

ISLINGTON AND SHOREDITCH HOUSING ASSOCIATION (ISHA)

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY & PROCEDURE

1. Policy Statement

Islington & Shoreditch Housing Association (ISHA) believes that every child has the right to live their life free from abuse and the fear of abuse. ISHA will work in collaboration with all legal and external agencies to uphold this right and to ensure that children living in or visiting its properties are protected from harm through abuse or exploitation at all times.

This policy also applies to any organisation using any space which is owned by ISHA. This includes tenant groups and other groups which may hire community facilities owned by ISHA.

2. Definition of 'Child'

For the purposes of this policy the term 'child' refers to all babies, children and teenagers ie from birth to their 18th birthday.

3. Government Guidance

The Government position is that everyone working in an environment where there may be children present should safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children.

4. Aim of the Policy

This policy is intended to:

- Identify a designated officer of the Association who is fully trained in how to deal with reported cases of suspected child abuse
- set out the values, principles and policies underpinning ISHA's approach to abuse
- set out the procedure to be followed if abuse is suspected.

5. The Designated Officer who is trained in how to deal with reported cases of suspected child abuse

The Supported Housing Manager is designated as the appropriate Officer who has been trained in how to deal with cases of suspected child abuse.

6. The Recognition and Reporting of Abuse

The term 'child abuse' is a generic term encompassing all maltreatment of children. The Department of Health has defined four broad categories which are used by professionals working in child protection. These are:

- Physical Abuse
- Emotional Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Neglect

These include religious and cultural practices that are illegal or harmful to children.

It is the duty of all members of staff (including contractors) and volunteers to be vigilant and watch out for any indications of child abuse. Any member of staff or volunteer who knows or suspects that abuse may be happening should report their suspicions immediately to the Supported Housing Manager or when this is not practical to their manager, the person in charge or, in the absence of a manager, to an appropriate third party. All incidents should be reported immediately, no matter who the alleged perpetrator is or who the victim is. ISHA respects and will not penalise anybody who is willing to stand up for any child suspected of being abused and will not tolerate harassment of staff, volunteers or tenants by other staff, volunteers or tenants to "keep quiet".

7. Action to be taken in an Emergency Situation

If the situation is an emergency (i.e. where the immediate safety of a child is at risk) then staff members or volunteers should call for assistance immediately (by calling 999 and/or getting help from another responsible adult) and intervene to protect the child from further harm if it safe and possible to do so. They should give first aid (if they are trained to do so), call for a doctor, an ambulance or the police as appropriate. If the abuser is still present staff or volunteers should try to calm the situation, but should avoid putting themselves at risk. An Incident Report Form (Appendix one) should be completed and passed to the Supported Housing Manager for safekeeping.

8. Action to be taken by Staff or Volunteers on Discovery of Abuse

On discovery of or suspicion of abuse staff or volunteers should inform the person in charge or their manager. This person must inform the Supported Housing Manager or, in their absence, the Operations Director who will decide on the course of action to be taken. If a member of staff or a volunteer is the alleged abuser then the Human Resources Manager must be informed.

In situations where the suspected victim asks a member of staff or a volunteer not to tell anyone they should reassure the child appropriately and explain that they cannot keep that confidentiality and that they have a duty to inform the manager or person in charge.

An Incident Report Form (Appendix One) should be completed and passed to the Supported Housing Manager for safekeeping.

9. Action to be taken by person in charge on a Report of or Discovery of Abuse

All reports of abuse should immediately be investigated and acted upon by the person in charge under the direction of the Supported Housing Manager.

All cases will be referred to social services without delay by the Supported Housing Manager. In situations where there is evidence of a criminal act the case should be reported immediately to the police by the Supported Housing Manager, manager or person in charge. This is particularly the case in suspected sexual abuse where the police will want to gather evidence as rapidly as possible.

Referral to the police or social services should include the following information:

1. Personal details of the victim
2. The referrer's details
3. The substance of the allegation
4. Details of the alleged abuser
5. Details of specific incidents or events including dates, places, injuries, witnesses, etc.
6. Whether or not the child has expressed any indication that they wish to take the matter further.

All staff and volunteers should ensure that they co-operate with police or social services investigations.

Where a member of staff or a volunteer is the alleged abuser they should be suspended immediately in line with ISHA's disciplinary policy. Any internal investigation should be delayed while a criminal investigation is in progress. Where a contractor is the alleged abuser the matter should be reported appropriately and that individual should not be permitted to carry out any further work on ISHA premises until a full investigation has been completed.

The local social services contact numbers are:

Camden	0207 974 6666 (telephone)	0207 974 6605 (fax)
Hackney	0208 356 5500 ext.5620 (telephone)	0208 356 5516 (fax)
Islington	0207 527 7400 (telephone)	0207 527 7040 (fax)
Waltham Forest	0208 496 2339 (telephone)	0208 496 2313 (fax)

Forms and further information are available on the websites of the appropriate local authority.

The local police contact numbers are:

Camden	0207 404 1212
Hackney	0207 739 1212
Islington	0207 704 1212
Waltham Forest	0208 556 8855

Where a suspected incident of child abuse has been reported to the police or social services then confirmation must be obtained from them that it has been dealt with. (Note: it will not be possible for the police or social services to divulge details of the case.)

10. Documentation

All facts, incidents, assessments and discussions related to the suspicions should be recorded clearly and accurately. Opinions and conjecture should be avoided and an attempt made to capture only facts. Such records should be written in an official file and be kept securely and safely as per the Data Protection Act 1998.

11. Action to be taken in the event of non-involvement by Social Services or the Police

In the absence of further action by the police or social services the following alternative courses of action should be considered.

1. In the case of a member of staff or a volunteer being the alleged abuser the manager should proceed with an internal investigation in line with the Association's disciplinary policy.
2. In the case of a relative, support worker or carer being the alleged abuser the Association should arrange with social services to restrict visits.
3. The situation will be kept under review and staff and volunteers will continue to monitor the situation.

12. Training

All staff will be trained so that they understand the term abuse, so that they know how to report their suspicions and so that they know what they should do in an emergency situation. This can be done in house with the help of material provided by recognised organisations like the NSPCC and Childline.

13. Recruitment

When recruiting new staff or volunteers who may deal with children or vulnerable adults an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check should be carried out by ISHA.

14. Policy Review Date

This policy will be reviewed in September 2012 and thereafter annually.

Peter Ward

September 2011

Incident Report Form

Resident:	Address:
Date:	Incident Number: CP
Brief Description of Incident: (please include approximate time)	
Action Taken:	
Persons Informed:	
Reported by:	SHM signature:
Date:	Date: