

Child Protection and Wellbeing Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out how Housing Trust will respond to concerns in relation to the welfare, safety and wellbeing of children and young people residing in dwellings owned or managed by Housing Trust.

Scope

This policy applies to all applicants, tenants, guests of tenants and former tenants of Housing Trust and will be observed by all staff, volunteers and contractors of Housing Trust. The roles and responsibilities of Housing Trust staff and contractors in relation to child protection and mandatory reporting are outlined below.

Housing Trust Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Undertake mandatory reporting to Family and Community Services• Report to Housing Trust Team Leaders (Housing and Crisis Accommodation) any instance of suspected risk of harm, neglect, or abuse to children or young people
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Contractors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Report to Housing Trust any instance of suspected risk of harm, neglect, or abuse to children or young people
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Team Leaders, Housing and Crisis Accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Manage all reports of harm to children or young people and coordinate Housing Trust response and action
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Chief Housing Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monitor Housing Trust response to child protection issues and manage internal reporting as required
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Policy

Housing Trust cares about the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children, young people and families residing in dwellings owned and managed by the Housing Trust.

Housing Trust's role in child protection is to report to the Child Protection Helpline (13 2111) any reasonable suspicion that a child or young person is at risk of significant harm. Housing Trust will report in line with the NSW Mandatory Reporter Guide (MRG) as outlined by Family and Community Services www.facs.nsw.gov.au/families/Protecting-kids

Note: It's mandatory to make a report if the child is 0 to 15 years and at risk of significant harm. It's not mandatory to make a report if it is an unborn child, or a young person aged 16 to 17.

Where the risk of significant harm is below this statutory reporting threshold, Housing Trust will work with other government and non-government organisations to identify services to support children, young people and their families.

Housing Trust will actively seek to refer families to appropriate support services where a risk to children or young people is identified. Under this policy Housing Trust commits to:

1. Training staff to ensure appropriate implementation of this policy.
2. Recognising the signs of abuse and neglect and reporting the name or description of a child or young person reasonably suspected of being at risk of significant harm and completing actions as mandatory reporters.
3. Making appropriate referrals to agencies that support children, young people and families.
4. Providing appropriate housing assistance to eligible households where children, young people are at risk.
5. Taking into consideration the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people when assessing applications for priority assistance from eligible clients who are experiencing family and domestic violence.
6. Supporting tenants who have children removed by conducting timely changes in rent and circumstances and responding with sensitivity to their changes.
7. Supporting tenants who have children placed with them, for example foster children, by conducting timely changes in rent and circumstances, including changes in household members where we will not unreasonably withhold approval.
8. Recognising that a tenant who has had children removed, may be under occupied in their property, with no action taken for six (6) months and then reviewed in collaboration with Family and Community Services to ascertain status of the children.
9. Ensuring all relevant Housing Trust staff and volunteers, including the Board of Directors, hold current Working with Children Checks and National Police Checks.

Exchange of Information

In accordance with Chapter 16a of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 Housing Trust will collect and release information about a child or young person and their parent, without consent if it relates to the safety, welfare or wellbeing of a child or young person.

Right of Appeal

Housing Trust staff are legally required to make a mandatory report to NSW Family and Community Services if, during the course of their work, they have reasonable grounds for suspecting a child or young person is at risk of significant harm. The making of child protection reports by Housing Trust staff is not appealable.

If an applicant or tenant believes Housing Trust has made a wrong decision (excluding the making of a child protection report) a formal review of the decision should be requested. To do this, the applicant or tenant is required to complete a Housing Trust Appeals Form stating why they disagree with the decision.

Housing Trust's Appeals Policy and form are available by contacting the Housing Trust office or alternatively, may be downloaded from our website: www.housingtrust.org.au

If the appellant is not satisfied with the outcome of the internal appeal they can make an appeal to the Independent Housing Appeals Committee (HAC). HAC is an independent appeals agency for all NSW Social Housing clients. Housing Trust will advise the appellant on how to lodge an appeal with HAC. Alternatively HAC may be contacted directly by visiting www.hac.nsw.gov.au or by calling 1800 629 794.

Reference or Related Documents

Internal Documents

1. Child Protection and Wellbeing Procedure
2. Identifying and Responding to Domestic and Family Violence Procedure
3. Appeals Policy
4. Form 106001 Review of decision and 1st tier appeal

External Documents

1. Residential Tenancies Act 2010
2. www.facs.nsw.gov.au/families/Protecting-kids
3. Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998
4. Family and Community Services Mandatory Reporter Guide

Policy Version Control

Version	Details of Improvements	Release Date	Approval/Release Details
V 1.0	Original Policy	16.09.2016	Approved for release by GM:C&C
V 2.0	Reviewed and updated to provide clearer clarification of roles and responsibilities of HT staff and contractors with no change to policy intent. Reviewed and in line with current Residential Tenancies Act 2010 No 42 dated 01.07.18. Policy reviewed by Association of Children's Welfare Agencies (AWCA) prior to release.	02.11.2018	Approved for release by Amanda Winks Chief Housing Officer