



Policy 43 – Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Adults

Introduction

A24 Group has a statutory responsibility to ensure that Children and Vulnerable Adults in receipt of services from the agency are safe from harm.

The commitment of A24 Group is reflected in its procedures for recruitment, induction and training. Registration with the Agency is supported by our policy of vetting and checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

A24 Group will take all reasonable steps to provide protection for Vulnerable Service Users in our care. We ensure that our procedures protect vulnerable adults and children in accordance with the latest Safeguarding and Disclosure and Barring Service legislation and guidance.

Recruitment processes

A24 Group ensures that all employees who are involved in the recruitment process have been given appropriate guidance in the relevant legislation relating to the recruitment of workers, including the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, The Rehabilitation of offenders Act 1974 and Police Act 1997 Part V.

Company procedures for safeguarding vulnerable adults and children are included in the induction programme for staff. All staff complete full training and are able to demonstrate and have full knowledge on indicators of abuse, responding appropriately to suspected abuse and how to report abuse. Training is updated on an annual basis. A24 ensures that all suspected, alleged or actual incidents of abuse are fully investigated, reported to the relevant persons and that outcomes of investigations are reported to the relevant bodies.

A24 Group keep written records of all suspected, alleged or actual abuse, including full details of investigations and outcomes.

The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 sets out the scope of the Vetting and Barring Scheme. As from 1st December 2012 the CRB merged with the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) to form the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). The DBS was established under the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 and both criminal record checks and barring are now performed by one body (DBS). The scheme aims to stop unsuitable people from working with Children or Vulnerable Adults and the DBS is responsible for the establishment and maintenance of a register of those able to work with vulnerable groups. All applicants who register with the Agency are required to

complete an enhanced disclosure application form and to confirm if they have any criminal convictions. Failure to reveal any criminal conviction could result in the applicant being rejected from the agency.

Vulnerable groups

A child is defined by section 60 of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act and Article 2 of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Order as being any person who has not attained the age of 18, regardless of the setting they are in or the service they receive.

A vulnerable adult is defined as someone who is defined as someone 18 years of age or older who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness and is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.

People with a physical or mental health condition are not vulnerable adults just because of their condition. They will be Vulnerable Adults when they receive health, social care or other services or activities specifically for those with physical or mental health conditions.

Savile Recommendations

The A24 Group endeavours to maintain a high standard of service and have implemented strict regulations in correlation to the recommendations published by Kate Lampard, referenced in article index: <http://www.nhsemployers.org/your-workforce/need-to-know/the-savile-inquiry>

The recommendations are covered in the A24 Group policies, which are reviewed on an annual basis.

- Agency Worker Hand Book
- Policy 2 – Recruitment Policy
- Policy 4 – Complaints Procedure
- Policy 10 – Disclosure Barring Service
- Policy 11 – Dignity & Privacy
- Policy 13 – Data Protection & subject access
- Policy 21 – Confidentiality
- Policy 25 – Uniform Requirements
- Policy 31 – Identification of staff

Disclosure and Barring Service referrals

Information sharing is vital to the DBS's decision making process. A24 Group has a duty to refer any issues about conduct which endangers or is likely to endanger a child or vulnerable adult. A referral should be made when an individual is rejected from the agency or the agency thinks relevant harm has occurred, a risk of harm is present (satisfies the harm test as per DBS guidance) or there is a relevant conviction or caution.

Disclosure and Barring Service criminal record checks

The Disclosure and Barring Service now manage the barring service and they also provide a disclosure service to enable employers and other organizations to obtain access to applicant's criminal record details when assessing their suitability to register with the agency.

A disclosure provides details of a person's criminal record including convictions, cautions, reprimands and warnings held on the Police National Computer (PNC) and may include information held by the local police forces.

The criminal records bureau allows two levels of disclosure Standard Disclosure and Enhanced Disclosure. All workers registering with A24 Group are required to be checked at Enhanced level. Enhanced disclosures contain the same information as standard disclosures but with the addition of non-conviction information from local police records considered relevant by Chief Police Officers. Checks against the Adults' and Childrens' Barred lists are requested based on where the applicant intends to work.

Disclosure information is only used for the specific purpose for which it was requested and for which the applicant's full consent has been given.

Portability of disclosures

Portability refers to the re-use of a Disclosure obtained for a position in one organisation and later used for a position in another organisation. Following the latest DBS guidelines A24 Group does accept disclosures obtained by other organisations on condition that the disclosure is enhanced, has checks against the Adults' and Childrens' Barred Lists, that the position applied for is similar and that the applicant has registered for the DBS Update Service (as A24 Group will need to check the update before registering the applicant).

Decisions on disclosures for prospective candidates

If a Disclosure reveals criminal convictions, cautions, warning, reprimands or other information the counter signatory in conjunction with the Risk Committee must decide whether the applicant is suitable for registration with A24 Group. This decision takes into consideration several factors:

- The relevance of the offence to the services offered by the agency
- The level of access to Vulnerable groups
- The applicants age at the time of the offence
- The nature of the offence
- The length of the sentence
- The time span since the offence occurred
- Is it an isolated offence or is there a pattern
- How likely is the candidate to re-offend
- The context of the offence

Data Protection

A24 Group and its employees comply fully with its obligations under the data protection act (1998), disclosure code of practice and other relevant legislation pertaining to safe handling, use, storage, retention and disposal of disclosure information.