

Safeguarding Annual Report 2023-2024





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Foreword from our Independent Chair

I'm delighted to introduce Midland Heart's annual Safeguarding Report for 2023-24, giving an overview of the association's work in this area over the last year.

As you'll see, the number and types of cases are broadly in line with previous years, continuing to suggest good awareness and reporting across the organisation.

A key development this year is that feedback from tenants who have been the focus of a safeguarding concern is being collected more systematically, and you can see some of the feedback on page 9 of this report. The feedback has been very helpful and generally very positive, and I'm grateful to tenants who have taken the time to help with this.

As chair of the Safeguarding Board, my role is to provide an independent external perspective and in March 2024 I was pleased to share that perspective through a report to Midland Heart's Operations Committee. This is the committee which oversees the association's work day to day.

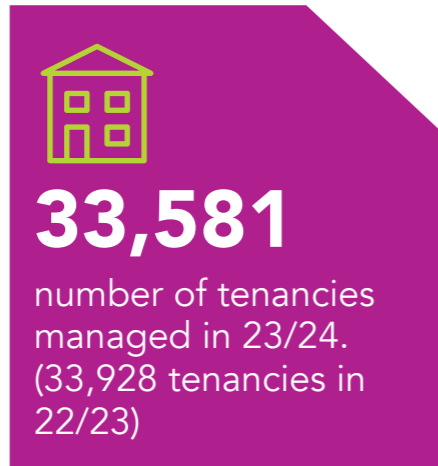
In the report I said that: "Having chaired the Safeguarding Board since April 2022, my view of the approach to safeguarding at Midland Heart is very positive. There is a good level of awareness and understanding and every indication of a positive safeguarding culture. There are good processes in place and a willingness to further develop those processes."

Those positive attributes come through strongly in the pages that follow.

Peter Cheer
Independent Chair of the Midland Heart
Safeguarding Board

Overview

A snapshot of our safeguarding progress this year:



Top three Safeguarding Concerns

The top three safeguarding concerns are self neglect, domestic abuse and emotional/psychological abuse. This trend is consistent to last year.

General Needs

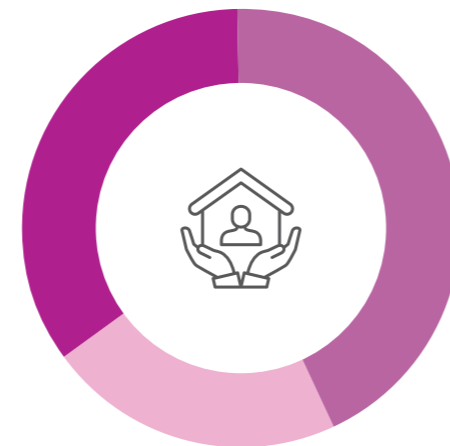
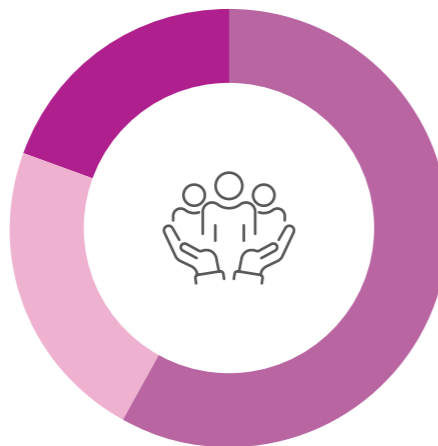
- Self neglect **244**
- Domestic abuse **159**
- Emotional/psychological abuse **152**

Retirement Living

- Self neglect **18**
- Neglect & acts of omission **7**
- Emotional/psychological abuse **6**

Independent Living

- Self neglect **10**
- Domestic abuse **5**
- Emotional/psychological abuse **8**



Highlights of the year

Here is a snapshot of our four strategic aims for 2023/2024 and what actions we have taken:



Good Governance – Our Safeguarding Board has continued to oversee and monitor our safeguarding practices and any trends. Furthermore, we have revised our policies and procedures in line with Housing Regulations and Consumer Standards.



Partnership Relationships – We have established ways across our teams to ensure we comply with consumer standards from the Social Housing Regulator. Operationally, we have continued to work hard to maintain robust working relationships with Local Authorities, Police, our peers within Social Housing, local community service providers and charities.



Develop our Tenant Voice – We have continued to collaborate with our tenants to understand feedback on the safeguarding services we provide. This has been elevated by the creation and running of our safeguarding perspective surveys.



Learning and Training – We have attended multiple 'toolbox talks' across a variety of internal teams and brought to light any learning and training gaps as a result of auditing and case reviews.

Understanding our tenants' needs

Understanding the demographics of our tenants remains a high priority for us, as this allows us to ensure our services remain person centred. Awareness of what safeguarding concerns are impacting our tenants helps us to provide the right support, strong collaborative links with key external agencies and ensure our colleagues are equipped with robust training to achieve a safe environment that is free of harm and abuse.

Following a deep dive into our 2023/2024 demographics data, we are pleased to continue to find that the number of safeguarding cases largely reflects our tenant profile. This remains to be a positive position to be in and is accredited to the work of our colleagues alongside the invaluable insight from our tenants. We will continue to monitor these trends, along with our tenant demographics.

Ethnic diversity:

When looking at the ethnic diversity of our tenants, we have found that the number of safeguarding cases we have managed in 2023/2024, is what we would expect when comparing to our tenant profiles.

Sex and Age:

Similarly to previous years, our 2023/2024 data shows that the majority of our tenant base is female.

When looking deeper into the top three safeguarding concerns we managed in 2023/2024, we are able to breakdown who has been impacted and required safeguarding interventions.

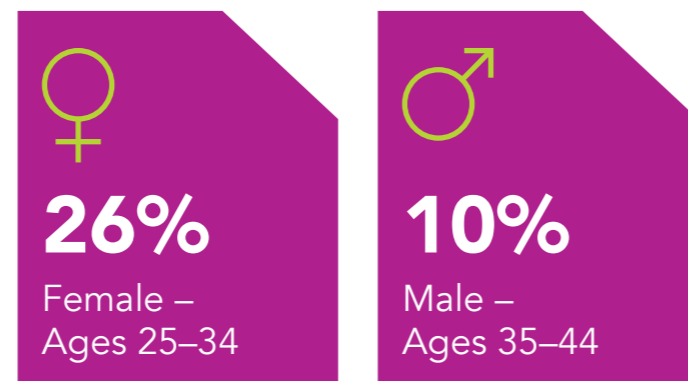
Our analysis has shown that when looking at self-neglect as a safeguarding concern, there is a close even keel as to both our female and male tenants being equally affected and across various age ranges. Whilst we know that self neglect can occur with older people, we have found that our tenants who have required interventions for self neglect are within the age range for our General Needs properties.

With domestic abuse, we know that women are more at risk of experiencing this than men. Our data shows that 92% of domestic abuse cases were focused on our tenants that are female and between the ages of 25-34.



Furthermore, we have found that there is just over half of our female tenants who have been impacted by psychological or emotional abuse. Similarly to domestic abuse, we know that females are more likely to be at risk of psychological and emotional abuse and can see this is largely reflected in our tenant base.

Psychological and emotional abuse ages and sex:



Age:

When considering the age range impacted across all safeguarding concerns, there has been a slight change to previous years, in that the most prevalent age group who have required safeguarding are 35-44 years old. Similarly to previous years, our tenants within the 25-34 age group continue to be one of the highest reported groups in safeguarding. This remains to be attributed to our tenant base across General Needs properties and Independent Living Services.

Top three Local Authorities with highest safeguarding cases

Our analysis into Local Authorities and the number of safeguarding cases that are raised within those areas has shown the following:



Our findings show that the number of cases within these areas are proportionate to the size of the areas and our tenant base within the area. Whilst it can be noted there are slightly more cases that have been raised in Birmingham and Wolverhampton, this can indicate changes within these areas that have impacted its residents and there are no significant concerns. We are committed to continuing our collaborative work with Local Authorities.

Safeguarding cases closed with an accepted Local Authority referral

Within 2023/2024, we have seen that 464 safeguarding cases managed did not require a Local Authority statutory safeguarding to be raised. Our analysis shows that where referrals have been made, there were 50 referrals that were accepted and 23 that were not.

When looking at which areas have the most accepted referrals, we found that Birmingham, Dudley and Sandwell were the top three. This is what we would expect based on the size of these authorities.



Case study: HomeChecker

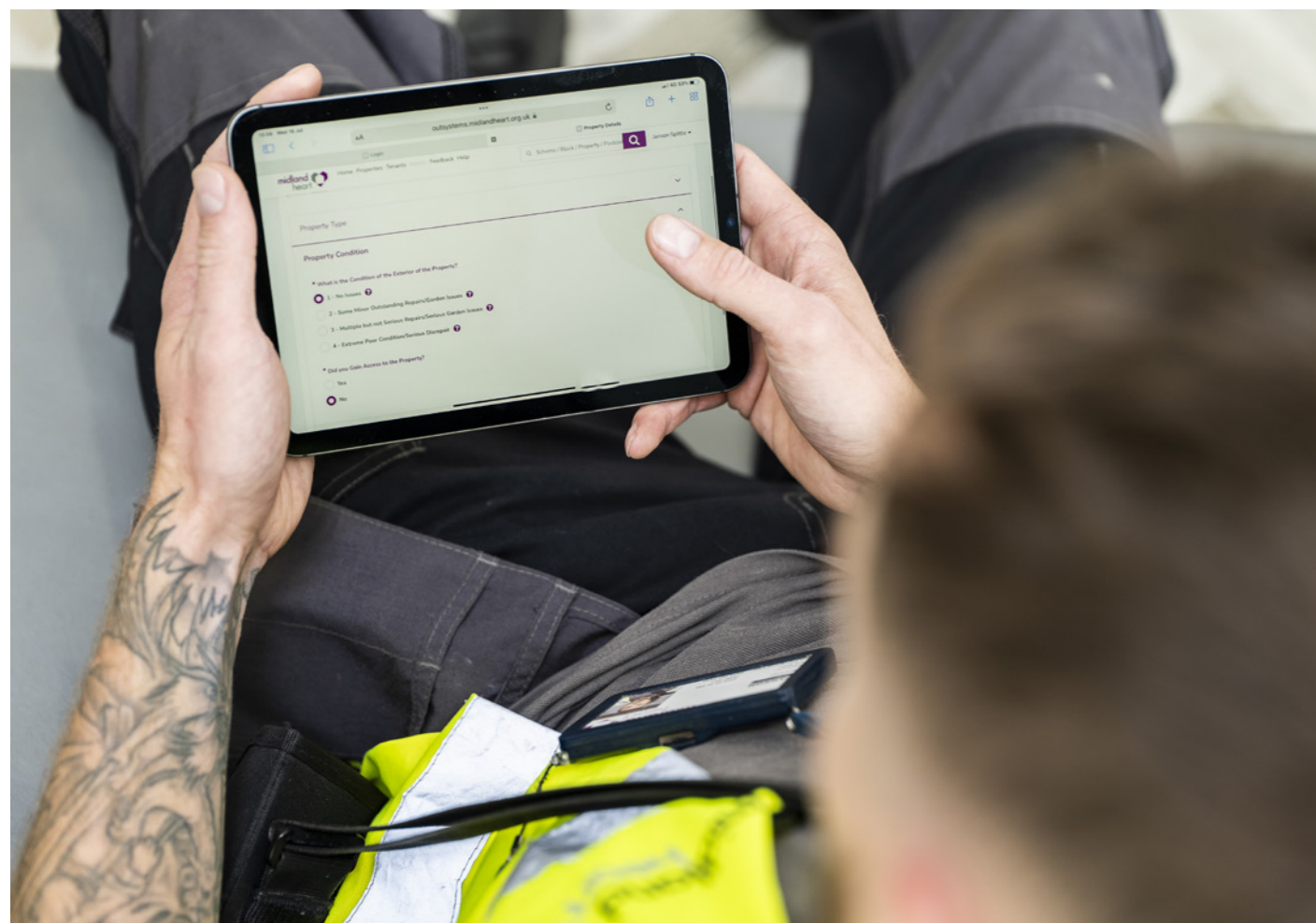
In our last Safeguarding Annual Report, we were excited to share with you the launch of HomeChecker and a snapshot of how the HomeChecker form had been used to strengthen our processes in identifying concerns at our tenants' homes.

In 2023/2024, there were a remarkable 94,472 HomeChecker forms completed by 369 of our colleagues. We have found that HomeChecker has continued to be a success in being our most valuable risk assessment tool. It is important to note that all our newer colleagues receive training in HomeChecker, so that there is an overall awareness on the purpose, how it works, and what to look out for.

We are pleased to report that many of our safeguarding cases that have been raised through a HomeChecker form, have been identified by our Repairs Team. This provided us with confidence that our holistic approach and thorough training has ensured that all our

colleagues who are accessing our tenants' properties daily, can spot any property and/or tenancy associated issues that have otherwise been unreported to us.

HomeChecker has been key in enabling us to have visibility on our tenants' home conditions, along with being able to identify any of our tenants that might need help. Using an all-encompassing approach alongside HomeChecker, such as gas service visits, completed repairs and stock condition surveys, we have been able to better understand and focus our communications on how we can help and support our tenants and encourage our tenants to approach us if they are struggling.



Listening to our tenants

Our tenant's feedback is crucial for us to ensure we are providing the right services at the right time. In order to do this, we conduct Tenant Perspective Surveys where we do just that.

Our focus is to ensure we provide a holistic service where we are keen to understand what we can improve on in the service we provide when managing safeguarding cases, in conjunction with understanding whether our external partners and agencies are providing appropriate support too.

Along with our safeguarding practices, we believe it is imperative to learn and understand how vulnerabilities may impact our tenants and how they can be a part of the support we provide. Our key focus is to ensure that when our tenants are accessing our services, they are treated with respect, no matter of what additional needs they may have.

One of our involved tenants, who we will refer to as 'J', has sat down with us to share what their experience has been as someone with vulnerabilities. 'J' commented that respect and courtesy go a long way in achieving tenant satisfaction with our services.



We have also worked with our tenants to develop a new Vulnerability e-learning which will be launching soon to better support colleagues.

Take a look at what some of our tenants have said to us about how their safeguarding case has been handled, how much they felt they were listened to, and how supported they felt during their case:

"I could talk to my officer and felt like she checked in on me."

"I was listened to, and I was told matters were being sorted out. I was continuously informed."

"I feel like my safety was taken into consideration and I was safeguarded."

"[Case Officer] was excellent with her service."

"I feel in a better position now."

"I was given lots of information for support."

"[Case Officer] came out and was understanding of my situation at the time, she told me where I could get support, and I was happy with this."

Case study: Housing Advice Team

Launched just over a year ago, our new Housing Advice Team is a dynamic team of highly experienced Housing Advice Officers, who act as the first point of contact for our tenants who are reporting issues in relation to antisocial behaviour and safeguarding.

Now our team is fully embedded, we have sat down with one of our Housing Advice Officers to find out, first hand, more about the incredible work this team does daily.

Describe a typical day in the life of a Housing Advice Officer

Before starting the day, it is important to feel ready and on time as the calls are our priority and we need to be prepared for whatever comes at the end of the call. For some of our tenants, making that phone call to ask for help and support can be a challenge because of feeling too proud, being in disbelief or not wanting to be judged. We can understand that for our tenants they are essentially talking with a stranger, so it is our duty to do what we can to make sure they feel as comfortable and as listened to as possible.

Along with listening and gathering all the information from our tenants, we can spend time providing them with advice and support to deal with the concern at hand. If we have assessed that a further case is required, our tenant is kept aware through every step of the process. It is up to us to ensure risk assessments, agreed actions plans, and touchpoints, are communicated with not only them but with our Tenancy Services Team.

What do you enjoy about being a Housing Advice Officer?

I enjoy the fact that every day is different, you just never know what call is going to come in. I would say that a massive positive of this role is the team dynamic, led by our Team Leader, we are supportive of each other and when there are some days when you need five minutes, the team are accommodating and understanding. A big plus is being able to receive positive feedback from tenants who I have helped. This keeps me motivated and the role enjoyable.



Our 2024/2025 Strategic Aims

Good Governance

Training

Assurance

Trend Analysis

- **Good Governance** – Ensuring we have robust policies and procedures remain to be one of our key priorities, where these will be reviewed regularly.
- **Training** – Following a thorough review of our policies and procedures across our organisation, our focus is to carry out a refresh on all relevant internal training.
- **Assurance** – Drawing focus on continuous thematic auditing on key safeguarding practices and processes to ensure assurances can be provided on a regular basis.

- **Trend Analysis** – Analysing our safeguarding data along with audit outcomes, case review recommendations, and root causes of complaints we receive to spot trends on any gaps and learning we can implement. We will also share learnings with Local Authorities and relevant agencies.

What else is being done?

We have a Safeguarding Group that consists of colleagues from across the whole of the organisation. The group works operationally and provides an integrated approach to policy and procedure reviews, case reviews, communication plans and our Safeguarding Ambassador work. The group also provides an open forum for teams to share safeguarding queries and share best practices.





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