

Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults and Children Policy

Introduction

AWICS Limited occasionally works with vulnerable adults and / or children especially when acting as an Independent Tenants' Advisor working with tenants, some of whom may be vulnerable.

This policy states our policy on preventing and reducing harm to children and vulnerable adults when they are in contact with our staff or associate consultants. The policy aims to:

- Promote and prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults.
- Provide assurance to clients, parents, carers and other parties that AWICS Limited takes reasonable steps to manage risks and keep children and vulnerable adults safe.
- Ensure that everyone understands their roles and responsibilities in respect of safeguarding and is provided with the necessary information, training and support on safeguarding matters.
- Prevent the employment of individuals in work with children and / or vulnerable adults where they have been barred by the DBS or are deemed by AWICS Limited to pose an unacceptable risk to vulnerable groups.
- Ensure that appropriate action is taken in the event of any allegations or suspicions regarding harm to children or vulnerable adults arising from contact with our staff or associate consultants.

This policy also seeks to manage effectively the risks associated with activities and events involving children and vulnerable adults through:

- Completing a risk assessment process that involves identifying risks and means of reducing or eliminating these.
- Implementing the required actions identified by the risk assessment process and reviewing the effectiveness of these on a regular basis.
- Ensuring that the appropriate DBS or basic disclosure checks are conducted, depending on eligibility, for any individuals starting or moving into work which involves working with children or vulnerable adults.
- Requiring new employees and individuals involved in working with children or vulnerable adults to familiarise themselves with the content of this policy.

This policy requires that any suspicions and allegations involving harm to children or vulnerable adults are referred to the Managing Director to determine what action, if any, must be taken. This should enable each situation to be investigated thoroughly, whilst treating the parties involved fairly and with sensitivity. It should also ensure that suitable steps are taken because of any investigations that may include contacting the police and / or fulfilling the legal duty to refer information to the DBS as required. Client organisations would also be informed.

The procedure for managing suspicions and allegations aims to strike a balance between the need to protect children and vulnerable adults from abuse and the need to protect staff and associate consultants from false or unfounded accusations.

Definitions

A child is any person under the age of 18.

Adults aged 18 and over have the potential to be vulnerable (either temporarily or permanently) for a variety of reasons and in different situations. An adult may be vulnerable if he / she:

- Has a learning or physical disability; or
- Has a physical or mental illness, chronic or otherwise, including an addiction to alcohol or drugs; or
- Has a reduction in physical or mental capacity; or
- Is in the receipt of any form of healthcare; or
- Is detained in custody; or
- Is receiving community services because of age, health or disability; or
- Is living in sheltered or residential care home; or
- Is unable, for any other reason, to protect himself / herself against significant harm or exploitation.

It is recognised that people who meet one or more of the criteria above may not be vulnerable at all, or all the time. However, until we have direct contact with people on an individual basis, it may be impossible to identify whether vulnerability exists in relation to an activity or event involving adults that we are planning.

Procedure

The Managing Director will ensure that any member of staff or associate who will work with vulnerable adults or children is made aware of this policy.

Organisations are required under health and safety legislation to protect people as far as is 'reasonably practicable'. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require organisations to assess the risks in their workplaces and to put plans in place to control the risks.

The Children and Vulnerable Adults Risk Assessment process will be initiated at:

- The commencement of new activities or events involving or potentially involving children and or vulnerable adults.
- Changes being made to activities or events involving or potentially involving children and or vulnerable adults.

A risk assessment will be completed in advance of the relevant activity or event by the Managing Director

The purpose of the risk assessment is to enable the responsible person to identify, mitigate and remove any potential risks relating to contact with children or vulnerable adults. This can also be a prompt to consider alternative working practices, such as minimising occasions where an individual is alone with a child or vulnerable adult and considering whether the activity could be supervised or observed by others.

The risk assessment will:

- Identify the nature, length and frequency of the contact and if it would be supervised or unsupervised.
- Consider if there will be children and adults who are particularly at risk.
- Consider whether any children or vulnerable adults have allergies, are on medication, have any disabilities (physical or mental), or any behavioural difficulties.

- Identify any potential areas for harm.
- Evaluate the risks.
- Determine actions to prevent harm occurring that might include consideration of alternative working practices, and prompt individuals to ensure that they are implemented.
- Identify those situations that would require a DBS check or a basic disclosure check.

Completed risk assessments will be retained whilst an activity / event is ongoing and for five years after it has ceased (or the risk assessment has been superseded). Where an activity is ongoing but unchanged, we will review the risk assessment on a regular basis to ensure that the measures put in place are still relevant and appropriate.

Once the key duties and responsibilities of the activity are determined, one of the required actions must be to identify which checks, if any, are required prior to the individual working with children and / or vulnerable adults. This includes DBS checks.

There are two types of check available from the DBS:

- Standard - contains details of all spent and unspent convictions, cautions, reprimands and warnings held on the Police National Computer that are not 'protected'. Protected convictions and cautions are normally old and minor; they are filtered by the DBS, so they are not disclosed, and they must not be considered by employers. The filtering rules and the list of offences that will never be filtered are now available to view on the DBS's web pages.
- Enhanced - contains the same information as the standard check but also any relevant and proportionate information held by the local police forces. In addition, where the role is eligible, registered bodies can request a check on whether a person is barred from working with children or adults in regulated activity (types of work with children and adults).

Following completion of checks, the Managing Director will consider whether it would be appropriate for the individual concerned to conduct the work required.

Concerns for the safety and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults could arise in a variety of ways and in a range of situations. For example, a child / vulnerable adult may report or show signs of abuse, someone may hint that a child / vulnerable adult is at risk or that a colleague is an abuser, or someone may witness abuse.

Each person has a responsibility to act if they have any concerns about someone's behaviour towards a child or vulnerable adult. It is important that the recipient of any complaint or accusation that a child or vulnerable adult has been or is being abused listens carefully without making or implying any judgment as to the truth of the complaint or accusation.

To ensure that all details of an allegation are captured for any future investigation, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the matter being raised.

Where someone suspects or is informed that a child or vulnerable adult has been, is being or could be harmed as a result of taking part in an AWICS Limited activity / event or through contact with our staff or associates, the individual aware of these suspicions or allegations must contact the Managing Director immediately for guidance and assistance on the action that must be taken.

Where a complaint of abuse is reported, the Managing Director will carefully consider the information available and decide on the appropriate course of action.

In emergency circumstances (for example, where there is certain immediate and significant danger to an individual or a criminal act has been witnessed), staff should make referrals to the police, social services or other appropriate authorities themselves prior to consulting with the Managing Director.

An employer has a legal duty to refer an individual to the DBS if they have been removed from working in regulated activity with children and / or adults because they caused harm to children / adults or posed a risk of causing harm. The duty to refer is absolute and overrides any concerns about data protection.

AWICS Limited complies with the principles of the Data Protection Act 1998 and Human Rights Act 1998 in the way it collects, holds and disposes of personal information.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Managing Director is the designated safeguarding person. As such, he takes overall ownership of the policy and promote the importance of safeguarding.

Context

AWICS Limited has a duty, both in law and as a responsible organisation, to take reasonable care of children and vulnerable adults that meet us. We aim to adopt the highest possible standards and take all reasonable steps in relation to the safety and welfare of children and vulnerable adults.

Adrian Waite
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