



WILLOW TREE

HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

Safeguarding Policy

Version:	V3
Responsibility for the Policy	Head of Housing & Customer Experience
Date approved by Executive	October 2025
Date approved by Resident Scrutiny Panel	October 2025
Date approved by Board (if applicable)	N/A
Date due for review:	November 2028

1. Statement of Intent

Willow Tree Housing Partnership (WTHP) aims to provide a safe environment for its residents and for members of the wider community. WTHP believes that individuals have a right, not only to be safeguarded from harm, but to be given every opportunity to develop to their full potential; socially, intellectually, emotionally and physically.

2. Policy Objectives

- 2.1. Safeguarding is the process of protecting adults with care and support needs or children from abuse or neglect. This may include empowering and enabling people to protect themselves.
- 2.2. It is WTHP's objective to prevent and reduce the risk of significant harm to adults and children at risk from abuse. In addition, WTHP will support vulnerable adults to maintain control over their lives and in making informed choices without coercion or exploitation or signpost them to other services.
- 2.3. Abuse can take a number of forms, including exploitation, coercion, domestic violence, neglect, "mate" crime and other types of abuse. Neglect can include self-neglect.
- 2.4. This policy is based on the principles that:
 - The welfare and safety of the adult or child at risk is paramount.
 - Adults at risk have a right to information, which could make life better and/or safer for them.
 - All concerns and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to appropriately.
 - Managers must never ignore or underplay alerts from their staff. They must develop understanding, knowledge and confidence and support the staff they manage to make referrals to the local Safeguarding Team and in certain situations, the Police.
 - WTHP will take full account of existing legislation and associated Government guidance.
- 2.5. A safeguarding alert is a report made by anyone about concerns of abuse or neglect of an adult or child at risk to the local authority Adult or Children's Services team. WTHP are not expected to investigate or prove any suspected abuse or neglect, either before an alert is made or subsequently.
- 2.6. If a WTHP member of staff is identified as a suspected abuser, then the Disciplinary Procedure may be invoked where appropriate and relevant.
- 2.7. Where a vulnerable tenant causes, or is the victim of, anti-social behaviour, or is involved in any other breach of their tenancy conditions, WTHP will advise the tenants support agency, Adult Social Care and the Local Authority's Housing Options team.
- 2.8. Where a member of staff makes a disclosure about abuse or neglect they may be covered by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. The Head of Housing and Customer Experience (HHCE) should consider whether this Act applies to

any member of staff who reports concerns about anyone at risk of abuse or neglect.

2.9. WTHP will appoint a designated safeguarding lead who has overarching responsibilities regarding safeguarding within the organisation.

3. Children's Safeguarding

3.1 All members of staff should be alert to the possibility of a child (under 18) being the victim of abuse or neglect and shall inform the Tenancy Team Leader (TTL) or HHCE of any evidence, allegation or suspicion of abuse or neglect. The appropriate agency must also be informed without delay, usually the Children's Services team of the relevant local authority.

3.2 In order to ensure that children are protected during their work, members of staff should;

- Not enter a home unless an adult (18 years or over) is present
- Not put themselves in a position where they are alone with a child
- Avoid any physical contact with children
- Keep all tools secured when children are in the vicinity
- Not photograph or video a child without the parent's or guardian's permission

4. Adult Safeguarding

4.1 An adult at risk from abuse or neglect is anyone over the age of 18 who is or who may be in need of community care or health care services by reason of mental or other disability or illness and who is or may be unable to take care of themselves or to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation. They may be referred to as an adult at risk.

For example, an adult at risk may be a person who:

- Is frail due to ill health, physical disability or cognitive impairment
- Has a learning difficulty
- Has a physical disability or sensory impairment
- Has mental health needs
- Has a long term illness or condition
- Is unable to demonstrate the capacity to make decisions and is in need of care and support

4.2 All members of staff should be alert to the possibility that an adult may be at risk from abuse or neglect. Where there is any evidence, allegation or suspicion of abuse or neglect the TTL or HHCE should be informed and a safeguarding referral made.

4.3 The TTL/HHCE will ensure that immediate action is taken to protect the adult at risk, if this is appropriate. Care should be taken to ensure that any action taken does not jeopardise any future investigation and preserve any evidence, if appropriate. The wishes of the adult at risk should be ascertained, if they have the capacity to make decisions about their care and safety. If the adult at risk does have capacity this should not preclude an alert.

4.4 From time to time staff members may come across situations where they believe someone lacks the ability to understand either what they are telling them or the implications of what they are doing. In this case they are said to be a person who may lack capacity. They may lack capacity for certain decisions but have capacity for others and the lack of capacity may be temporary or permanent. In deciding whether someone has capacity to make a decision for themselves, WTHP staff members should:

- Assume the person has capacity unless proved otherwise
- Not treat people as incapable of making a decision unless you have tried all practicable steps to try to help them
- Allow people to make what may seem to you an unwise decision
- Always do things, or take decisions for people without capacity in their best interest
- Ensure that when doing something to someone, or making a decision on their behalf you chose the least restrictive option.

Where a staff member thinks a resident may lack capacity they should seek advice from the TTL or HHCE or a relevant support agency such as Adult or Children's Social Care.

2. Performance Standards

The number of safeguarding referrals will be reported to the Customer Experience Committee and the Board quarterly.

3. Reference Documents

External

Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018

When setting policy, the Willow Tree Housing Partnership will ensure a golden thread of best practice runs through all aspects of its operations in respect of equality, diversity and inclusion. It will seek to minimise adverse environmental impacts arising as a consequence of its work. This approach and all policies will be reviewed on their anniversary date or as new guidance or legislation is introduced, whichever occurs sooner.