

Safeguarding Children at West Heanton

Policy Overview

West Heanton Ltd is committed to ensuring that all children who visit, interact with, or are encountered by our organisation are protected from harm, abuse, neglect, and exploitation. This policy applies to anyone under the age of 18 and covers all settings in which children may be present, including the care home, extra-care housing, Day Centre, domiciliary care visits, community activities and events organised by West Heanton.

The welfare of the child is paramount. All staff, volunteers, contractors, and visitors share responsibility for safeguarding children and must act promptly on any concerns.

Legal and Regulatory Framework

This policy is aligned with:

- Children Act 1989 and 2004
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)
- Care Act 2014 (in relation to adult services encountering children)
- Devon Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements
- CQC Fundamental Standards

Policy Statement

Children may be present at West Heanton for various reasons, including:

- Visiting relatives or friends
- Accompanying adults who work at West Heanton
- Participating in group activities or events
- Working or volunteering at West Heanton
- Encountered during domiciliary care visits or community support activities

West Heanton will ensure that:

- Children are kept safe from harm and danger
- Risks to children's safety are assessed and managed
- Positive interactions between clients and children are encouraged when safe and appropriate
- The child's welfare always takes precedence over other considerations

Key Principles

- **Welfare of the child is paramount**
- **Zero tolerance of abuse or neglect**
- **Early identification and reporting of concerns**
- **Clear accountability and responsibility**
- **Partnership working with parents, carers, and safeguarding agencies**
- **Respect for children's rights, wishes, and feelings**

Safeguarding Children at West Heanton

Safeguarding Responsibilities

Staff Responsibilities

All staff and volunteers must:

- Be vigilant for signs of abuse or neglect
- Report concerns immediately to their manager
- Escalate concerns directly to MASH if they believe a child is at risk
- Contact police on 999 if a child is in immediate danger
- Follow confidentiality and information-sharing protocols
- Complete mandatory safeguarding training

Management Responsibilities

Management will:

- Ensure safeguarding procedures are followed
- Assess and manage risks to children in all settings
- Make decisions regarding limitations on visiting when necessary
- Support staff in reporting concerns
- Liaise with safeguarding agencies and police
- Maintain accurate records of safeguarding concerns and actions

Children Visiting West Heanton

- Children are welcome to visit in line with West Heanton's visiting policy.
- Staff must be informed when a child is on the premises.
- Children remain the responsibility of their parent or accompanying adult.
- Children working or volunteering must never work alone.
- Staff should raise concerns with the responsible adult as a first step.
- Management may restrict or end visits if a child's safety is at risk.

Limitations on Visiting

Visits may be restricted if:

- The client's physical or mental wellbeing poses a risk
- The child appears distressed or uncomfortable
- The child expresses wishes not to visit
- The child's emotional needs indicate visiting is not appropriate
- Staff or professionals raise concerns
- The client is known to pose a risk to children (e.g., Schedule 1 offender)

Where agreement cannot be reached, West Heanton may make a unilateral decision. Parents or responsible adults may use the complaints procedure to challenge decisions.

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Safeguarding Children During Domiciliary Care and Community Activities

During homecare visits or community support:

- Children remain the responsibility of their parent or responsible adult
- Staff must raise concerns with the responsible adult unless they are the source of concern
- Staff must escalate concerns to MASH if a child may be at risk
- Staff must contact police on 999 if a child is in immediate danger

Recognising Abuse

Staff must be aware of the following categories of abuse:

- Physical
- Emotional
- Sexual
- Neglect
- Child exploitation (CSE/CCE)
- Domestic abuse
- Online abuse
- Exposure to inappropriate behaviour or environments

Reporting Concerns

Immediate Danger

- Call **999**

No Immediate Danger

- Report to manager
- If concerns persist or involve the responsible adult, contact:
 - **MASH (Devon):** 0345 155 1071
 - **Email:** mashsecure@devon.gov.uk
- Police non-emergency: **101** or online reporting
- Report online: <https://www.devon-cornwall.police.uk/ro/report/ocr/af/how-to-report-a-crime/>

All concerns must be documented accurately and promptly.

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Information Sharing and Confidentiality

- Information will be shared on a need-to-know basis in line with statutory guidance
- Records will be factual, clear, and stored securely
- Children's identities will be protected when sharing information externally unless required by law

Staff Training

All staff have access to safeguarding training covering:

- Recognising abuse
- Reporting procedures
- Whistleblowing
- Professional boundaries
- Online safety awareness
- Working Together (2023) principles

Refresher training is required annually.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if legislation, guidance, or local safeguarding arrangements change.