



HOUSING January 2008

1. Housing and homelessness staff in Buckinghamshire play an important role in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children as part of their day to day work in:

- Recognising child welfare issues,
- Sharing information
- Making referrals
- Managing or reducing risks

2. Housing managers, whether working for the Local Authority or for a registered social landlord (RSL), and others with a front-line role such as environmental health officers, also have an important role, e.g.:

- Housing staff, in day to day contact with families and tenants, may become aware of needs or welfare issues which they can either tackle directly e.g. by making repairs or adaptations to homes, or by assisting the family to accessing help
- Housing authorities are key to the assessment of the needs of families with disabled children who may require housing adaptations in order to participate fully in family life and reach their maximum potential
- Housing authorities have a front line emergency role for instance managing re-housing or repossession when adults and children become homeless or at risk of homelessness as a result of domestic violence
- Housing staff through their day to day contact with members of the public and with families may become aware of concerns about the welfare of particular children.
- Housing authorities and RSLs may hold important information that could assist Children's Social Care carry out 'child in need' or 'child protection' assessments under the requirements of the Children Act 1989 (NB. in the case of mobile families they may have more information than most other agencies). Conversely, Social Care staff and other organisations working with children can have information which will make assessments of the need for certain types of housing more effective; joint information sharing protocols should be developed
- Housing authorities have a responsibility to ensure that dangerous offenders are not offered tenancies in locations offering high levels of access to children
- Environmental Health Officers inspecting conditions in private rented housing may become aware of conditions that impact adversely on children. Under Part 1 of the Housing Act 2004, authorities will take account of the impact of health and safety hazards in housing on vulnerable occupants, including children, when deciding on the action to be taken by landlords to improve conditions.

3. Registered Social Landlords

In some areas, the Local Authority in Buckinghamshire does not directly own or manage housing, having transferred these responsibilities to one or more RSL. Housing authorities remain responsible for assessing the needs of families, under homelessness legislation, and for managing nominations to registered social landlords who provide housing in their area, although some have contracted this to RSL partners.

4. Housing authorities continue to have an important role in safeguarding children because of their contact with families as part of the assessment of need, and because of the influence they have designing and managing prioritisation, assessment and allocation of housing.

5. RSLs are independent organisations, regulated by the Housing Corporation under its regulatory code, and are not public bodies. RSLs are not under the same duties to safeguarding and promote the welfare of children, as are Local Authorities. However, the Housing Corporation supports the principle of RSLs working in partnership with a range of organisations to promote social inclusion. Its regulatory code states that housing associations must work with Local Authorities to enable the latter to fulfil their duties to the vulnerable and to those covered by the Government's 'Supporting People' policy.

6. There are RSLs who provide specialist supported housing schemes specifically for:

- Young people at risk
- Young people leaving care
- Pregnant teenagers