



Places to live. Space to grow.

Safeguarding Children Policy

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1 Introduction & purpose

1.1 Introduction

We are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children throughout the areas where we operate and recognise that successful outcomes for children depend on strong partnership working. This policy has been written in line with guidance issued by the Kent and Medway Safeguarding partnerships.

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate our commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who we come into contact with. The policy ensures that all staff are aware of their responsibility to recognise a situation where they believe there is a child potentially at risk, and how to respond, report and refer their concern.

2 Scope

2.1 This policy applies to work with all children, defined as anyone under the age of 18. We have an obligation to safeguard the welfare of children ensuring that they are:

- Protected from maltreatment
- Not impaired in their health or development
- Growing up in circumstances that provide safe and effective care

2.2 In delivering this we make the distinction between those staff and volunteers that deliver services directly to children and their supervisors, upon whom additional responsibilities lie, and the remainder of West Kent staff who have a general obligation to promote the welfare of children and young people and be vigilant of and report any child protection concerns.

3 Policy Statement

3.1 We believe everyone has a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people in our homes and communities, to keep them safe and to ensure that our practise is followed in a way that protects them.

3.2 We will give equal priority to keeping all children and young people in our homes and communities safe regardless of their age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

3.3 We recognise and will be sensitive to the fact that some children are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of discrimination, previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues.

- 3.4 Where a staff member observes or has concerns about a child's welfare or receives a safeguarding disclosure form from a third party, the incident must be treated seriously and immediately respond in accordance with our Safeguarding Adults and Children Procedure.

4 Responsibilities

- 4.1 All staff and volunteers, including contractors and partner agencies, are required to take shared responsibility for the welfare of children who are encountered in the course of our work. Some of our staff are in a direct position of trust, particularly those who support, guide or in any way interact with children and young people either in the West Kent workplace or in the community. Other staff working with adult service users who are parents, or working in family homes, should be mindful of child welfare and alert to any behaviour from service users which might impact on their children.
- 4.2 Concerns about the welfare of a child may be identified by a staff member or disclosed to us by another concerned adult (including members of the public) or the child themselves. We are responsible for recording and responding to all concerns, however raised, in line with our procedures. This includes any reports of non-recent or historical abuse which may be made by or about an adult relating to incidents which took place when the alleged victim was under 18.
- 4.3 Where services are delivered under contract to a statutory body we have a statutory responsibility to ensure the welfare and safety of children under section 11 of the Children's Act 2004. In all other circumstances, it has a duty to be vigilant to safeguarding issues.
- 4.4 The Head of Support is our Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and is the senior member of staff responsible for safeguarding adults. The DSL will be responsible for monitoring and reporting. They are supported by a Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) for children who is the Community Development Manager. The DSO will also provide guidance to staff or line managers on safeguarding concerns.
- 4.5 There is also delegated responsibility to line managers in implementing this policy. Line Managers of front-line staff must:
- Attend training at the relevant level and ensure their staff also attend appropriate training
 - Act as the first source of advice for colleagues on Safeguarding and link with the DSL or DSO to discuss cases if they are being referred to social services.
 - Respond to all concerns swiftly in line with policy and procedures
 - Ensure accurate recording of all safeguarding concerns
 - Keep up to date with local safeguarding arrangements in Medway and Kent.
 - Make sure that any allegations of colleague conduct around Safeguarding are investigated in line with HR processes

- Recognise that dealing with safeguarding situations can be distressing and support the well-being of colleagues dealing with reports.
- 4.6 West Kent will consider any equality and diversity issues of targeted service users. The managerial responsibility for any programme or activity accessed by children rests with the individual who is directing or organising the activity. That person is expected to:
- Ensure that the activity is planned, organised and delivered in accordance with the Safeguarding Children Policy.
 - Consider safeguarding issues when completing the health and safety risk assessment.
 - Arrange the appropriate checking, training, induction and guidance for all staff and volunteers.
 - Inform their line manager or the DSO/DSL and complete the appropriate documentation in case of any incident.

5 Safeguarding Concerns

- 5.1 All staff and volunteers working closely with children must be alert to possibilities of abuse or maltreatment of a child, whether it is perpetrated by an adult or another child. West Kent staff must contact their line manager, the Child Protection Co-ordinator or their deputy if they have any cause to believe a young person involved in any activity with West Kent is in any way at risk.
- 5.2 All issues must be reported in line with current Kent and Medway procedures and a case raised on Cx.
- 5.3 It is the duty of staff to inform only not to investigate – this is the role of the Police and Social Services. If staff, in the course of their work, have a child safeguarding issue brought to their notice, this must be treated as a priority over all other work. Guidance regarding a specific incident may be obtained from the line manager or the Designated Safeguarding Officer.

If you believe that a child is in immediate danger you should call 999 without delay.

6 Categories of Abuse

The following categories of abuse are based on those identified in Working Together to Safeguard Children and Keeping Children Safe in Education:

- Physical Abuse.
- Emotional Abuse.
- Sexual Abuse
- Neglect or acts of omission

Definitions of the categories can be found in the West Kent Safeguarding procedure

7 Establishing a Caring Environment

7.1 All children, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse. We recognise that some children may be additionally at risk because of their circumstances and experiences, including special educational needs, communication issues, a disability or care need. All staff delivering direct services to children are responsible for making West Kent a safe and caring environment for all.

7.2 A Safe and Caring Environment is an environment:

- in which the health, safety and welfare of young people has been assessed and catered for.
- in which staff are alive to the possibility of abuse and take measures to prevent that possibility.
- where there is a sound and known reporting system for any incident.
- where staff take reasonable and practical precautions to avoid any suspicions of abuse being brought against them.
- where children and young people are listened to, respected, and actively involved in decisions that affect them. Staff are trained to listen attentively and respond appropriately, creating safe spaces where children feel comfortable sharing their views and experiences. Age-appropriate communication methods, including visual aids and interpreters, are used, where appropriate to support understanding. In all safeguarding matters, the child's perspective is considered alongside other relevant information to guide appropriate action.

8 Consent

8.1 When abuse is disclosed or suspected, information will be restricted to those who need to know, and we will adhere to the Data Protection Act 2018, its Data Protection and Retention Policy and confidentiality as set out in the Code of Conduct.

8.2 If we have concerns about the safety and wellbeing of a child / children, we will make a safeguarding referral even when consent is not given, but it should be noted that consent from the family or child should be sought where it's possible for us to do this without increasing the risk to the child / children. we will not contact the family if this could indirectly put the child at risk.

9 Staff recruitment

9.1 Some staff are in a position of trust, particularly those staff who support, guide, or in any way interact with children and adults at risk and those that supervise them.

Such staff must be aware of this and to always act accordingly and in line with the Staff code of conduct.

- 9.2 Staff are recruited in line with our Safer Recruitment Procedure. Staff who will be in regular or significant occasional contact with under-18s in the course of their work, and their direct supervisors, must hold satisfactory Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificates. A 'satisfactory' check is defined as having no criminal convictions (including cautions, reprimands and final warnings) relevant to the post. When Staff obtain a valid DBS there must let HR see their valid copy.
- 9.3 The interview process for roles which will work specifically with children and young people will include questions to assess candidate's understanding of safeguarding and address suitable personal behaviours for applicants to these roles. Once appointed line managers will ensure staff are made familiar with this policy and procedures as part of their induction and are trained and competent to work safely with children and young people in line with these.
- 9.4 All staff or volunteers employed to work with children must report any subsequent criminal convictions to Head of Human Resources and the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action being taken.

10 Allegations of abuse or inappropriate behaviour involving staff

Allegations involving a member of staff, and a person under-18 will be dealt with the strictest confidence and reported immediately to the Head of Human Resources and relevant Department Director. Consideration will be given as to whether the situation falls within the definition of safeguarding children. The situation will be dealt through our disciplinary procedure and /or reported to appropriate agencies.

11 Relationships with young people aged 16-18

It should be noted that whilst a young person can consent to sexual activity once they reach the age of 16, the Sexual Offences Act 2003 makes it a criminal offence for a person to engage in any kind of sexual activity with a person under 18 where the adult is in a position of trust.

12 Reporting and Monitoring

- 12.1 All reported suspicions or allegations of abuse will be recorded and monitored to ensure the procedures are followed, and so any patterns may be identified. Outcomes will be monitored to check we are meeting our aims relating to adult safeguarding.
- 12.2 Safeguarding case numbers and training information will be reported quarterly to the Executive. A full safeguarding report will be produced every six months for the Communities and Housing Committee where we will identify trends, risks and ongoing actions.
- 12.3 Safeguarding cases will also be reported in the monthly health and safety report.

13 Training and Awareness

- 13.1 We will ensure that all staff understand what action to take if they identify a child safeguarding issue, or have one reported to them. This will include how to handle a disclosure, how to report a concern, and the importance of confidentiality and consent through the process.
- 13.2 Dedicated safeguarding training is available and recommended to all staff, volunteers and partnering contractors.
- 13.3 The following levels of safeguarding training are provided for staff:
- Introduction and General Awareness- mandatory for all staff
 - Level 1 – For all staff who interact with customers on phones or whilst carrying out duties.
 - Level 2 – Increased Awareness for staff who visit customers and can make referrals to the local authority.
 - NB: Youth workers will also complete KSCB training
- 13.4 The level of training that is required for individual role profiles has been assessed depending on the level of contact with children and the responsibilities that are associated with the role.
- 13.5 Safeguarding will form part of induction training at all levels and must be repeated every three years. Training records will be maintained and monitored for compliance.
- 13.6 We will also offer training to specific contractors, in order that they understand the signs of abuse and what actions to take.
- 13.7 Where opportunities arise, we will also look to raise awareness of safeguarding with our staff and with our tenants, be that through internal communications, Neighbourhood News, at events or through other means.

14 Media Relations

For any activity involving children or young people, parents or guardians must be given the opportunity to refuse permission for photographs, videos or other images to be made of them, their children and for the children to be interviewed by press, broadcasters or other media. The West Kent consent form can be found on Bettie. If colleagues are unsure, they can contact the communications and marketing team for support.

15 Review

This policy and procedures will be regularly monitored and reviewed on an annual basis, in accordance with changes in legislation or guidance on the safeguarding children, or any changes within West Kent, or any issues or concerns raised about the safeguarding of adults at risk within West Kent.

16 Regulation

The primary legislation regarding the safeguarding of children is:

- Children's Act 1989 and 2004
- United Convention of the Rights of the Child 1992
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Care Act 2014
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023
- Guidance issued by Kent and Medway Safeguarding Children multi agency partnerships
- The Equality Act 2010
- Children and Social Work Act 2017

17 Communication

This policy will be published on Bettie and on the website

18 Consultation

This policy will be implemented after consultation with residents.

19 Summary of key material/changes

- Definitions of abuse moved to procedure document.

20 Related policies and supporting documents

- Safeguarding Adults policy
[Safeguarding Adults Policy - Bettie](#)
- Safeguarding Adults and Children Procedure
[Safeguarding Adults and Children procedure - Bettie](#)
- Code of Conduct
[Code of conduct - Bettie](#)
- Safeguarding: Safer Recruitment DBS Procedure
[Safer recruitment procedure - Bettie](#)
- Working together to safeguard children 2023
[Working together to safeguard children 2023: statutory guidance](#)

- Domestic Abuse Guidance
[What is domestic abuse? - Bettie](#)
- Current Guidance issued by the Kent and Medway Safeguarding Partnerships
[Kent and Medway safeguarding children procedures and strategies - Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Partnership](#)
- West Kent whistle blowing policy & procedures
[Whistleblowing form and policy - Bettie](#)

21 Policy Sign-off

A current version of this procedure is available to all employees on (West Kent Intranet).

Document Name:	Safeguarding Children Policy
Equality Impact Assessment:	The policy has a positive impact as specifically designed to protect and support the welfare of children.
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Equality Impact Assessment on S Drive:	No
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22 Version History

Version	Date	Details of Change(s)	Approved By
V1.0	18/08/2025		
V2.0			