



Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedure

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Pivotal Housing Association is not a statutory partner. However, it recognises its legal obligations and takes child safeguarding seriously. As a Registered Provider it will, as required by law and regulation and in alignment with its mission, vision and values, adopt clear safeguarding policies and procedures and work with local agencies to ensure the safeguarding of children at all times in all aspects of its operations and practices and in collaboration with:

- Bournemouth, Dorset, Christchurch and Poole pan-Dorset Multi-agency Safeguarding Children Service.
- Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Safeguarding Children Partnership.
- Gloucestershire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Children Team.
- Torbay and Devon Safeguarding Children Partnership.

2.0 Scope

2.1 This policy is specific to the safeguarding of children. Pivotal Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults policy addresses the safeguarding of adults.

2.2 Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. This policy applies across Pivotal. It applies to Pivotal Board members, all Pivotal employees, bank workers, contractors, volunteers and all those managing or providing services for or on behalf of Pivotal.

3.0 Definition of Terms

Pivotal will be used throughout this document to refer to all Pivotal Group companies, including Pivotal Housing Association, unless otherwise specified.

A *child* for the purposes of this policy a child is anyone under the age of 18 years and includes unborn children. All children are at risk due to their inherent vulnerability and dependency on others.

Abuse or neglect This can take many forms. The Working Together to Safeguard Children (Statutory Guidance), 2023, definition of abuse is "a form of maltreatment of a child.

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Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm”. Children may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

Safeguarding A safeguarding concern constitutes any circumstance where a child is suspected of being involved in abuse or neglect and may include, but is not limited to, physical, emotional, psychological or domestic abuse, or acts of omission, sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation, bullying/cyberbullying, domestic abuse, trafficking, grooming and harmful sexual behaviour.

Types and indicators of abuse

Category	Type of abuse
Physical	Hitting, slapping, punching, kicking, hair-pulling, biting, pushing, rough handling, scalding and burning, physical punishments, inappropriate or unlawful use of restraint, physical harm caused by a parent or carer fabricating the symptoms of, or inducing, illness.
Sexual	Sexual abuse may take place either in person or online or offline. It may be perpetrated by family or non-family members, males or females, older adults or by other young people. Forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, which may or may not involve violence, penetrative acts, non-penetrative acts (kissing, masturbation, rubbing or inappropriate touching), sexual photography or forced use of pornography or witnessing of sexual acts, non-contact (looking at or producing pornography or sexual images, watching sexual activities, grooming in preparation for abuse).
Emotional	Some level of emotional abuse is present in all types of abuse or neglect, though it may also appear alone. It is the persistent mistreatment of a child that has a severe and negative impact on their emotional development. Emotional abuse may also be perpetrated by other young people through serious bullying and cyber-bullying. Overprotection – preventing someone accessing educational and social opportunities and seeing friends, intimidation, coercion, harassment, use of threats, humiliation, bullying, swearing or verbal abuse, conveying feeling of worthlessness, inadequacy or that a child is unloved, threats of harm or abandonment, placing inappropriate expectations on children, witnessing or hearing the abuse or ill-treatment of others (including domestic violence).
Neglect	Neglect is a persistent failure to meet basic needs (physical or emotional) and it leads to serious harm to the health or development of a child and includes failing to provide adequate shelter, clothing or food, failing to protect a child from harm or danger, failing to ensure that a child is supervised appropriately, failing to access medical care or treatment for a child when it is needed.

(SCIE): <https://www.scie.org.uk/safeguarding/children/education/types-indicators-abuse>

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4.0 Legislation and Regulation

- 4.1 The Children Act 2004 (as amended) places duties on local authorities and a range of organisations, including housing providers, under Section 11 to have due regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- 4.2 The Children Acts 1989 and 2004 set out the specific statutory duties to safeguard and promote welfare. Under Section 17, local authorities must provide services to children in need, and under Section 47 they must undertake enquiries where there is reasonable cause to suspect a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm.
- 4.3 Domestic Abuse Act 2021: This act includes provisions for children who witness domestic abuse, recognizing them as victims and granting additional protections. It emphasizes multi-agency collaboration for child safety in cases involving domestic abuse.
- 4.4 Online Safety Act 2023: While primarily targeting digital platforms, this legislation indirectly impacts child safeguarding policies by creating obligations for online safety that extend to organizations' interactions with children through digital means. It might require adjustments in training for recognising and managing risks associated with online interactions and digital abuse.
- 4.5 The Director of Children's Services and Lead Member for Children's Services in local authorities are the key points of professional and political accountability, with responsibility for the effective delivery of child safeguarding operations. Pivotal acknowledges their expertise in handling cases of child abuse, providing counselling to victims and assisting police investigations
- 4.6 Children and Social Work Act 2017: Emphasizes improved training and safeguarding practices for those in social work and education, reinforcing the need for up-to-date safeguarding training in organizations.
- 4.7 Pivotal recognises and operates in accordance with the Working Together to Safeguard Children (Statutory Guidance), 2023, which replaced earlier guidance. This framework sets out how all agencies, including registered providers of social housing, must work collaboratively under Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships (LSCPs) to identify, assess and support children at risk of harm.

5.0 Policy Statement

- 5.1 Pivotal accepts that it has a responsibility to raise any issues of concern encountered relating to the welfare of children. Pivotal acknowledges that its board members, employees, bank workers, contractors, volunteers and those managing or providing services for or on behalf of Pivotal may encounter situations concerning the welfare of children as they carry out their day-to-day respective roles.

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- 5.2 Pivotal will have clear policies and procedures in place for the safeguarding of children and reporting suspected abuse or neglect.
- 5.3 In accordance with the Working Together to Safeguard Children (Statutory Guidance), 2023 on inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, Pivotal will respond to any child protection concerns made known to them. It will make referrals to the relevant local authorities or the police and adopt an inter-agency co-operation approach to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.
- 5.4 Pivotal will provide training to ensure everyone who works for us, and works on our behalf, is alert and knows how to note any signs of child abuse they may come across, including any risks abusers or potential abusers may pose to children, and that our customers and staff are informed on how to report safeguarding concerns.
- 5.5 Where Pivotal houses ex-offenders with a known history of sex offences or child abuse, we will always ensure that a risk assessment is undertaken in respect of the appropriateness of any offer of accommodation and, in so far as it is possible, that any risk to children is minimised.
- 5.6 In circumstances where it is proven that an existing resident has committed sexual, physical, emotional or psychological child abuse, Pivotal will take appropriate action relevant to the circumstances in conjunction with other statutory agencies.
- 5.7 As part of its safeguarding reporting and recording process, Pivotal will ensure robust reporting and recording procedures are in place, that any child safeguarding issues are included as part of the process, and that all data is managed in accordance with Data Protection requirements.
- 5.8 Pivotal will work with local agencies to ensure the safeguarding of vulnerable children and adults (see the Pivotal safeguarding vulnerable adults policy) at all times in all aspects of its operations and practices and to ensure compliance will:
- appoint a Safeguarding Strategic and Operational Lead for the organisation. The Safeguarding Strategic and Operational Lead will be Pivotal's Chief Executive Officer;
 - ensure Pivotal has in place safeguarding policies and procedures;
 - ensure robust recruitment practices and training include safeguarding considerations;
 - maintain clear and accurate records of all children and adult safeguarding allegations including the responses made and actions taken, sharing the information as appropriate when this is in the best interests of a child or vulnerable adult;
 - attend Local Safeguarding Children's Boards (SCBs) if necessary. Although this is not a legal requirement, we will provide information to them and participate in relevant safeguarding child and adult reviews as requested;

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- co-operate with local authority enquiries where suspected child safeguarding concerns are raised;
- review all safeguarding incidents and adopt a lessons-learned approach to inform future practice.

5.9 Pivotal acknowledges its responsibilities under the Regulator of Social Housing's Governance and Financial Viability Standard to manage risks appropriately, including safeguarding, and to ensure that its approach protects the welfare of children and promotes a strong safeguarding culture across all services.

5.10 Pivotal will recruit colleagues appropriately, ensuring that DBS checks are completed for every staff member and reviewed every three years (see DBS Policy and Procedure).

6.0 Interface Between Child and Adult Safeguarding

6.1 Pivotal recognises that safeguarding concerns can involve both children and adults, for example where a vulnerable adult is a parent, carer or household member. In such cases, the Safeguarding Children and Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults policies will be applied jointly. Pivotal colleagues must liaise with both children's and adults' services to ensure a coordinated and consistent approach to risk assessment and support, following the principles of the Care Act 2014 and the Working Together to Safeguard Children (Statutory Guidance), 2023.

7.0 Roles and responsibilities

7.1 The responsibility for safeguarding rests with every Pivotal colleague, and colleagues are encouraged to report any safeguarding concerns to their Line Manager immediately.

7.2 As with the Pivotal Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy, the structure below applies:



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- 7.3 Notwithstanding the above structure, where child safeguarding concerns arise, colleagues, others working with or for Pivotal, and Pivotal customers are also encouraged to raise any issues directly with the police and/or children's services at the local authority.

To strengthen governance oversight, Pivotal's Board will appoint a Board Safeguarding Champion responsible for maintaining strategic oversight of safeguarding performance and assurance. The Chief Executive Officer will retain the role of Strategic Lead for safeguarding, supported by a designated Safeguarding Lead responsible for day-to-day case management and liaison with external agencies. This separation ensures accountability, effective oversight and operational focus.

- 7.4 Pivotal's Strategic and Operational Lead for Safeguarding is the Chief Executive Officer. The role of the Safeguarding Strategic and Operational Lead is to:

- monitor any changes to legislation or good practice and advise Directors of corresponding updates required to Pivotal policy and procedures;
- work with Directors/Senior Leadership Team to review the safeguarding children policy on an annual basis and ensure that other policies have regard to safeguarding as appropriate;
- with regard to value for money, ensure adequate resources are in place to provide adequate and up to date training and supervision of colleagues in respect of managing and/or reporting safeguarding concerns with appropriate induction and update training programmes in place;
- report to Boards annually and, in the event of a serious case review, inform them of this;
- report quarterly to the Senior Leadership Team on the number of safeguarding cases and any issues of note;
- lead internal quarterly review meetings with Heads of Department and maintain records of this;
- ensure robust systems are in place for the accurate and appropriate recording and monitoring of all safeguarding issues;
- promote and raise awareness and understanding of safeguarding across the Pivotal Homes Group;
- work with external organisations as appropriate in relation to child safeguarding and ensure statutory agencies including local authorities and the police and safeguarding boards in its areas of operation are aware of this;
- if institutional abuse is suspected, this should be taken directly to the local authority;
- write and review child safeguarding policy and procedures and ensure other procedures have regard to child safeguarding as appropriate;
- oversee safeguarding cases to ensure that all safeguarding cases are recorded and reported in accordance with procedures.

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7.5 Pivotal's Designated Safeguarding Lead will:

- promote safeguarding within and across all Pivotal operations and ensure team managers are properly reporting, recording and reviewing safeguarding cases;
- ensure that managers oversee and implement safeguarding and it is regularly discussed at team meetings and as part of one-to-one meetings;
- ensure the appropriate supervision of colleagues as part of the Line Management process.
- attend quarterly safeguarding review meetings held by the Pivotal Safeguarding Strategic and Operational Lead;
- attend external multi agency meetings representing Pivotal as required.

7.6 Managers and all colleagues' responsibilities

Safeguarding responsibilities lie with all colleagues and everyone has a duty to report all safeguarding incidents to the Local Authority. Colleagues must:

- report concerns promptly in line with the safeguarding procedure;
- maintain a record of all referrals;
- be alert to signs and symptoms of abuse;
- cooperate with any Local Authority enquiries;
- support any protection plans put in place;
- if institutional abuse is suspected, report directly to the local authority.

8.0 Learning Lessons

- 8.1 Where there is a case of child abuse or neglect raised at Pivotal, the organisation will fully comply with, and seek to learn lessons from, any identified failings on the part of Pivotal. Appropriate actions will be taken to rectify areas of failure and, in such instances, Pivotal Boards shall be informed and updated on any service changes required.

9.0 Information Sharing

- 9.1 Pivotal colleagues must, at all times, comply with the employee handbook and Pivotal's Data Protection Policy and Information & Communications Technology (ICT) Policy requirements relating to information shared, transmitted or accessed via email or the Internet.
- 9.2 Pivotal will share information with other agencies appropriately and in accordance with the Data Protection Act and the General Data Protection Regulation. Information sharing agreements may be put in place.

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- 9.3 Pivotal will only share information without an information sharing agreement where there is an immediate risk of harm or criminal activity is taking place.
- 9.4 Pivotal may have to disclose unconfirmed third-party information and/or reports of the potential abuse of a child and/or vulnerable adult, in circumstances where it could be considered organisationally negligent not to do so.
- 9.5 All safeguarding records will be held securely with access restricted to authorised staff only. Records will be retained for six years following case closure, or longer where required by law, in accordance with Pivotal's Data Protection and Records Retention Policy.

10.0 Recording and Reporting

- 10.1 All concerns relating to child safeguarding must be recorded promptly and accurately on Pivotal's safeguarding register or case-management system, following the safeguarding procedure.

11.0 Safeguarding and Human Resources

- 11.1 The Pivotal Director of People will ensure the appropriate recruitment of colleagues to new roles and will ensure relevant role recruitment procedures are adhered to including DBS checks. DBS checks will be repeated every three years (see DBS Policy and Procedure).
- 11.2 The HR team will provide support to any colleague dealing with safeguarding cases as necessary. This will include providing access to confidential counselling.
- 11.3 If an allegation about a colleague is received, and it constitutes a child safeguarding issue, investigations will be conducted in accordance the Pivotal Disciplinary Policy and Procedure. A safeguarding referral will be made to the appropriate local authority. In cases where an allegation of this nature is received, the employee may be suspended pending the outcome of the investigation.
- 11.4 In cases where an allegation against a colleague is proven, Pivotal will update Local Authority safeguarding teams, inform the police and make a referral to the DBS.
- 11.5 In respect of child safeguarding allegations made by concerned colleagues about the conduct of a colleague, contractor or board member, the Pivotal Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure will be followed.

12.0 Contractors and Partnerships

- 12.1 Contractors operating on behalf of, and partners working with, Pivotal will be obliged to adhere to Pivotal safeguarding policies in respect of vulnerable adults and children as part of their contractual agreement.

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- 12.2 Contractors will be obliged to report concerns about child safeguarding to Pivotal but should also report these directly to social care.
- 12.3 Pivotal main contractors who have access to Pivotal customers' homes will be responsible for ensuring that their staff are trained in safeguarding and are appropriately DBS checked as per Pivotal's Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Policy and Procedure.
- 12.4 Where Pivotal properties are managed by others under third party arrangements for housing management, support, care or other services, the agent of Pivotal will be required to demonstrate its commitment to managing safeguarding appropriately. All future agreements will require this and existing agreements will be amended to ensure it is met at the earliest practical opportunity.
- 12.5 Where Pivotal works in partnership with others or under third party arrangements for housing management, support, care or other services, the agent of Pivotal will be required to demonstrate its commitment to managing safeguarding appropriately.

13.0 Perpetrators of Abuse

- 13.1 Abuse and neglect will not be tolerated. Where allegations of abuse are substantiated, Pivotal will consider legal courses of action and sanctions against perpetrators of abuse for those who are customers.
- 13.2 Perpetrators of abuse and neglect will be referred to appropriate support agencies as and when this is deemed relevant to a situation.

14.0 Raising Awareness of Safeguarding

- 14.1 Pivotal is committed to ensuring it raises awareness of safeguarding with customers and will work in partnership with other appropriate agencies to ensure this is achieved.

15.0 Procedure for Responding to Child Protection Concerns

- 15.1 If at any point a child is believed to be in immediate danger, colleagues must contact the Police (999) or Children's Social Care Emergency Duty Team without delay. The safeguarding referral and internal reporting steps should be completed only after the child's immediate safety has been secured.
- 15.2 A colleague who becomes aware that a child safeguarding issue has arisen has a duty to inform the local safeguarding teams of that concern. Ideally, it would be best practice to discuss this referral with their Line Manager before making a referral, but it is recognised that this is not always possible.

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- 15.3 Any colleague can raise a child safeguarding alert and must do so either on the appropriate form stored in the safeguarding area of the P Drive or using the direct access form on the Local Authority website. A copy of the form must be given to the relevant Line Manager and their Line Manager should be advised of the safeguarding referral. Night staff must include the relevant day staff managers. In an out of hours' situation, a colleague may need to contact the out of hours On-Call manager.
- 15.4 Where a Local Authority database has been used to complete a referral, a copy of that referral should be taken and emailed to the relevant Line Manager and the Designated Safeguarding Lead. If it is not possible to take a copy of the referral, then a separate internal form should be completed and emailed out in the same way. The safeguarding form should be stored at the agreed location in the safeguarding area of the P drive once the referral has been completed.
- 15.5 If a Local Authority triage team has been contacted to discuss a safeguarding concern and a decision has been taken by the Local Authority not to progress the referral, a Pivotal safeguarding form should be completed recording the decision to end the concern at that point. The form should then be emailed to the relevant managers.
- 15.6 Where colleagues are aware that a child has an allocated safeguarding practitioner, the practitioner should be contacted and asked whether a new referral is required or an existing referral is to be updated. Where an update to an existing referral is required, the safeguarding practitioner must then be notified in writing and Pivotal records must be updated.
- 15.7 Within 24 hours of a child safeguarding referral being emailed to the local authority, a follow up phone call must be made to the relevant authority to ensure the referral has been logged. If an issue arises where the referral has not been logged, the referral must be re-sent and followed up with an immediate telephone call to the local authority to establish receipt. Follow-up calls should be recorded on Pivotal's safeguarding register.
- 15.8 Any Pivotal manager, upon being notified of the safeguarding concern:
1. should, if required, attend the property where the safeguarding concern has occurred to ensure the safety of customers and colleagues;
 2. should, where required, ensure that any additional statutory organisations are notified of the safeguarding concern, and ensure that any actions required as a result of the referral are completed in a timely manner;
 3. must, on being notified of the safeguarding concern, update the central register and ensure any actions outlined in the report have been completed.
- 15.9 The safeguarding case is considered closed when notified by the local authority that the case is closed.

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- 15.10 When a safeguarding concern is highlighted which includes allegations against a Pivotal colleague, the Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure should be adhered to. The Safeguarding Strategic and Operational Lead should be made aware (unless the concern raised is about the Safeguarding Strategic and Operational Lead, in which case the Director of People should be made aware) and they will nominate a manager to raise the safeguarding concern with the relevant Local Authority.
- 15.11 The safeguarding referral should be password protected and Safeguarding Strategic and Operational Lead advised of this. Entries on the central register should maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of the colleague subject to the allegation.

16.0 Training

- 16.1 Pivotal will ensure all colleagues across the organisation receive safeguarding training, providing them with an understanding of safeguarding and enabling them to fulfil the requirements of Pivotal Policy and procedures.
- 16.2 Training will be tailored and appropriate to individual roles and the requirements of these in respect of safeguarding.
- 16.3 Refresher training will be provided at least annually and sooner if any significant changes to legislation or good practice affecting Pivotal policy and procedures arises.
- 16.4 Board members will be provided with safeguarding training as part of the Board induction process, with refresher training at least bi-annually, and will be advised of any legislative and regulatory changes by the Safeguarding Strategic and Operational Lead as they arise.
- 16.5 Pivotal volunteers and contractors will be provided with safeguarding training as appropriate.
- 16.6 As part of their safeguarding training, colleagues will be made aware of child safeguarding issues to enable them to identify these if any should come to their attention during the course of carrying out their role with Pivotal.
- 16.7 Colleagues will be provided with guidance and training on professional boundaries.

17.0 Monitoring and Review

- 17.1 This policy will be monitored by the Board nominated Safeguarding Strategic and Operational Lead who will review cases with the Head of Services on a quarterly basis and report to the Senior Leadership Team and Pivotal Boards.

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- 17.2 Pivotal Boards will have oversight of any required amendments following lessons learnt and legislative or regulatory changes.
- 17.3 Pivotal will ensure its safeguarding approach is inclusive and responsive to the diverse needs of children and families, including those from minority backgrounds, with disabilities, or facing communication barriers. Safeguarding information and support will be made accessible to all.
- 17.4 The Head of Services and relevant manager for the service area will audit safeguarding referrals on a monthly basis and report to the Safeguarding Strategic and Operational Lead.
- 17.5 In line with Charity Commission requirements, this policy will be reviewed annually.

18.0 Referral to the Local Authority

- 18.1 All alerts for child protection issues must be referred to the local authority relevant to the area where a concern is raised or a child safeguarding incident or concern has allegedly occurred.

Legislation, Regulation and Guidance informing this policy and procedure

Pivotal acknowledges the considerable amount of legislation regarding the safeguarding of children and will continue to monitor legislation and guidance in respect of this. From the existing legal framework, the following has informed this policy:

Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014

Children Act 1989

Children Act 2004

Data Protection Act 2018

Disclosure and Barring Service

Education Act 2002

Family Law Act 1996

Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (amended by the Serious Crime Act 2015)

UK General Data Protection Regulation

Domestic Abuse Act 2021

Human Rights Act 1998

Homelessness Act 2002

Modern Slavery Act 2015

Sexual offences Act 2003

Working Together to Safeguard Children (Statutory Guidance), 2023

SCIE <https://www.scie.org.uk/safeguarding/children/education/types-indicators-abuse>

Related Pivotal Policies and Procedures

Related Policies and Procedures include but are not limited to:

Adult Safeguarding Procedure

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Antisocial Behaviour Policy & Procedure
Domestic Abuse Policy
Lettings and Allocations Policy
Data Protection Policy
DBS Policy & Procedure
Information Sharing Protocol
Disciplinary & Appeals Policy and Procedure
Grievance Policy & Procedure
Student Placement Policy
Volunteer Policy
Recruitment & Selection Policy & Procedure
Whistleblowing Policy & Procedure
Code of Conduct

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