



Safeguarding Children Policy

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1 STATEMENT OF GENERAL POLICY

Everyone, at every age, should have the right to live a life that is free from abuse and to treatment that respects and promotes their human rights.

Every organisation and person who comes into contact with a child or adult has a responsibility and a role to play to help keep children and adults safe. ***Safeguarding is everybody's business.***

Staff working for 1st Homecare may from time to time come into contact with children in the course of providing care to clients. For example, a client may have family living with them, including a grandchild, or their family may be visiting them.

This Policy sets out the practices and procedures that 1st Homecare follows to safeguard and protect children who may come into contact with its staff. It sets out the procedures that apply in the event that any member of staff has concerns that a child is at risk of, or is suffering, abuse of any kind.

In this Policy, a child is anyone under the age of 18.

The Registered/Branch Manager has overall responsibility for safeguarding.

2 RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

Recruitment

Safe recruitment procedures followed by 1st Homecare include the requirement for all applicants to complete pre-employment enhanced DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks and applying for a minimum of two references in respect of each applicant, normally from the two most recent employers.

Training

All care workers are given training in safeguarding of vulnerable adults at induction stage and by way of update training. Additionally, as of 1st April 2015 when the new Care Certificate came into effect, staff receive training in safeguarding children, to enable them to recognise the potential signs and indicators of abuse or neglect and know what to do in the event of a concern or allegation of abuse.

3 ABUSE

Child abuse is any action by another person – adult or child – that causes significant harm to a child. It can be physical, sexual or emotional but can just as often be about a lack of love, care and attention. Neglect is also a form of abuse.

An abused child will often experience more than one type of abuse, as well as other difficulties in their lives. It often happens over a period of time rather than being a one-off event, and it can also happen online.

The types of child abuse include the following:

- Domestic
- Sexual
- Neglect
- Online abuse
- Physical
- Emotional
- Child sexual exploitation
- FGM
- Bullying and cyberbullying
- Child trafficking
- Child grooming
- Harmful sexual behaviour

The NSPCC has information on the signs and symptoms of abuse – please see <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/signs-symptoms-effects/>

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

It is estimated that thousands of women living in the UK have been victims of FGM, a practice classed as torture by the United Nations and which is illegal in the UK. There are no health benefits and girls and women suffer physical, psychological and psychosexual complications. These include severe pain, infection, haemorrhage, anxiety, depression, kidney damage, infertility, and death.

If you think that a child may be at risk of FGM or if you suspect that FGM has already happened, even if not recently, inform the Office, and the FGM helpline can be contacted on **0800 028 3550** or email fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk. If you think a child is at immediate risk call the police on 999.

If a child tells you that she has had FGM then inform the Office immediately, which will help take steps to alert the relevant authorities.

A child may be at risk of FGM if she talks to you about, or you become aware by some other means, of any of the following:

- a long holiday abroad or going 'home' to visit family
- a relative or cutter visiting from abroad
- a special occasion or ceremony to 'become a woman' or get ready for marriage
- a female relative being cut – a sister, cousin, or an older female relative such as a mother or aunt

If a child has had FGM, the following may be signs and symptoms:

- She may have difficulty walking, standing or sitting
- spend longer in the bathroom or toilet
- appear withdrawn, anxious or depressed.

Speak to the Office if you have any concerns.

Radicalisation

Radicalisation is a process by which an individual or group comes to adopt increasingly extreme political, social, or religious ideals and aspirations that reject or undermine the status quo or reject and/or undermine contemporary ideas and expressions of freedom of choice.

The internet, in particular social media, is used as a channel by extremist groups to promote and engage people. Children may watch material that glorifies violence and that attracts and influences them. In extreme cases, it may radicalise them. Children can be trusting and can be drawn into these groups and into adopting these extremist views. Viewing shocking and extreme content may lead to children accepting such content as normal.

If you think a child might be at risk of extremism, contact the Office and let your manager know what you are concerned about and why. Either you or the Office may contact the Home Office helpline, which is open Monday to Friday from 9am to 6pm (excluding bank holidays). The email address is: counter.extremism@education.gsi.gov.uk

The telephone contact number is: 020 7340 7264

Child trafficking and Modern Slavery

Child trafficking refers to children and young people under 18 years of age. Children can be trafficked into, within and out of the UK for many reasons and for all forms of exploitation. Child modern slavery occurs when the use of force, coercion, abuse of vulnerability, deception or other means is used for the purpose of exploitation, which may include child trafficking, child marriage, child sexual exploitation, child domestic slavery, forced labour and organ harvesting.

Most children are trafficked for financial gain and this can include payment from or to the child's parents. The trafficker also receives payment from those who want to exploit the child. Trafficking is carried out by individual adults, agents and organised crime groups.

Trafficking is a form of child abuse.

Children held in modern slavery are victims of serious crime and this will impact on their health and welfare. Traffickers and their clients commonly subject their victims to physical, sexual and emotional abuse. They will use any means to coerce and control them.

Carers should report to the Office anything that alerts them to the possibility that a child is being held in modern slavery and may have been the victim of trafficking.

5. ROLE OF CARE WORKERS

Care workers have a duty to report any suspicions they may have that a child they come into contact with is at risk of abuse or may be suffering abuse. A carer may suspect abuse due to disclosure by a child, an expression of concern by someone else, or the carer may witness abusive behaviour or other things that point to possible abuse. **If there is any suspicion of abuse, action MUST be taken.**

6. RAISING AN ALERT ABOUT ABUSE – WHAT TO DO

6.1 Alerting in emergencies

- If the child is in **immediate danger** and/or needs **urgent medical help** the carer should contact the Police and/or ambulance service (dial 999) FROM A SAFE PLACE – THE CARER SHOULD NOT PLACE THEMSELVES IN DANGER
- The carer must then report the situation **immediately**:
 - **Call the Office**, or if it is outside office hours, contact the **On call manager**, who will advise what to do next
- In the unlikely case that **no manager is contactable** the carer should call the **Child Safeguarding Team** (for Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, Oxfordshire or Hertfordshire depending where the client's location is) on the numbers set out below, and report the abuse to the Team
- The carer must **make a record of what has happened straight away** - see below
- Give the report to the Branch Manager or Registered Manager (or other manager as appropriate) as a matter of urgency

6.2 Alerting in non-emergencies

If it is not an emergency situation, the carer should:

- **talk urgently** about their concern to the Branch Manager or Registered Manager (or other manager as appropriate) and
- then **record their concern** in a report as soon as possible **and always on the same day**, including the information described below
- The record should be kept confidential and passed to the Branch Manager or Registered Manager who will take the next steps described below.

7. IMMEDIATE STEPS TO BE TAKEN BY RELEVANT MANAGER

When an allegation of abuse is brought to the attention of management, it will be dealt with seriously. The relevant manager must:

- in an emergency, check that the Police have been called and/or any necessary emergency medical treatment has been arranged
- if necessary, clarify the facts reported by the member of staff but **MUST NOT** investigate the situation – this is the job of the investigating authorities
- ensure that the carer reporting the allegation promptly makes a report in writing
- report the concern as a matter of urgency to the relevant Local Authority following the relevant Local Authority's safeguarding policy and procedure
- pass the carer's written report to the appropriate person responsible for these matters in line with the Local Authority's safeguarding policy and procedure
- if the allegation of abuse involves a member of staff within 1st Homecare, the appropriate steps will be taken, including considering suspending the person, undertaking an investigation, and where necessary taking appropriate disciplinary action. At any stage, if it is found appropriate or necessary to inform the Police of the situation, this will be done
- on an ongoing basis, co-operate with the relevant agencies involved in the investigation of the concern

8. IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER WHEN WRITING A REPORT ABOUT ABUSE

A care worker who has a suspicion or concern that a child is at risk of, or is suffering, abuse, must record the details in a report in writing. The report must be written in **clear handwriting** or **typed up**, so that it can be read easily, and should include the following information:

- All the details the care worker is aware of – the nature of the allegation, the care worker's observations, including a description of the child's behaviour and physical and emotional state and any visible injuries. **The report must be factual - opinions or judgements should not be included**
- If the child has made an allegation of abuse to the care worker, make a record as closely as possible of what the child said, using the exact words the child said, and also noting anything said to the child
- The date and time and place and anyone else present
- The child's name, address and (if it is possible to obtain this) date of birth
- It should be **signed and dated by the carer**

This is very important as the report will be needed as part of the process of referral of the abuse, and may be required later e.g. as evidence in legal action. Additionally, the carer should **NOT**:

- ask questions or try to put words in the child's mouth – just listen
- Make promises that cannot be kept e.g. "this won't happen again"
- Contact the alleged abuser or confront them/try to interview them, or any potential witnesses

- Talk about it with any other member of staff or anyone else other than the relevant manager – it must be kept confidential and reported on a “need to know” basis only
- Tamper with any evidence – remember a crime may have been committed

IMPORTANT:

If the carer raising the alert has a concern about reporting abuse to the designated contact person/manager, because there is a suspicion they may be implicated, or if at any stage in the process a member of staff feels that correct action is not being taken, then the Whistleblowing Policy should be followed, and/or the Child Safeguarding Team contacted directly.

9. CONTACT DETAILS FOR CHILD SAFEGUARDING TEAMS

Child Safeguarding Referrals in Bedfordshire

Bedford Borough Council

Telephone: 01234 267422 (ask for child services)
Out of hours emergency duty team: 0300 300 8123

Central Bedfordshire Council Access and Referral Team

Telephone: 0300 300 8585 (mon- thurs 08.45-17.20, fri 8.45 to 16.20)
Out of hours emergency duty team: 0300 300 8123

Child Safeguarding Referrals in Buckinghamshire

Buckinghamshire County Council

Telephone: 0845 460 0001
Out of hours emergency contact: 0800 999 7677

Child Safeguarding Referrals in Oxfordshire

To report a concern of abuse or neglect, please contact the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) on **0345 0507666**.

Or email the MASH on mash-childrens@oxfordshire.gcsx.gov.uk

Child safeguarding referrals in Hertfordshire

Telephone: 0300 123 4043

10 GENERAL

This Policy may be reviewed and amended at any time, as may be necessary. Staff shall be informed of the amended version.

Change History

Issue	Date	Description of Change and Reason
1	March 2015	First issued
2	June 2016	Second Issue – reference to 1 st March 2015 and introduction of Care Certificate amended to make clear it is historic
3	January 2017	Third issue – to make applicable to both offices including adding the Oxfordshire safeguarding referral details
4	January 2019	Fourth Issue – to amend address for Oxford, to include FGM, radicalisation and child trafficking/modern slavery
5	January 2020	Fifth Issue – to add KL office address and also to add the contact details for Hertfordshire child safeguarding referrals
6	December 2021	Sixth Issue – checking for need to make changes, no changes required
7	August 2022	Seventh Issue – Addition of “General” section, no other changes needed at this time.

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