



# Safeguarding Policy

## March 2022

**Lead Officer: Helen Wright, Tenancy Services Manager**

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14.0	Directorate Transformation	09/03/2022	Executive Leadership Team	March 2023
13.0	Update to section 4.7.1	19/03/21	Director for Communities	August 2021
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## **1. Our policy is...**

- 1.1 At Ongo, we accept the moral and legal obligation to ensure the duty of care for vulnerable adults and children across all of our services.
- 1.2 We believe that the welfare of vulnerable adults and children is of primary concern and that all vulnerable adults and children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, social-economic status, religious belief and/or sexual identity have the right to live free from abuse.
- 1.3 We recognise we have a duty to safeguard children not only in places where they are known to live, or may live, but also where children may visit and in other places where customers may have access to children.
- 1.4 We seek to prevent and effectively deal with incidents of abuse by:
  - Operating a 'zero tolerance' approach towards abuse
  - Making safeguarding personal and putting the victim at the heart of the process
  - Raising awareness of the duty of care responsibilities relating to vulnerable adults and children throughout the company
  - Promoting and implementing appropriate procedures to safeguard the well-being of vulnerable adults and children to protect them from harm
  - Creating a safe and healthy environment within all our services, avoiding situations where abuse or allegations of abuse may occur
  - Recruiting, training, supporting and supervising employees to adopt best practice to safeguard and protect vulnerable adults and children from abuse, and to minimise risk to themselves
  - Responding promptly to any allegations of poor practice, misconduct or abuse of vulnerable adults or children in line with this policy as well as implementing, where appropriate, relevant disciplinary and appeals procedures
  - Requiring employees to adopt and abide by the organisation's Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults and Children Policy and associated procedures
  - Maintaining effective partnerships with other external agencies, including adult and children's social services teams and the Police across all Local Authority areas where we work and working in line with multi-agency guidelines to ensure vulnerable adults and children are safeguarded against all types of abuse.

## **2. It applies to...**

- 2.1 All our people and everyone providing a service on our behalf, including agency workers, apprentices, fixed term workers, consultants, secondees, board members and volunteers as well as potential employees and contractors who may provide a service on our behalf.

### **3. Because we want to...**

- 3.1 Have a transparent, fair and equitable policy for safeguarding vulnerable adults and children.

### **4. We will...**

- 4.1 Follow two key principles
- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility
  - Effective safeguarding is person centered

#### Safeguarding Adults

*(Taken from statutory guidance issued under the Care Act 2014)*

- Protecting the rights of adults to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect
- People and organisations working together to prevent and stop both the risks and experience of abuse and neglect
- People and organisations making sure that the adult's wellbeing is promoted including, where appropriate – taking fully in to account their views, wishes, feelings and beliefs in deciding on any action
- Recognising that adults sometimes have complex interpersonal relationships and may be ambivalent, unclear or unrealistic about their personal circumstances and therefore potential risks to their safety or well-being

#### Safeguarding Children

*(Taken from statutory guidance – Working Together to safeguard children)*

- Protecting children from maltreatment
- 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
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

Key definitions of Abuse (*physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, domestic abuse, self neglect, neglect, honour based abuse, forced marriage, financial abuse, female genital mutilation, cuckooing, modern slavery, extremism and radicalization*) can be found in Appendix 1 – Key Definitions.

#### **4.2 Acknowledge mental capacity when dealing with cases of abuse**

4.2.1 The Mental Capacity Act 2005 requires that any intervention is carried out respecting the vulnerable adult's human rights.

4.2.2 Having mental capacity means being able to understand and retain information and to make a decision based on that information.

4.2.3 It is accepted that every adult has the right to make their own decisions, a person is assumed to have capacity to do so unless it is proved that they do not.

4.2.4 We recognise that vulnerable adults have the right to be supported in making their own decisions about how they wish to proceed in the event of abuse/self-neglect and will respect their wishes wherever possible. However, in some circumstances, the vulnerable adult's wishes may be overridden where the safety of the individual or others may be at significant risk.

4.2.5 If there are concerns that the vulnerable adult lacks mental capacity, a Mental Capacity Assessment must be completed before any further action is taken using appropriate specialist support – please follow the *Mental Capacity Procedure*.

#### 4.3 **Dealing with concerns and allegations of abuse effectively and efficiently**

4.3.1 Our Safeguarding Procedure details the process on how to raise Safeguarding Alerts in line with this policy.

4.3.2 It is the role of the Local Authority to investigate and establish abuse. It is the role of all Ongo employees or anyone providing a service on our behalf, to report any suspicions or evidence of abuse or neglect and provide information as required to assist the LA in their investigations.

4.3.3 We will fully support and protect employees who, in good faith, report concerns about a colleague's practice or the possibility that a vulnerable adult or child may be being abused.

4.3.4 If an employee suspects that a colleague is involved in abuse or neglect they should report this immediately by following the Safeguarding Procedure.

#### 4.4 **We will use the most appropriate type of investigation when dealing with safeguarding allegations**

4.4.1 In relation to concerns about a child/adult, action may need to be taken in respect of a person in position of trust (PiPOT). A referral will be required to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) in addition to the Local Authority Safeguarding Team (for adults) where there are concerns or evidence that the alleged (PiPOT) has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
- Behaved towards a child in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children
- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children/adults

#### **And**

- It is believed that the above poses a current or continuing risk in the person's current role of responsibility (whether paid or unpaid)

4.4.2 Where an employee is suspected of abuse or neglect, there may be three strands of investigation:

- Child/Vulnerable Adult Safeguarding investigation (led by the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO))
- Criminal Investigation (led by Police)
- A disciplinary or misconduct investigation (led by Ongo)

4.4.3 As an employee, the usual terms and conditions for disciplinary investigations will apply, including consideration of suspension on full pay pending the outcome of the investigation.

4.4.4 We will assess each individual allegation on its own merits, taking into account the findings of any criminal investigation.

4.4.5 Depending on the outcome of the investigation, we will assess the appropriateness of the employee returning to work in their previous environment.

4.4.6 We will consider North Lincolnshire Councils policies and procedures as our main Local Authority partner. However, other local authorities policies and procedures should be checked:

- Children - <https://www.northlincscmars.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/9-Procedures-for-managing-allegations-against-people-who-work-with-children-Jan-21.pdf>
- Adults - <http://www.northlincssab.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/PiPoT-policy-V6.pdf>

#### 4.5 **Maintain Professional boundaries at all times**

4.5.1 In order to protect themselves from allegations of abuse or situations that could be misunderstood, employees should maintain strong professional boundaries as detailed in the Code of Conduct and the Professional Boundaries Policy.

4.5.2 Ongo will provide work based learning on professional boundaries to all employees.

#### 4.6 **Address safeguarding in all recruitment and selection processes**

4.6.1 We will make sure all reasonable steps are taken to prevent unsuitable people from working with vulnerable adults and/or children.

4.6.2 Employees, contractors and volunteers will be reference checked in accordance best practice and legislative requirements.

4.6.3 Where appropriate, employees must be registered with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) as detailed within Ongo's DBS checks procedure.

#### 4.7 **Provide training for all employees**

4.7.1 All our employees will undertake safeguarding training at the level appropriate to their role to ensure that they are equipped to recognise abuse and deal with concerns in the appropriate manner.

4.7.2 All new customer facing employees will attend face-to-face safeguarding training within the first six months of their employment with Ongo.

4.7.3 Refresher training for front line employees will be undertaken every three years as a minimum to ensure that skills and knowledge are kept up to date in line with statutory guidance.

4.7.4 Safeguarding will be included in the employee induction programme for all new employees via e-learning.

#### 4.8 **Our contractors**

4.8.1 We will make sure all partnering contractors or sub-contractors who are likely to come into contact with vulnerable adults or children have their own equivalent Safeguarding Policy or failing this, comply with the terms of this policy and have trained employees to deal with safeguarding issues.

4.8.2 We will take reasonable care to make sure that contractors doing work on our behalf are monitored appropriately.

#### 4.9 **Maintain Confidentiality**

4.9.1 We will always treat any sensitive or personal information given to us as confidential in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR 2018).

4.9.2 Information will be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only. We will not disclose information to other agencies without the prior consent of a victim of abuse except where:

- There is a risk of serious harm to the individual or someone involved in the situation
- The victim is a child
- The individual has been assessed as incapable of making an informed decision
- A serious crime has been committed
- Terrorism and terrorist-related activities

#### 4.10 **Terrorism and terrorist-related activities**

4.10.1 Under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, we will follow the Prevent Agenda Guidance for England and Wales. We will work with the Local Authority, the Police, statutory partners and the local community to safeguard children and adults from being drawn into committing terrorist-related activities; recognising that early interventions may help to protect and divert them away from these risks.

## 5. Making sure that we do what we say.....

<p>The Director of Communities will:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Represent Ongo Homes on the Safeguarding Adults Board (when required) in the areas in which we work</li> </ul>
<p>The Head of Landlord Services will:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure the adoption of and adherence to this policy</li> <li>• Carry out the role of Child Protection coordinator and appoint a deputy in their absence</li> </ul>
<p>The Safeguarding Lead will:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making a decision as to whether a vulnerable adult alert is to be referred to the Local Authority (where the decision is made not to refer, cases will be supported by us or signposted to specialist agencies)</li> <li>• Overseeing and monitoring safeguarding cases concerning Ongo Homes Ensuring that Ongo is represented at safeguarding meetings for vulnerable adults and children</li> <li>• Providing advice, guidance and support to employees in respect of safeguarding vulnerable adults and children</li> <li>• Ensuring employees keep clear and accurate records in relation to safeguarding and child protection</li> <li>• Ensuring appropriate child protection referrals are made to the Local Authority</li> <li>• Overseeing and monitoring child protection cases concerning Ongo Homes</li> </ul>
<p>Service managers are responsible for ensuring that:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where relevant, the safeguarding of vulnerable adults and children is considered in strategies, plans and services</li> <li>• They and their teams understand the Safeguarding Policy and associated procedures and know how to use this in practice</li> <li>• They inform the relevant Designated Officer of any safeguarding or child protection issues raised to them</li> <li>• Ensure that employees reporting any safeguarding concerns are provided with appropriate support</li> <li>• All employees have undertaken safeguarding e-learning training and other relevant training appropriate to their role as approved by the Heads of Service (e.g. Prevent) within one</li> </ul>

	<p>month of their employment with Ongo commencing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All customer facing employees must complete face to face safeguarding awareness training within six months of their employment with Ongo commencing</li> <li>• Each office/scheme location has copies of (or employees have access to) safeguarding procedures and multi-agency safeguarding referral/alert forms and contact details</li> </ul>
Employees working for Ongo Communities are responsible for ensuring that:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If they have a safeguarding concern (for either an adult or child) living in an Ongo property they report this via the Report It button on the intranet.</li> <li>• If they have a safeguarding concern (for either an adult or child) who does not live in an Ongo property, they report this through the appropriate channel and record it on the spreadsheet.</li> <li>• If they need any help or guidance they contact The Tenancy Services Manager.</li> </ul>
Team leaders in the Tenancy Services team, Lettings team and within Ongo Communities have a responsibility to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that contracts and support plans refer to the safeguarding of vulnerable adults;</li> <li>• Ensure that services provide a safe environment for vulnerable adults</li> <li>• Understand and use whistleblowing and child protection policies where appropriate</li> </ul>
The People and Culture team is responsible for:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring all employees working with vulnerable adults and children have employment checks appropriate to their role</li> <li>• Keeping up-to-date with safer recruitment policies, procedures and training</li> </ul>
The Procurement & Vfm Manager is responsible for:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring that safeguarding is considered within all contracts where contractors employees come into direct contact with Ongo customers</li> </ul>
The Contract Manager is responsible for:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring that all contractors who have customer facing employees adhere to their own or adhere to our Safeguarding Policy</li> <li>• Identifying contractors that need safeguarding training</li> </ul>
All employees and persons working on our behalf, whether they work directly with, or	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report any suspicions or concerns regarding the welfare of vulnerable adults and children. This duty extends to the identification of abuse, poor practice</li> </ul>

<p>come into contact with, vulnerable adults and children have a responsibility to:</p>	<p>and allegations brought to the attention of employees by a member of the public</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribute to investigations of suspected abuse</li> <li>• Take part in safeguarding training relevant to their role</li> <li>• Keep clear and accurate records in relation to safeguarding</li> <li>• Adequately inform customers of the Safeguarding Policy and provide them with support to help them understand it</li> </ul>
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- 5.1 We will collect the following performance information to make sure we are doing what we say we will do:
- Number of alerts (adults or children) received and their origin
  - Number of vulnerable adult cases passed to the Local Authority
  - Number of vulnerable adult cases accepted by the Local Authority
  - Number of safeguarding children referrals passed to the local Authority
  - Number of safeguarding children referrals accepted by the Local Authority

- 5.2 A report will be provided to the Group Common Board annually, to provide assurance to them in respect of our approach and management of Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults and Children across the group.

## 6. Other things to bear in mind...

- 6.1 This policy has been developed to comply with the legal framework and published guidance relating to the safeguarding of vulnerable adults and children.
- 6.2 This policy clarifies our role and our employees' role in safeguarding adults and children. It should be read alongside the below policies and procedures:

Legislation and Regulations relevant to this policy include:

- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015
- General Data Protection Regulation
- Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984
- Public Concern at Work
- Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Sex Offenders Act 1997
- Sexual Offenders Act 1956
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- No Secrets Guidance (Department of Health, 2000)

- Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007
- Mental Health Act 1983
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- The Care Act 2014
- ADASS Guidance 2013
- Children and Young Persons Act 1933
- The Children Act 2004
- The Children Act 1989
- The Local Safeguarding Children Boards Regulations 2006
- Early Help Assessment Framework

We will also link to external local documents including:

- Local safeguarding Adult’s Board Safeguarding Adults Board Policies & Procedures
- Local Safeguarding Children’s Board Procedures and Guidance
- The Early Help Safeguarding Strategy
- Domestic Abuse Strategy
- Helping Children & Families (Threshold Document)
- Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy & Guidance
- LSCB Safer Recruitment Guidance
- SAB Risk Management Policy
- What to do if you’re worried a child is being abused – advice for practitioners

## 7. We’ll look at this again...

7.1 This policy will be health-checked annually by the Safeguarding Lead and Tenancy Services Manager.

## 8. What we mean...

Reference	Definition
<b>Abuse</b>	‘Abuse is a violation of an individual’s human and civil rights by any other person or persons’. It may involve ‘a single or repeated act, or omission occurring within a personal or closed relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to a person’.
<b>Alerter</b>	Someone who sees abuse taking place, is told about abuse or suspects abuse is occurring.
<b>Child</b>	A child is defined as any person under the age of 18.
<b>Child Abuse</b>	Child abuse occurs when a child or young person suffers a violation of their human and civil rights.

<p><b>Child Protection</b></p>	<p>Child protection is a part of safeguarding and promoting welfare.</p> <p>This refers to the activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or are at risk of suffering significant harm.</p> <p>Effective child protection is essential as part of the wider work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. However, all agencies and individuals should aim to proactively safeguard and promote the welfare of children so that the need for action to protect children from harm is reduced. (Source: Working Together to Safeguard Children).</p>
<p><b>Customer</b></p>	<p>This includes tenants, residents, clients and anyone who is receiving a service from us.</p>
<p><b>Designated Officer</b></p>	<p>The Safeguarding Lead has the overall responsibility for managing Safeguarding Referrals for both Children and Adults.</p>
<p><b>Mental Capacity</b></p>	<p>Mental Capacity refers to the ability of a person to make decisions about their own life. Some people have difficulties in making such decisions. This is called 'lacking capacity'. This is applicable to people aged 16+.</p> <p>Under the Mental Capacity Act (MCA) there are laws governing who can make decisions on someone else's behalf, which help to safeguard vulnerable people</p>
<p><b>Parent</b></p>	<p>The term 'parent' is used as a generic term to represent parent, carers and guardians.</p>
<p><b>Perpetrator</b></p>	<p>A perpetrator is a person, group or organisation that is suspected of, or has carried out, abuse. The perpetrator may or may not understand that they are carrying out abuse.</p>
<p><b>Employees</b></p>	<p>For the purpose of this policy, 'employees' relates to anyone employed by Ongo, including agency workers, apprentices, fixed term workers, consultants, secondees, Board members and volunteers who work on behalf of us.</p>
<p><b>Vulnerable Adult</b></p>	<p>Someone who is aged 18 or over and who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental health or other disability; age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect themselves against harm.</p>