

Policy Name:	Safeguarding children
Lead Directorate:	Communities and Neighbourhoods (CaN)
Authors:	Daniel Rose, Director of Community and Neighbourhoods
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APPROVAL PROCESS FOR CURRENT VERSION

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Poplar HARCA is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and young people who use or are connected to our services or activities.
- 1.2. We have a duty of care, based on law and guidance, to protect children and young people from abuse or neglect. We believe that every child has the right to feel safe and be protected from any situation or practice that could result in him or her being significantly harmed. This policy and related procedures apply to everyone working within, or on behalf of, Poplar HARCA included paid staff, volunteers, trustees and contractors. Poplar HARCA endorses the principle that safeguarding is everybody's business.
- 1.3. A child that is anyone who has not reached their 18th birthday. The fact that a child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently or is in further education, is a member of the armed forces, is in hospital or is in custody does not change their status or entitlement to services or protection under the Children Act 1989 in accordance with statutory guidance.

2. Key definitions

- 2.1. Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may harm or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children. Abuse can occur offline, online, or through combination of both.
- 2.2. There are four types of abuse and often one or more type will occur at the same time. They are neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse and emotional abuse. Full definitions of each type of abuse and the indicators for each type of abuse are included in the Safeguarding Children Procedures.
- 2.3. Some children are identified as being more at risk than others. This is due to either characteristics or circumstances that make them more vulnerable and include:
 - Children leaving care or care experienced young people
 - Young carers
 - Homeless children and families in temporary accommodation
 - Children living in families where there is substance misuse, domestic violence and/or parental mental ill health
 - Disabled children
 - Children affected by gang activity or serious youth service
 - Children experiencing organised or multiple abuse
 - Children experiencing female genital mutilation
 - Children experiencing forced marriage or so called 'honour-based' abuse
 - Children suffering abuse linked to belief-based abuse
 - Child victims of trafficking and/or modern slavery

- Children who are subjected to child sexual exploitation and/or criminal exploitation such as county lines
- Refugee children, asylum-seeking children and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children
- Children and families requiring interpretation or translation support
- Children with speech, language or communication difficulties
- LGBTQ+ children and young children
- Neurodivergent children and young people

2.4. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined as:

- protecting children from maltreatment;
- preventing impairment of children's health or development;
- ensuring they are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and
- taking action to enable all children to have the best life chances.

2.5. Contextual safeguarding is defined as follows: recognises that alongside threats to the welfare of children from within their families, children may be vulnerable to abuse may experience abuse, harm or exploitation from outside of their home families. These extra-familial threats might arise at school, from within peer groups, online, or more widely from within the local community. These threats can take a variety of different forms from and may include:

- Child criminal exploitation
- Child sexual exploitation
- Serious youth violence
- Peer-on-peer abuse
- Online exploitation
- Sexual violence and harassment
- Radicalisation
- Trafficking and organised crime

2.6. Child protection is part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. It refers to the activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering or are likely to suffer significant harm.

2.7. Significant harm: there are no absolute criteria on which to rely when judging what constitutes significant harm. For the purposes of Poplar HARCA's response to concerns about children, this decision is the responsibility of children's social care and/or the police. Any decision about investigating concerns or allegations of this nature is their responsibility under the Children Act 1989 section 47.

- 2.8. Non recent historic allegations of abuse. Any disclosure or concerns that relate to abuse that happened more than a year ago, whether involving anyone working or volunteering for Poplar HARCA, must be taken seriously and acted upon in line with the safeguarding procedures. Victims of abuse take many years to come forward due to shame and a fear of being disbelieved however the alleged perpetrator may remain a risk to others and therefore all non-recent historic allegations must be examined. Poplar HARCA will work in partnership with local authorities and/or the police in such cases. Poplar HARCA will work in partnership with statutory agencies, including Children's Social Care, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and the police where appropriate.

3. Guiding principles of the policy

- 3.1. All children have an equal the right to be safeguarded from harm and exploitation regardless of their race, religion, ethnicity, first language, sex, sexual orientation, gender, age, ability, health, socio-economic background, family circumstances, location, placement or immigration status.
- 3.2. Responsibility for the protection of children must be shared. Children are safeguarded only when all relevant agencies and individuals accept responsibility, co-operate with one another and share information appropriately.
- 3.3. A child-centred approach is fundamental to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of every child. Anyone working with children should see and speak to the child, listen to what they say, observe their behaviour, take their views seriously, and work with them and their families and the people who know them well when deciding how to support their needs.
- 3.4. Statements or allegations of abuse or neglect made by children must always be taken seriously.
- 3.5. Poplar HARCA will promote a culture of vigilance, transparency and professional curiosity where staff, volunteers, residents and partners feel able to raise safeguarding concerns.
- 3.6. We will take seriously the concerns of all staff, volunteers, contractors or residents who raise concerns about a child or the behaviour of an adult towards a child.
- 3.7. Poplar HARCA is committed to anti-discriminatory safeguarding practice and will seek to ensure safeguarding responses are inclusive, accessible and culturally informed.
- 3.8. Poplar HARCA recognises the importance of early help, prevention and partnership working in improving outcomes for children and young people.
- 3.9. Poplar HARCA recognises that trauma, abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation can significantly impact children and young people's wellbeing, behaviour and development. We are committed to responding in a trauma-informed, supportive and child-centred manner that promotes safety, trust, empathy and understanding.

4. Policy aims and objectives

To achieve our commitment to safeguarding we have the following measures in place:

- 4.1. Providing safeguarding procedures so that staff, volunteers, trustees and contractors know what to do if they become aware of concerns about a child.

- 4.2. Informing staff, volunteers, trustees, partner agencies and contractors about the safeguarding policy and procedures at induction or at the start of any work with us.
- 4.3. Taking all suspicions and/or allegations of abuse or risk to children or young people seriously and responding swiftly when appropriate.
- 4.4. Ensuring that all our partner agencies and anyone delivering on our behalf adhere to best practice, when within our control.
- 4.5. Ensuring staff and volunteers are informed of our safeguarding policy and procedure at induction it is line managers responsibility to make sure that their staff teams have been briefed.
- 4.6. Identifying which people require specific safeguarding children training and ensuring that they receive it and refresh it as necessary. All Youth Workers in Charge must be DSO trained and have this refreshed every 2 years. This is tracked through HARCA's HR online portal (Cascade), reminders are sent to line managers when training is due to be renewed.
- 4.7. Providing appropriate support and supervision for those staff or volunteers who have a specific role and responsibility for children or young people.
- 4.8. Providing a safeguarding governance structure so that key roles have specific safeguarding roles and responsibilities.
- 4.9. Have a Safeguarding Review Group who will have an overview of all safeguarding arrangements, monitor and quality assure their effectiveness, address incidents that have organisational implications and be responsible for policy review (see Appendix 1).
- 4.10. Taking all reasonable action to avoid the employment and deployment of staff or volunteers who are likely to pose a risk to children or young people through safer recruitment and vetting processes. At recruitment for roles which will involve working with children frequently it is made clear that the role requires an enhanced DBS check, on successful appointment candidates must have an enhanced DBS check completed and two satisfactory employment references before starting employment.
- 4.11. Ensuring that all our customers, including children attending our activities services, have appropriate and accessible information about the nature of child abuse, children's right to be safe and how to raise concerns if the safety of children or young people is compromised.
- 4.12. Provide a Customer Care policy to address how complaints will be addressed and Poplar HARCA's commitment to equality.
- 4.13. Poplar HARCA staff who work frequently with children must have their enhanced DBS check renewed every three years. This is tracked by HR and reminders are sent to line managers when a DBS needs updating.
- 4.14. Staff must respect confidentiality and only divulge information given in confidence when justified by an assessed risk to the child or to others.
- 4.15. Effective information sharing between professionals and local agencies is essential for effective identification, assessment and service provision. Fears about sharing information cannot be allowed to stand in the way of the need to promote the welfare and protect the safety of children. No member of staff or volunteer should assume that someone else will pass on information which they think may be critical to keeping a child safe.

- 4.16. To ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people is paramount when adults, young people or children are using the internet or mobile devices
- 4.17. To provide staff and volunteers with an online code of conduct that guide our approach to online safety

5. Legal and regulatory framework

- 5.1. Poplar HARCA seeks to be fully compliant with the legal and regulatory framework concerning safeguarding and child protection. Hence this policy and related procedures are written with reference to the following legislation and guidance:

Children Act 1989 and 2004	Data Protection Act 2018
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1991	Serious Crimes Act 2015
Human Rights Act 1998	HM Government Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026
Sexual Offences Act 2003	London Safeguarding Procedures and Practice Guidance Child Protection Procedures (Updated: 30 th March 2026)
Protection of Freedoms Act 2012	Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015
Malicious Communications Act 1988	Protection of Children Act 1978
Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003	Children and Families Act 2014
Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023	Domestic Abuse Act 2021
Children's Social Care National Framework 2023	Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006,

6. Cross references to other Poplar HARCA policies / procedures

This policy should also be read in conjunction with the following policies and procedures that also relate to and integrate safeguarding:

- Safeguarding children procedure
- Recruitment procedure
- Volunteer recruitment policy and procedure
- Disciplinary and grievance procedures
- Whistle blowing procedure

- Safeguarding vulnerable adults' policy and procedure
- Complaints procedure
- Customer Care Policy
- Disclosure Barring Service Checks Procedure
- Privacy Notice

7. Policy review

This policy will be subject to **review on an annual basis** unless a change in legislation, statutory or local guidance or an incident warrant an earlier review.

Appendix 1

Safeguarding roles and responsibilities

All organisations that provide services for children, parents or families or work with children are required to have in place a clear line of accountability and governance within and across the organisation for the commissioning and provision of services designed to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. Within Poplar HARCA there are a number of individuals who fulfil specific safeguarding roles and their responsibilities are listed below. Their contact details are in Appendix 2.

Designated Safeguarding Officers (DSO)

- Receive and record information from staff or volunteers who have a concern or disclosure concerning a child or young person
- Assess the information promptly and carefully, clarifying or obtaining more information about the situation as appropriate
- Seek consultation from the DSL or statutory agencies if uncertain as to the appropriate action to take
- Make safeguarding referrals to children's social care or the police without delay in accordance with the procedures of Tower Hamlets Safeguarding Children Partnership
- Ensure a full record is maintained of the concerns, action taken, liaison with other agencies and outcomes
- Deal with the aftermath of any safeguarding incident in terms of offering support;
- Identify and alert the DSL to any safeguarding training needs
- Keep abreast of developments in safeguarding legislation, practice and local procedures
- Link with the lead officer(s) for vulnerable adults when children and their families are known to the DSO reach their 18th birthday.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

- Maintain a strategic overview of safeguarding across all Poplar HARCA's activities and services
- Provide support for the DSOs
- Meet monthly with DSOs to review safeguarding activity including case closures
- Ensure the safeguarding children policy and procedures are implemented
- Ensure there is compliance with safeguarding policy and procedures through quality assurance processes
- Co-ordinate the safeguarding training strategy for staff and volunteers.

Designated Director for Safeguarding Children

- Present an annual report to CMT and the board of trustees on safeguarding activity;
- Ensure that there is a review, and if necessary, a revision, of the safeguarding policy and procedures on an annual basis or sooner if there is a change in legislation, guidance or an incident that warrants it
- Provide support to the DSL
- Have a strategic overview of safeguarding
- Co-chair the Safeguarding Review Group

Board Member for Safeguarding Children

- Understand the implications of the safeguarding policy, procedures and related policies and procedures;
- Ensure that safeguarding is considered in respect of organisational risk and any strategic planning;
- Be aware of, and be available to, those staff who have a specific responsibility for safeguarding as identified in this document.

Safeguarding Review Group

- Co-chaired by the Designated Director for Safeguarding Children and the Designated Director for Safeguarding Adults
- Establish its terms of reference and membership, reviewing them annually;
- Devise a strategy for the routine monitoring of Poplar HARCA's safeguarding policies and practices
- Ensure resources are allocated to support sound safeguarding practice which will include training, supervision and IT systems
- Instigate an annual review of the safeguarding policy and procedures (relevance, compliance and outcomes) reporting this to Audit and Risk Committee
- Ensure that there is a coordinated approach to safeguarding across Poplar HARCA and between child and adult safeguarding.

Appendix 2 – Contact details for those with child safeguarding responsibilities

Role	Name	Contact Details
Board member for safeguarding children	Christopher Haines	christopher.haines@poplarharca.co.uk
Designated safeguarding director (DSD)	Babu Bhattacharjee	babu.bhattacharjee@poplarharca.co.uk 07932616630
Designated safeguarding lead (DSL)	Daniel Rose	Daniel.rose@poplarharca.co.uk 07957396868
Designated safeguarding officers for each Spotlight site (DSOs)		
Creative Programme Manager	Emma Chapman	emma@wearespotlight.com 07812638881
Youth Service Manager	Khadija Begum	khadija@wearespotlight.com 07764422071
Head of Strategic Engagement (Youth & Community)	Nahim Ahmed	nahim@wearespotlight.com 07814174720
Youth Worker in Charge	Shabul Miah	shabul@wearespotlight.com 07970 226 509
Designated safeguarding officers for other teams/services outside of Spotlight:	Daniel Rose	Daniel.rose@poplarharca.co.uk 07957396868

Appendix 3 - Impact assessment

How does the policy contribute to Poplar HARCA's aims?	By safeguarding children and young people from abuse Poplar HARCA is empowering children and young people to grow and seize opportunities.
Which group(s) of people will benefit from the policy? If any group could be disadvantaged, what is the mitigation or justification?	Children and young people benefit. No group will be disadvantaged by this policy.
How have residents been involved in developing the policy? If they have not been involved, why not?	We provide services and support to children and their families in our network of community centres, Spotlight and through our housing services. Our experience with these residents has informed this policy.
How will the policy be monitored and measured? (e.g. performance indicators?)	Monitored by the Safeguarding Review Committee. Major youth service funders provide feedback on an annual basis on policy. London Youth review policy as part of the quality mark process.
If any, what are the Value for Money implications?	n/a
Will personal data be collected, stored, used, or shared? If yes, has a privacy impact assessment been carried out.	Yes. A privacy impact assessment is carried out.