

**SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS (INCLUDING CHILD PROTECTION POLICY)**

**Date**: 6 October 2017

**Review Date:**  5 October 2018

**Foreword**

This document is supported by Omega Care Group’s:

* Equality policies
* Complaints Procedure
* Disciplinary and Appeals Policy and Procedure
* Data Protection Compliance Policy on the use of photographs and videos.
* Lone Working policy
* Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedure
* Disclosure and Barring, Criminal Records Check procedure (revised 2013).

Omega Care Group aims to ensure currency and best possible practice within its work and this policy will be reviewed on an annual basis, or whenever there are legislative changes.

Omega is committed to ensuring that all employees are screened at the appropriate level and are appropriately qualified and/or trained in working with children, young people and vulnerable adults.

Omega will ensure that all necessary procedures and practices are in place to provide adequate protection both for children and vulnerable adults and also for protection for staff working with them.

**Contents**

1. Introduction
2. Policy statement
3. Aims of Policy
4. Scope of Policy
5. Responsibilities: Safeguarding Children and Young People
6. Responsibilities: Safeguarding Vulnerable adults.
7. Record keeping
8. Recruitment process.
9. Safeguarding Officer: Roles and responsibilities
10. Allegations against staff
11. Confidentiality
12. Complaint procedure
13. Training
14. Recognising child abuse.
15. Procedures for Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults.
16. Procedures for Safeguarding Children and young People.
17. Responding to suspicions that an employee may be abusing a child or vulnerable adult or not following the Code of Conduct.
18. Code of Conduct and Good Practice
19. Anti-social behaviour
20. Approach to threats of suicide
21. Legislation and guidance

Appendix 1: Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Report Form

1. **Introduction**

Omega Care Group recognises that we all have a responsibility to protect children and vulnerable adults and has developed a safeguarding policy to ensure that effective practices are in place.

Omega Care Group believes that all children, young people and vulnerable adults have the right to be safe, happy and healthy and deserve protection from abuse. Omega is committed to safeguarding from harm all children, young people and vulnerable adults using any of its services and involved in any of its activities, and to treat them with respect during their dealings with the organisation. This policy is written in accordance with The Children Act 2004, The Care Act 2014 and associated guidance.

1. **Policy Statement**

Omega Care Group is committed to practices that protect children, young people and vulnerable adults from harm regardless of age, gender, disability, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or any other protected characteristic as covered by the Equality Act 2010. Omega and its employees accept and recognise their responsibilities to develop self awareness of the issues that cause children, young people and vulnerable adults harm.

1. **Aims of the Policy**

The aims of the policy are to:

* Clarify the roles and responsibilities of all parties within the scope of the policy;
* Support the promotion of a safe working environment and a culture of care in which the rights of all children, young people and vulnerable adults are protected and respected;
* Promote procedures, codes of conduct and best practice in how employees interact with children, young people and vulnerable adults while providing services;
* Develop clear guidance and procedures for all staff working with children, young people and vulnerable adults and ensure through training and support that they are aware of these and able to implement them;
* Provide a framework for developing partnerships with appropriate external bodies e.g. Local Safeguarding Children and Adult Boards to ensure that the policy continues to reflect legal and best practice requirements in respect of the responsibility of care of children, young people and vulnerable adults;
* Enable information sharing about safeguarding concerns with relevant agencies and involving parents/carers and children, young people and vulnerable adults appropriately;
* Support the procedures for the safe recruitment of employees, in accordance with relevant legislation and guidance;
* Provide effective management for employees through supervision, support and training.

4. **Scope of Policy**

Children and young people legally defined as any person under the age of 18. From this point the terms child or children will be used to refer to this group. (Children Act 2004)

The term ‘parent/carer’ is used throughout as a generic term to represent parents, carers and guardians for both children and vulnerable adults.

1. **Responsibilities: Safeguarding Children and Young People**

Child Protection is defined as:

Protecting individual children identified as either suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of abuse or neglect. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people is defined as:

* Protecting children from maltreatment;
* Preventing impairment of children’s health or development;
* Ensuring that children are growing up and living in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care;
* Undertaking that role to enable those children to have optimum life chances.

6. **Responsibilities: Safeguarding Vulnerable adults**

Adult Safeguarding is defined as:

* Safeguarding those adults with care and support needs who may be in vulnerable circumstances and at risk of abuse or neglect;
* Protecting an adult’s right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect.

1. **Record keeping**

Ensuring that proper records are kept of any incidents occurring within the service and that these are held securely and passed on to the Safeguarding Officer or the director if the incident involves an employee.

1. **Recruitment**

Omega Care Group commits to:

* Ensuring that recruitment procedures are robust and that information pertinent to working with target groups is obtained during the recruitment procedure.
* Ensuring that all safeguarding and DBS checks are carried out at the level required in respect of every role identified involving contact with children and vulnerable adults.
* Explore each applicant’s experience of working or contact with children or vulnerable adults prior to an appointment being made
* Obtain two references, one of which must be from a current or most recent employer. Qualifications and professional registration will also be verified prior to an appointment being made.
* Undertake any other pre-employment checks, for example confirmation of the applicant’s right to work in the UK.
* Ensuring that employees in contact with these groups are adequately trained and aware of their responsibilities in this area.
* Referring any information about individuals who may pose a risk to the Disclosure and Barring Service.

1. **Safeguarding Officer: Roles and responsibilities**

The designated Safeguarding Officer has the responsibility to:

* Provide advice and information relating to safeguarding concerns
* Receive and record information from staff, children, vulnerable adults or parents and carers who have safeguarding concerns.
* Assess the information promptly and carefully, clarifying or obtaining more information about the matter as appropriate.
* Consult initially with Children’s or Adult Services to test out any doubts or uncertainty about the concerns as soon as possible.
* Ensure a formal referral to a statutory agency or the police has been made without delay and ensure the proper transfer of information relating to dealings with children and vulnerable adults, where necessary.
* Ensure the organisation’s safeguarding policies and procedures are up to date and compliant with legislation and guidance.
* Ensure appropriate training is available for all staff members.
* Be responsible for ensuring any internal safeguarding allegations are reported to the Local Authority Designated Officer as appropriate and in accordance with Working Together guidelines
* The designated Safeguarding Officer should be aware of the local child and vulnerable adult protection networks, the role of the relevant Local Safeguarding Children Board and Safeguarding Adult Board and the existence of local safeguarding procedures. The designated Safeguarding Officer will have received training in child protection and safeguarding vulnerable adults.

1. **Allegations against staff members**

Where there is an allegation against an employee concerning children or vulnerable adults in which it is alleged that a staff member has:

* Behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed a child or vulnerable adult
* Possibly committed a criminal offence against, or related to, a child or vulnerable adult
* Behaved in a way that indicates they are unsuitable to work with children or vulnerable adults.

The following shall apply:

* The director will be responsible if the allegation concerns an employee and the normal employment procedures would apply.
* In each case it shall be the responsibility of the director or the Safeguarding Officer, as appropriate, to make any required report to the relevant Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for children or Designated Safeguarding Adult Officer.

It is recognised that staff work a shift pattern and therefore may have difficulties contacting the Safeguarding Officer. If there is an incident or allegations of abuse when the Safeguarding Officer is not available, this should be reported directly to the relevant Out of Hours (Children and Adults Services) Duty team. The member of staff should then complete the Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Report form and contact the Safeguarding Officer at the first opportunity. Any out of hours working undertaken by an employee should comply with Health and Safety and the Lone Working procedures.

1. **Confidentiality**

The legal principle that “the welfare of the child is paramount” means that the considerations of confidentiality that might apply to other situations within the organisation should not be allowed to override the right of the child to be protected from harm. The same applies to vulnerable adults where there is an immediate risk of harm but wherever possible consent from the adult must be obtained before a referral is made unless doing so places the individual at further risk. Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned both when an allegation is made and whilst it is being investigated.

Records should be stored securely and shared only with those who need to know. These procedures not only serve to protect children/ adults but also to protect employees.

All written/electronic communications should be marked CONFIDENTIAL and sent only to the named person/s dealing with the case. The importance of good record keeping in this area cannot be over stressed.

1. **Complaints procedure**

It is important to maintain an open culture where staff, associated workers, children, vulnerable adults and parents/carers feel able to express concerns both about safeguarding children and vulnerable adults and concerns about issues of poor practice when dealing with children and vulnerable adults. Employees can raise concerns about other employees by following the Grievance Procedure.

1. **Training**

Omega Care Group recognises that it has a commitment to ensure that all staff members have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities when working with children and vulnerable adults. The organisation’s training process will help them to:

* Be able to recognise signs of abuse and what appropriate course of action should be taken in such circumstances.
* Have an understanding of the potential risks to themselves and ensure that good practice is adhered to at all time.
* Recognise signs of improper behaviour from other staff members and take appropriate action should this occur.

All employees who work directly or indirectly with children and vulnerable adults will be required to have training in the above areas to a level to ensure and support competency.

1. **Recognising Child Abuse**

Recognising child abuse is not easy and it is not the responsibility of staff members to decide whether or not abuse has taken place or if a child is at significant risk, they do however have a responsibility to act if they have any concerns.

What is Child Abuse?

There are four main forms of child abuse\*:

* **Physical Abuse**. Physical abuse may involve actions such as hitting, shaking and burning as well as giving children alcohol, inappropriate drugs or poison. Physical abuse as well as being a deliberate act can be caused by an omission or failure to act to protect.
* **Emotional Abuse**. Emotional abuse is a persistent lack of love and affection. A child may be constantly shouted at, threatened or taunted. This can make the child nervous and withdrawn. Other forms of emotional abuse include excessive overprotection and unrealistic pressure to succeed. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of children although it may occur alone.
* **Sexual Abuse**. Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing the child or young person to take part in sexual activities whether or not the child is aware of, or consents to, what is happening. Sexual abuse can involve penetrative acts or non-penetrative acts such as fondling. It may also involve non-contact activities such as showing pornographic material or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. This includes children who are victims of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) or are missing or trafficked.
* **Neglect**. Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical and or psychological needs. These needs include, for example, adequate food and warm clothing and also medical care. Children may be left alone unsupervised. Emotional neglect is when children are deprived of love and affection.

\*(Working Together to Safeguard Children HM Gov 2015)

Indications that a child is being abused:

* Unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruises, cuts and burns particularly if situated on parts of the body not normally prone to such injuries.
* Injuries for which an explanation seems inconsistent.
* Fear of parents being approached about such injuries.
* Reluctance to get changed e.g. wearing long sleeves in hot weather.
* Flinching when touched or approached.
* A failure to thrive or grow
* Sudden speech disorders
* Difficulties in making friends
* The child is prevented from socialising.
* Sudden or unexplained changes in behaviour.
* Fear of being left with a specific person.
* Sexually explicit behaviour.
* Sexual knowledge beyond their age and developmental level.
* A distrust of adults particularly those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected.
* Constant hunger, sometimes stealing food.
* The child being dirty/smelly and unkempt.
* Loss of weight.
* Inappropriate dress for the conditions.

This list is by no means definitive and it is important to remember that many children will exhibit some of these indicators at some time and the presence of one or more should not be taken as proof that abuse is occurring. There may be other reasons for changes in behaviour such as a death in the family or the birth of a new baby. It is crucial that this is only a process of observation and that at no point in time should staff feel that they should be actively seeking out abuse or an abuser. The responsibility of the staff and of the organisation is to ensure that if there are concerns about the welfare of a child that it is reported and never to assume that others will do so.

1. **Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults**

What is abuse of vulnerable adults?

* **Physical:** Hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint or inappropriate sanctions.
* **Sexual:** Rape, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, inappropriate looking or touching, sexual teasing or innuendo, sexual photography, subjection to pornography or witnessing sexual acts, indecent exposure and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the adult has not consented or was pressured into consenting.
* **Psychological**: Emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, cyber bullying, isolation or unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal of services or supportive networks.
* **Financial or material**: Theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.
* **Neglect and acts of omission**: Ignoring medical or physical care needs, failing to provide access to appropriate health, social care, welfare benefits or educational services, withholding the necessities of life such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.
* **Discriminatory**: Racism, sexism or acts based on a person’s disability, age or sexual orientation. It also includes other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment such as disability hate crime.
* **Domestic abuse**: Psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional abuse and so called ‘honour’ based violence.
* **Organisational abuse**: Neglect and poor care practice within a care setting such as a hospital or care home or in relation to care provided in someone’s own home ranging from one off incidents to on-going ill-treatment. It can be neglect or poor practice as a result of the structure, policies, processes and practices within a care setting.
* **Modern slavery**: Encompassing slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude. 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.
* **Self-Neglect**: Covers a wide range of behaviour including neglecting to care for one’s personal hygiene, health or surroundings and behaviour such as hoarding.

1. **Procedures for Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults**

These procedures seek to ensure that all staff members have a clear understanding of their responsibilities when working with children and vulnerable adults.

Responding to allegations and suspicions of abuse to children or vulnerable adults:

* Stay calm.
* Listen carefully.
* Find an appropriate, early opportunity to explain that it is likely that the information will need to be shared. Do not promise to keep secrets.
* Allow the child/adult to talk at their own pace.
* Ask questions for clarification only and avoid asking questions that suggest a particular answer.
* Reassure the child/adult that they have done the right thing in telling you.
* Tell them what you will do next and with whom the information will be shared.
* Record in writing what was said using the child’s/adult’s own words as soon as possible. Note the date and time, any names mentioned and to whom the information was given. Ensure that this record is signed and dated.
* Relay this information as soon as possible to the Safeguarding Officer/Responsible officer.

All reports should be made using the Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Report form (Appendix 1). It is important that all staff at Omega Care Group are aware that the person who first encounters a case of alleged or suspected abuse is not responsible for deciding whether or not abuse has occurred. This is the task of the professional agencies following a referral to them of a concern about a child or vulnerable adult. If you think a child or a vulnerable adult is in immediate danger then always contact the Police 999.

Report your actions to your line manager who should in turn pass the information onto the Safeguarding Officer.

1. **Responding to suspicions that a staff member may be abusing a child or vulnerable adult or not following the Code of Conduct and Good Practice**.

Any staff member who suspects that a colleague may be abusing children/ vulnerable adults or in any way behaving inappropriately, should act on their suspicions. Action should also be taken if it is felt that colleagues are not following the codes of conduct set out in this document. This action will serve not only to protect children/ or vulnerable adults but also colleagues from false accusations.

Write down the details of the incident following the guidelines in this policy.

Pass this report to your manager at the earliest opportunity.

The manager should then take appropriate action to ensure the safety of the child / adult and of any other child/adult who may be at risk.

The matter should then be discussed with the Safeguarding Officer and HR, who will then consider whether the matter is an issue relating to poor practice or to child / adult abuse.

If the matter relates to poor practice, procedures relating to misconduct should be followed. If the matter relates to child / adult abuse the matter should be referred to Children or Adult Services who may involve the Police, and the employee suspended pending the outcome of an internal investigation into the allegations. Omega Care Group acknowledges that this is an extremely sensitive issue and assures all employees and people working on its behalf that it will fully support and protect anyone who in good faith reports a concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child or vulnerable adult.

1. **Safeguarding Code of Conduct and Good Practice**

These guidelines are designed not only to protect children and vulnerable adults but also to protect employees from situations where false allegations may occur.

Employees must:

* Treat all children and vulnerable adults and their possessions with respect.
* Provide an example of good conduct they wish others to follow
* Ensure that whenever possible there is more than one adult present during activities with children and vulnerable adults or at least that they are within the sight or hearing of others
* Respect the child/vulnerable adult’s right to personal privacy and encourage them to feel comfortable enough to point out attitudes or behaviour they do not like.
* Remember that someone else might misinterpret their actions, no matter how well intentioned.
* Be aware that physical contact with a child or vulnerable adult may be misinterpreted and be mindful of how and where they touch them.
* Recognise that special caution is required when discussing sensitive issues
* Challenge unacceptable behaviour and report all allegations/suspicions of abuse.
* Be identifiable and have their photo ID card at all times
* Keep the child’s or vulnerable adult’s needs first and performing outcomes second.

Staff members and volunteers must not:

* Have inappropriate physical or verbal contact with children or vulnerable adults
* Make sexually suggestive comments, even in fun
* Make derogatory remarks or gestures in front of children or vulnerable adults
* Jump to conclusions about others without checking the facts
* Exaggerate or trivialise child or vulnerable adult abuse issues
* Show favouritism to individuals
* Ask people to do things that are potentially dangerous, illegal or otherwise unreasonable.
* Allow bullying
* Let allegations a child or vulnerable adult makes be ignored or go unrecorded
* Take chances when common sense, policy or practice suggests a more prudent approach.
* Take children or vulnerable adults alone on a vehicle journey unless in an emergency or with parental consent.
* Take children/ vulnerable adults to their home.
* Meet up with children / vulnerable adults outside of their work with Omega Care unless it is with the full consent and knowledge of the person’s parents / carers and their manager.
* Enter a house when a child is in there on their own.

**Personal Care**: It may sometimes be necessary for employees/volunteers to do things of a personal nature for children or vulnerable adults, particularly if they are very young or disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of the parents/carers. If an emergency situation arises that requires this type of help then parents/carers should be fully informed as soon as is reasonably possible.

1. **Anti-social behaviour**

If anti-social behaviour (vandalism, bullying, intimidation) is taking place you must call the Police on the 0845 045 4545 stating clearly what you have seen. Call 999 if you feel it is an emergency and ask for the appropriate emergency service.

Such action must also be reported to your line manager at the first opportunity. Actions of an employee will be supported by the organisation in accordance with the Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy where an employee is acting in good faith and responding to a concern.

You do not have to approach the child, young person or group as this is not your responsibility and you may be putting yourself at risk, but you should act quickly and report as above. If you are in any doubt, always act on the side of caution and report your concern and let the correct authorities decide if any further action is required.

This type of information sharing will also help to identify areas of hotspots for truancy and action can then be taken by relevant agencies to tackle this problem. Your actions may prevent a child or young person from coming to harm.

1. **Approach to threats of suicide**

If an individual states that they are going to take their own life, phone the police on 101 and tell them your concern, the person’s name, address and any other relevant information you have. We do not need the individual’s consent, as it is considered a serious safeguarding alert.

1. **Legislation /Guidance**

The Children Act 2004 Working Together to Safeguard Children – A guide to interagency working HM Gov 2015 Information Sharing Advice for practitioners March 2015.

Appendix 1



**Safeguarding Report Form**

**Company Name:** Omega Care Group

**Address of premises:** 7 Station Road

Prescot

Merseyside

L34 5SN

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Young person involved** |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Date of incident** | **Time of incident** | **Location of incident** |
|  |  |  |

**Details of incident:**

|  |
| --- |
|  |

**Police/social worker informed?**

|  |
| --- |
|  |

**Further action to be taken**

|  |
| --- |
|  |

**Completed by: (Name)…………………………………………..Date:………………..**