

Commonweal Housing Policy for Safeguarding Children & Vulnerable Adults

The Trustees of Commonweal Housing Limited are ever mindful to safeguard children and vulnerable adults and to expect any individual to be able to live their life free from abuse.

After re-examining their operations in June 2012, Trustees have reaffirmed their view that Commonweal do not undertake activity directly resulting in any contact with children and vulnerable adults. Therefore, for the time being, they do not need to have in place procedures for the protection of this group of people.

Notwithstanding the current position, it is the policy of Commonweal to instigate appropriate procedures and controls prior to ever having direct contact with children and vulnerable adults. In the meantime it is the policy of Commonweal that any service providers or other organisations who are employed by or contracted to Commonweal to provide services that involve children and / or vulnerable adults, should agree to work within the policy statement set out below.

In reaching this view the Trustees of Commonweal Housing Limited have used the following definition of terms:

Child: A child is legally defined as anyone under the age of 18.

Vulnerable Adults: The definition of vulnerable adult as expressed in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) (Amendment) Order 2002:

“a person aged 18 or over who has a condition of the following type:

(i) a substantial learning or physical disability;

(ii) a physical or mental illness or mental disorder, chronic or otherwise,

including an addiction to alcohol or drugs; or

(iii) a significant reduction in physical or mental capacity.”

Abuse: Abuse is the violation of an individual's human rights. It can be a single act or repeated acts. It can be physical, sexual, or emotional. It also includes acts of neglect or an omission to act. In all forms of abuse there are elements of emotional abuse. Vulnerable adults may also suffer additional types of abuse such as being manipulated financially or being discriminated against. Other examples of abuse include inflicting physical harm such as hitting or misuse of medication, rape and sexual assault or exposure to sexual acts without informed consent, emotional abuse such as threats, humiliation and harassment, exploitation, ignoring medical or physical needs, withholding of necessities of life such as food or heating. This list is not definitive.

Commonweal's Policy Statement Expectation of Project Partners:

The welfare of the child or vulnerable adult is paramount

- All children and vulnerable adults, without exception, have the right to protection from abuse regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or beliefs.
- The policy is approved and endorsed by the Board of Trustees or appropriate Governing Body of the organisation.
- The policy applies to all Trustees, staff and volunteers.
- Children, parents, vulnerable adults and carers are informed of the policy and procedures as appropriate.
- All concerns and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously by Trustees, their staff and volunteers and responded to appropriately. This may require a referral to children's or adult social services and in emergencies, the Police.
- A commitment to safe recruitment selection and vetting.
- Reference to principles, legislation and guidance that underpin the policy.
- Arrangements for policy and procedures review.
- Reference to all associated policies and procedures, which promote children's safety.
- Reference to all associated policies and procedures which promote children's safety and welfare e.g. with regard to:
 - Health and safety
 - Anti-bullying
 - Protection of children / vulnerable adults online and with photography

Furthermore, it is the policy of Commonweal that service providers and the like should have the procedures and systems that include:

- A named person (and deputy) with a clearly defined role and responsibilities in relation to protection of children and vulnerable adults, appropriate to the level at which she/he operates.
- A description of what abuse is and the procedures for how to respond to it where there are concerns about a child's safety or welfare or concerns about the actions of a trustee, staff member or volunteer. Relevant contact details for statutory and voluntary support services should be available.
- A process for recording incidents, concerns and referrals and storing these securely in compliance with relevant legislation and kept for a time specified by their insurance company.
- Guidance on confidentiality and information sharing, legislation compliant, and which clearly states that the protection of the child or vulnerable adult is the most important consideration.
- A code of behaviour for trustees, staff and volunteers. The consequences of breaching the code are clear and linked to appropriate disciplinary and grievance procedures.
- Safe recruitment, selection and vetting procedures that include checks into the eligibility and the suitability of all trustees, staff and volunteers who have

direct or indirect (e.g. help line, email) contact with children or vulnerable adults. In the case of trustees, because of their position within the charity, we take the view that whenever there is a legal entitlement to obtain a CRB check in respect of such a trustee, a check should be carried out. This goes beyond circumstances where the trustee comes into contact with children.

- A complaints procedure, which is an open, and well publicised way in which adults and children can voice concerns about unacceptable and/or abusive behaviour towards children or vulnerable adults.
- Systems to ensure that all staff and volunteers working with children or vulnerable adults are monitored and supervised and that they have opportunities to learn about child protection in accordance with their roles and responsibilities.
- Requirements for trustees, staff and volunteers to learn about safeguarding in accordance with and as appropriate to their roles and responsibilities.

Reviewed by Trustees June 2012