

Unipol Student Homes Safeguarding Statement

This statement sets out Unipol's approach to safeguarding in respect of children and adults at risk. It applies to all staff and contractors working in Unipol's owned and managed portfolio.

Unipol uses no volunteers. It restricts its normal tenancy group to over 18's. It houses a few 16-18 year olds and has a specialised policy for that. It houses a small number of adults at risk (under 10) including some elderly residents in one development.

Unipol's Values

As a charity, Unipol has an established set of values that include:

- To be trusted
- To promote safety and wellbeing
- To be ethical
- To be transparent and accountable.

The charity's actions are informed by these values and Unipol takes its responsibilities as a landlord seriously.

Responsibility for this Statement

The person with overall responsibility for this statement is the Deputy Chief Executive. All members of Unipol staff dealing with housing management are responsible for complying with this statement and will be given training about it.

Definitions

Statutory guidance sets out the definition of safeguarding.

Safeguarding children is defined in *Working together to safeguard children* (Department of Education) as:

- protecting children from maltreatment
- preventing impairment of children's health or development
- ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

Safeguarding adults at risk is defined in the *Care and support statutory guidance* issued under the Care Act 2014 as:

- protecting the rights of adults to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect
- people and organisations working together to prevent and stop both the risks and experience of abuse or neglect
- people and organisations making sure that the adult's wellbeing is promoted including, where appropriate, taking fully into account their views, wishes, feelings and beliefs in deciding on any action
- recognising that adults sometimes have complex interpersonal relationships and may be ambivalent, unclear or unrealistic about their personal circumstances and therefore potential risks to their safety or well-being.

In this context, an adult at risk is defined as person aged 18 years or over who may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of themselves, or unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation. (*NHS England - Safeguarding Adults*).

Unipol Housing

Unipol provides housing and general property maintenance services to its tenants. Unipol also provides a level of tenancy support to its tenants through specialist Tenancy Support Coordinators who offer advice and provide pastoral help to tenants, when required. Unipol's approach to this is outlined in the *Tenancy Support Guide*

https://www.unipolhousing.org.uk/media/6069/unipoltenancysupportguide_web.pdf

and the Tenants Handbook

<https://www.unipol.org.uk/documents/tenant-handbooks/unipol-tenants-handbook-leeds> and, more generally, throughout the website www.unipohousing.org.uk

Unipol does not offer or provide care services to tenants. In its capacity as a landlord, Unipol has a legal “duty of care” to manage its properties and tenancies in a manner that would be expected of a reasonably competent student landlord.

As a landlord, Unipol does not have any defined legal duties in respect of safeguarding. However, Unipol recognises that the whole of society has a responsibility towards children and adults at risk, and therefore the charity has chosen to follow certain procedures where there are concerns that tenants may come to harm. Unipol works in partnership with a number of higher education institutions and colleges who have a higher duty of care in regard to their students.

Unipol acknowledges that it has a role to play in making sure that concerns about children and vulnerable adults are passed to an agency that can help them without delay. Unipol has a number of policies and procedures in place that ensure action is taken where safeguarding issues arise, that cover the following areas:

- Policy on Housing Students Under the Age of 18
- Arrangements for other adults at risk
- Recruitment arrangements
- Training for staff
- Expectations for staff and contractors
- Reporting procedures.

Policy on Housing Students under the Age of 18

Unipol houses a number of students aged under 18, and has a dedicated policy covering this, which can be accessed here:

<https://www.unipol.org.uk/footer/governance/corporate-documents-unipol-board/policy-on-housing-students-under-the-age-of-18>

This policy applies to all persons housed by Unipol who are under the age of 18 (including children of tenants), the persons with parental responsibility for them, guarantors, Unipol staff, and Unipol’s contractors who come into contact with under-18s, nominations partners and participants in the Homestay scheme.

The policy sets out how Unipol will act, and what can be expected from Unipol, and covers:

- the allocation of accommodation
- contracts
- welfare and support arrangements
- rent collection
- medication and first aid
- safety and security
- time spent away from Unipol’s accommodation
- confidentiality and data protection.

The policy makes clear that Unipol does not have parental responsibility for students under 18 and that this rests with their responsible adult. It outlines what practical steps Unipol will take to provide a supportive environment, including allocating the student to a Tenancy Support Co-ordinator who will meet with them.

The policy details Unipol’s position on the children of tenants and underlines that the primary responsibility for those children remains with their parent or legal guardian, however where Unipol reasonably suspects a child is being neglected or abused, it will notify social services (or equivalent statutory agency) of any concerns.

Other Adults at Risk

Unipol houses a small number of elderly adults and adults with disabilities. Where these tenants have a care or support need, this is provided for them by their local authority, educational institution or through private arrangements. Unipol does not provide care services, nor does it check that adults who have care needs are receiving appropriate care, or monitor their welfare.

Where Unipol is aware that adult tenants have care or support needs, this tenant will be assigned to a Tenancy Support Coordinator. The Tenancy Support Coordinator will meet or communicate with them as necessary. If a Tenancy Support Coordinator has any concerns about abuse or neglect of these adults, they will report these to an appropriate agency without delay.

If the adult is not receiving appropriate care or support, a Tenancy Support Coordinator will signpost the tenant to this, but ultimately it is the decision of the tenant whether they pursue this. With the permission of the tenant, a Tenancy Support Coordinator may discuss these concerns with a parent or guardian, or the educational institution. If a Tenancy Support Coordinator has serious concerns about a student's welfare and believes they are in danger, they will raise a wellbeing concern with their educational institution.

If the tenant has care provision, which Unipol is aware of, and Unipol has any concerns about the welfare of the tenant, an attempt will be made to inform the care provider of any concerns, where permission has been given by the tenant to share this information. If Unipol has concerns about a carer, it will report these to adult social services at the relevant local authority.

Recruitment

Unipol Student Homes carries out Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks on all residential staff in buildings housing tenants aged under 18, as well as the Tenancy Support Co-ordinators.

Training for Staff

All housing management staff who manage property where children or elderly adults live receive safeguarding training as part of their induction. Unipol staff are not trained in the detection of abuse or neglect. However, they are trained in procedures for reporting concerns they may have about a child or adult at risks' welfare. Where an under-age child is found "home alone" then this will be reported to social services. Allegations of abuse or neglect are referred to a Tenancy Support Coordinator who will take up the matter with the Deputy Chief Executive.

Expectations for Staff and Contractors

All staff working in tenant-facing roles will be asked to familiarise themselves with this statement. Contractors are informed of this statement as part of becoming an approved contractor.

Acting on Safeguarding Concerns

Staff will not investigate concerns about children or vulnerable adults who are or may be being abused or who are at risk. However, when staff learn of a concern, they will pass this to a Tenancy Support Coordinator or the Deputy Chief Executive, who will then pass this to an appropriate agency.

If anyone is concerned that a child or adult at risk is being abused or neglected, they should not ignore their suspicions and should not assume that someone else will take action to protect that person. Concerns about children will be referred to the children's social care department of the local authority where the child lives. Similarly, concerns about vulnerable adults should be referred to local authority adult services.

Where statutory agencies request information about a tenant or child relating to safeguarding concerns, these requests will be passed to the Company Secretary who deals with data requests. Unipol will comply with all such reasonable requests.

References

NHS England – Safeguarding Adults

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/adult-pocket-guide.pdf>

Working together to safeguard children (Department of Education)

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/942454/Working_together_to_safeguard_children_inter_agency_guidance.pdf

Care and support statutory guidance, issued under the Care Act 2014

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-act-statutory-guidance/care-and-support-statutory-guidance>

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