



## **VHA Policy Document**

### **Safeguarding and Protection from Abuse**

**Reviewed: January 2023**

**Next Review Due: January 2026**

# **Vectis Housing Association Safeguarding and Protection from Abuse Policy - Vulnerable Adults and Children**

## **1. Introduction**

In accordance with the Care Act 2014, VHA is committed to maintaining safeguarding policies and procedures, implemented by knowledgeable and trained staff.

Safeguarding people is everyone's responsibility.

Some of our residents are vulnerable or are at risk of abuse, harm or neglect, and all staff have a responsibility to protect them.

VHA also recognises that all staff have a personal, professional and ethical responsibility to conduct themselves in a responsible manner.

This policy explains what safeguarding is, discusses types of harm, abuse or neglect and outlines the steps we will take to identify and respond to safeguarding concerns.

VHA will always report concerns to the local authority or police.

## **2. The principles of safeguarding**

The key principles of safeguarding are to:

- Protect a person's right to live in safety, free from abuse or neglect.
- Work to help protect those who may be at risk from abuse or neglect.
- Identify where a child or adult needs care and support.
- Identify where a child or adult is experiencing, or is at risk of abuse or neglect, and can't protect themselves.

In these circumstances we will engage the person in a conversation about how best to respond to their safeguarding situation in a way that enhances involvement, choice and control as well as improving quality of life, wellbeing and safety.

We will think about the needs of each resident then decide what action to take.

### 3. Our approach to safeguarding

This policy applies to all properties owned and managed by VHA and seeks to ensure that VHA complies with all relevant legislation and regulatory standards relating to safeguarding.

When we identify concerns, we will always report them to the local authority or the police who have a statutory duty to investigate.

We will ensure that staff are aware of the policies and procedures and understand their professional boundaries. We will also arrange ongoing training for all relevant staff ensuring best practice is applied so that they can identify and report safeguarding concerns.

We will also make sure that our contractors have safeguarding practices in place and will fully investigate any safeguarding enquiry a local authority may make.

We will pro-actively manage incidents of alleged abuse by working in partnership with other agencies, and the wider community and support and contribute towards relevant multi-agency protocols and agreements.

### 4. Forms of abuse

Somebody may abuse or neglect a person by causing harm or by failing to act to prevent serious risk of harm from happening. There are many ways in which harm, abuse or neglect can occur. These include:

- Neglect, such as lack of food.
- Self-neglect, such as poor hygiene or hoarding.
- Emotional or psychological abuse, such as bullying.
- Controlling behaviour, such as restricting what someone else does.
- Coercive behaviour, such as threats and or frighten someone.
- Financial abuse, such as theft or pressuring someone into giving them money.
- Sexual abuse, making someone do things they don't want to do.
- Discrimination and racial abuse or treating someone differently due to their beliefs.
- Domestic abuse, hitting a partner or family member.
- Modern day slavery and human trafficking, such as forced labour or withholding documents.
- Radicalisation and extremism, such as people influencing others to develop extremist views.
- Organisational abuse, such as neglect or poor practice.
- Cyber bullying, including social media.

- Sexual exploitation ie. grooming and giving gifts in return for sex.
- Forced marriage.
- Female genital mutilation.

## 5. Prevention

Safeguarding is a general responsibility and includes measures to prevent or minimise the potential for abuse occurring. Protection is a statutory responsibility in individual cases where risk of harm is identified.

To prevent abuse, harm or neglect we will:

- Provide information and advice to our tenants.
- Encourage everyone to report concerns to us or local authority safeguarding teams.
- Promote ways for all our people to report concerns, including contractors and any visiting employees.
- Work with local statutory safeguarding teams and adults and children's safeguarding boards focusing our efforts in areas of high risk.

## 6. Suspected abuse

If we suspect or identify possible harm, abuse of or neglect we will report it to the local safeguarding team. If there's an immediate risk to safety or a crime has been committed, we will call the police or an ambulance.

We will always listen to resident's concerns and try to understand what the resident wants, provide clear accurate and straightforward advice. We will also give the resident time to explain the situation and the impact on them, particularly where the resident has difficulties in communicating.

We will treat every report seriously and respond quickly. We will work with the residents, their families, carers and support network so they can stay safe. We will consider what the impact could be on the resident and their family and will be sensitive to residents' needs in terms of any diversity issues such as age, gender, race, disability or sexual orientation.

We will consider how we can minimise risk for both the resident and us and all reports will be treated as confidential unless there is a risk of harm.

## 7. Reporting concerns to a statutory body

We will not disclose information to other agencies without the prior consent of the victim, except where a person is considered to be at risk, or if there is a risk of serious harm to anyone involved in the situation. Also, when required to do so by law or by an order of court.

We will be party to relevant protocols and formal agreements to ensure that, where appropriate, information can be shared with other agencies. Any disclosure of information will be undertaken in accordance with the relevant policy, procedure, protocol or formal agreement.

## 8. Review of this policy

If a tenant feels we haven't kept to our safeguarding policy, they can ask us to review our decision and this will be dealt with in accordance with VHA Appeals Procedure. We will also ask residents to give us feedback on how we have dealt with their issue and will apply any learning to future policy and practice.

## 9. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) disclosures can be sought to help assess the suitability of applicants for positions of trust.

We will ensure that where appropriate, any person providing a service on behalf of VHA has an up to date appropriate level DBS disclosure.

## 10. Supporting our people

We will support and train our people to spot signs of harm, abuse and neglect and make sure they are aware how to report concerns.

We will provide support and advice to anyone who might deal with safeguarding issues. Anyone who needs support can contact their line manager.

## 11. Allegations against our people

Where an incident of abuse involves a member of staff, either as a victim or as a perpetrator, action will be taken in accordance with the relevant policies and procedures.

If we receive any allegation that one of our staff has abused or neglected a tenant, we will report this to the police and local safeguarding team. We will work with the police and local authority safeguarding team to investigate.

We will follow our disciplinary policy which may mean that we take legal action.

We will report to the Disclosure and Barring service (DBS) if we ask any of our people to leave, or if an employee chooses to leave because we think they've abused or may have abused a child or adult at risk.

Any appeal against the decision to take action, or otherwise, against a perpetrator of abuse will be dealt with in accordance with the VHA Appeals Procedure.

## 12. Monitoring

Monitoring of incidents of abuse and an annual review of the effectiveness of actions taken will be undertaken by the relevant Senior Manager.

## 13. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

This policy has been developed to ensure the landlord provides equality of access to service delivery and this includes:

-Ensuring that no customer is disadvantaged irrespective of their race, gender (including gender reassignment), religion or belief, colour, ethnic or national origin, sexual orientation, marital status, age, disability, or social position in accordance with our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy. Additionally, we will ensure that specific communication or support requirements and equal access to the service is available.

We will Identify and address any inequality of access to the service and record and monitor incidents of abuse and the actions taken to ensure no individual or group is excluded.

We will be transparent about our responsibilities around equality. If anyone raises concerns that we've not acted fairly, then we will treat this as a formal complaint.