



# **SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

**Approved by:** Mark Kotecha

**Last reviewed on:** 15 January 2024

## Introduction

Safeguarding is defined as: 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 and taking action to enable all children to achieve the best outcomes in their lives.

This policy has been developed in accordance with the principles established by the Children Acts 1989 and 2004, The Education Act 2011 and in line with the Government publications “Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 (December 2021)”, “Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021”, London Child Protection Procedures (31/03/2022) and What to do if you are worried a child is being abused 2015.

<b>Designated Safeguarding Leads for Woodside School</b>	
<b>Managing Director / Responsible Individual</b> Mark Kotecha  <b>Mobile:</b> 07956351971 <b>Email:</b> mark@sevahomes.co.uk	<b>SENCO &amp; Acting Headteacher</b> Laila Shire  <b>Mobile:</b> 07933905487 <b>Email:</b> laila@sevahomes.co.uk

Everyone, no matter their position in Seva Childcare and beyond, has the potential to abuse children. Abuse occurs across all races, cultures, religions, and social classes, so it is important to consider that someone who abuses a child could be a member of their immediate or extended family, a friend, neighbour, stranger, a member of staff or another pupil within Woodside School. It is therefore essential to remain professional in our approach and objective to safeguarding children by not make any pre-judgements on who is or who is not capable of inflicting harm and abuse.

Seva Childcare recognises its duty to make arrangements to ensure that functions are carried out with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. It is the intention of the procedures within this policy to ensure that the appropriate action is taken immediately where it is alleged that a child is suspected of being abused. Our prime concern at all times must be the interests and safety of the young people we support.

In accordance with the Children Acts 1989 and 2004, where a child is suffering significant harm, or is likely to do so, immediate action must be taken to protect the child. Action should also be taken to promote the welfare of a child in need of additional support, even if they are not suffering harm or are at immediate risk All staff employed by Seva Childcare, including those who are temporary workers and volunteers, are particularly important as they are in apposition to identify concerns early on and

provide help for children, to prevent concerns from escalating. As part of the wider safeguarding system for children, described in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015, Seva Childcare staff work with local authorities, the police, medical professionals, educational settings, and other organisations to promote the welfare of children and ensure a collaborative approach to safeguarding.

## **Aim**

The aim of this policy is to:

- To protect children and young people from harm and abuse.
- To lay down procedures to follow should any employees suspect abuse.
- To ensure employees understand the different types of child abuse that can occur.
- Ensure employees can identify the signs and symptoms of potential abuse.
- To ensure all staff are aware of their own responsibilities in regard to protection procedures and safeguarding children and young people overall.

## **Categories of abuse**

### ***Physical Abuse***

Physical abuse 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.

### ***Emotional Abuse***

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child 'such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person.

It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation, or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

### ***Sexual Abuse***

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape or buggery or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

### ***Financial Abuse***

Financial Abuse is a form of mistreatment and fraud in which someone forcibly controls another person's money or other assets. It can involve, for instance, stealing cash, not following a victim to take part in any financial decisions or preventing a victim from having a job.

### ***Neglect***

Neglect 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. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food and clothing, shelter including exclusion from home or abandonment, failing to protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger, failure to ensure adequate supervision including the use of inadequate caretakers, or the 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.

## **Roles & Responsibilities**

### **Employees:**

All employees working at Seva Childcare regardless of their role or ranking have a responsibility to be aware of the procedures to be followed if they are worried a child or young person is being abused. Staff in regular contact with young people (direct support staff) are well placed to notice signs of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, neglect, behavioural change or failure to develop as expected. All employees must read our safeguarding policy before they can work with our young people. An accessible copy of this policy must be kept of site for all employees to refer to as required. Each employee will be trained on what to do and who to report to should they need to report a safeguarding concern.

### **Designated Safeguarding Lead**

The designated Safeguarding Lead for Woodside School is Mark Kotecha who is managing director and Responsible Individual. Laila Shire is the Acting Headteacher.

**The role of the DSL is to:**

- Ensure child protection procedures are in place and updated as appropriate.
- Ensure all staff are aware of Barnet and placing authorities safeguarding procedures and policies.
- Be available to provide advice/support to staff and for confidential discussions about concerns.
- Be available to provide support to children and young people.
- Keep records of any concerns/ suspected cases of abuse/referrals in a secure location within the home.
- Arrange appropriate training to all staff so they are fully equipped to carry out their role and understand their responsibilities around safeguarding.
- Ensure staff training is kept up to date and a refresher in safeguarding training is carried out at least once per year.
- Ensure temporary staff, bank and volunteers' staff who work with children are made aware of Seva Childcare arrangements for child protection and their responsibilities.

**Multi-agency partnership:**

We work in partnership with social services in both our local area and the young person's local area if they have placed out of county. This multi-agency approach enhances the effectiveness of identifying and dealing with child abuse issues that may arise.

**General Strategies****Vetting of Staff**

There are careful selection and vetting of all staff, volunteers, and monitoring of visitors to the home to prevent children from being exposed to potential abusers. All candidates' suitability to work with children will be explored through the recruitment process, Employment with Seva Care is subject to the following conditions.

- Proof of eligibility to work in UK.
- Satisfactory employment references.
- Medical questionnaire at point of offer.
- Evidence of appropriate qualifications.

Disclosure & Barring Service check, at Enhanced Level, please ensure you read our policy. carefully. For additional information, please contact the DBS information line 0300200190 or go to website [www.gov.uk/dbs-update-service.Staff](http://www.gov.uk/dbs-update-service.Staff) will be required to renew their DBS at least once yearly.

In events that Seva Childcare will learn that their employed staff is involved in any child protection in their personal lives, this will be assessed on an individual case basis and decided if the employee is still fit to carry on their duties.

### **Induction of Staff**

As part of the induction programme, we cover such issues as who to report concerns to, clarifying the procedure ensuring the member of staff knows the procedure of reporting safeguarding matters. Our Induction process involves employees reading all other policies and procures for the home, young peoples care plans, risk assessments and positive behaviours support plans. Training is allocated in order of importance with safeguarding training being at the top of our list; a pass mark of 85% and above is mandatory, we recognise the importance of relationships between staff and young people being based on mutual respect and understanding, and there being dear boundaries in relation to acceptable behaviour on both sides.

### **Children's Rights**

We recognise that children are our core concern, and must be respected, and given voice in all matters relating to their care. Children's opinions are sought over key decisions which are likely to affect them, their privacy is respected, as far as is consistent with good parenting and their need for protection, and all matters related to child protection concerns are kept confidentially, with access only to those who need it for the child's protection. Safeguarding records are kept in individual files, away from the child's own main file, and secured in a locked cabinet with access clearly defined.

Children know how and feel able to complain if they are unhappy with any aspect of living at Seva Childcare Homes and feel confident that any complaint is addressed seriously and without delay.

### **Positive Behaviour Support**

Our model of support at Woodside School follows a Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) approach. We have a written policy on PBS which all staff are aware of and follow in practice. At times it may be necessary to hold a young person if they pose a serious risk to themselves or others; this will always be a last resort technique and one that is used proportionality to the risk being faced. The training we use when holding a young person is called Prevention Management of Violence and Aggression (PMVA). All staff at Woodside School are trained in PMVA before they can work with our young people. All staff at Woodside School have will be trained in Positive Behaviour Support.

Any use of restraint is recorded and reported to the homes manager for review. Young people and staff involved in the restraint will always receive a debriefed and their parents and social care team Informed of the incident. Behavioural incidents are analysed and used as learning tools. Currently, we do not use sanctions for behavioural incidents.

## **Anti-Bullying Policy**

Seva Childcare has, and follows, an anti-bullying policy, with which children and staff are familiar. Children who are bullied are supported, and those who may bully others are also subject to a risk assessment. Each will have a care plan outlining actions to address and support issues identified. We recognise the fact that bullying is the form of abuse most children fear. The Manager will review all bullying incidents to act where feasible to reduce or counteract the risk of bullying. Woodside School staff are trained to recognise the signs of bullying in young people and how to manage this.

## **Missing Children**

Seva Childcare has procedures to follow in the event of any child being absent without authority or missing, which are known to staff, children, and their parents, and ensure that they are protected as quickly, and as far as possible. Children are seen on return, in a positive interview by the staff, to establish the reason for their absence, and if abuse is cited, this is to be reported straight away to a young person's social worker. At times it may be necessary to report incidences of missing young people to the police, LADO or Ofsted.

## **Monitoring**

This policy document will be reviewed at least annually and monitored on a regular basis. Staff will be asked to evaluate the effectiveness of the procedures whenever they have had occasion to put them into practice.

## **Support & Supervision**

Staff have regular individual supervision sessions with the Manager or Deputy Manager, Managers will take a supportive approach to any member of staff subject to any child protection investigation, However, the needs of a young person will always take precedence. Manager to sign post employees to additional support should they need this.

Anyone with a connection to Seva Childcare LTD can request to see a copy of this Safeguarding Policy By emailing Sai Guttikonda; [sai@sevahomes.co.uk](mailto:sai@sevahomes.co.uk) or calling on 07308189778.

## **Allegations of Abuse Processes**

### **Concerns involving a member of staff**

Any concerns that involve allegations against a member of staff should be referred immediately to the manager who will in turn contact Barnet's LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) to discuss and agree further action to be taken in respect of allegation. Any child protection allegation concerning the Manager should be referred to the Responsible Individual, who will seek the assistance of the Barnet LADO. If the allegation concerns the Responsible Individual, then OFSTED should be contacted immediately.

If staff have any concerns about practices within the which they feel may put children at risk of abuse or serious harm, they should raise these first with the Manager. If they are not satisfied with the way in which the Manager is dealing with the situation, then they should speak to the Responsible Individual.

<b>Escalating Your Concerns</b>		
<b>Barnet Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)</b> Rob Wratten <b>Tel:</b> 02083594066 <b>Email:</b> rob.wratten@barnet.gov.uk	<b>Ofsted</b> Contact Ofsted about concerns <b>Tel:</b> 03001234666 <b>Email:</b> <a href="mailto:CIE@ofsted.gov.uk">CIE@ofsted.gov.uk</a>	<b>Responsible Individual</b> Mark Kotecha <b>Tel:</b> 07956351971 <b>Email:</b> mark@sevahomes.co.uk

### **Safe Working Practice**

All staff should take normal precautions not to place themselves in a vulnerable position with relation to child protection. Physical intervention should only be used as last resort and only, when necessary, as when the child is endangering him/herself or others or property or animals, and such events should be recorded and signed by a witness.

Staff must understand that ‘failure to report actual or reasonably suspected physical, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect of a child is a disciplinary offence.

### **Duty to refer**

It is the duty of all staff to immediately refer any child protection concerns about a child to the manager. It is the duty of the Registered Manager to consult with and refer this to. If as a member of staff, you are not satisfied with the Manager’s response you should make a referral yourself.

### **Recognising & Responding to Concern**

It is important to remember that children rarely talk about their own abuse for many reasons, and staff need to be vigilant to physical, emotional, sexual, and behavioural signs which may suggest abuse. If a young person chooses to confide in you, disclosing any form of abuse, the most important thing to do is to listen attentively without asking any leading questions. The child must tell their own story in their words. Even what seems to be an unbelievable story must be listened to and acted upon. If at this stage when you make any notes, you must use the child’s own words, or the words in which anyone else reports to you, and they must be kept in their original state, please see the section on recording of disclosures and concerns.



### **Suspicion of abuse**

If a member of staff suspects a young person may be at risk or hears a disclosure from a young person then the Manager must be informed without delay and this raw data must be written down. The member of staff may then be asked to complete a detailed record, if they have not already done so, to provide an accurate account of any discussions or observations regarding the young person concerned. Any records are then passed to the Manager as they are confidential documents and are kept in a separate locked child protection file.

### **Child Sexual Exploitation**

Any member of staff who suspects a young person maybe involved in child sexual exploitation must follow the same procedures as above and inform the Manager.

### **Young people missing or absent from the home without authorisation**

Seva Childcare will take steps to ensure that children who are absent or missing from home without consent are protected in line with:

- A thorough search of the grounds and surrounding areas.
- A report to the police (where necessary), the parents and to the child's placing authority within 1 hour.
- Information gathering to ensure the safety and welfare of the child.
- Search for this missing child.
- The collection and return of the child when found.
- A Detailed Record should be written of the behaviour and any action taken.
- A meeting between the child and a member of staff to establish why they left the home without informing staff of their whereabouts.

### **Recording of disclosures and concerns**

If notetaking is inappropriate, or not possible at the time, the member of staff involved should immediately afterwards note any key points on a piece of paper, using the child's own words and phrases. These notes must be kept as original, timed, dated and signed, as they could be used as evidence in court. As soon as possible the member of staff contacts the Manager without delay, the information should be placed in a sealed envelope marked 'Highly Confidential'. You should check as soon as possible that the Manager has the report. Disclosed information from a young person cannot be discussed with any other member of staff, other than the Manager.

### **Physical evidence**

If any physical injuries or bruising are noticed, it is appropriate as a caring adult, to ask the child how they sustained the bruise, graze scratch, bite or other mark on their body. If there is any doubt about the child's explanation, the injury not corresponding or you have further concerns, then a body map should be filled in, for marks easily visible, (ie do not examine the child beneath their clothing) and handed to the Manager with the child's explanation attached.

### **Working with parents/carers**

The Manager and other professionals should aim to work in partnership with parents and carers by attempting to discuss any concerns they have with them where possible. Permission should be sought by the Manager from the person holding parental responsibility for the child before discussing a referral about them with other agencies unless this process may in itself place a child at risk of significant harm or prejudice a criminal investigation.

### **Making a referral**

When the Manager has been informed of a case of suspected abuse or of a young person who may be at risk of abuse, they will pass this information on to the allocated Social Worker. Reporting the matter must be given priority. Any delay may put the child in further danger. A written referral will then be emailed to the LADO within 24 hours, which should be acknowledged within one working day. The manager also should contact OFSTED to notify about the safeguarding matter. In circumstances where a child is in immediate danger it may be necessary to call the police for immediate intervention.

### **Support for young people following a referral.**

We allow the young people to choose an adult to accompany him/her, if he/she so wishes, to any interview, which may take place as a result of Safeguarding assessment, to offer support. However, we respect the wishes and feelings of the young person should they want to be on their own. If a young person requires support from staff this will normally be granted in discussion with the Manager. Interviews with young people are usually undertaken by social workers and police who are specially trained, and these can be undertaken at the home, or at a special video interview suite, whatever is appropriate.

### **Support for staff**

Staff will be given support via their line Manager and sign posted to resources/organisations/unions that can also offer additional support and advice.

### **Issues of confidentiality**

If a young person requests confidentiality, they must be told that this cannot be promised, and it should be explained that staff have a responsibility to share information with those adults who will be able to help protect them from harm. The young person should be reassured that only staff who need to know about it will be told. Be aware that this could result in the young person not continuing the conversation, in which case the matter should not be pursued but concerns reported to the Manager. Staff have a professional duty to share confidential information about the protection of children with the Manager. Staff should take care not to discuss information given in confidence outside the appropriate professional contexts.

All documentation regarding the disclosure should be treated and marked as highly confidential and should only be shared with others on a need-to-know basis. This information must be kept locked away and access restricted.

### **Safeguarding records**

Safeguarding information must be held on a confidential Safeguarding file for each child, kept separately from their young person records in a locked cabinet with restricted access. A leaver's safeguarding information should be kept in a secure location until his/her 25th birthday, the information should then be offered to the local authority or shredded if the LA do not want it.

### **Staff conduct while safeguarding children**

Seva Childcare is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. This means that we have a Safeguarding Policy and Procedures in place. All staff (including agency staff and volunteers) must ensure that they are aware of these procedures. Parents, carers, and young people are welcome to read the Policy on request.

Sometimes we may need to share information and work in partnership with other agencies when there are concerns about a child's welfare, we will ensure that our concerns about our young people

are discussed (age appropriately with him/her) and his/her parents/carers first unless we have reason to believe that such a move would be contrary to their welfare.

If you are concerned about a young person's welfare, please write clear notes, preferably and ensure that it is received – in a sealed envelope – by the Manager who will discuss the contents with you at the earliest opportunity that day. **Do NOT conduct your own investigation.**

If your concerns relate to the actions or behaviour of a member of staff (which could suggest that s/he is a danger to children) then you should report this immediately to the Manager in confidence without delay, who will consider what action to take.

### **Safe Working Practice Agreement**

Seva Childcare is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. It is everyone's responsibility to ensure that young people are cared for appropriately and safeguarded from any harm, and their duty of care to promote the health, safety and welfare of all members of Seva Childcare and the community.

The staff code of conduct gives clarity to the measures needed to ensure that all employees and young persons can work within and enjoy being part of a safe and caring environment.

It is acknowledged that the vast majority of employees behave appropriately whilst working with young people. Whilst it is recognised that the individual members of an organisation may hold differing values and opinions, adults working in a Children's Home are in a position of trust and their conduct is, therefore, governed by specific laws, guidance and policies and procedures.

Staff occasionally express uncertainty as to what is and is not acceptable and seek guidance regarding those behaviours which, whilst most probably innocent, may be perceived by others as inappropriate.

The following is, therefore, a code of appropriate conduct for all adults working in Seva Childcare including those involved in any other activities. Adherence to this code should ensure that both children and adults are safe from misconduct or unfounded allegations of misconduct.

#### **You should always:**

- Adhere to all policies, many of which are specifically written with safeguarding in mind. For example: Safeguarding, Behaviour Management, Physical Intervention, Bullying, Equal Opportunities, Health and Safety.
- Behave in a mature, respectful, safe, fair and considered manner at all times.
- Provide a good example and 'positive role model' to the young people under our care.
- Observe other people's right to confidentiality (Unless you need to report something to the manager e.g. Concerns about a child protection issue).

- Treat all children equally; never build 'special relationships' with individual children or confer favour on particular children.

Report to the Manager (or in the case of an allegation concerning the Manager the Responsible Individual) without delay:

- Any behaviour or situation which may give rise to complaint, misunderstanding or misinterpretation.
- Any difficulties that you are experiencing, for example, coping with an unruly child; situations where you anticipate that you may not be sufficiently qualified, trained or experienced to deal with or handle appropriately.
- Any behaviours of another person working in the home which gives you cause for concern or breach of this code of conduct or other policies and procedures.

**You should never:**

- **Behave in a manner that could lead a reasonable person to question your conduct, intentions or suitability to care for other people's children.**
- Touch children in a manner which is or may be considered sexual, threatening, gratuitous or intimidating.
- Discriminate either favourably or unfavourably towards any child make arrangements to contact, communicate or meet children outside of work.
- Develop personal or sexual relationships with children, even after they leave care.
- Push, hit, kick, punch, slap, throw missiles at or smack a child or threaten to do so unless your own personal safety is threatened.
- Make inappropriate remarks or jokes of a personal, sexual, racial, discriminatory, intimidating or otherwise offensive nature.
- Intentionally embarrass or humiliate children, for example, by using sarcasm or humour in an
- Give or receive gifts unless arranged through your manager for example, outgrown sports kit, inappropriate way football boots etc.
- Allow, encourage or condone children to act in an illegal, improper or unsafe manner e.g. Smoking or drinking alcohol.

- Behave in an illegal or unsafe manner, for example, exceeding the speed limit, being under the influence of drugs or alcohol, driving a vehicle which is known to be un-roadworthy or otherwise unsafe or not having appropriate insurance, using a mobile phone whilst driving, fail to use seatbelts and drive in a safe manner at all times whilst transporting children.
- Undertake any work with children when you are not in a fit and proper physical or emotional state to do so. For example: under the influence of medication which induces drowsiness dictates that you should not be caring for children; under extreme stress which is likely to impair your judgement.

It is the perception of the person subject to a remark or action rather than your stated intention that defines 'appropriate' or 'inappropriate'.