

Safeguarding Policy for internal supported accommodation and Homestay

This procedure will be available to and explained to children and their families and to all staff whatever their role. All staff must be familiar with, and must follow, this procedure for responding to and reporting concerns about the safety of a child.

This chapter must be read in conjunction with the [Cumbria Safeguarding Children Partnership Procedures](#) for the area.

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1. Principles

The service works to ensure that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe.

The Managers responsible for the day to day running of our supported accommodation and Homestay provision will ensure:

- That staff in the supported accommodation or Homestay carers:
 - Assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the young person's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the young person.
 - Help each young person to understand how to keep safe.
 - Have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a young person is at risk of harm.
 - Manage relationships between young people to prevent them from harming each other.

- Understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting young person that are assigned to them by the Manager.
- Take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a young person welfare; and
- Are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the local authority child protection policies.
- That the day-to-day care/support is arranged and delivered so as to keep each young person safe and to protect them effectively from harm;
- That the premises used for the purposes of the supported accommodation/lodgings are located so that young people are effectively safeguarded;
- That the premises used for the purposes of the supported accommodation/lodgings are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each young person from avoidable hazards to their health; and
- That the effectiveness of the supported accommodation/lodgings use of child protection policies is monitored regularly.

See also related procedures on protecting children from specific types of harm and abuse:

- [Recognising Abuse and Neglect](#);
- [Allegations Against Staff](#);
- [Children who go Missing from Care or Home](#);
- [Self-Harming and Suicidal Behaviour](#);
- [Safe Use of the Internet, Social Media and Photographs](#);
- [Child Exploitation \(including Child Sexual Exploitation and Child Criminal Exploitation\)](#) ;
- [Child Criminal Exploitation and County Lines](#);
- [Safeguarding Young People from Radicalisation and Extremism](#);
- [Female Genital Mutilation](#).

2. Definitions

Safeguarding is a term which is broader than 'child protection' and relates to the action taken to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Safeguarding is defined in [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#) as:

- Protecting children from maltreatment;
- Preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health and development;
- Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

There are four defined categories of child abuse:

- Physical Abuse;
- Emotional Abuse;
- Neglect;
- Sexual Abuse.

See also: [Recognising Abuse and Neglect Procedure](#).

3. Proactive Safeguarding Practice

The supported accommodation/lodgings provider is supported to be proactive in working with young people to reduce the risk of harm to them, and sets high expectations to ensure that young people feel safe and are safe, understand how to protect themselves and are protected from significant harm, including (but not limited to) neglect, abuse, sexual and criminal exploitation, accidents, bullying, self-harm, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, homophobic behaviour, racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination, and radicalisation. Any discriminatory behaviours are challenged and help, and support are given to young people about how to treat others with respect. Staff and Homestay providers are prepared and supported to respond to young people who may face these risks and receive suitable training.

Young People must feel safe and be safe. Staff and homestay providers should support young people to be aware of and manage their own safety both inside and outside the home to the extent that any good parent would. Staff and homestay providers should help children to understand how to protect themselves, feel protected and be protected from significant harm.

Young people should be encouraged to develop positive relationships with others both in and outside the home and develop positive relationships. However, staff and homestay providers should be alert to the possibility that young people may be at risk from such relationships including with other young people in the provision, staff, family members, friends and others outside the provision, and they therefore should take appropriate steps to protect a young person where there are concerns for their safety.

Proactive and creative safeguarding practice means that all children, including the most vulnerable, have a strong sense of safety and well-being and so are unlikely to be missing from their provision on a regular basis. See: [Children who go Missing from Care or Home](#).

Staff and Homestay providers will be prepared and supported to manage situations and behaviour and use clear and consistent boundaries to contribute to a feeling of well-being and security for their young people. Young people will be involved in creating ways to de-escalate situations and finding creative alternative strategies that are effective. See: [Positive Behaviour Support, Contact and Restraint](#).

4. Care and Placement Planning

Care and placement planning should ensure that any risks associated with young people offending, misusing drugs or alcohol, self-harming, going missing, being affiliated with gangs, being subject to sexual or criminal exploitation, extremism or radicalism are known and understood by those who support them.

This includes regular meetings with the young persons allocated social worker and the wider network (for example - P.A, Homestay Support worker, education and training provider and their family, if this is appropriate and in accordance with plans for their future.

Leaders and managers will regularly review and act on any known risks to young people, taking advice and guidance from local partners and agencies as appropriate.

5. Working in Partnership with Others

The manager of the supported accommodation or Homestay provision is responsible for coordinating safeguarding children referrals. They will also ensure the Service manager and Nominated individual are cited on this for oversight.

However, safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and protecting them from abuse and harm is a shared responsibility and depends on effective joint working between all staff, homestay providers and other agencies. We all have a responsibility to report any suspicions that a young person has been mistreated or harmed.

Local authorities have a duty to promote and safeguard the welfare of children and to investigate and take necessary action to protect children and young people from abuse and harm.

The service will maintain effective links with local authorities, designated officers and other safeguarding agencies and ensure that there is good communication about safeguarding issues, such as any injuries sustained during restraints or allegations against staff/Homestay providers.

The Managers will also make all notifications as required by Regulation 40 to notify placing authorities, Ofsted and other relevant persons about serious events (see [Notification of Serious Events Procedure](#)).

6. Managing Risk

Staff in the supported accommodation and those supporting Homestay carers should continually and actively assess the risks to each young person and the arrangements in place to protect them. Where there are safeguarding concerns for a young person, their placement plan, agreed between the provider and their placing authority, must include details of the steps the service/Homestay provider will take to manage any assessed risks on a day to day basis.

Young people will be supported to take age-appropriate risks, as part of their development of independent living skills. The service implements a proportionate approach to risk assessments to ensure that these work in practice, are fit for purpose and provide enough information to all relevant people so that they can care for the young people safely and appropriately. Individual up-to-date risk assessments must effectively address any known vulnerabilities for each young person and set out what action should be taken to address and minimise the risks, and reduce harm or the risk of harm (see [Risk Assessment and Planning Procedure](#)).

7. Providing Someone for Young People to Talk to

There is a strong safeguarding culture in the service where young people are listened to, respected and involved in both the development of the service and decisions about the accommodation. All staff/Homestay carers will strive to build positive relationships with young people in the accommodation and develop a culture of openness and trust that encourages young people to be able to tell someone if they have concerns or worries about their safety.

Staff should make information available to young people and Homestay carers in an appropriate form which enables young people to contact their placing authority to call for a review of their care plan if they have concerns about their safety or welfare. Staff and Homestay providers should encourage young people to understand they can speak to an independent advocate, Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO), Ofsted inspector or other relevant person if they have concerns about their safety.

See also: [Advocacy, Independent Visitors and Independent Reviewing Officers](#).

As part of their ongoing care planning and support young people will be supported by their professional network (care staff, social worker etc) to understand what abuse is. They will be given information about how to report abuse or any concerns about possible abuse. They will be able to access in private, relevant websites or help lines such as [Childline](#) to seek advice and help.

Young people will be able to identify a trusted adult who they can talk to about any concerns. When young people raise concerns, it is essential that the adults in whom they confide listen to them, take their concerns seriously and respond appropriately.

8. Staff

All staff will undergo safeguarding training. Staff need the knowledge and skills to recognise and be alert for any signs that might indicate a young person is in any way at risk of harm. The Manager of supported accommodation will ensure that skills in safeguarding are gained, refreshed and recorded in the provisions workforce plan. See also: [Staffing and Safe Recruitment](#).

Staff skills for safeguarding should include being able to identify signs that young people may be at risk and support young people in strategies to manage and reduce any risks. Staff should encourage young people to express their views about whether they feel safe both within and outside the provision. Staff should support children to understand how to ask for help to stay safe and that the provision is an environment which supports this.

All staff will be made aware of and have access to the [Whistleblowing or Raising Concerns at Work Procedure](#).

Supervision of staff practice should ensure that individual adults in the Home are engaged in the safeguarding culture of the provision so they understand what they would need to do if they found other staff misusing or abusing their position to the detriment of the safety of a child. See also: [Allegations Against Staff Procedure](#).

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HOMESTAY PROVIDERS

All Homestays hosts will undergo safeguarding training annually as part of the mandatory training. Staff need the knowledge and skills to recognise and be alert for any signs that might indicate a young person is in any way at risk of harm. The Manager of Homestay provision will ensure that skills in safeguarding are gained, refreshed and recorded in the provisions workforce plan. See also: [Staffing and Safe Recruitment](#).

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9. Reporting Concerns

The general principle is that all safeguarding concerns and any allegations must be reported.

See [Reporting Concerns - Professionals](#).

Young people must be listened to and enabled to report any abuse or neglect at the earliest opportunity.

The following actions should be taken when there is any concern or, disclosure about the welfare of a child or young person. This includes non recent or historical abuse that may have occurred at some time in the past and may not have been previously reported or investigated.

Harm can be perpetrated by any person, including:

- Another child or young person (including serious or persistent bullying) - see **Section 12, Allegations made Against Children or Young People**;
- A member of staff, or manager, see additional procedures in [Allegations Against Staff Procedure](#);
- A visitor or person in the community.
- A teacher, social worker or other professional.
- A parent or other family member.

Staff and provider/ Hosts should firstly make their report to the supported accommodation or Homestay Advisor, unless the advisor is implicated. In which case staff must notify one of the following:

- Another manager who is not implicated (E.g. Service manager or Nominated Individual);
- The local authority Children's Social Care Services in whose area the Home is located;
- The child's allocated social worker / the placing authority;
- Police;
- The Regulatory Authority (Ofsted).

In an emergency, where there is an immediate risk to the young person, staff or the Homestay provider must take necessary action. This may involve asking for police assistance or seeking emergency medical assistance e.g. taking the child to hospital or contacting the emergency services via 999. If the child is taken to hospital or the police are called, staff must inform them that there is a suspicion of abuse or harm. Thereafter staff/Homestay provider must notify the manager (or other agency) as described above.

Once notified, the manager will be responsible for following the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Children Procedures for the area and making a referral to the local authority Children's Social Care Services.

When sharing information about a young person with Children's Social Care, it is good practice for practitioners to be transparent about their concerns and to seek to work cooperatively with the young person and their parents / carers. The manager in the setting should therefore usually inform parents / carers (and the child depending on their age and level of understanding) that they are going to make a referral.

However, referrals can be made without first informing the young person and / or their parents / carers where to do so would place a child at risk. Any decision not to inform a child or their parents / carers must be recorded with reasons.

The provider must keep a record of all safeguarding concerns and the actions taken by staff / managers.

If a Child Protection / Section 47 Enquiry is initiated, the Home's manager must inform the Regulatory Authority (see [Notification of Serious Events Procedure](#)).

10. Receiving Concerns in relation to Abuse or Harm

When a staff member or homestay provider sees, hears or is told anything that causes them to become concerned that a child or young person is suffering or likely to suffer Significant Harm, they must report it immediately - as described above in **Section 9, Reporting Concerns**.

Young people will sometimes disclose abuse to an adult who they have come to feel they can trust. If a child discloses abuse it is important that staff respond appropriately by remaining calm and receptive; listening without interrupting; only asking questions for clarification and acknowledging the young person's courage in telling.

It is not the staff member's responsibility to investigate or in any way make judgements about what is reported to them. Investigations, if necessary, must be undertaken by the police and Children's Social Care.

If a disclosure or allegation of abuse or harm has been made, staff should discuss with the child or other person who has made the complaint what steps they would like taken to protect them and their wishes should be shared and, if not in conflict with procedures, followed.

Where the allegation or disclosure is of a non recent or historical nature, e.g. relating to abuse or harm that may have been perpetrated in another placement or by family members, allegations must be taken seriously and must be reported in the same way as any other allegation.

Staff must not give absolute guarantees of confidentiality to those who report possible abuse or harm, but they should guarantee that they will take steps to ensure that appropriate action is taken, and the child or young person protected.

If an allegation or any suspicion is about the behaviour, past or present of another member of staff, including managers, which may in any way put children at risk, staff must follow the [Allegations Against Staff Procedure](#).

Staff must make a written record as soon as possible of what they have been told, any questions they asked, and the replies given, and the actions taken and by whom. They must then give the report to the designated manager.

This information should be placed on the child's record except where a colleague is implicated or there is any risk to the child as a result, in which case notes/records should be given to the manager dealing with the matter.

Staff/Homestay providers should not discuss the matter with others, including other staff, parents etc. unless asked to do so by those responsible for dealing with any subsequent investigation or enquiry.

11. Action by the Designated Senior Manager

After receiving a report of a concern, suspicion or allegation of abuse or harm, the Home's designated senior manager must firstly take any steps needed to protect any child or young person from risk of immediate harm.

The designated senior manager should ensure the following people are notified, and retain a record of the referral:

- The line manager for the Home;

- Children's Social Care in the area where the Home is located;
- If the suspicion/allegation relates to a member of staff/professional*, the manager should ensure the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) Team of Designated Officers is notified;
- The Placing Authority/child's allocated social worker;
- If a Child Protection Enquiry is initiated, the Regulatory Authority, see [Notification of Serious Events Procedure](#).

*Re Allegations Against Staff: See [Allegations Against Staff Procedure](#).

The procedures that will be followed will depend on the decisions made by Children's Social Care and the social worker. It is also likely that the Regulatory Authority will be involved in decision making.

The Home's manager (or delegated senior manager) will co-operate with the decisions/actions taken by them.

Following receipt of the referral, if Children's Social Care have concerns that a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm a Strategy Discussion/Meeting will be convened, to decide whether to initiate a Child Protection Enquiry and, if so, to agree the following with the manager:

1. Who should inform the child's parent(s);
2. Arrangements for any medical examination of the child;
3. Any immediate arrangements for protection of the child(ren), including whether the child should be moved to another Home;
4. Whether it is necessary to inform staff within the Home and if so, who will do it;
5. Whether any implicated staff should be suspended or moved;
6. Who should inform/update the person making the initial allegation of the steps/actions taken?

The designated senior manager should ensure that the child is supported during any enquiries/investigation, this may require an independent advocate or independent person to be involved. The manager should also ensure that all staff co-operate fully.

If the designated senior manager is not satisfied with the response from either the local authority where the Home is situated or the placing authority, they should escalate their concerns appropriately, including by writing to the director of children's services (DCS) in the local authority placing the child.

12. Allegations made against Children or Young People

Abuse and harm can be perpetrated upon one child or young person by another in many different ways, including persistent or serious bullying, sexual exploitation, aggressive, exploitative or other threatening behaviour which places a child or young person at risk.

Where there is any suspicion or allegation of abuse or harm perpetrated by one child or young person upon another, the procedures in **Section 9, Reporting Concerns** should be followed.

Protecting the rights of both victim and alleged perpetrator is important. It may be necessary, dependent on an assessment of all the facts, to separate the alleged perpetrator and victim but it may not be possible to explain why this is necessary to the perpetrator.

Throughout the process thereafter it will be necessary to ensure that children or young people with allegations made against them are properly supported, by an independent person if appropriate or required, as well as their social worker and parent(s).

Once the investigation is complete, consideration will then need to be given to the needs and interests of both alleged victim and perpetrator, and whether counselling and/or other support should be given.

Children or young people who are known to have sexually abused other children should not be placed together unless a risk assessment has been undertaken by someone specially qualified to do so.

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