SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN POLICY

EG/Board Approval:	June 2024	**Responsible Board:**	Ocean Housing Group Ltd
Next Review:	June 2027	**Responsible Executive:**	Managing Director of Ocean Housing Ltd

1.0 Policy Statement

1.1 Ocean is a provider of social housing for people in need in Cornwall. Our mission is 'to be an innovative provider of quality homes and services, with residents and staff at the heart of Ocean, and Ocean at the heart of the community'.

1.2 This policy sets out Ocean's approach to safeguarding children and young people. For the purposes of this policy the words "child" or "children" are used to refer to anyone who has not yet reached the age of 18 years.

1.3 This policy may need to be read in conjunction with other Ocean policies, including:

- Safeguarding Children Policy
- Services for Vulnerable People Policy
- Allocations and Lettings Policy
- Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Policy
- Harassment Incidents, Crime & Racial Harassment Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy
- Compliments and Complaints Policy
- Domestic Abuse Policy
- Data Protection Policy

2.0 Background

2.1 Abuse is never the choice of the child and is never their fault. Ocean therefore has in place appropriate policies and procedures to help safeguard children, and will do all it reasonably can to assist.

2.2 Although not statutorily responsible for safeguarding, Ocean takes its responsibilities seriously, as a landlord, service provider and employer, in safeguarding the independence, safety and wellbeing of its tenants, their families and other customers.

2.3 Ocean is committed to ensuring that the nature of abuse and vulnerability is understood throughout the organisation. Training for staff is provided on procedures produced in respect of safeguarding children experiencing abuse or in potentially abusive situations.

2.4 Ocean's Safeguarding Children policy is based on the following values:

- All children have a right to be safe no matter who they are or what their circumstances.
- Keeping children safe is everyone's responsibility.

- We all need to listen to children even though we may not always be comfortable with what we hear.
- Children cannot be protected if we keep concerns to ourselves – it is important that we share information with appropriate agencies.

2.5 Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Children means:

- protecting children from maltreatment
- preventing impairment of their health or development
- ensuring that they grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- taking action to enable all children to have the best life chances

3.0 Policy Objectives

3.1 To ensure Ocean does all it reasonably can to protect children living in, or visiting our homes, who may be at risk of neglect or abuse.

3.3 To ensure that Ocean's working practices support effective safeguarding referrals for children who may be at risk of neglect or abuse.

3.4 To ensure Ocean staff are appropriately trained, taking account of their job role, to help protect vulnerable children living in, and visiting, our homes, who may be at risk of neglect or abuse.

3.5 To ensure our services are open and accountable and that information on raising safeguarding alerts is available.

3.6 To ensure that staff are aware of Ocean's policy and procedures on safeguarding children.

3.7 To ensure that staff are confident in their ability to raise a concern about safeguarding and there are systems in place for concerns to be heard, evaluated and if required to act swiftly in passing on information to the relevant authority for further investigation and action.

3.8 To ensure we have appropriate and rigorous safeguards in place for staff recruitment.

3.9 To ensure we appropriately assist the Our Safeguarding Children Partnership (OSCP) for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly in protecting children

4.0 What is considered abuse and neglect?

4.1 The OSCP identifies seven types of abuse. These are:

4.2 Physical abuse - When an adult deliberately hurts a child, such as hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, drowning or suffocating.

4.3 Sexual abuse – when someone is forced, pressurised or tricked into taking part in any kind of sexual activity with someone else. This can happen in real life and online. An example of sexual abuse would be where a child has been forced to take part in sexual

activities or in the taking of sexual photos.

4.4   Emotional abuse – Someone is being emotionally abused if their parent or the person caring for them regularly does or says things which make them feel sad, angry, ashamed, or have other negative feelings. For example, when a child is being unfairly blamed for everything, all the time, or told they are stupid and made to feel unhappy.

4.5   Neglect - Where a child is not being looked after properly, for example, not getting enough to eat or being left alone in dangerous situations. All children and young people have the right to be properly looked after and to have the things they need – like food and drink and a safe home. These are things they need to be able to grow up healthy and well.

4.6   Exploitation - where a child is being taken advantage of so that someone else can benefit. It is when they are pressurised, forced or tricked into doing something they do not want to do.

4.7   Domestic abuse - When one adult in a family or relationship threatens, bullies or hurts another adult e.g. physically, psychologically, emotionally, sexually or financially. Children can be affected even if you they not the one being hurt.

4.8   Bullying – This might include the of calling names, damaging property, stealing, spreading rumours, cyberbullying, hurting and getting the child into trouble.

4.9   The Governments 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023' guidance makes clear a child-centred approach is fundamental to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of every child.

4.10 Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined in the guidance as:

- providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge.

- protecting children from maltreatment, whether that is within or outside the home, including online.

- preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development.

- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.

- promoting the upbringing of children with their birth parents, or otherwise their family network, through a kinship care arrangement, whenever possible and where this is in the best interests of the children

- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

5.0   Roles and Responsibilities

5.1   Ocean Group Board will receive and consider an annual report from the Ocean Housing Safeguarding Board on safeguarding activities and issues, as well as agreeing significant

policy revisions.

5.2 Executive Group will receive and consider a quarterly report from the Ocean Housing Safeguarding Board, on safeguarding activities and issues, as well as agreeing significant policy revisions in line with its delegation from Group Board.

5.3 The Ocean Housing Safeguarding Board, chaired by the Head of Neighbourhood Services, will:

- Ensure Ocean does all it reasonably can to protect and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults living in our homes.

- Ensure Ocean complies with relevant legislative and regulatory requirements.

- Ensure effective reporting of issues to both Ocean Group Board and the Executive Group

- Develop, monitor, and review Ocean's safeguarding, and associated, policies and procedures.

- Ensure Ocean staff are appropriately trained to help protect and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults living in, and visiting, our homes, taking account of their job role.

- Raise awareness of welfare issues within Ocean.

- Ensure team members are supported when dealing with other agencies and, where necessary, escalate concerns both internally and externally.

- Review safeguarding cases and cause for concern referrals to identify trends and learning.

- Ensure that learning is shared.

5.4 Neighbourhood Services Managers and Home Ownership Manager will ensure the policy is implemented correctly and all relevant processes are followed.

5.5 Ultimately, safeguarding is the responsibility of every Ocean employee. Everyone who comes into contact with children and families has a role to play.

6.0 Concerns that may not meet the threshold for a safeguarding referral

6.1 Ocean employees may encounter 'welfare' issues that are not covered by the seven types of abuse and neglect identified above, and which would not be accepted as a safeguarding referral e.g threats of suicide. Other issues may be referred for a safeguarding assessment but those assessing the referral may decide the threshold for acceptance has not been met.

6.2 Ocean takes all welfare issues seriously and will ensure that the same principles are applied to welfare concerns that may not qualify for a safeguarding referral, or may not

be accepted if they are referred. It will put in place appropriate process so that we do all we reasonably can to protect and promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults living in, or visiting, our homes.

7.0 Our Approach

7.1 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 in custody in the secure estate for children and young people, does not change his or her status or entitlement to services or protection

7.2 Ocean will make a safeguarding, or other type of referral, without the childs permission where it is assessed there is a significant risk of harm. We will carry out a risk assessment to determine whether a safeguarding referral is required.

7.3 We will provide a safe, non-judgmental environment, within which someone can report concerns and seek advice.

7.4 We will provide advice on housing options where appropriate, and support to access alternative housing if required.

7.5 We will signpost to specialist agencies who can offer tailored advice and support to the person we are working with.

8.0 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

8.1 Ocean collects data to understand the diverse needs of tenants, including those arising from protected characteristics, language barriers, and additional support needs; and also to assess whether all tenants have fair access to, and equitable outcomes of, housing and landlord services

8.2 Ocean recognises that often vulnerable people may be disadvantaged socially, isolated and/or financially excluded. Where appropriate we will offer services in line with this policy to assist vulnerable households to sustain and maintain their tenancy.

8.3 Everyone has a right to be treated with dignity, fairness, and respect. This Policy is in line Ocean's Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy.

8.4 This policy does not unfairly or unlawfully discriminate and will be applied equally for all Protected Characteristics. Reasonable Adjustments, under the Equality Act 2010, will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

8.5 We are committed to addressing any communication or language barriers by providing translation services for face-to-face contact and written communication when needed. We will also produce information in alternative formats such as audio or large print where required.

8.6 Staff are made aware of our approach to Customer Care and Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion, and Safeguarding.