

Children Safeguarding Policy 2016 - 2019

Document control

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Author	Group Director Customer Services
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Version	Date	Author(s)	Notes on Revisions
1	Feb 2016	Group Director Customer Services	Original document. Introduces new safeguarding policy statement. Includes Care Act 2014 and reference to child sexual exploitation and radicalisation.
2	April 2016	Group Director Customer Services	Revised following feedback from KMBC to separate and have separate documents for adult and children's safeguarding policies.

1.0 Purpose & Scope

1.1 This policy establishes the approach that First Ark will take to safeguarding children at risk. The policy applies to all First Ark employees, agency staff, contractors and volunteers. It sets out what we will do and our role in partnership with the Knowsley Safeguarding Children's Board to protect children at risk from abuse.

2.0 Policy objectives/principles

2.1 At First Ark we believe that children should at all times be treated with dignity and respect. First Ark and its contractors will ensure that when we are delivering services, the welfare of children at risk is of primary concern. To achieve this, our key policy objectives are:

- To demonstrate a clear commitment to keeping children whose lives we touch safe from harm
- To raise awareness of safeguarding responsibilities throughout First Ark and with agency staff, contractors and volunteers who work with us
- To promote and implement working practices to safeguard the wellbeing of children at risk
- To comply with the objectives of the Knowsley Safeguarding Children's Board
- To establish recruitment procedures that support and promote our safeguarding objectives.

3.0 Definitions

3.1 **Definition of a child** – any person who has not attained the age of 18, regardless of the setting they are in or the service they receive (Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006).

3.2 **Definition of abuse** – Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons (Department of Health Report 2000 – No Secrets).

Abuse can take many forms and can include:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse including child sexual exploitation
- Psychological and emotional abuse
- Financial abuse
- Neglect or acts of omissions
- Institutional abuse
- Discriminatory abuse

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- Radicalisation of children and young people by political and religious extremists.
- Domestic abuse
- Modern slavery

4.0 Service standards

We aim to provide high quality services to our customers that are effective and culturally sensitive. When we identify concerns regarding the welfare of children at risk we will:

- Maintain strict confidentiality whilst dealing with cases where abuse occurs or is suspected
- Inform victims that some personal information may need to be shared even without the consent of the individual
- Make the safety and wellbeing of the person considered at risk our first priority
- Pass on our concerns swiftly to Children's Services at Knowsley Council through established referral arrangements, where the appropriate thresholds are met
- Involve other agencies such as the police where this would be appropriate
- Engage with key partners to facilitate effective responses to instances of abuse.

5.0 First Arks approach to safeguarding children at risk

5.1 General principles

First Ark aims to provide the highest possible standard of service to our customers. In doing so we recognise that we must do all that we can to protect children at risk from abuse when they are engaged in services organised or delivered by us. We want to ensure that we have working practices in place that will help us identify abuse and enable us to take action to prevent abuse from happening.

5.2 Responsibility and training

All First Ark staff, agency workers, contractors and volunteers have a responsibility to safeguard children and who may be at risk. This includes sharing information and raising alerts where abuse is suspected.

We will do this by:

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- Establishing recruitment and induction arrangements for new staff that have regard to our approach to safeguarding
- Ensuring all relevant existing and new staff, and volunteers, are made aware of how to access and implement our Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.
- Using training and supervision sessions to raise awareness about safeguarding.
- Identifying and training internal Safeguarding Specialists who can advise staff and managers within the organisation.
- Ensuring all contractors and external partners understand our approach to safeguarding.

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation rests with the Group Director Customer Services, who will take the lead as Safeguarding Champion in First Ark.

5.3 Reporting

Where abuse occurs or is suspected our principle concern will be the safety and wellbeing of the person considered at risk. All incidents of misconduct or abuse will be reported to the relevant service manager and be recorded as soon as possible after the event. All staff and contractors have responsibility for raising safeguarding concerns.

First Ark will adopt appropriate practices to ensure that information is passed swiftly to Children's or at Knowsley Council in accordance with established referral arrangements.

Where it is considered appropriate First Ark will report concerns to the police or other relevant agencies such as the Care Quality Commission or the Supporting People Authority.

Where allegations are made against staff or contractors, concerns should be reported to the manager responsible for the service area or the head of service. Human resources will be involved from the outset and reports will be investigated thoroughly in accordance with our safeguarding procedures.

5.4 Sharing information and confidentiality

We will share information where it is necessary to do so in the best interests of an individual to protect them from harm or abuse. We will normally seek consent before sharing information but if this is not possible or refused we will share information with other agencies if in our opinion it is in the best interests of the child or adult at risk. There are also times when legally we must also share such information.

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We will maintain strict confidentiality whilst dealing with cases where abuse occurs, or is alleged or suspected. Where it is necessary to share information with Children's Services we will do so accurately and distinguish between facts, opinion and hearsay.

5.5 Partnership working

First Ark will maintain close links with Knowsley Council Children's Services and other local agencies. The Group Director Customer Services and team will take the lead to develop effective partnerships that will enable us to:

- Maintain working relationships with all key agencies to facilitate effective responses to instances of abuse
- Establish and maintain good practice with regard to safeguarding procedures and adopt joint working and information sharing protocols
- Participate in joint training
- Monitor the appropriateness of referrals
- Participate in relevant safeguarding partnership groups
- Engage in serious case reviews, safeguarding adult reviews and multi-agency reviews.

When organising an event or activity which will be delivered by a partner, the event organiser is expected to ensure the event is organised with regard to this policy and to verify that they have their own effective safeguarding policy in place.

6.0 Consultation

We recognise the importance of working in partnership with our customers to develop and continuously improve our services. We will consult regularly with customers and key partners from voluntary and statutory agencies within Knowsley on the content and operation of this policy and any revisions.

7.0 Complaints

First Ark will seek to resolve any complaint from customers or partners over the operation of this policy at the first point of contact. If this cannot be done complaints will be dealt with through our formal complaints procedure.

8.0 Monitoring and performance

- 8.1 First Ark will put in place a recording process for all safeguarding alerts and referrals to other agencies. The Group Director Customer Services will use this information to monitor the number of alerts and referrals and the response from Knowsley Council Children's Services and the effectiveness of our partnering arrangements.
- 8.2 The Board recognises safeguarding as a key strategic risk and in order to monitor that we are taking our safeguarding responsibilities seriously the Group Director Customer Services will provide the Board and Executive Management Team with:
- An annual safeguarding review
 - Periodic reports identifying significant safeguarding concerns
- 8.3 There are no specific Business Plan objectives or key performance indicators relating to this policy statement.

9.0 Legislation and regulation

- 9.1 The processes for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children at risk are covered by extensive legislation. This policy has been developed so that it complies with the legal framework and is compatible with the work of the Knowsley Safeguarding Children's Board.
- 9.2 There are no specific regulatory standards with regards to this policy area; however, indirectly this policy statement supports the following HCA Consumer Standards:
- Tenancy Standard – develop and provide services that will support tenants to maintain their tenancy and prevent unnecessary evictions.
 - Neighbourhood and Community Standard – keep the neighbourhood and communal areas associated with our homes clean and safe and co-operate with our partners to help promote social, environmental and economic wellbeing in the areas where we own properties.

10.0 Equality and Diversity

- 10.1 First Ark acknowledges that customers from marginalised groups may face additional difficulties and may be the most likely to experience some form of abuse. We will work with our customers to identify and respond effectively in circumstances where children and adults may be at risk. We will have regard to our Equality and Diversity Policy and take into account the language, translation and other personal needs of our customers.

11.0 Associated documents

11.1 This safeguarding policy is not intended to operate in isolation. First Ark has a strong commitment to supporting vulnerable customers. Staff and contractors are required to consider our approach to safeguarding in the delivery of all customer services.

11.2 This policy statement is related to the following documents:

- Safeguarding procedures
- Anti-social behaviour policy and procedure
- Whistleblowing policy
- Professional boundaries guidance
- Complaints policy and procedure
- Equality and diversity policy