



# West Valley Home

---

## CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING POLICY

### REGULATIONS AND STANDARDS

#### The Protection of Children Standard

This chapter must be read in conjunction with the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Children Partnership Procedures for the area.

## Contents

---

### Introduction

1. Principles
2. Definitions
3. Proactive Safeguarding Practice
4. Care and Placement Planning
5. Working in Partnership with Others
6. Managing Risk
7. Providing Someone for Children to Talk to
8. Staff
9. Reporting Concerns
10. Receiving Concerns in relation to Abuse or Harm
11. Action by the Designated Senior Manager
12. Allegations made against Children or Young People
13. Record keeping
14. Safer recruitment
15. Contact Information

## Appendices

---

- A – Recognising abuse and neglect
- B – Specific staff responsibilities
- C – A safeguarding culture

## Introduction

West Valley Home is a children's care home that offers specialised, high-quality planned long-term care for children/young people aged between 8 - 17 years old with Emotional behavioural difficulties. This Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy outlines the policy and procedures adopted by our organization as required by:

- **The Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015**
- **The Care Standards Act 2000**

We take the safeguarding of children/young people who use our service very seriously and we enroll all staff members in regular safeguarding training to ensure they understand what must be done if they have any concerns. The managers will hold an advanced safeguarding qualification as a safeguarding lead.

In accordance with legislation and guidelines, we are committed to ensuring the highest quality of child-centered services in all aspects of practice. We seek to promote and protect the rights of children, creating an environment where children/young people feel protected, safe and secure. Therefore, strong safeguarding practices like listening to children/young people and taking into account their wishes and feelings are the cornerstone of our services.

All staff, caregivers and visitors are responsible and care must be taken to ensure that all children remain safe. Anyone who has identified an area of potential risk can immediately draw the attention of appropriate staff and take the necessary steps. Overall, the registered manager is responsible for the protection of children/young people and must ensure that protection procedures are followed in the event of complaints or allegations against employees.

## 1. Principles

The home works to ensure that children are protected from harm and enabled to keep themselves safe;

The registered person will ensure:

- That staff:
  - Assess whether each child is at risk of harm, taking into account information in the child's relevant plans, and, if necessary, make arrangements to reduce the risk of any harm to the child;
  - Help each child to understand how to keep safe;

- Have the skills to identify and act upon signs that a child is at risk of harm;
  - Manage relationships between children to prevent them from harming each other;
  - Understand the roles and responsibilities in relation to protecting children that are assigned to them by the registered person;
  - Take effective action whenever there is a serious concern about a child's welfare; and
  - Are familiar with, and act in accordance with, the Home's child protection policies;
- That the home's day-to-day care is arranged and delivered so as to keep each child safe and to protect each child effectively from harm;
  - That the premises used for the purposes of the Home are located so that children are effectively safeguarded;
  - That the premises used for the purposes of the Home are designed, furnished and maintained so as to protect each child from avoidable hazards to the child's health; and
  - That the effectiveness of the Home's child protection policies is monitored regularly.

## 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.

### 3. Proactive Safeguarding Practice

The home is proactive in working with children to reduce the risk of harm to them, and sets high expectations to ensure that children 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 children about how to treat others with respect. Staff are prepared and supported to respond to children who may face these risks, and receive suitable training.

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

Children should be encouraged to develop positive relationships with others both in and outside the Home as set out in the positive relationships standard. However, staff should be alert to the possibility that children may be at risk from such relationships including with other children in the Home, staff, family members, friends and others outside the Home, and they therefore should take appropriate steps to protect a child where there are concerns for a child's 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 care on a regular basis. See Missing Children Procedure.

Staff 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 children. Children will be involved in creating ways to de-escalate situations and finding creative alternative strategies that are effective. See Positive Relationships and Behaviour Management Procedure.

### 4. Care and Placement Planning

Care and placement planning should ensure that any risks associated with children 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 the staff who look after them. This includes regular contact and planning with the child's allocated social worker 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 children, taking advice and guidance from local partners and agencies as appropriate.

## 5. Working in Partnership with Others

The Home's designated senior manager is responsible for coordinating safeguarding children referrals.

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 working in the Home and other agencies. All staff have a responsibility to report any suspicions that a child 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 home 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. The Home also has good relationships with relevant local voluntary sector organisations that may be able to offer specialist support to children in keeping themselves safe.

The home will also make all notifications as required by Regulation 40 to notify placing authorities, Ofsted and other relevant persons about serious events.

## 6. Managing Risk

Staff should continually and actively assess the risks to each child and the arrangements in place to protect them. Where there are safeguarding concerns for a child, their placement plan, agreed between the home and their placing authority, must include details of the steps the home will take to manage any assessed risks on a day to day basis.

Children will be supported to take age-appropriate risks, as part of their development of independent living skills. The home 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 children safely and appropriately. Individual up-to-date risk assessments must effectively address any known vulnerabilities for each child and set out what action should be taken to address and minimise the risks, and reduce harm or the risk of harm.

## 7. Providing Someone for Children to Talk to

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

Staff should make available in the home, information in an appropriate form which enables children to contact their placing authority to call for a review of their care plan if they have concerns about their safety or welfare. Staff should encourage children 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.

Children will be supported by staff 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.

Children will be able to identify a trusted adult who they can talk to about any concerns. When children 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 child is in any way at risk of harm. The registered person will ensure that skills in safeguarding are gained, refreshed and recorded in the Home's workforce plan.

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

All staff will be made aware of and have access to the Whistleblowing or Raising concerns at work procedures.

Supervision of staff practice should ensure that individual adults in the Home are engaged in the safeguarding culture of the Home 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.

## 9. Reporting Concerns

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

Children 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),
- A member of staff, or manager,
- A visitor or person in the community;
- A teacher, social worker or other professional;
- A parent or other family member.

Staff should firstly make their report to the home's designated senior manager, unless the manager is implicated. In which case staff must notify one of the following:

- The responsible individual or a director if the RI is implicated;
- The local authority Children's Social Care Services in whose area the Home is located (known as the LADO);
- The child's allocated social worker / the placing authority;
- Police, if there is a suspected criminal offence.

In an emergency, where there is an immediate risk to the child, staff 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 must notify the manager (or other agency) as described above.

Once notified, the designated senior 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 child 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 child and their parents / carers. The manager in the Home 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 child 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 home 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.



## 10. Receiving Concerns in relation to Abuse or Harm

When a staff member 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.

Children 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 child'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 allegation against staff procedures.

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

Staff must adopt the following principles when they are concerned about the abuse of a child:

- Always place the child or young person's welfare and interests as the paramount consideration.

- Listen carefully and actively to the child. Do not start to investigate.
- Let the child guide the pace and tell you in their own way what has happened.
- Do not show shock or judgement at what is being said. Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in talking to you.
- Do not investigate. If anything needs to be clarified in order to understand the safeguarding risk, ask clear, open questions:
- The TED rule; Tell, Explain and Describe
- Ask 'what, when, who, how, where' questions
- Ask 'do you want to tell me anything else?'
- Do not ask any 'why' questions as these can suggest guilt or responsibility.
- Remain calm and reassure the person that they have done the right thing by talking to a responsible adult.
- Never promise to keep a secret or confidentiality.
- Ensure the child or young person at risk understands what will happen next with their information.
- Record the conversation in writing as soon as possible and in line with company policy.

## 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 are to be notified of serious events.

The procedures that will be followed will depend on the decisions made by Children's Social Care and the social worker.

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

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.

### 13. Record keeping

The case manager will maintain clear records about any case where the allegation or concern meets the criteria above and store them on the individual's confidential personnel file for the duration of the case. Such records will include:

- A clear and comprehensive summary of the allegation;
- Details of how the allegation was followed up and resolved; and
- Notes of any action taken and decisions reached (and justification for these, as stated above).

If an allegation or concern is not found to have been malicious, the home will retain the records of the case on the individual's confidential personnel file and provide a copy to the individual. We will retain these records at least until the individual has reached normal pension age, or for 10 years from the date of the allegation if that is longer. The records of any allegation that is found to be malicious will be deleted from the individual's personnel file.

### 14. Safer recruitment

At least one person on any interview/appointment panel for a post at the company will have undertaken safer recruitment training.

All staff who have contact with children and families will have supervisions which will provide them with support, coaching and training, promote the interests of children and allow for confidential discussions of sensitive issues.

Recruitment practice will comply with the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015.

## **Explanation of terms**

### ***‘Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children’***

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

Child protection is part of this definition and refers to activities undertaken to prevent children suffering or being likely to suffer significant harm.

### ***‘Abuse’***

A form of maltreatment of a child and may involve inflicting harm or failing to act to prevent harm.

### ***‘Neglect’***

A form of abuse and is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development.

### **Children**

Includes everyone under the age of 18.



## Contact information

### Name of Responsible individual

Keith Riley

Telephone: 07777 618617

Email: Keith.Riley@westvalleyhome.co.uk

### Name of Registered Manager

Jo Sharp

Email: JoSharp@westvalleyhome.co.uk

This policy was last reviewed on: 29/01/2024

Signed: Joanne Sharp

Date: 29/01/2024