstane Group (the Group) consists of Langstane Housing Association Limited and its wholly owned subsidiaries.

This policy applies to all members of the Langstane Group.

This policy highlights the collective responsibility of all staff, especially frontline staff, to recognise and actively consider the potential child protection risks to children and young people, irrespective of whether that child or young person is central or peripheral to their role. Every child and young person has the right to be listened to, to be respected, to feel valued and ultimately to feel safe and secure. Regardless of how educated, confident or 'streetwise' a child or young person is, they are still at risk of abuse and neglect.

Langstane Housing Association employees are expected to identify and consider a child or young person's needs, to share relevant and proportionate information and concerns with other key agencies and to work collaboratively with other services to improve outcomes for children and young people. While staff are not expected to investigate actual or suspected abuse or neglect, they are expected to follow the guidance contained within this policy to ensure the health, well-being and safety of the child or young person.

This policy has been written to reflect current best practice in the field of both Child Protection and includes information and guidance to challenge Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).

Definitions

For the purpose of this policy a child or young person is defined as anyone under the age of 18 years of age, and this definition has been formally endorsed through the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

Regardless of this definition, the individual circumstances of each child or young person should be taken into account when determining what legal measures or status should be applied. The Adult Support & Protection (Scotland) Act 2007 applies to those over 16 years of age, and therefore presents a conflict to be aware of between these two legislative Acts designed to protect children and adults respectively.

Legislation & Statutory Guidance

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) 1989

This UN Convention protects the human rights of children under the age of 18 years old. Articles 35 and 36 require the state to protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse. The Convention also helped form the basis of Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC), Scotland's central approach to supporting children and young people. GIRFEC constitutes the Scottish Government's commitment to embed this work as the foundation for all work to support and protect children and young people.

Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)

GIRFEC provides a framework for all those working with children and young people, placing them at the centre of service provision and encouraging inter-agency working to support, safeguard and ensure the best possible start in life for children and young people.

National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2014)

This framework permits agencies and organisations to understand and agree processes for working together to support, protect and safeguard the well-being of children and young people. It provides background context, guidance and best practice and is designed to be the starting point for Child Protection issues.

Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014

This broad legislation addresses a range of issues, but also enshrines the GIRFEC framework as part of all future legislation introduced to support children and young people. It defines a child or young person as anyone under the age of 18 years old.

National Risk Framework to support the Assessment of Children and Young People (2012)

Published by the Scottish Government in 2012, it is essentially a national risk assessment toolkit for Child Protection, offering support to practitioners in identifying and acting on the risks which children or young people may be exposed to.

Children (Scotland) Act 1995

This act provides a major part of the legal framework for child welfare and protection in Scotland

2. Aims and objectives of the policy

The aims and objectives of this policy are to ensure:

- that wider child protection activity at both a local and national level is promoted;
- that partnership working with those agencies who have a duty to investigate child protection is encouraged and that staff proactively work to develop those relationships;
- that a culture of early intervention is embedded, for example, that Housing Officers have detailed knowledge of our communities and are therefore in a unique position to be alert to early indications of neglect, abuse or any other concerns within a household;
- awareness is raised of child protection issues and everyone who is employed or involved in the Association is aware of this and leaders within the organisation will support and promote this;
- a balance is struck of being sufficiently flexible to ensure that child protection is at the heart of our processes while ensuring a level of consistency in the implementation of this policy

3. Links to other strategic documents and policies

The Group's Child Protection Policy is linked to a number of strategic documents and policies in particular but not solely:

- Equality and Diversity Strategy and Policy
- Harassment Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Langstane Housing Support Service Complaints Policy
- Supporting and Protecting Adults from Abuse and Harm policy
- Privacy Policy
- Customer Care Policy
- Unacceptable Actions Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Lone Working Policy

4. Policy

4.1 Child Protection

Child Protection is a complex issue therefore it is important to understand that procedures and guidance alone cannot protect children and young people. There are many forms of abuse and maltreatment which a child or young person could experience ranging from physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse (including Child Sexual Exploitation) and neglect. Abuse and maltreatment can be as a result of the actual infliction of physical or sexual harm, but also encompasses those who fail to act, respond, report or raise concerns which result in significant harm to a child or young person. Abuse can be perpetrated by anyone and in the vast majority of cases it is carried out by someone known to the victim.

Responding to Child Protection issues or concerns requires a competent, skilled and confident workforce who understands their own responsibilities, but also the responsibilities of other workers and agencies. Effective Child Protection also relies on public vigilance and assumes that members of the public are aware of the action they should take to report actual or suspected child protection issues.

Improving outcomes for children and young people is a fundamental objective for all services and organisations. However in order to safeguard, protect and support children and young people, and ensure they get the support they need, agencies and services must liaise with each other, share information, and understand the contribution they can make to address child protection issues.

Parents, carers with responsibility for children, families and communities have the primary role in ensuring children and young people are safe, supported and have their well-being promoted. Agencies and services have a role in supporting and encouraging those who hold this primary role. Agencies and services furthermore have a duty to ensure the needs of the child and young person are met, and to intervene to resolve any issues before they escalate further.

Child Protection places a collective responsibility on each and every staff member working with children and families regardless of whether that work brings them into direct contact. In the context of Langstane Housing Association, this covers all

frontline customer facing staff across Housing, Property and Asset Management including the direct labour staff (tradesmen), as well as the Langstane Housing Support Service. Furthermore, all Association staff will be provided with training around the impact of adult behaviour on children and young people, in addition to their duty to keep them safe and secure.

Even approaching Child Protection from the most basic viewpoint, the agencies that have a statutory duty to investigate, such as Police Scotland and Child Protection Officers within the Local Authority, cannot discharge this duty if they are not aware of the risks or concern. This reinforces the need for appropriate procedures, effective record keeping and information sharing with relevant agencies.

4.2 GIRFEC

The primary indicator of Child Protection is to keep children and young people safe. This is categorically the key outcome of the GIRFEC framework. There are several additional key areas, which are linked to personal safety, which practitioners should be promoting to ensure the well-being of children and young people. These include health, nurture, achievement, activity, respect, responsibility and inclusion.

The GIRFEC approach emphasises early, pro-active intervention in order to create a supportive environment and identify any additional support which may be required at as early a stage as possible. The framework focuses on outcomes rather than processes and encourages practitioners to consider the following 5 questions:

1. What is getting in the way of this child or young person's well-being?
2. Do I have all the information I need to help this child or young person?
3. What can I do now to help this child or young person?
4. What can my agency do to help this child or young person?
5. What additional help, if any, may be needed from others to safeguard and support this child or young person?

4.3 Recognising & Responding to Actual or Suspected Abuse

Definition of Types of Abuse	
Physical Abuse	Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Sexual Abuse	Child sexual abuse involves forcing, or enticing, a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. It does not necessarily involve a high level of violence but may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. It may also include 'non-contact' activities for example, engaging children in the viewing of sexual images.
Emotional Abuse	Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It could involve conveying to a child that they are worthless, unloved, and inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It covers denying opportunities to express views, silencing them or mocking their opinions or communication. It may feature age, or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may also involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying) causing children to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur in isolation.
Neglect	Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to: provide adequate food, clothing, and shelter; protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; ensure adequate supervision; or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

The Association's staff have a collective responsibility to report any child protection concerns to the appropriate agency via the Langstane Housing Support Team Leader. This includes sharing information on adults who may present a risk to children or young people.

Staff, especially Langstane Housing Support staff, may also be invited to participate in multi-agency meetings designed to safeguard and protect a child or young person.

Although the Association's staff are not required to investigate Child Protection concerns, this should not discourage or prevent consideration and reflection on the GIRFEC approach outlined above to safeguard children and deliver positive outcomes for them.

4.4 Child Sexual Exploitation

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is a distinct form of child abuse which affects children and young people of both sexes up to the age of 18 years old. It can occur as part of a seemingly consensual relationship or in return for attention, affection, money, drugs or alcohol or accommodation. Victims of CSE may live at home; they could be living independently, with carers or in a residential setting. The child or young person potentially will view their abuser as a friend, potentially even a boyfriend or girlfriend, but this abuser will force the victim into dangerous situations, and make them do things they do not want to do. The victim will often experience verbal or physical abuse, violence, manipulation, controlling behaviour all of which is designed to isolate them from family and friends. Any child or young person, from any background, can be exploited for sex with the abuser being an adult or occasionally a peer. At its most extreme, CSE may include organised exploitation where a child or young person is forced to have sexual activity with multiple people, and also recruit other young people for exploitation.

Grooming plays an integral part of CSE as recognised by Section 1 of the Protection of Children and Prevention of Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2005. The grooming may be carried out online or in person. The risk comes from the following areas:

- Child or young person accessing pornographic material, pop-ups etc.;
- Child or young person is targeted by someone with a view to CSE;
- Child or young person creating, uploading or seeking out sexually explicit material;

Indicative Signs of Child Sexual Exploitation	Risk Indicators	Other Significant Risk Indicators
Disrupted family life	Staying out late / time unaccounted for	Older boyfriend or relationship with controlling adult
History of abuse & disadvantage	Multiple callers / multiple mobile phones / constant use of mobile phones / unexplained money or material items	Physical or emotional abuse by boyfriend or controlling adult
Problematic parenting	Disclosure of sexual / physical assault, followed by withdrawal of accusation	Entering and leaving vehicles driven by unknown adults
Disengagement from education	Sexually Transmitted Infection's / pregnancy / peers engaged in sexual activity / high number of sexual partners	Frequenting areas known for prostitution either on or off-street areas
Experience of bullying & learning difficulties	Drug & alcohol misuse	Physical injury or symptoms of physical or sexual abuse

Going missing	Truancy or exclusion	Children under 13 requesting Sexual Health services
Poor health & Well-being	Lack of a positive relationship with protective & nurturing adult	Child or Young person being taken to flats / houses / hotels and engaging in sexual activity
Drug & alcohol misuse	Living independently but failing to respond to contact by Social / Support / Health Worker	Use of new technological devices which parent / carer has no knowledge off

CSE is first and foremost a Child Protection concern and therefore requires the appropriate response. Early intervention will lead to protective measures to ensure the child or young person is freed from the control of the abuser. Perpetrators and potential abusers must be investigated and ultimately prosecuted, which cannot happen unless practitioners have the knowledge and confidence to deal with these situations. Everyone has a responsibility to protect the child or young person. Staff need to understand their role, their responsibility, know where to report their concerns and understand their duty to share information with appropriate agencies.

Children or young people exploited into CSE are victims of abuse and should be listened to and supported; they are not the perpetrator or the criminal. Responsibility for sexual exploitation lies fully with the abuser whether they are paying for sex, grooming a child or organising the exploitation.

4.5 Consent, Information Sharing & Appropriate Record Keeping

Children and young people have a right to express their views and also have these views taken into account when decisions are made.

Generally, information should be shared only with the consent of the child or young person, with the reasons communicated to them openly and honestly. However, if there is a risk to the child or young person, consent should not be sought and the relevant information should be shared with the appropriate agency. This duty of care obligation overrides all other considerations. Information sharing is a key component of both Child Protection and Social Care.

This duty of care and immediate disclosure where there is real or suspected risk compliments the GIRFEC approach and key Child Protection legislation and guidance, stressing that information is shared, and not simply passed on. Practitioners and staff should be proactive in identifying and responding to risk or suspected harm irrespective of whether the child or young person is a client, within a household they are visiting or indeed known to them out-with their work.

Any information shared should be relevant, proportionate and necessary to the circumstances of the case. Records should be maintained to show what information was shared, whether this information was offered or requested, who the information was passed to, what was requested or handed over, what the purpose of the requested information, whether it was disclosed or not, and whether consent was

sought or not. Similarly, the reasons for any non-disclosure should also be recorded.

4.6 Support for Staff

The Association acknowledges that dealing with Child Protection concerns or issues are complex and emotionally demanding for those involved.

All Langstane Housing Association staff will be provided with Child Protection Training upon adoption of the Child Protection Policy. Through this training they will understand their roles and responsibilities, the scope of their authority and their discretion to act immediately if the welfare of a child or young person is at risk.

Support Service staff will have an appropriate Disclosure Scotland or PVG (Protection of Vulnerable Group) check in place prior to commencing their role, and this will be renewed every three years. The registered manager of the Langstane Housing Support Service will ensure that appropriate and regular checks of the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) Register to ensure that, under the SSSC (Conduct) Rules, no interim order or decision has been made that may impact on a registered staff member's ability to practice.

Housing support staff will be provided with appropriate advice and support, and also provided with time to reflect on individual and collaborative practice to ensure that the service is outcome led and person-centred. These staff will also be required to attend regular and consistent high quality support and supervision to enable them to discuss, reflect and identify areas for further development.

5. Roles and responsibilities

The Director of Housing has overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy.

All relevant staff must, in an emergency, report any concern around actual or suspected physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse (including Child Sexual Exploitation) and neglect to Police Scotland and the relevant Social Work team immediately. Where the matter is not an emergency they may wish to discuss the issues with the Langstane Housing Support Team Leader or Manager in the first instance who will provide advice and guidance in terms of a referral. In all circumstances the form attached as Appendix 1 to this policy will be completed.

Relevant staff are defined as anyone who is in contact with a tenant, member of their family, carer, or other visitor to the tenancy, in a Langstane housing support role, property services or asset management role including trade representatives, housing staff or other visiting staff.

6. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years or where legislative changes require an earlier review.

7. Equality and diversity

The Langstane Group is committed to promoting equality and diversity across all areas of work. Discrimination or harassment of any kind is not tolerated.

If you would like this document in large print, please contact Support Services on 01224 423000.

Child Protection Reporting Form	
Service User Name	
Date of Birth	
Address	
Reason for Concern	
Notes	
Staff member making report	
Date of report	
Time of report	
Discussed with Line Manager	
Reported to	