



Social Housing Action Campaign

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Safeguarding Policy

October 2023

Introduction

SHAC is an online-based membership organisation comprising a network of tenants, residents, workers and activists in housing associations and cooperatives. It is aligned to the Unite Housing Workers Branch, which represents staff in these organisations.

Together we campaign to improve the lives of those who live in housing association properties and to reduce the commercialisation of the sector. Our demands include genuine tenant and resident democracy, improved repairs and maintenance services, reduced rents and service charges, better health and safety provisions for all, and an end to the exploitation of housing workers.

The organisation is membership-led, and its objectives are overseen by an elected committee. This organisation does not provide casework services for its members. As such, committee members infrequently have prolonged, in-person engagement with individual members in a formal capacity, and committee interactions mainly occur in groups via video meetings and email correspondence.

Notwithstanding, the committee is aware of its overall safeguarding obligations as an organisation and has published this policy to ensure adherence to safeguarding principles wherever required.

Scope

This policy applies to all SHAC members and can be applied further to incidents or conditions in the course of activities related to the organisation or within members' housing and/or personal circumstances.

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Definitions

Safeguarding

With regard to this policy, the term 'safeguarding' describes the broader preventative and precautionary approach to planning and procedures that are necessary to protect people from abuse or neglect. People may be at particular risk of abuse or neglect due to the actions (or lack of action) of another person, and because they are vulnerable.

Vulnerable Adult

A vulnerable adult (or adult at risk) is any person aged 18 or over who is, or may be in need of, community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness and who is, or may be, unable to take care of him or herself or protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.

The list below is not exhaustive, but a vulnerable adult (or adult at risk) may be someone who:

- is elderly and frail.
- has a mental disorder.
- has a physical or sensory disability.
- has a severe physical illness.
- is a substance misuser
- is homeless.
- has a learning disability.

Child

An individual is considered to be a child or young person up to their 18th birthday.

Abuse

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights. It may consist of a single act or repeated acts, may happen intentionally or unintentionally, and can take place in any relationship or setting.

Examples of abuse include:

- physical abuse e.g., shoving, hitting, slapping.

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- sexual abuse e.g., involvement in any direct or indirect (i.e., innuendo, pornography) activity against the member's will or knowledge
- emotional/psychological abuse e.g., intimidation, bullying or humiliation.
- discriminatory abuse e.g., racial, sexual, or religious harassment.
- financial or material exploitation e.g., coercing money or goods.
- institutional abuse e.g., failure to ensure privacy, dignity or uphold individual human and civil rights.
- neglect or acts of omission e.g., ignoring physical or medical needs, failure to access appropriate health, social care, or educational services, and/or withholding medication.

Abuser

An abuser may be anyone including members, their relatives and/or friends, professional staff, neighbours, care workers, volunteers, and strangers.

Organisation Commitment

SHAC is committed to promoting safeguarding through the provision of an inclusive, supportive, and safe environment for its committee, the wider membership, and others closely associated with its work. SHAC affirms the rights of individuals to be treated fairly and with respect.

The organisation will fulfil its safeguarding obligations by –

- promoting a culture of value and respect for all within a supportive and safe membership environment, and in all communications.
 - posting visible information on our website on the signs of abuse and the action to take if/when abuse is reported.
 - supporting members subjected to safeguarding breaches by signposting them to the appropriate agencies.
 - providing up-to-date government guidance on safeguarding on our website.
 - providing briefings on the principles of safeguarding at least twice a year by email and/or in meetings.
 - identifying and sharing good practice in safeguarding with the membership.
 - monitoring the safeguarding practices within the organisation.
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- monitoring the effectiveness of this policy and reviewing it annually.
- reporting safeguarding breaches committed by organisation members to the appropriate agencies.

Reporting an Incident

If a safeguarding breach is committed by a member during the course of any activity related to this organisation, and if witnessed by another member, the details of this incident should be disclosed to Suzanne Muna (SHAC Secretary) in the first instance.

In Suzanne Muna's absence, Niall Mulholland (SHAC Chair), should be approached.

When making this report, please include the following:

- what your concerns are.
- where, when, who from and how you got the concerns.
- what you have done.
- whether the individual affected is aware of this referral.
- any additional info about the individual.

This policy was approved and authorised by the SHAC Committee on 1st May 2023. It was revised and agreed on the 2nd October 2023.