

Sustain (UK) Limited

Document 3.6

SAFEGUARDING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Version 3.0

May 2026

Beech House, 1a and 1b Greenfield Crescent
Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 3BE

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Document control and version history

Version	Date	Approved by	Summary of changes	Next review
v1.0	Oct 2022	Board	Initial Safeguarding Policy and Procedure adopted by the Board.	Sept 2023
v2.0	Aug 2024	Board	Biennial review. Minor updates to the legislation list, BSAB contact details and BSAB hyperlinks. Six Key Principles refreshed in line with BSAB. Tenant Engagement Committee role in periodic review confirmed.	Aug 2026
v3.0	May 2026	Board (proposed)	<p>Substantive redraft following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Stage 2 Safeguarding Policy Gap Analysis (May 2026); and the Sustain Rapid Assessment Report (November 2025), Section 3 — Operational, Recommendation 2(b). <p>Eight headline structural changes; named individuals removed and replaced with role titles; structured version control introduced; alignment with the April 2024 Consumer Standards, SH(R)A 2023 and the strengthened safeguarding statutory framework.</p>	May 2027

Owner	Operations Manager (with delegation to the Lead Safeguarding Officer)
Approver	Board of Sustain (UK) Limited, on recommendation of the Tenant Engagement and Empowerment Committee
Applicability	All Board members, Executive, employees, agency workers, contractors, consultants and volunteers of Sustain (UK) Limited; and, through contractual flow-down, all Home Providers and their staff
Related policies	Code of Conduct and Professional Boundaries (12i); Probity Framework (51 v3.0) including Disclosure / Whistleblowing; Complaints Policy and Procedure (13a); Managed Behaviour Policy; Equal Opportunities Policy; Risk Management Framework v3 (March 2026); Standing Orders and Financial Regulations; Recruitment Policy; Data Protection Policy

Review cycle	Annual, or earlier in the event of material change to legislation, regulatory standards or Sustain’s operating model
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Section 1: Safeguarding Adults Policy

1.1 Sustain's Safeguarding Statement

Sustain (UK) Limited is a not-for-profit Registered Provider of social housing, providing specialist supported accommodation for vulnerable adults, mainly in the Birmingham area.

“At Sustain UK, safeguarding protects an adult's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect, while providing additional measures for those least able to protect themselves from harm or abuse.”

Sustain is committed to safeguarding adults in line with national legislation, the Regulator of Social Housing's Consumer Standards (April 2024) and relevant national and local guidelines. Sustain is committed to creating a culture of zero tolerance of harm to adults, which necessitates: the recognition of adults who may be at risk and the circumstances which may increase risk; knowing how adult abuse, exploitation or neglect manifests itself; and being willing to report safeguarding concerns. Sustain is committed to best safeguarding practice and to upholding the rights of all adults to live a life free from harm, abuse, exploitation and neglect.

1.2 Scope of policy

This policy applies to:

- all Board members, the Executive, employees, agency workers, contractors, consultants and volunteers of Sustain (UK) Limited;
- all tenants of Sustain (UK) Limited; and
- through contractual flow-down, all Home Providers, their staff who deliver day-to-day tenancy and support services in respect of Sustain's tenants and any contractors.

The policy is for the protection of vulnerable adults within Sustain's tenant population, and for the protection of visiting children (under 18 years of age) where they are present in the household or affected by a safeguarding concern relating to a tenant. The arrangements for safeguarding children are set out in Section 7.

1.3 Sustain's operating context

Sustain predominantly provides supported housing across the midlands, with day-to-day service delivery provided by third-party managing agents, known as Home Providers. Vulnerability is therefore at the centre of Sustain's operating model, and safeguarding is correspondingly a core operational and strategic priority. Sustain's arrangements for embedding the Safeguarding Policy within the Home Provider operating model are set out in Section 11.

1.4 Regulatory and statutory framework

This policy sits within, and gives effect to, the regulatory and statutory framework summarised below. The framework should be read alongside the Stage 1 Policy Mapping Exercise (May 2026) and the Stage 2 Safeguarding Policy Gap Analysis (May 2026).

Regulator of Social Housing — Consumer Standards (April 2024)

- the **Safety and Quality Standard 2024** — Required outcomes 1.1 (quality of homes and services for vulnerable tenants), 2.1 (safety of homes and tenants, including the landlord’s knowledge of vulnerabilities), and 3 (decency, including action on knowable hazards engaging Awaab’s Law);
- the **Tenancy Standard 2024** — Required outcome 1.4 (sustaining tenancies, with particular regard to vulnerable tenants);
- the **Neighbourhood and Community Standard 2024** — Required outcomes 1.2 (cooperation with relevant partners, including statutory safeguarding partners) and 1.3 (domestic abuse-informed approach to operations); and
- the **Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard 2024** — Required outcome 1.6 (fair and equal access to housing-related services for vulnerable tenants, including safeguarding reporting routes; reasonable adjustments).

Regulator of Social Housing — Governance and Financial Viability Standard 2015

The G&FV Standard 2015 (Required outcome 1) continues to require Sustain to comply with all relevant law and to demonstrate effective management of risk; safeguarding is a key operational and reputational risk addressed under the Risk Management Framework v3 (March 2026).

Statutory framework

- **Care Act 2014** — in particular, s.42 (safeguarding enquiries), s.43 (Safeguarding Adults Boards), s.44 (Safeguarding Adults Reviews), and ss.6–7 (cooperation between partners);
- **Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006** — regulated activity, enhanced DBS and barred-list checks, and Sustain’s referral duty to the DBS (see Section 10);
- **Mental Capacity Act 2005** — the five statutory principles, capacity assessment and best-interests decision-making (see Section 4);
- **Domestic Abuse Act 2021** — ss.1 (statutory definition), s.3 (children as victims) and related provisions; coupled with s.76 Serious Crime Act 2015 on controlling and coercive behaviour (see Section 5); and s.3 (children who see, hear or experience the effects of domestic abuse and are related to either party are recognised as victims — see Section 7).
- **Modern Slavery Act 2015** — ss.1–3 (offences) and s.52 (duty to notify) and the National Referral Mechanism (see Section 6);
- **Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015** — s.26 Prevent duty;

- **Equality Act 2010** — protected characteristics; the public sector equality duty in respect of relevant functions; and the duty to make reasonable adjustments under s.20;
- **Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR** — in particular DPA 2018 Sch.1 Pt 2 para 18 (substantial public interest condition for safeguarding of children and individuals at risk) (see Section 9);
- **Housing and Regeneration Act 2008** (Part 2) — the statutory framework governing the conduct of Registered Providers; and
- **Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023** — strengthened consumer regulation; the landlord's knowledge-of-vulnerabilities duty; and Awaab's Law obligations on response to hazards.

Codes of governance and conduct adopted by Sustain

Sustain has formally adopted, and this Policy gives effect to:

- the **NHF Code of Governance 2020** — Principle 1 (Mission and Values), Principle 4 (Control and Risk Management), Principle 6 (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) and Principle 7 (Stakeholder Engagement); and
- the **NHF Code of Conduct 2022** — in particular, Sections A and D on behaviour with integrity around vulnerable people and the maintenance of professional boundaries.

Adherence to these Codes is given operational effect through this Policy, the Probity Framework (Document 51 v3.0) and the Code of Conduct and Professional Boundaries Policy (Document 12i).

1.5 Monitoring and review

Safeguarding is owned at Board level. The Board holds ultimate accountability for safeguarding across Sustain's operations and for the culture, resourcing and effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements. The Tenant Engagement and Empowerment Committee holds delegated responsibility for routine oversight and assurance, receiving regular safeguarding reports and escalating material matters to the Board. The Lead Tenant Engagement and Complaints Officer, contributes the tenant and lived-experience perspective to the design and review of safeguarding arrangements. The approval and review cycle is as follows:

- The **Board of Sustain** is responsible for approval of this Policy and for oversight of its effective implementation, on the advice of the **Audit & Risk Committee** (see Section 13).
- This Policy will be reviewed by the **Tenant Engagement & Empowerment Committee** working with the Lead Safeguarding Officer, with recommendations reported to the Audit & Risk Committee and to the Board for approval and adoption. The review cycle is annual, or earlier if material change occurs in legislation, regulatory standards or Sustain's operating model.

1.6 Safeguarding partnerships in Birmingham

Sustain currently work primarily in partnership with the **Birmingham Safeguarding Adults Board (BSAB)** - a multi-agency partnership of over 100 organisations including the local authority, the police, NHS, fire

service, and voluntary and community sector partners. The BSAB framework, and Sustain's active participation in it, gives effect to the cooperation duty under ss.6–7 Care Act 2014 and the wider Neighbourhood and Community Standard 2024 (1.2). Useful BSAB contact details are set out in Section 14.

Sustain increasingly operates through Home Providers in local authority areas beyond Birmingham. In every area in which Sustain operates, it will work in partnership with the relevant Safeguarding Adults Board and follow that area's multi-agency safeguarding policies and procedures. The cooperation duty under ss.6–7 Care Act 2014 and the requirements of the Neighbourhood and Community Standard 2024 (1.2) apply across all areas of operation. The Lead Safeguarding Officer is responsible for maintaining current knowledge of the relevant local arrangements in each area and ensuring staff and Home Providers know how to raise concerns locally.

1.7 Reporting alleged abuse

- Safeguarding is the duty and responsibility of everyone. Concerns must be reported immediately.
- All staff are expected to follow the procedures set out in Section 8 of this Policy.
- All information sharing in connection with safeguarding concerns must comply with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR and the principles set out in Section 9 of this Policy.

Section 2: Aim and principles

2.1 Aim of the policy

This policy provides a framework for the protection of vulnerable adults within Sustain's tenant population, and for visiting children and household children under 18 years of age, from abuse. The policy describes the types of abuse and potential signs or indicators of such, and the action that must be taken when a member of staff in any organisational setting becomes aware that an adult or child may be experiencing abuse.

Good safeguarding process will:

- ensure that the well-being of adults is paramount at all times;
- maximise people's choice, control and inclusion and protect their human rights;
- encourage working in partnership with statutory and voluntary agencies in order to safeguard adults;
- ensure safe and effective working practices are in place;
- support staff and tenants within the organisation; and
- ensure frontline staff are suitably trained on how to recognise abuse and the principles of safeguarding (see Section 12).

2.2 Code of Practice

Sustain is committed to ensuring that the nature of abuse is fully understood within the organisation so that there can be no question of a working culture which knowingly or otherwise allows abuse.

In addition to this Policy, Sustain maintains a framework of policies designed to ensure the emotional and physical safety of tenants, staff and volunteers, including:

- Probity Framework (51 v3.0) — including Disclosure / Whistleblowing
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
- Complaints Policy and Procedure (13a)
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Recruitment Policy and the safer-recruitment arrangements set out in Section 10
- Code of Conduct and Professional Boundaries (12i)
- Managed Behaviour Policy
- Disciplinary Procedure
- Risk Management Framework v3 (March 2026)
- and arrangements under the statutory Prevent programme (s.26 Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015).

Principles underpinning policy and procedures (Common Principles within Birmingham)

We give the prevention and detection of abuse a high priority in our approach to staff training and development. All staff who work with vulnerable persons are required to attend safeguarding training, which is identified as a core training requirement. Formal supervision is an important opportunity for staff to raise issues relating to abuse. Agencies, including our Home Providers and Sustain, work together within an interagency framework and commit to the following:

- Believe that everyone has the right to live free from abuse or neglect regardless of age, ability or disability, sex, race, religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, marital or gender status.
- Be committed to creating and maintaining a safe and positive environment and an open, listening culture in which people feel able to share concerns without fear of retribution.
- Acknowledge that safeguarding is everybody's business and is committed to prevent abuse and neglect through safeguarding the welfare of all adults involved.
- Recognise that health, well-being, ability, disability and need for care and support can affect a person's resilience. We recognise that some people experience barriers (for example, to communication) in raising concerns or seeking help, and that these factors can vary at different points in people's lives.

- Recognise that there is a legal framework to safeguard adults who have needs for care and support and to protect those who are unable to take action to protect themselves; act in accordance with the relevant safeguarding adult legislation and with local statutory safeguarding procedures.
- Take action that is prompt, proportionate and respectful of the voice of the adult concerned.
- Actively promote the empowerment and well-being of vulnerable adults.
- Maintain confidential, detailed and accurate records of all safeguarding concerns, securely stored in line with Sustain's Data Protection Policy and Section 9 of this Policy.
- Cooperate fully with the Police and the relevant Local Authorities in taking action to safeguard an adult.
- Ensure that all Board members, staff, Home Providers and volunteers understand their role and responsibility for safeguarding adults and are up to date with appropriate training (see Section 12).

The Six Key Principles of adult safeguarding

Sustain operationalises the Six Key Principles articulated by the Birmingham Safeguarding Adults Board ("BSAB" and the statutory guidance to the Care Act 2014:

Empowerment: people being supported and encouraged to make their own decisions and to give informed consent.

Prevention: it is better to take action before harm occurs.

Proportionality: the least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented.

Protection: support and representation for those in greatest need.

Partnership: local solutions through services working with their communities. Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse.

Accountability: accountability and transparency in delivering safeguarding.

2.3 Making Safeguarding Personal (MSP)

Making Safeguarding Personal is Sustain's operational approach to adult safeguarding. MSP is a person-centred approach in which the safeguarding response is shaped by what the adult at risk wants to achieve. At every stage of the safeguarding process, staff and Home Providers will ask, document and revisit four questions:

- What has happened?
- What does the person want to happen now?
- What outcomes does the person want to achieve from the safeguarding response?
- Were those outcomes achieved?

These four questions are embedded into Sustain's Initial Disclosure Form (Form 1.5.1) and into the records maintained by the Lead Safeguarding Officer.

2.4 Equality, diversity and inclusion

Sustain is committed to an inclusive approach to safeguarding. The disproportionate risk of harm faced by people with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 is expressly recognised, and the duty to make reasonable adjustments under s.20 of that Act applies to the way in which Sustain receives, investigates and responds to safeguarding concerns. Reasonable adjustments will be made to ensure that safeguarding reporting routes are accessible to all tenants regardless of disability, language or other relevant characteristic.

Section 3: Defining and recognising abuse

3.1 Definition of abuse

Department of Health guidance 'No Secrets' states that the starting point for a definition is: *"Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons."*

England (Care Act 2014)

An adult at risk is an individual aged 18 years and over who: has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs) AND is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect AND as a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of, abuse or neglect.

3.2 How to recognise a safeguarding concern

The table below summarises the types of abuse most commonly encountered in Sustain's operating context, together with the common signs and indicators which will assist staff and Home Providers in recognising a safeguarding concern. The list is not exhaustive: where any concern arises, the Section 8 reporting procedure applies.

Type of abuse	Description	Signs and indicators
Physical abuse	An individual's body being injured or hurt due, for example, to assault, hitting, slapping or pushing. It can also be the wrong use of restrictive practices. Examples could be the misuse of medication or inappropriate restraint such as locking someone in a room, tying them to a chair or using inappropriate physical sanctions.	Injuries that are unexplained or untreated. There may be a number of injuries of different ages and in different places. Examples include: broken bones; bruises; unexplained loss of clumps of hair; bite, burn or scald marks.

Type of abuse	Description	Signs and indicators
Domestic abuse (incl. coercive control)	As defined in s.1 Domestic Abuse Act 2021: any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality. Includes so-called 'honour-based' violence. Children present in the household are recognised as victims (s.3 DA Act 2021). Controlling and coercive behaviour is a discrete criminal offence (s.76 Serious Crime Act 2015, as amended).	Signs of domestic abuse can be any of those relating to the different types of abuse. Specific indicators include controlling behaviour by a partner or family member, isolation from friends and family, monitoring of communications, and unexplained injuries with implausible explanations. See Section 5 of this policy for Sustain's response framework.
Modern slavery and trafficking	As defined in ss.1–3 Modern Slavery Act 2015: slavery, servitude, forced or compulsory labour, and human trafficking. Traffickers and slave-masters use whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment. See Section 6 for the National Referral Mechanism route and the s.52 duty to notify.	Signs of physical or psychological abuse; being malnourished or unkempt; appearing withdrawn; rarely allowed to travel on their own; under the control and influence of others; rarely interacting; appearing unfamiliar with the neighbourhood; few or no personal belongings or documents; avoiding eye contact; appearing frightened or hesitant to talk to strangers and law enforcement.
Financial or material abuse	The use of a person's funds or belongings without their permission. Includes theft, fraud, internet scamming, coercion in relation to financial affairs (including wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions), and the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.	Bills not being paid. Loss of assets such as a house being sold and the proceeds disappearing. Expenditure higher than the living conditions suggest. Not having enough food or clothing.

Type of abuse	Description	Signs and indicators
Sexual abuse	When a person becomes involved in sexual relationships or activities that they do not want to be involved in. They may have said so, or they may be unable to give consent (engaging the Mental Capacity Act 2005 — see Section 4). Includes rape, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, inappropriate looking or touching, sexual teasing or innuendo, sexual photography, subjection to pornography, witnessing sexual acts, and sexual assault.	Pain, sores and bruising around the inner thighs and genital, anal or breast areas. Bloodstained underwear or bedding. Pain when walking or sitting. Sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy are indicators of sexual activity and can indicate abuse where the person does not have capacity to provide consent.
Neglect and acts of omission	Failure to meet the basic needs of the individual. Includes ignoring medical, emotional or physical care needs; failure to provide access to appropriate health, care or support services; and withholding the necessities of life such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.	Malnutrition, dehydration, bedsores, dirty clothing and bedding, taking the wrong dose of medication, poorly maintained or unsafe living environment.
Self-neglect (and hoarding)	A person's failure or refusal to take care of their own basic needs. Neglecting personal hygiene, health or surroundings, including hoarding behaviours.	Severely cluttered living environment; declining personal hygiene; refusal of services; risks to health (e.g. fire hazard); social isolation.
Psychological (mental / emotional) abuse	Results in a person feeling worthless, unloved or uncared for. Includes emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, cyber-bullying, isolation, or unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal of services or supportive networks.	Anxiety; lack of confidence; low self-esteem; disturbed sleep; sudden change in mood or behaviour; reluctance to be in the company of a particular person.

Type of abuse	Description	Signs and indicators
Organisational abuse	Occurs where services delivered are focused on the needs of the organisation rather than the individual. Includes neglect and poor care practice within an institution or specific care setting, or in relation to care provided in the person's own home. May range from one-off incidents to ongoing ill-treatment, resulting from the structure, processes, policies or practices of the organisation.	Poor care standards; rigid routines; lack of staff learning, development and support; absence of personalised support plans; sustained poor practice across a setting.
Discriminatory abuse	An individual or group being treated unequally because of characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010 (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation). Includes harassment, slurs or similar treatment based on protected characteristics, and ignoring a person's values, beliefs or culture.	Poor service that does not meet the person's needs; verbal abuse and disrespect; exclusion from activities or services. Discrimination can be direct or indirect. Engages the duty to make reasonable adjustments under s.20 Equality Act 2010.
Radicalisation (Prevent duty)	The process by which a person comes to support terrorism or extremism. Engages the statutory Prevent duty (s.26 Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015) to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. Channel is the multi-agency safeguarding process for individuals at risk of radicalisation.	Changes in behaviour, dress or language; withdrawal from family and friends; engagement with extremist material online; expression of grievances framed in extremist terms; identification with extremist figures or causes. Sustain's single point of contact for Channel referrals is the Lead Safeguarding Officer.

Who may be the source of abuse?

People who abuse vulnerable adults or visiting children are often well known to the person and may be:

- a paid carer or volunteer;

- a partner, relative or friend;
- a health, social care or other worker;
- a visitor or other contact; or
- another vulnerable adult (for example, another tenant).

Section 4: Capacity, consent and best interests

Sustain's approach to mental capacity is governed by the Mental Capacity Act 2005 (MCA). The five statutory principles guide every step of a safeguarding response where capacity may be in issue.

The five MCA principles

- **Presumption of capacity** — a person must be assumed to have capacity unless it is established that they lack capacity.
- **Supported decision-making** — a person is not to be treated as unable to make a decision unless all practicable steps to help them to do so have been taken without success.
- **Unwise decisions** — a person is not to be treated as unable to make a decision merely because they make an unwise decision.
- **Best interests** — any act done, or decision made, for or on behalf of a person who lacks capacity must be done, or made, in their best interests.
- **Least restrictive option** — before the act is done or the decision is made, regard must be had to whether the purpose can be as effectively achieved in a way that is less restrictive of the person's rights and freedom of action.

4.1 Capacity assessment

Capacity is decision-specific and time-specific. Staff who reasonably believe that a tenant may lack capacity to make a decision relevant to a safeguarding response must escalate the matter to the Lead Safeguarding Officer at the earliest opportunity. The Lead Safeguarding Officer will ensure that appropriate consideration is given to the tenant's capacity and, where necessary, work with the relevant Home Provider, Adult Social Care, healthcare professionals or other agencies to facilitate a formal capacity assessment.

4.2 Best interests

Where a tenant is assessed as lacking capacity to make a particular decision relevant to a safeguarding response, any best-interests decision must be made in accordance with s.4 MCA 2005, taking into account the person's past and present wishes and feelings, beliefs and values, and the views of those involved in their care and support. Sustain will work with the relevant Home Provider and statutory agencies, as appropriate, to ensure that best-interests considerations are properly addressed and recorded.

4.3 Lasting Powers of Attorney and IMCAs

Where a tenant who lacks capacity has no appropriate person to consult, the Lead Safeguarding Officer will work with the relevant Home Provider and statutory agencies to ensure that any requirement for Independent Mental Capacity Advocate (IMCA) involvement is identified and addressed in accordance with the Mental Capacity Act 2005.

Section 5: Domestic abuse

5.1 Statutory definition

Domestic abuse is defined in s.1 Domestic Abuse Act 2021 as behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”), where A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and the behaviour is abusive. Abusive behaviour consists of any of the following: physical or sexual abuse; violent or threatening behaviour; controlling or coercive behaviour; economic abuse; or psychological, emotional or other abuse. Children who see, hear or experience the effects of the abuse, and who are related to either A or B, are recognised as victims (s.3 DA Act 2021).

Controlling and coercive behaviour is a discrete criminal offence under s.76 Serious Crime Act 2015 (as amended).

5.2 Sustain’s response framework

- **Recognition:** staff and Home Providers will be alert to the indicators of domestic abuse set out in Section 3 and to the wider features of coercive control (isolation, financial control, micro-management, monitoring of communications).
- **Safety:** where there is immediate danger, staff will follow the immediate-danger steps in Section 8.1, including contact with emergency services where appropriate.
- **MARAC:** where a tenant is identified as being at high risk of serious harm or homicide from domestic abuse, the Lead Safeguarding Officer will refer the case to the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) in line with the BSAB framework.
- **Safety planning:** the Lead Safeguarding Officer, in conjunction with the tenant’s Home Provider, will support the development of an individual safety plan, including where appropriate target hardening, sanctuary scheme referral and engagement with specialist support services.
- **Partnership:** Sustain works with statutory specialist services and the helplines listed in Section 14, including the National Domestic Abuse Helpline, Women’s Aid, the Men’s Advice Line and the National LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Helpline.
- **Children:** where children are present in the household and engaged by the s.3 DA Act 2021 definition, the safeguarding-children arrangements in Section 7 apply.

Sustain’s approach is calibrated to the Neighbourhood and Community Standard 2024 (Required outcome 1.3) on a domestic-abuse-informed approach to operations.

Section 6: Modern slavery and trafficking

Sustain recognises that vulnerable adults in supported housing may be at heightened risk of exploitation through modern slavery and human trafficking. The Modern Slavery Act 2015 defines the offences of slavery, servitude, forced or compulsory labour (s.1) and human trafficking (s.2).

6.1 National Referral Mechanism (NRM)

Where staff or Home Providers identify indicators of modern slavery in respect of a Sustain tenant or any other person, the Lead Safeguarding Officer will engage with statutory first responders (typically the local police force or the local authority) to enable referral to the National Referral Mechanism, the framework for identifying and supporting potential victims of modern slavery.

6.2 Section 52 duty to notify

Sustain is not itself a s.52 specified public authority but works in partnership with bodies that are. Where the Lead Safeguarding Officer reasonably believes that a person may be a victim of slavery or trafficking, they will ensure that the relevant specified public authority is notified so that the s.52 duty is discharged, recording the notification on Sustain's safeguarding records.

Section 7: Safeguarding children (visiting and household members)

Although the principal scope of this Policy is the safeguarding of adults, Sustain frequently encounters circumstances in which children visit, are present in, or are otherwise affected by the household of a tenant. The arrangements set out in this Section apply.

7.1 Statutory duties

Sustain is not a specified body under s.11 Children Act 2004. The principal basis for this section is s.3 Domestic Abuse Act 2021, which recognises children who see, hear or experience domestic abuse in the household as victims, and the BSAB multi-agency good practice framework.

Where a Home Provider or Sustain staff member becomes aware that a child present in or visiting a tenant's household may be at risk of harm, whether in connection with a domestic abuse concern or independently:

- report the concern immediately;
- notify Birmingham Children's Trust — Children's Advice and Support Service (CASS) concurrently with any adult safeguarding referral; and
- where a child is in immediate danger, contact emergency services (999) without delay.

Section 8: What to do: reporting, response and escalation

8.1 What to do if you suspect abuse

All staff and Home Providers must act immediately where there are concerns that an adult or child may be at risk of abuse or neglect. The safety and wellbeing of the individual is always the primary consideration. Where there is a risk of harm:

- Take proportionate action to ensure immediate safety, contacting emergency services and seeking urgent medical attention where necessary.
- Preserve evidence where it is safe to do so.
- Report the concern without delay, following the timescale and using the standard initial disclosure form set out in the supporting safeguarding SOP.

8.2 Reporting Responsibilities

8.2.1 Sustain staff must report concerns to their line manager and the Lead Safeguarding Officer without delay, record concerns accurately, and follow Sustain's internal procedures and escalation routes. Where a concern implicates the Lead Safeguarding Officer or an Executive Director, it must be reported directly to the Director of Governance, or failing that the Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee. The Lead Safeguarding Officer determines whether thresholds are met, makes referrals to statutory agencies, and coordinates Sustain's response.

8.2.2 Home Providers and their staff are responsible for the day-to-day safeguarding of residents in line with their own policies and statutory duties. They must take immediate protective action; make referrals to Adult Social Care, the police or other agencies where required; notify Sustain of concerns involving Sustain tenants in line with agreed requirements; and maintain records. Home Providers must ensure their staff are

8.3 Sustain Oversight

Sustain retains overall accountability as landlord and registered provider and operates an oversight and assurance role. Sustain will receive and log notifications, review the adequacy and timeliness of Home Provider actions, seek assurance and challenge where appropriate, escalate where risks are not effectively managed, and take contractual action where necessary. Sustain will cooperate with statutory agencies under ss.6–7 Care Act 2014 and will cooperate with any s.42 enquiry. Safeguarding case outcomes are reported to the Audit & Risk Committee in line with Section 13.

8.4 Lead responsibility for cases

Home Providers ordinarily lead on cases arising from their day-to-day service delivery. Sustain takes the lead where the concern is identified by Sustain staff, where there are concerns about a Home Provider or its staff, where risks are not being effectively managed, or where the case presents significant organisational or regulatory risk

8.5 Responding to disclosures

Anyone receiving a disclosure must take it seriously, listen and respond appropriately, avoid investigating or asking leading questions, explain that information will be shared to keep the person safe, and ensure the concern is reported without delay.

8.6 Concerns involving staff or organisations

Concerns involving staff, volunteers, contractors or Home Providers must be reported immediately and managed in line with safeguarding procedures, disciplinary processes, and DBS referral duties where applicable. Disclosure / whistleblowing routes remain available at all times.

8.7 Recording and Information Sharing

All concerns must be accurately recorded, stored securely, and shared appropriately in line with Section 9, including with statutory agencies where necessary to protect individuals at risk.

Section 9: Information sharing and data protection

Sharing information appropriately is a critical part of safeguarding. The duty of confidentiality is not absolute and does not bar disclosure where disclosure is necessary to protect an adult at risk or a child.

9.1 Lawful basis under the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR

Where personal data is processed for safeguarding purposes, the lawful bases relied upon include:

- Article 6(1)(e) UK GDPR (public task) or Article 6(1)(f) (legitimate interests) for ordinary personal data;
- Article 9(2)(b) UK GDPR (employment, social security and social protection law) and Article 9(2)(h) (health or social care) for special category data; together with
- the substantial public interest condition at **Schedule 1, Part 2, paragraph 18 Data Protection Act 2018** (safeguarding of children and individuals at risk).

9.2 Caldicott principles

Sustain applies the seven Caldicott principles when sharing safeguarding-related personal data: justify the purpose; do not use confidential information unless necessary; use the minimum necessary; access on a need-to-know basis; understand responsibilities; comply with the law; the duty to share information can be as important as the duty to protect patient confidentiality.

9.3 Records and retention

All safeguarding records will be held securely in Sustain's designated safeguarding records system, retained in line with Sustain's Data Protection and Retention Schedule, and made available to lawful requesters (including statutory partners and the Regulator) on request.

Section 10: Safer recruitment and the DBS regime

Sustain operates a safer-recruitment framework under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (SVGA) and the Recruitment Policy.

10.1 Regulated activity

All Sustain roles, and equivalent roles within Home Providers delivering day-to-day services to Sustain tenants, are assessed against the definition of regulated activity in Schedule 4 SVGA 2006. Roles assessed as falling within regulated activity require enhanced DBS clearance with barred-list check.

10.2 DBS checks

- **Enhanced DBS with barred-list check** is required for all roles involving regulated activity with adults or children.
- **Enhanced DBS** is required for all roles involving regular contact with vulnerable adults or children that does not meet the regulated-activity threshold.
- **Standard DBS** may apply to other in-scope roles in accordance with the DBS eligibility framework.
- Checks must be in place before unsupervised contact with vulnerable adults or children commences.

10.3 Renewal and ongoing assurance

DBS checks are refreshed at the renewal interval set out in the Recruitment Policy (currently every three years for in-scope roles) or earlier where there is reason to believe further check is appropriate. Sustain will keep enrolment under the DBS Update Service under review.

10.4 Referral duty to the DBS

Where Sustain dismisses or removes from regulated activity a worker because the worker has harmed (or there is a risk that they may harm) a child or vulnerable adult, or where Sustain would have done so but the worker resigned, was made redundant or was transferred, Sustain has a statutory duty under s.35 SVGA 2006 to refer the worker to the DBS. The Director of Governance is responsible for ensuring that the referral is made, with the Lead Safeguarding Officer providing operational support.

10.5 Recruitment process safeguards

- Role descriptions and person specifications expressly state safeguarding duties.
- Application packs include a self-declaration of relevant convictions and cautions.
- Interviews include scenario-based questions on safeguarding judgement.
- References are sought before any unsupervised contact with tenants commences.
- Records of all of the above are retained in line with Section 9.

Section 11: Safeguarding within the Home Provider operating model

Day-to-day tenancy and support services in respect of Sustain's 1,684 tenants are delivered by 88 third-party Home Providers. The Safeguarding Policy gives effect to Sustain's safeguarding obligations across this network through the arrangements set out in this Section, which respond directly to Recommendation 2(b) of the Sustain Rapid Assessment (November 2025).

11.1 Contractual flow-down

- All Home Provider contracts include an express obligation on the Home Provider to comply with this Safeguarding Policy and to ensure that its staff are familiar with, and trained in, the Policy.
- All Home Providers are required to maintain their own safeguarding arrangements consistent with this Policy and with the Care Act 2014 statutory guidance, and to make those arrangements available to Sustain on request.
- Failure to comply with the safeguarding obligations under the Home Provider contract is a material breach and engages the contract management framework, up to and including termination.

11.2 Training and refresher programme (RA Rec 2(b))

Sustain will operate a structured Safeguarding training programme for Home Providers, comprising:

- **Induction safeguarding briefing** for every new Home Provider, covering this Policy, the Initial Disclosure Form, escalation routes and the contractual obligations under section 11.1.
- **Annual refresher session** for all Home Providers, covering updates to legislation, regulatory standards, BSAB guidance and lessons learned from safeguarding incidents during the previous twelve months.
- **Ad-hoc updates** issued on the occurrence of material changes (for example, new statutory guidance or significant case learning), with confirmation of receipt and engagement required.
- **Records** of all training delivered, the Home Providers represented and the staff attending, retained centrally and reported to the Audit & Risk Committee on a quarterly basis.

11.3 DBS assurance over Home Provider staff

Sustain will obtain annual confirmation from each Home Provider that all staff in regulated-activity roles in respect of Sustain tenants hold a valid enhanced DBS with barred-list check, and will sample-test this assurance through the Operations Team.

11.4 Escalation route into Sustain

Each Home Provider is required to identify a Designated Safeguarding Person and to provide their contact details to Sustain. The Designated Safeguarding Person will be the first point of escalation into Sustain's Lead Safeguarding Officer for any safeguarding concern arising in respect of a Sustain tenant.

11.5 Oversight

The Operations Manager working with the Lead safeguarding officer will provide quarterly oversight reports to the Tenant Engagement and Empowerment Committee covering Home Provider-related safeguarding activity, including training completion rates; DBS assurance status; safeguarding referrals received from Home Providers; and any contractual escalations under section 11.1.

Section 12: Training and competence

- All Board members, the Executive, employees, agency workers, contractors, consultants and volunteers complete the Sustain induction safeguarding module within four weeks of joining.
- All staff with tenant-facing roles complete an annual safeguarding refresher; the refresher includes updates on legislation, regulatory standards, BSAB guidance and lessons learned from incident reviews.
- The Lead Safeguarding Officer maintains accredited safeguarding qualifications relevant to their role, refreshed in line with the framework of the BSAB.
- Records of training completion are maintained centrally and reported to the Audit & Risk Committee annually as part of the Sustain training-compliance dashboard.
- Sustain has used, or works in partnership with, accredited training providers including the Birmingham Safeguarding Adults Board (BSAB), the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE), the Rape and Sexual Violence Project (RSVP) and Walsall College (distance learning). The full current list of accredited training partners is held by the Lead Safeguarding Officer.

Section 13: Board oversight and assurance

Safeguarding is a strategic and operational risk for Sustain and is treated as such in line with Principle 4 of the NHF Code of Governance 2020 and the Risk Management Framework v3 (March 2026). Oversight arrangements are as follows.

13.1 Board

- Approves this Policy and any material revisions.
- Receives an annual Safeguarding Report from the Director of Governance covering trends, incidents, lessons learned and forward-looking actions.
- Confirms, on an annual basis, that the Policy remains fit for purpose against the regulatory and statutory framework.

13.2 Sub Committees

- **Tenant Engagement and Empowerment Committee** - reviews quarterly Safeguarding management information from the Operations Manager (incidents notified, referrals made, training compliance, Home Provider DBS assurance, contractual escalations); and Safeguarding Adults Review engaging Sustain.
- **The Audit & Risk Committee** - reviews the outcome of any safeguarding-related internal audit, root-cause review or Safeguarding Adults Review engaging Sustain.
- Both committees report to the Board with recommendations.

13.3 Executive

- The Director of Governance is the Executive owner of this Policy.
- The CEO retains overall accountability to the Board for the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements across Sustain.

Section 14: Useful information and external contacts

Birmingham Safeguarding Adults Board (BSAB)

The BSAB provides information and resources for citizens and for those working in professions supporting vulnerable adults across the city. Sustain is committed to working in partnership with the BSAB.

Email: BSABsupportteam@birmingham.gov.uk

Postal address: Safeguarding Adults Team, P.O. Box 15537, Birmingham, B2 2PQ

Web: www.bsab.org

Birmingham Adult Social Care Team

Where reports of suspected or known abuse should be made. Adult Social Care Contact Centre staff review online referrals Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. For urgent matters out of hours, contact the Out of Hours team on 0121 464 9001.

- Email: CSAdultSocialCare@birmingham.gov.uk
- Telephone: 0121 303 1234
- Text Relay: dial 18001, followed by the full national phone number
- Emergencies / immediate danger: dial 999

Birmingham Children's Trust — Children's Advice and Support Service (CASS)

- Telephone (business hours): 0121 303 1888
- Emergency Duty Team (out of hours): 0121 675 4806
- Emergencies / immediate danger: dial 999

Ann Craft Trust

A national organisation providing information and advice about adult safeguarding.

- Telephone: 0115 951 5400
- Email: Ann-Craft-Trust@nottingham.ac.uk
- Web: www.anncrafttrust.org

Hourglass (formerly Action on Elder Abuse)

A national organisation working to end the harm, abuse and exploitation of older people.

- Telephone helpline: 0808 808 8141
- Web: wearehourglass.org

National 24-Hour Freephone Domestic Abuse Helpline (England)

- Telephone: 0808 2000 247

- Web: www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk

Men's Advice Line

For male victims of domestic abuse.

- Telephone: 0808 801 0327

National LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Helpline (Galop)

- Telephone: 0800 999 5428

Rape Crisis (England and Wales)

- Web: www.rapecrisis.org.uk

Respond

Services to victims and perpetrators of sexual abuse who have learning disabilities, and training and support to those working with them.

- Telephone helpline: 0808 808 0700
- Web: www.respond.org.uk

Stop Hate UK

Independent, confidential and accessible reporting and support service for hate crime victims, witnesses and third parties.

- 24-hour helpline: 0800 138 1625
- Web: www.stophateuk.org

Suzy Lamplugh Trust

Leading authority on personal safety.

- Telephone: 020 7091 0014
- Web: www.suzylamplugh.org

Victim Support

- Telephone: 0808 168 9111
- Web: www.victimsupport.org.uk

Women's Aid (England)

- Web: www.womensaid.org.uk

Modern Slavery Helpline

- Telephone: 08000 121 700

- Web: www.modernslaveryhelpline.org

Anti-Terrorism Hotline / Prevent (Channel)

- Anti-Terrorism Hotline: 0800 789 321
- Sustain's single point of contact for Channel referrals is the Lead Safeguarding Officer.

Sustain safeguarding training partners

Sustain has used and / or works in partnership with the following training providers; current capacity and approved partner list is maintained by the Lead Safeguarding Officer:

- Birmingham Safeguarding Adults Board (BSAB) — www.bsab.org
- Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) — www.scie.org.uk
- Rape and Sexual Violence Project (RSVP) — rsvporg.co.uk
- Walsall College — www.walsallcollege.ac.uk