



Safeguarding Adults Policy

Version 1

Approved by: Executive Team

Approved date: 14 March 2019

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 We take all concerns and allegations of abuse, neglect and harm seriously and respond appropriately. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Doing nothing is not an option.
- 1.2 We know abuse against individuals occurs in society and individuals from all communities are at risk of abuse. We recognise there are large numbers of adults at risk living in our homes.
- 1.3 Abuse can take many different forms. It may occur via neglect of an individual, by inflicting harm or failing to act to prevent harm. This can happen in a family, institution or community setting.
- 1.4 Safeguarding is about preventing and stopping both the risks and experience of abuse or neglect, while at the same time making sure we promote the person's wellbeing. This Policy outlines our commitment to Safeguarding, in line with the [Care Act 2014](#).
- 1.5 A key aspect of the statutory framework is 'Making Safeguarding Personal'. This means we work with individuals to decide actions and timescales, as the focus is on the person, not the process.
- 1.6 Before we refer a safeguarding case to the Local Authority, we must get consent from the person affected. We'll only override consent where there's risk of serious harm; and with approval from the Safeguarding Monitoring Group (SMG). A risk of 'serious harm' is when a person's life is in danger and/or they're a victim of abuse causing a deterioration of mental or physical health. SMG can offer guidance on whether or not we have enough evidence to override consent.
- 1.7 Our primary role is as 'alerters'. We are responsible for **reporting** safeguarding concerns to the relevant agencies such as the Local Authority, University, Hospital, the Police, and Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs).
- 1.8 This Policy relates to all household members in Optivo homes and all Optivo staff, Board members, volunteers, agents and contractors and their supply chains.

2.0 Aims of this policy

2.1 The aims of this Policy are to make sure we:

- Report safeguarding concerns about adults at risk (see [section 4.0](#) for definitions) living in our properties and using our services
- Comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements and best practice, including:
 - [Care Act 2014](#)
 - [Mental Capacity Act 2005](#)
 - [Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards \(DoLS\)](#)
 - [Human Rights Legislation.](#)
- Protect staff, volunteers, contractors and agents who have a responsibility towards adults at risk
- Raise awareness of the different types of abuse and signs to look out for
- Raise awareness of the action we'll take on suspecting, witnessing or discovering abuse or inappropriate conduct
- Have a zero tolerance approach towards abuse and take immediate action
- Improve partnership working around safeguarding
- Work in line with our safeguarding partner's policies and procedures.

2.2 We will achieve our aims by:

- Protecting the rights of individuals at risk and treating them with respect and dignity at all times
- Having a nominated Strategic lead and Operational lead for Safeguarding
- Ensuring our Safeguarding leads provide clear lines of accountability for reporting abuse
- Working within, and keeping up to date with, Government legislation, guidance and regulation
- Ensuring when in contact with people at risk, all necessary Health and Safety risk assessments are carried out by appropriately trained staff
- Having a safeguarding monitoring group in place to oversee strategic objectives for safeguarding
- Having Safeguarding Champions available to staff within each region, to offer support and guidance with raising Safeguarding alerts.

3.0 Our approach

3.1 Our Policy adopts the six safeguarding principles in the statutory guidance for the [Care Act 2014](#):

Empowerment

Interventions must support people to make decisions and have a say in their care. Presumption of person-led decisions and informed consent.

Protection

Supporting victims and allowing them to have a say. This includes support and representation for those in greatest need.

Prevention

It is better to take action before harm occurs. Interventions for people at risk should focus on preventing care and support needs from developing.

Proportionality

Interventions must represent the least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented.

Partnership

Local solutions from services working within the community have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse. Housing providers, their contractors and residents all have a role to play.

Accountability

Safeguarding practice and arrangements should be accountable and transparent to the public. There should be a lead Safeguarding officer that is known and available to staff ([see 5.1](#)).

4.0 Definitions

4.1 **An adult** is any person aged 18 years or over. Adults at risk within the [Care Act 2014](#) are referred to as 'people with care and support needs'. Safeguarding duties apply to an adult who:

- *“Has needs for care or support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of these needs) and*
- *Is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect, and*
- *As a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of, abuse and neglect. “*

4.2 **Abuse** – for this Policy, we define abuse as *‘the violation of an individual’s human and civil rights by another person or persons’*.

Abuse is behaviour that either deliberately or unknowingly causes harm or endangers life or infringes on rights.

It may be a single or repeated act. It may be deliberate neglect or a lack of appropriate action. It can also be where the person is persuaded to do something which they have not consented to or cannot consent to.

Abuse causes harm or distress to a person and is often a crime. It often occurs where there is an expectation of trust.

- 4.3 Abuse cannot be excused for any cultural or religious reason and should always be reported.

5.0 Responsibilities

- 5.1 We have a designated strategic lead on safeguarding for Optivo, supported by a Safeguarding Coordinator as operational lead. The Strategic Lead via the Executive Team is responsible for making sure lessons learnt are communicated to all relevant staff. Where necessary, supporting policies, procedures and guidance will be amended.

- 5.2 All staff, Board members, volunteers, agents and contractors are responsible for understanding the different [types of abuse](#) and reporting concerns or suspected abuse.

6.0 Reporting Abuse

- 6.1 We record all safeguarding reports and alerts relating to our residents on a central database.

Reporting abuse – Residents

- 6.2 We work in partnership with external agencies to prevent abuse. Where we suspect imminent harm or abuse, we'll take immediate action.
- 6.3 We must report safeguarding concerns to the relevant agencies such as the Local Authority, University, Hospital, the Police and Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs).
- 6.4 We will raise awareness of how to report safeguarding concerns and the support we can offer to residents. And we will work with customers to manage risks and enable the appropriate level of support.

Reporting abuse - Non-residents (including staff, Board members, volunteers, agents and contractors)

- 6.5 We take any concerns raised about our staff, Board members, volunteers, agents or contractors very seriously.

- 6.6 If a staff member is concerned for a non-resident using our services (e.g. a community project), they should:
- Contact the local authority direct to raise the alert immediately
 - Inform their line manager of the situation.
- 6.7 If a staff member is concerned about a member of the general public, they should:
- Contact the appropriate local authority immediately
 - Inform their line manager of the situation.
- 6.8 If a staff member or volunteer is concerned a colleague is suffering abuse (at or out of the workplace), they should raise their concerns with their manager or HR (as appropriate). If they suspect the abuse is happening at work, staff should follow our [Wellbeing Policy](#).
- 6.9 If staff are concerned another staff member, Board member or volunteer, is a perpetrator of abuse, they can refer to the [Whistleblowing Policy](#). This allows staff members to make confidential reports. Under the [Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998](#), employees are protected by law if they report any of the following:
- A criminal offence e.g. fraud
 - Someone's health and safety is in danger
 - Risk or actual damage to the environment
 - A miscarriage of justice
 - The company is breaking the law e.g. doesn't have the right insurance
 - They believe someone is covering up wrong doing.
- 6.10 Where we receive an allegation relating to Optivo staff, Board member, volunteers, agents or contractors, we'll report it to the Police, and the local safeguarding board. It is inappropriate for us to initiate an internal investigation where there's also an external (criminal / social services) investigation running. We will fully co-operate with any investigation and take appropriate disciplinary action following our [Disciplinary Policy](#) or [Breach Procedure for Governance Members](#).
- 6.11 Any allegation we receive relating to a contractor or agent's operative may result in their immediate suspension from our contract. The suspension will remain in place pending the outcome of any investigation. We reserve the right to permanently exclude the operative or agent from our contract following the outcome of the investigation.
- 6.12 Any reports found to be malicious will be fully investigated. To safeguard themselves all staff should adhere to the [Probity Policy](#) (including [Code of Conduct](#)) and [Professional Boundaries Guidance for Staff and Governance Members](#).

7.0 Information sharing

- 7.1 Sharing information is essential. When sharing information about people at risk all staff must follow the [Optivo Data Protection Policy](#).

8.0 Ensuring we have properly vetted, trained and supported colleagues

- 8.1 The Disclosure and Barring Service, (DBS) helps prevent unsuitable people from working or volunteering with people at risk. Human Resources will make any referrals to the DBS and ensure all staff and volunteers are employed according to DBS regulations (see [DBS Policy](#) for more details).

- 8.2 All Optivo staff, volunteers and Board members will complete mandatory safeguarding e-learning training as part of induction. This will be repeated at intervals appropriate for their role.

Frontline staff will attend mandatory workshops every three years providing detailed safeguarding information and use of in-house reporting systems.

- 8.3 We recognise the emotional impact on staff of working with vulnerabilities and having to recognise and deal with safeguarding concerns. Employees should inform their manager if they are reporting an incident or concern. Managers should support employees affected by an incident.

Employees also have access to a specialist stress counsellor provided through our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).

- 8.4 Contractors and agents providing frontline services on our behalf need to make sure their staff:

- Are suitable to provide frontline services
- Comply with our [Supplier Code of Conduct & Expected Behaviours Code](#)
- Are aware of who to contact with any safeguarding concerns in an Optivo property.

Contractors must also:

- Notify us of all safeguarding concerns
- Fully co-operate with any investigation into received allegations
- Have adequate systems in place to take appropriate disciplinary action.

We support our main contractors by providing:

- ‘Safeguarding Tool Box Talks’ annually
- ‘Safeguarding Awareness’ cards with contact details of our Safeguarding Coordinator for guidance and support, and the direct line to raise the alert immediately.

- 8.5 Staff, contractors and agents are prohibited from knowingly entering a property where the sole occupant is or appears to be under 16 years of age. If this is the case, they should withdraw from the premises and advise Optivo immediately. Appointments must be re-arranged to a time where an appropriate adult is present.
- 8.6 Any breach of this Policy will be dealt with under the [Disciplinary Policy](#) or [Breach Procedure for Governance Members](#).

9.0 Review

- 9.1 The Executive Team will report to Board where there have been incidents of significant abuse reported to statutory agencies. All reports go to Board will be anonymised to hide the identities of those involved.
- 9.2 The strategic lead and safeguarding monitoring group will meet quarterly to monitor performance against safeguarding duties and discuss lessons learnt from safeguarding cases. The strategic lead will also advise the group of any changes to legislation and/or guidance at these meetings.
- 9.3 We will review this Policy annually to address legislative, regulatory, best practice or operational issues.