

Safeguarding Children & Young Adults Policy

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INTRODUCTION

At Warrington Housing Association ('WHA') we are committed to working with a wide range of vulnerable service users, and throughout its services, staff could, from time to time, become aware of /or suspect situations where abuse of a child/children may be taking place. We will not knowingly ignore or allow such incidents to continue unchallenged or unreported. We require our colleagues to take action in all cases where it is suspected that abuse of a child/children is occurring, no matter whom the perpetrator is or who the victim is. We will respect and support anyone who whistle-blow because they think a child/children is being abused.

This policy has been developed using guidance from the Department of Health publication 'No Secrets' (2000) and Working Together to Safeguard Children (2013). Guidance from the 'Every Child Matters' cross government strategy has also been considered. Under 'Every Child Matters' every organisation and adult has a responsibility to safeguard all children they come into contact with. The main areas of the strategy are:

- Be healthy;
- Stay safe;
- Enjoy and achieve;
- Make a positive contribution; and
- Achieve economic wellbeing.

A child is anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday.

SCOPE

The scope of this Policy relates to colleagues, Board, volunteers, contractors, sub-contractors and anyone working on behalf of WHA.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is:

- To protect children from maltreatment;
- To prevent the impairment of children's health or development; and
- Child protection.

Child protection is a key part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. This refers to the activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or at risk of suffering, significant harm.

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DEFINITION OF CHILD ABUSE

Child abuse is any action by another person – adult or child that causes significant harm to a child. 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.

TYPES AND INDICATORS OF ABUSE

Sexual Abuse

A child is sexually abused when they are forced or persuaded to take part in sexual activities. This doesn't have to be physical contact and it can happen online. Sometimes the child won't understand that what's happening to them is abuse. They may not even understand that it's wrong or they may be afraid to speak out. There are two different types of child sexual abuse. **Contact abuse** includes touching activities where an abuser makes physical contact with a child. **Non-contact abuse** involves non-touching activities such as grooming, exploitation, persuading children to perform sexual acts over the internet and flashing.

Changes in behaviour, which can indicate sexual abuse:

- They might avoid being alone with people, such as family members or friends;
- They could seem frightened of a person or reluctant to socialise with them;
- They may become sexually active at a young age;
- They might be promiscuous;
- They could use sexual language or know information that you wouldn't expect them to;
- They may have physical symptoms.

Physical abuse

A form of abuse which 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.

Changes in behaviour which can indicate physical abuse:

- Physical symptoms such as bruises, burns or scalds, bite marks, fractures or broken bones, other injuries or health problems;

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- Fear of parents / carers being approached for an explanation of injuries;
- Aggressive behaviour or severe temper outbursts;
- Flinching when approached or touched;
- Reluctance to get in front of teachers or friends;
- Wearing inappropriate clothing for the climate ie. Long sleeves in hot weather;
- Depression;
- Withdrawn behaviour; and
- Running away from home / living situations where abuse is taking place on a regular basis.

Emotional abuse

The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may involve serious bullying (including bullying using virtual means such as Social Media, texts, WhatsApp), causing children to frequently feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children.

Changes in behaviour which can indicate emotional abuse:

- Being overly-affectionate towards strangers or people they haven't known for very long;
- Lacking confidence or becoming wary or anxious;
- Not appearing to have a close relationship with their parent;
- Being aggressive or nasty towards other children or animals;
- Using language or acting a way or know about things that you wouldn't expect them to know for their age;
- Struggling to control strong emotions or having extreme outbursts;
- Lack of social skills or have few, if any, friends.

Neglect

Neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment). Failing to protect a child from physical

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and emotional harm or danger, failure to ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers.) Failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Changes in behaviour which can indicate neglect:

- Poor appearance and hygiene;
- Appear hungry;
- Untreated injuries, medical and dental issues;
- Repeated accidental injuries caused by lack of supervision;
- Tiredness;
- Faltering weight or growth and not reaching developmental milestones;
- Poor language, communication or social skills.
- Living in an unsuitable home environment;
- Left alone for a long time;
- Taking on the role of carer for other family members.

Modern slavery

Modern slavery encompasses slavery, human trafficking, forced labour, domestic servitude, sexual exploitation and debt bondage (being forced to work to pay off debts that realistically they will never be able to).

Traffickers and slave masters use whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment.

It is important to note that victims of this can remain hidden in plain sight such as people who deliver everyday services such as those washing cars, working in small shops/market stalls, delivering beauty treatments, domestic cleaning etc.

Indicators Include:

- Signs of physical or emotional abuse
- Appearing to be malnourished, unkempt or withdrawn
- Isolation from the community, seeming under the control or influence of others
- Living in dirty, cramped or overcrowded accommodation and or living and working at the same address
- Lack of personal effects or identification documents

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- Always wearing the same clothes
- Avoidance of eye contact, appearing frightened or hesitant to talk to strangers
- Fear of law enforcers

PERPETRATOR OF ABUSE

Anyone can be the perpetrator of child abuse. Abusers can be adults (any gender or perceived pronoun) and other young people, and are usually known to and trusted by the child and family.

WHERE DOES ABUSE TAKE PLACE?

Abuse can take place anywhere, including:

- In a child's own home;
- In the homes of family and friends;
- In public places/the community;
- Place of child care: Nursery/School; and
- In a residential or hostel setting.

Child abuse may result from a deliberate intention to cause harm but may also occur where a provider of a service lacks the necessary knowledge or skills to respond to a child's needs appropriately. Abusive behaviour between a member of staff and a child will always be investigated and could possibly require police involvement.

CONFIDENTIALITY

UK government guidance specifically refers to information sharing and states that the child's best interest must always be the overriding concern.

If a member of WHA believes that a child may be at risk of, or is suffering, significant harm and that they need to be referred to the appropriate authorities, they will consider whether they have a duty of confidentiality to the child. If this is so, they may share information if they have the consent of the child or if they believe, based on their professional judgment that the sharing of information is in the public interest.

Any concerns should also be discussed with the family and if possible their agreement should be sought, unless this would put the child at increased risk of significant harm, or if it would undermine any possible criminal investigation.

Concerns of child abuse must be discussed immediately either with a line manager or WHA Colleague who has the lead role for child protection. Concerns should always be

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acted upon and any decision on whether to share information or not should always be recorded. Any information shared should always be accurate, up to date, shared appropriately and securely: only with the person or people who need to know and limited to information relevant to purpose.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Organisational arrangements are in place to ensure the clear allocation of responsibilities within the Group and that the objectives of this policy are fulfilled.

Board

The Board is ultimately responsible for monitoring safeguarding compliance and associated policies. In order to achieve this, the Board will review and approve this policy every three years and review monitoring arrangements through the quarterly Assurance Report and ensure that any issues of significant risk are actioned appropriately. The Board has a collective role for championing service standards within Group and has appointed a Neighbourhoods Board Sponsor.

Chief Executive

The Chief Executive is ultimately responsible for the control and implementation of this policy at all levels of the organisation and the provision of adequate resources to meet safeguarding requirements. The Chief Executive will:

- Provide leadership to encourage colleagues to be aware of safeguarding at all times
- Ensure that responsibility for the implementation of, and compliance with, this policy is properly assigned and accepted by the Senior Management Team and colleagues under their control
- Appoint competent safeguarding champions to co-ordinate safeguarding matters within the Group
- Ensure that adequate financial and human resources are available to maintain standards

Senior Management Team

The Senior Management Team (SMT), chaired by the Chief Executive will:

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- Bring this policy to the attention of colleagues under their management and ensure an understanding of its contents
- Ensure that colleagues within their departments are suitably trained, competent and fully understand their safeguarding obligations
- Monitor the activities of their departments in relation to safeguarding to ensure compliance with relevant legislation, good practice, policies and procedures
- Ensure that all new colleagues are properly inducted into the organisation, including an awareness of safeguarding as applicable to their role
- Ensure that any safeguarding responsibilities delegated to staff are clearly understood
- Provide staff with names of the Safeguarding Champions within WHA who will support staff in the reporting of abuse and with any subsequent participation in investigations, strategy meetings or assessment processes
- Promote and embrace partnership working
- Ensure contractors (and sub-contractors) appointed to carry out works on behalf of the Group are made aware of safeguarding policies and procedures
- Regularly review and develop WHA's safeguarding policies and procedures to ensure ongoing relevance and adherence to legislation and good practice

Colleagues

In addition to the duties outlined in the Safeguarding Policy Statement, colleagues at all levels of the organisation will:

- Familiarise themselves with safeguarding policies and procedures relevant to their role
- Attend mandatory safeguarding training as and when necessary
- Report all safeguarding incidents in accordance with the Safeguarding Reporting Procedure
- Have an obligation to prevent abuse. If something is happening in WHA or within a partner organisation which gives cause for concern and could lead to abuse in the future, procedures within WHA's separate Whistleblowing Policy should be followed

Safeguarding Champion

Specific responsibilities of the Safeguarding Champion(s) include:

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- Ensure all members within the scope of the Policy are familiar with the local protocols and arrangements for safeguarding;
- Ensure all allegations have been reported to the relevant adult protection team or the Police;
- When considering a report of abuse, take advice from Warrington Safeguarding Children’s Board (WSCB);
- Ensure that any referrals are followed through by the Local Authority;
- Ensure members within the scope co-operate fully with any investigations; participate in any review meetings and follow through on any actions agreed;
- Ensuring that any differences of opinion are escalated, linking with WSCB’s escalation process.
- If there is an allegation against a member within the scope of this Policy, the Safeguarding Champion / Resources Director or the CEO must report this to WSCB;
- Maintain a central log of Safeguarding which is to be kept in a secure place with access limited to relevant colleagues only;
- Ensure that everything is recorded in the central Safeguarding Folder including the reasons for not referring a case on to the WSCB; and
- Once all investigations have been completed and conclusions have been reached, convening an internal meeting, to assess on going risk and actions to safeguard the adult or family; anyone else; review support and training needs for colleagues.

Contractors

WHA requires that contractors, sub-contractors or anyone working on their behalf have a comprehensive safeguarding policy. In the absence of such a policy contractors will be required to sign up to the principles of WHA’s policy. Appropriate communication and training will be provided.

WHISTLEBLOWING

We will take seriously any matters raised in good faith by colleagues. The Whistleblowing Policy will support and protect any employee who has volunteered information from reprisals or victimisation.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Number of Safeguarding Children referrals;

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- Annual review of Safeguarding – including monitoring implementation, interagency response, training record and review of policy and procedure;
- Evaluation of investigated cases and lesson learnt; and
- Completion of monitoring information as required by Warrington Borough Council as part of their statutory duty.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

This policy and associated procedures will be reviewed every three years, or sooner, if required, in the following circumstances:

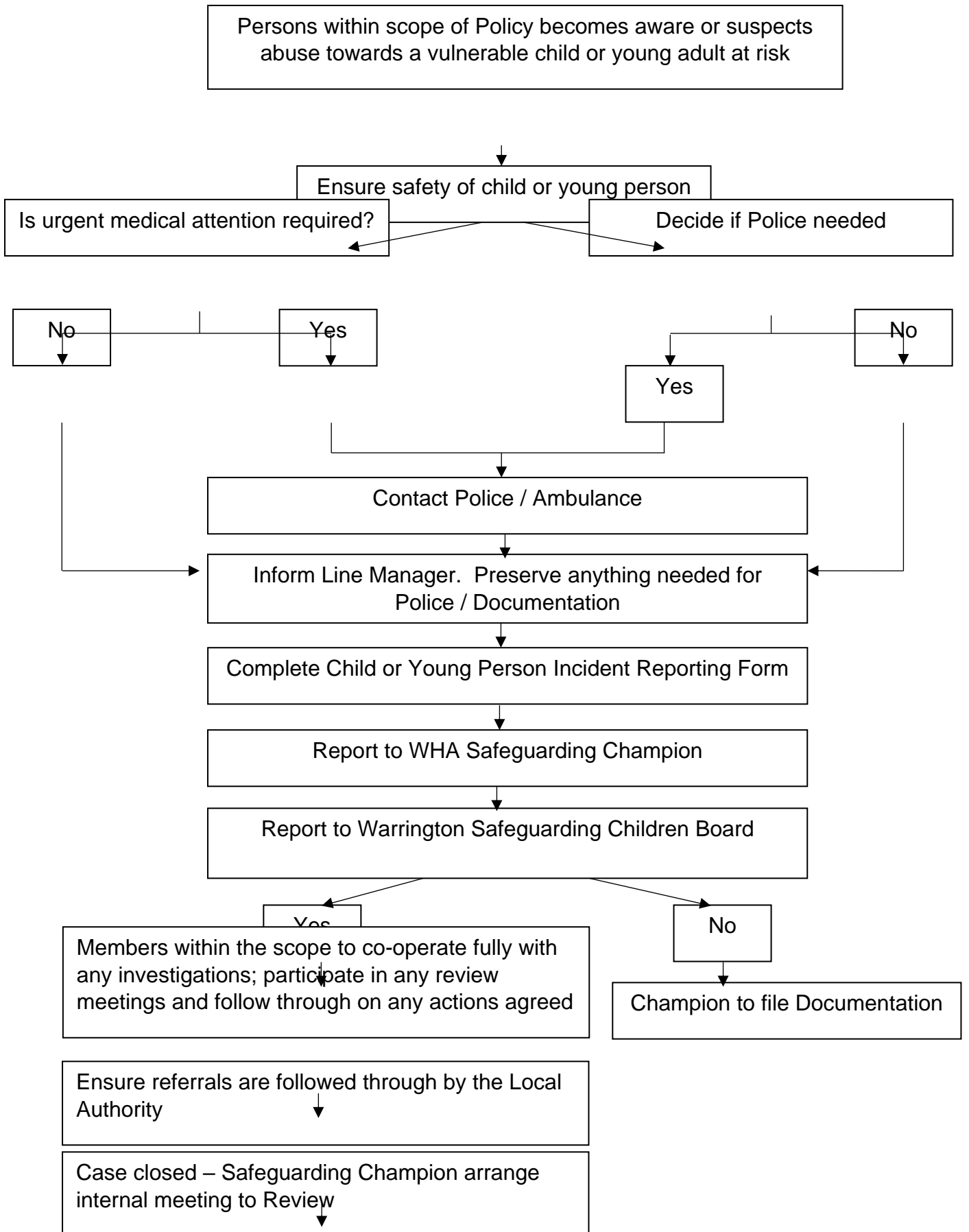
- Changes in legislation and / or Government guidance
- As required by Warrington Safeguarding Children’s Board

FURTHER CONTACT DETAILS

- Warrington Borough Council – Children’s Safeguarding / Social Work Team 01925 443400
- Cheshire Police – 101 or in an emergency 999

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VULNERABLE CHILD OR YOUNG ADULT SAFEGUARDING REPORTING PROCEDURE



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