

## Policy for Safeguarding Children and Young People (aged under 18)

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<b>Consultation process</b>	Safeguarding Team, CMT	<b>Distribution and training</b>	Synergy
<b>Created</b>		<b>Next planned review</b>	October 2026
<b>Last reviewed</b>	December 2025		
<b>Approved by and date</b>	CMT: 23 October 2025 Board: 03 December 2025		
<b>Change record</b> Adapted to be consistent with Adults Safeguarding Policy so contains more contextual information.			
<b>Version no</b>	<b>Nature of change</b>	<b>Last approved</b>	<b>Approval</b>
1	Review	21.11.23	Board
2	Review	26.11.24	Board
3	Review	03.12.25	Board
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## **Policy statement**

- 1.0 At CHS we believe every child or young person has the right to live in safety, free from abuse, neglect and exploitation. Children's safeguarding is the term used to describe the process and activity of protecting children from neglect or abuse. CHS has a statutory duty to protect children and young people as we are well placed to spot early signs of abuse or neglect.
- 1.1 CHS is committed to taking a pro-active approach to the safeguarding requirements under the Children Act (1989, 2004) and the Children and Social Work Act 2017 ensuring all our employees understand their individual responsibilities to our customers and the wider community and are supported to act accordingly. This includes ensuring our organisation and individual employees are active partners with key stakeholders who are concerned with children's safeguarding and with the relevant multi-agency procedures.
- 1.2 This document has been designed to set out the safeguarding children and young people' policy statement and standards in a way that recognises the diversity of roles, responsibilities, degree and mode of contact with our customers. The document is designed for clarity and quick reference for each team in day-to-day operations. However, it is paramount that every employee initially reads all of the policy, attends the safeguarding training appropriate to their role and reflects on their understanding and practice in supervision.

## **Legal framework**

- 2.0 This policy has been drawn up based on legislation, policy and guidance that seeks to protect children in England. The four main acts are:
  - Children Act 1989, which provided the legislative framework for child protection in England. Key principles established by the Act include:
    - the paramount nature of the child's welfare
    - the expectations and requirements around duties of care to children.
  - Children Act 2004, which encourages partnerships between agencies and creates more accountability, by:
    - placing a duty on local authorities to appoint children's services members who are ultimately accountable for the delivery of services
    - placing a duty on local authorities and their partners to co-operate in safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of children and young people.
  - Children and Social Work Act 2017, which reformed safeguarding by replacing Local Safeguarding Children's Boards with new local partnerships, introduced a Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel, strengthened information sharing, clarified responsibilities for agencies, and improved support for care leavers,
  - Supported Accommodation (England) Regulations 2023. This policy enables us to meet Standards 20 and 5 which relate to Quality and Protection

We take guidance from Cambridgeshire and Peterborough -Safeguarding Partnership Board: <https://www.safeguardingcambspeterborough.org.uk/>, including:

- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023. In particular, this guidance refers to :-
  - Guidance for Safer Working Practice 2022
  - Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Safeguarding Board's Effective Support for Children and Families (Thresholds) Document

### **Policy aims**

#### 3.0 Policy aims:-

- To provide guidance for employees to be able to recognise and identify the types and signs of abuse or neglect.
- To provide guidance for employees to enable them to feel confident to act on and, report suspected or actual incidents of abuse or neglect, including responding to any immediate safety needs.
- To identify the reporting pathway for raising an alert and making a safeguarding referral.
- To ensure that employees record any concerns and the action taken.
- To clarify the support and advice available to employees who are involved in a safeguarding situation.
- To clarify the organisational structure and governance arrangements in relation to safeguarding children and young people.
- To clarify CHS's responsibilities around allegations against people in positions of trust (PIPOT)

### **Policy statement**

#### 4.0 Policy Statement :-

##### **We believe that:**

- Children and young people should never experience abuse of any kind
- We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people, to keep them safe and to practise in a way that protects them.

##### **We recognise that:**

- The welfare of children is paramount in all the work we do and in all the decisions we take.

- Working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare
- All children, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation have an equal right to protection from all types of harm or abuse.
- Some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues
- Extra safeguards may be needed to keep children who are additionally vulnerable safe from abuse and exploitation.
- Achieving the best results comes from both using intersectional approaches that acknowledge people's diverse needs and collaborating with expert professionals from various agencies.

**We will seek to keep children and young people safe by:**

- Valuing, listening to and respecting them
- Appointing a Strategic Lead for Child protection and Young People – our Director of Communities – and a lead Board member for safeguarding, Andrew Ryde
- Adopting child protection and safeguarding best practice through our policies, procedures and behaviours framework for employees and volunteers
- Developing and implementing an effective online safety policy and related procedures
- Providing effective management for employees and volunteers through supervision, support, training and quality assurance measures so that all employees and volunteers know about and follow our policies, procedures and behaviour codes confidently and competently
- Recruiting and selecting employees and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made
- Recording and storing and using information professionally and securely, in line with data protection legislation and guidance
- Sharing information about safeguarding and good practice with children and their families via our newsletter, posters, and one-to-one discussions in our Community Support and supported accommodation services
- Making sure that children, young people and their families know where to go for help if they have a concern
- Using our safeguarding and child protection procedures to share concerns and relevant information with agencies who need to know, and involving children, young people, parents, families and carers appropriately
- Following guidance set out in the Department for Education's Information Sharing

Advice.

- Using our procedures to manage any allegations against employees and volunteers appropriately
- Referring any current and historical allegations of abuse against children to Children's Services, whether the alleged perpetrator is a PIPOT or not
- Ensuring that we have effective complaints and whistleblowing measures in place
- Ensuring that we provide a safe physical environment for our children, young people, employees and volunteers, by applying health and safety measures in accordance with the law and regulatory guidance
- Building a safeguarding culture where employees and volunteers, children, young people and their families, treat each other with respect and are comfortable about sharing concerns.
- Keeping abreast of best practice

## Definitions

### 5.0 What do we mean by children's safeguarding

Children's safeguarding is the term used to describe the process and activity of protecting children from harm, neglect, or abuse, and promoting their welfare. Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance identifies safeguarding as:

- Providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge
- Protecting children from maltreatment, whether that is within or outside the home, including online
- Preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development
- Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- Promoting the upbringing of children with their birth parents, or otherwise their family network through a kinship care arrangement, whenever possible and where this is in the best interests of the children
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes in line with the outcomes set out in the Children's Social Care National Framework

### 5.1 What do we mean by abuse and neglect?

**Abuse and neglect** are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family, institutional, or community setting; by those known to them or, more rarely, by strangers (including online). Abuse can be perpetrated by adults or by other children.

In the context of safeguarding children, abuse and neglect are defined as follows:

## **Abuse**

Abuse refers to any action that intentionally harms or injures a child. It can take several forms:

- Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of or deliberately induces illness in a child.
- Emotional Abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child's emotional development e.g.
  - Humiliating or constantly criticising a child
  - Threatening, shouting, or calling them names
  - Making the child subject of jokes or using sarcasm to hurt the child
  - Blaming, scapegoating
  - Making a child perform degrading acts
  - Not recognising a child's individuality, trying to control their lives
  - Pushing the child too hard, not recognising their limitations
  - Exposing a child to distressing events such as domestic abuse or drug taking
  - Failure to promote a child's social development
  - Not allowing them to have friends
  - Persistently ignoring them
  - Being absent
  - Manipulating a child
  - Never saying anything kind, expressing positive feelings or congratulating a child on successes
  - Never showing any emotions in interactions with a child
- Sexual Abuse: Involving a child in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. Online sexual abuse is increasingly prevalent, including grooming, exploitation, and sharing of images.

## **Neglect**

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and emotional needs, which can severely impact their health and development. This includes:

- Physical Neglect: Failing to provide adequate food, clothing, or shelter.
- Medical Neglect: Not ensuring the child receives necessary medical care.
- Educational Neglect: Failing to ensure the child receives an education.
- Emotional Neglect: Ignoring a child's emotional needs, not providing affection, or exposing them to domestic violence.

## **Other Forms of Harm**

### **Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and County Lines**

- CSE is a form of sexual abuse where children are manipulated or coerced into sexual activity, often in exchange for money, gifts, or affection.
- County lines exploitation involves children being used to transport, store, or sell drugs, often under threat or coercion.

### **Radicalisation**

- Radicalisation refers to the process by which children are drawn into extremist ideologies and may be encouraged to participate in, or support, terrorism or violent acts.

### **Online Abuse**

- Abuse can take place wholly online or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. This includes cyberbullying, grooming, exploitation, and exposure to harmful content.

### **Domestic Abuse**

- Children can be harmed by witnessing or being exposed to domestic abuse, even if they are not directly targeted.

## **Our approach**

6.0 The first component of any safeguarding strategy is prevention. As an organisation, we can make a difference to children's lives by early intervention and/or preventing a deterioration in their situation.

This includes:

- a) Good governance: putting systems in place to identify and reduce risks to children in relation to abuse and neglect. This includes collecting information that may indicate something might be going wrong for them e.g., number of falls, attendance at A & E, learning lessons from safeguarding incidents and ensuring action is taken to prevent recurrence. A serious incident policy and procedure, robust investigation process and capability to make initial enquiries if requested by the Local Authority is in place.
- b) Access to clear information for all employees on safeguarding: ensuring all employees have access to, and understand, the safeguarding and whistleblowing policies and procedures that are underpinned by a zero-tolerance approach to abuse. Coherent linking of related policies such as those concerned with Anti-Social Behavior, Hoarding, and Domestic Abuse etc.
- c) Clear operational policies and procedures for employees who provide support: ensuring employees have clear standards and information to provide safe and high-quality support. For example, assessments within benefits and money advice, risk assessment and care planning etc.
- d) Recruitment: ensuring vigilance in recruitment practice specifically, references and appropriate use of Disclosure and Barring Services for all customer facing employees. Minimising the use of bank and agency employees in care and support services. Clear expectations and standards of conduct for employees, including contractors and volunteers.
- e) Training and supervision: development of employees understanding and practice of safeguarding children, reinforcing of policies, and sharing lessons learned.
- f) Information for customers: helping customers, and their families, to understand their rights and what to do if they feel they are at risk, or experiencing abuse or that, for whatever reason, they may be neglecting themselves to the detriment of their health and safety.

- g) Partnership working and information sharing: collaboration with local agencies concerned with safeguarding such as police, GP's, NHS, local authority, and regulators is a key aspect of effective practice. This includes ensuring there is a local agreement or protocol setting out the principles and process for sharing information about children at risk or potential/actual perpetrator of abuse. The Data Protection Act (1998) enables the sharing of information and sets out the law in relation to this.

### **Persons in position of trust (PIPOT)**

- 7.0 While the primary focus of Safeguarding work is to safeguard one or more identified children, there may be times where a risk or potential risk may be posed by somebody who works with children, but where there is no specific child identified. Where such concerns are raised about a CHS employee or volunteer who works with children it will be necessary for CHS to assess any potential risk to children who use our services, and, if necessary, to take action to safeguard those children.

Where concerns have been raised that a person in a position of trust may pose a risk to children, the experience is likely to be very stressful for them. Alongside CHS's duty of care towards the child/children, there must be a duty of care to the employee or volunteer concerned. CHS will provide support to minimise stress associated with the process, including where possible:

- the individual has the right to be informed of the allegation.
- support for the person to understand the procedures being followed.
- the right to contact their union representative at any point – should they have one.
- updates on developments.
- the opportunity to respond to allegations/concerns.
- support to raise questions or concerns about their circumstances.
- mental health support available through CHS's Mental Health First Aiders and the Employee Assistance Programme. There may be limitations on the amount of information that can be shared at a particular time in order not to prejudice any enquiry/investigation or place any adult or child at risk. There may also be occasions where there is a need to agree changes to the Person's working arrangements or to the support provided.

### **Supporting policies and procedures**

- 8.0 This policy statement should be read alongside our organisational policies, procedures, guidance, and other related documents:

- Missing Persons
- Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Grievance Procedure
- Disciplinary Procedure
- Complaints Procedure
- Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy
- Confidential Reporting (Whistle blowing) Policy
- Lone Working Policy
- Confidentiality Policy
- Policy on Gifts, hospitality, and conflicts of interest
- Use of Disclosure and Barring Service checks
- Dignity at work policy
- Domestic Abuse policy
- ASB and Harassment policy
- Handling cash and valuables
- Professional Boundaries



- Use of mobile phones and cameras (Mobile Technology)
- Adverse Incident Reporting
- CCTV Policy
- House rules at Looked After Children Services
- Online Safety Procedure
- Children's Safeguarding Procedure
- Employees Training Matrix
- Adult safeguarding policy
- PIPOT (persons in position of trust) procedure
- Whistleblowing policy
- Damp and Mold Policy
- Aids and Adaptations Policy
- Fire Safety and Risk Policy
- Management of Water Risk (Legionella) Policy
- Management of Gas Safety Policy

### Who does this policy apply to

9.0 This policy and its associated procedures are for:

- All CHS's employees
- All CHS's contractors
- Apprentices, volunteers, and students working within any department within CHS.
- CHS's Board

### Roles and responsibilities

10.0 **Overall responsibility: CHS's Board** has responsibility for ensuring that the organisation meets the legislative and regulatory duties relating to children's safeguarding and the protection of children. It will:

- a) Appoint a lead Board member – with the appropriate skills and experience – to provide support to the Strategic Lead for Safeguarding. This is Andrew Ryde.
- b) Regularly review whether the things the organisation has put in place are creating a safer culture and keeping children safe.

10.1 **Strategic lead for safeguarding: Director of Communities** has responsibility for:

- a) Ensuring policies and procedures are in place relating to the safeguarding of children.
- b) Maintaining a cross organisational focus and attention to matters relating to the safeguarding of children.
- c) Ensuring that strategic initiatives, policies, or procedures are instigated in response to internal and external learning and/or new legislative policy and guidance.
- d) In partnership with the Human Resources team, allocating and coordinating investigations into allegations of abuse in relation to the allegations against employees.

- e) Maintaining a list of Designated Safeguarding Persons (DSP's) and ensuring that information related to this is kept up to date.
- f) Providing support and advice to the Designated Safeguarding Persons.
- g) Liaising with HR to ensure that training content is aligned to organisational policies and procedures and achieving required outcomes.

**10.2 Directors of Homes and Director of Customers:** have responsibility for:

- a) Ensuring this policy, procedures and protocols are implemented and adhered to within their sphere of responsibility.
- b) Ensuring the swift reporting, management, and follow-up of safeguarding concerns within their team are dealt with in a timely and organised manner.
- c) Ensuring multi-agency policies and procedures are adhered to when a concern is raised and facilitating the attendance of employees when required at relevant safeguarding meetings and forums.
- d) Reviewing, disseminating, and ensuring appropriate action on 'lessons learned.
- e) Considering the impact of reporting a safeguarding concern on a team member and any action that may be required including appropriate feedback on outcomes and any additional support or access to counselling.

**10.3 Designated Safeguarding Persons (DSP's):** have responsibility for:

- a) Being a point of contact for advice, ensuring support for service delivery employees and managers, whilst not replacing the individual's responsibility for safeguarding.
- b) Promoting within their team, understanding and adherence to the policies and related procedures, and particularly those concerned with anti-social behavior, domestic violence, hate crime, Missing, hoarding and self-neglect.
- c) Maintaining accurate records of advice provided to other employees and ensuring follow up of actions recommended.
- d) Attending quarterly organisational wide safeguarding forums to discuss safeguarding issues arising, lessons learned and implications for practice within their team and the wider organisation. This will be facilitated by the strategic lead for safeguarding and include an update on relevant national and local policy, information, research, or case studies from external safeguarding reviews.
- e) Maintaining links with, and attend as required, external safeguarding forums, meetings, or networks on behalf of CHS.

**10.4 All employees** have responsibility for:

- a) Taking seriously, listening carefully, and reporting appropriately any safeguarding concerns reported to them.

- b) Ensuring immediate action is taken if the person/s are in immediate or serious danger or a crime is likely/or has been committed as per policy.
- c) Ensuring they keep accurate records of the allegation, initial enquiries and action and completing appropriate paperwork/forms as instructed by this policy and supporting procedures.
- d) Acting in accordance with this policy, procedure and protocols and attendance at appropriate training and supervision.
- e) Understanding the Whistleblowing policy and their obligation to report suspected or actual abuse or neglect.
- f) Ensuring that confidentiality is maintained and information is shared appropriately.

### **Agencies involved with Childrens Safeguarding**

11.0 There are a number of agencies involved with the safeguarding of children, including:

- Local Authorities
- NHS
- Police
- Education
- Housing providers
- Voluntary and charitable groups
- Advocacy

It is important that CHS works in partnership with these, and other agencies as required to support the prevention of abuse and to deal swiftly and decisively to secure the protection of the child. CHS will work within the policy and procedure developed by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Safeguarding Partnership Board and work in partnership e.g. logging concerns with the Police about children and young people being radicalized .

### **Reporting a Safeguarding concern**

12.0 **Reporting a safeguarding concern** – CHS has a robust procedure for reporting concerns, see CHS safeguarding children and young people procedure

### **Record keeping of a Safeguarding concern**

13.0 It is paramount that all employees keep accurate and timely records of any safeguarding concerns and actions.

### **Support for Employees**

14.0 Reporting alleged abuse and witnessing children and young people at risk in abusive or neglectful situations can be distressing and traumatic for employees. Line managers should ensure that employees have support and opportunity to de-brief and discuss their experiences and concerns.

CHS has in place an employee assistance programme and employees should be encouraged to make use of this should they wish. It is important that employees who report potential or actual abuse or neglect are kept informed at each stage of the process and provided with appropriate feedback in relation to outcomes.

## **Distressed or vexatious allegations**

- 15.0 Occasionally, there may be customers who are 'at risk' who make distressing or vexatious allegations that CHS employees have in some manner abused or neglected them. This is rare and it is important to remember that the person making the allegation may have a mental health disorder or cognitive impairment. However, when it does happen it is important for the customer and employees to discharge their Duty of Candour by contacting the LA Designated Officer (LADO) and discussing the situation, explaining why you believe the report to be untrue and any evidence you have and seeking their advice as to how to proceed. In these cases, it is vital to ensure that detailed records are maintained as to the type of complaint made, which employees it involved and action taken.

Employees, who are lone workers, can be particularly vulnerable to allegations of this nature and it is important to recognise and support them should they experience such a situation, reassuring them that any investigation or suspension without prejudice is routine practice.

## **Reporting and monitoring**

- 16.0 We will review this policy annually as follows:

- a) An annual assessment of effectiveness of the policy and procedures in resolving each case of abuse that has arisen during the year is conducted. This includes seeking feedback from employees, service users and other agencies as appropriate. The number and type of safeguarding concerns and actual cases, and seriousness rating is summarised.
- b) An annual written report to the Customer and Homes Committee on the effectiveness of the Policy and Procedures including any proposals for revision, and an action plan; including assessment against NSPCC guidelines.

We will maintain and strengthen the safeguarding culture at CHS through our Safeguarding Team, which will meet quarterly, to:

- a) Monitor potential and actual safeguarding incidents
- b) Consider incidents and reflect on lessons learnt
- c) Communicate any lessons across the organisation
- d) Monitor and inform safeguarding training
- e) Consider information, lessons and policy changes from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Safeguarding Board
- f) Consider good practice from the NSPCC and other sources

Serious incidents are reported via the CHS adverse incident forms, and these are shared with relevant overseeing bodies such as OFSTED, CQC, Cambridgeshire County Council.

## **Equality and diversity implications**

- 17.0 This policy, by its nature and focus, supports the needs and promotes the safety and wellbeing of people as defined by the nine protected characteristics (Equality Act 2010).