



ALPHA PLUS GUARDIANS LTD Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Alpha Plus Guardians Ltd has considered its responsibilities to the young people under guardianship care with them carefully and has produced the following **Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy** and underpinning procedures in order to set out the standards we wish to uphold in safeguarding the welfare of children in our care.

Accreditation

Accredited by The Association for the Education and Guardianship of International Students AEGIS

1. Policy Statement

Alpha Plus Guardians Ltd acknowledges its duty of care to safeguard the welfare of all young people (defined as those under 18) in guardianship care with them. All young people have a right to protection, and have their needs taken into account.

Alpha Plus Guardians will therefore endeavour to ensure the safety and protection of all young people involved with the guardianship agency through the Child Protection guidelines adopted by the Management Committee of the guardianship agency. It is the responsibility of all adults within the guardianship agency to assist the Management Committee in this endeavour.

2. Policy Aims

- To provide young people with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care of the guardianship agency.
- To reassure parents that their children will receive the best practicable care possible whilst in guardianship care.
- To provide Alpha Plus Guardians Ltd employees to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues and to fulfil their role effectively.

3. Principles

- The welfare of young people is paramount.
- All young people, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, ethnic origin and religious beliefs have the right to protection from abuse.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse and poor practice will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- All staff have a responsibility to report concerns to their Safeguarding Officer.
- Adults – staff will be supported to understand their role and responsibility about the duty of care and protection of young people by the guardianship agency and the National Governing Body.
- Individuals will receive support through education and training, coordinated by the national governing body to be aware of and understand best practice and how to manage any welfare or child protection issues that may come to light.
- *Alpha Plus Guardians Ltd* will work in partnership with young people and parents to review and implement child protection and safeguarding procedures.
- *Alpha Plus Guardians Ltd* policy and procedures are based on the above principles and UK and international legislation and government guidance and take the following into consideration:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education KCSiE 2023
- The Children Act 1989 and 2004.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018.
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Any subsequent legislation relating to child protection would implicitly be incorporated into this document.

4. Responsibilities and Communication

- The *Alpha Plus Guardians Ltd* Child Protection Policy will be available to all members, parents, staff, volunteers and participants.
- The Policy will be reviewed every year by the Management Committee and amended as appropriate. Guidance from AEGIS will be sought as part of the review process.
- The Management Committee has responsibility for ensuring that the policy and procedures are implemented, including referring any appropriate disciplinary action to the national governing body as appropriate.
- The guardianship agency Safeguarding Officer has responsibility for responding to any allegations, concerns or child protection incidents, passing information to the appropriate Safeguarding Officer and informing the appropriate staff where relevant.
- Parents have a responsibility to work together with the guardianship agency in implementing procedures and providing their children with the necessary information to keep themselves safe.

5. Monitoring and review

- This policy will be reviewed one year after being introduced and then annually or in response to significant new legislation.
- The policy will be monitored in partnership with AEGIS procedures.

6. Additional supporting information:

Definition of Child Protection

There is no legal definition of child protection, but services aim to identify those children who are at risk of serious harm. Child protection aims to keep children safe where there is serious risk of harm. Serious risk of harm may arise from a single event or a series of concerns over time.

Often the phrases 'Child Protection' and 'Safeguarding' are used synonymously, but they are quite distinct. Safeguarding refers to all children, whilst Child Protection refers distinctly to children at risk of harm.

The Children Act 1989, defines a child as 'anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday, even if they are living independently, are a member of the armed forces or is in hospital.

The Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 identifies four types of abuse and neglect: emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse and neglect.

Types of Abuse as defined by the NSPCC:

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is when a child is forced or persuaded to take part in sexual activities (All Wales Child Protection Review Group, 2008; Department for Education, 2018; Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, 2017; Scottish Government, 2014). This may involve physical contact or non-contact activities and can happen online or offline. Children and young people may not always understand that they are being sexually abused.

Contact abuse involves activities where an abuser makes physical contact with a child. It includes:

- sexual touching of any part of the body, whether the child is wearing clothes or not
- forcing or encouraging a child to take part in sexual activity
- making a child take their clothes off or touch someone else's genitals
- rape or penetration by putting an object or body part inside a child's mouth, vagina or anus.

Non-contact abuse involves activities where there is no physical contact. It includes:

- flashing at a child
- encouraging or forcing a child to watch or hear sexual acts
- not taking proper measures to prevent a child being exposed to sexual activities by others
- making a child masturbate while others watch
- persuading a child to make, view or distribute child abuse images (such as performing sexual acts over the internet, sexting or showing pornography to a child)
- making, viewing or distributing child abuse images
- allowing someone else to make, view or distribute child abuse images
- meeting a child following grooming with the intent of abusing them (even if abuse did not take place)
- sexually exploiting a child for money, power or status (child sexual exploitation)

Physical abuse is deliberately hurting a child causing injuries such as bruises, broken bones, burns or cuts.

It isn't accidental - children who are physically abused suffer violence such as being hit, kicked, poisoned, burned, slapped or having objects thrown at them. Shaking or hitting babies can cause non-accidental head injuries (NAHI). Sometimes parents or carers will make up or cause the symptoms of illness in their child, perhaps giving them medicine they don't need and making the child unwell – this is known as fabricated or induced illness (FII).

There's no excuse for physically abusing a child. It causes serious, and often long-lasting, harm – and in severe cases, death.

Bumps and bruises don't necessarily mean a child is being physically abused – all children have accidents, trips and falls.

There's isn't one sign or symptom to look out for that will say a child is definitely being physically abused. But if a child often has injuries, there seems to be a pattern, or the explanation doesn't match the injury then this should be investigated.

Things you may notice

If you're worried that a child is being abused, watch out for any unusual behaviour.

withdrawn

suddenly behaves differently

anxious

clingy

depressed

aggressive

problems sleeping

eating disorders

wets the bed

soils clothes

takes risks

misses school

changes in eating habits

obsessive behaviour

nightmares

drugs

alcohol

self-harm

thoughts about suicide

Bruises

- commonly on the head but also on the ear or neck or soft areas - the abdomen, back and buttocks
- defensive wounds commonly on the forearm, upper arm, back of the leg, hands or feet
- clusters of bruises on the upper arm, outside of the thigh or on the body
- bruises with dots of blood under the skin
- a bruised scalp and swollen eyes from hair being pulled violently
- bruises in the shape of a hand or object.

Burns or scalds

- can be from hot liquids, hot objects, flames, chemicals or electricity
- on the hands, back, shoulders or buttocks; scalds may be on lower limbs, both arms and/or both legs
- a clear edge to the burn or scald
- sometimes in the shape of an implement for example, a circular cigarette burn
- multiple burns or scalds.

Bite marks

- usually oval or circular in shape
- visible wounds, indentations or bruising from individual teeth.

Fractures or broken bones

- fractures to the ribs or the leg bones in babies
- multiple fractures or breaks at different stages of healing

Other injuries and health problems

- scarring
- effects of poisoning such as vomiting, drowsiness or seizures
- respiratory problems from drowning, suffocation or poisoning

What does emotional abuse include?

Because there's an element of emotional abuse in all other types of [child abuse and neglect](#), it can be difficult to spot the signs and to separate what's emotional abuse from other types of abuse.

Emotional abuse includes:

- humiliating or constantly criticising a child
- threatening, shouting at a child or calling them names
- making the child the subject of jokes, or using sarcasm to hurt a child
- blaming, scapegoating
- making a child perform degrading acts
- not recognising a child's own individuality, trying to control their lives
- pushing a child too hard or not recognising their limitations
- exposing a child to distressing events or interactions such as [domestic abuse](#) or drug taking
- failing to promote a child's social development
- not allowing them to have friends
- persistently ignoring them
- being absent
- manipulating a child
- never saying anything kind, expressing positive feelings or congratulating a child on successes
- never showing any emotions in interactions with a child, also known as emotional neglect.

Types of emotional abuse

Just like [child neglect](#), there are two different types of emotional abuse which affect children in different ways.

Passive emotional abuse

When a parent or carer denies their child the love and care they need in order to be healthy and happy it's known as "passive" abuse.

It's just as damaging, but it can be harder to spot than "active" abuse. The definitions for passive emotional abuse and emotional neglect are very similar.

Five categories of passive emotional abuse have been identified ([Barlow and Schrader McMillan, 2010](#)):

1. **Emotional unavailability**
where a parent or carer is not connected with the child and cannot give them the love that they deserve and need
2. **Negative attitudes**
such as having a low opinion of the child and not offering any praise or encouragement
3. **Developmentally inappropriate interaction with the child**
either expecting the child to perform tasks that they are not emotionally mature enough to do or speaking and acting in an inappropriate way in front of a child
4. **Failure to recognise a child's individuality**
this can mean an adult relying on a child to fulfil their emotional needs and not recognising that the child has needs
5. **Failure to promote social adaptation**
not encouraging a child to make friends and mix among their own social peers.

Active emotional abuse

When someone intentionally scares, demeans or verbally abuses a child it's known as "active" abuse. This requires a premeditated intention to harm a child.

Active emotional abuse has been defined as:

- spurning (rejecting)
- terrorising
- isolating
- exploiting or corrupting.

([Barlow and Schrader McMillan, 2010](#))

Sometimes a fifth category of "ignoring" is also included ([Cawson et al, 2000](#)).

Types of neglect

Physical neglect

Failing to provide for a child's basic needs such as food, clothing or shelter. Failing to adequately supervise a child, or provide for their safety.

Educational neglect

Failing to ensure a child receives an education.

Emotional neglect

Failing to meet a child's needs for nurture and stimulation, perhaps by ignoring, humiliating, intimidating or isolating them. It's often the most difficult to prove.

Medical neglect

Failing to provide appropriate health care, including dental care and refusal of care or ignoring medical recommendations.

Source: [Horwath, 2007](#)

Neglect can have serious and long-lasting effects. It can be anything from leaving a child home alone to the very worst cases where a child dies from malnutrition or being denied the care they need. In some cases it can cause permanent disabilities.

Neglect can be really difficult to identify, making it hard for professionals to take early action to protect a child.

Having one of the signs or symptoms below doesn't necessarily mean that a child is being neglected. But if you notice multiple, or persistent, signs then it could indicate there's a serious problem.

Children who are neglected may have:

Poor appearance and hygiene

They may:

- be smelly or dirty
- have unwashed clothes
- have inadequate clothing, e.g. not having a winter coat
- seem hungry or turn up to school without having breakfast or any lunch money
- have frequent and untreated nappy rash in infants.

Health and development problems

They may have:

- untreated injuries, medical and [dental issues](#)
- repeated accidental injuries caused by lack of supervision
- recurring illnesses or infections
- not been given appropriate medicines
- missed medical appointments such as [vaccinations](#)
- poor muscle tone or prominent joints

- skin sores, rashes, flea bites, [scabies](#) or [ringworm](#)
- thin or swollen tummy
- [anaemia](#)
- tiredness
- faltering weight or growth and not reaching developmental milestones (known as failure to thrive)
- poor language, communication or social skills.

Housing and family issues

They may be:

- living in an unsuitable home environment for example dog mess being left or not having any heating
- left alone for a long time
- taking on the role of carer for other family members.

Child on Child Abuse

This form of abuse is when there is any kind of physical, sexual, emotional or financial abuse or coercive control exercised between children/young people both on and offline. It is essential that all staff and homestays recognise that emotional bullying can sometimes be more damaging than physical harm and should be taken equally seriously. It can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours, an unsafe environment for children and in worst case scenarios, a culture that normalises abuse leading to children/young people accepting it as normal and not coming forward to report it.

- Child-on-child abuse is most likely to include, but may not be limited to: bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying)
- Abuse in intimate personal relationships between children (sometimes known as 'teenage relationship abuse')
- Physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse) sexual violence such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault; (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence)

Actions to be followed if there are concerns about a child or young person:

Any concerns should be immediately reported to the Designated Safeguarding Officer of Alpha Plus Guardianship Services Ltd; Emma Ryan.

Disclosure from a child

If a child discloses abuse

If you're in a situation where a child discloses abuse to you, there are a number of steps you need to take.

- **Listen carefully to the child.** Avoid expressing your own views on the matter. A reaction of shock or disbelief could cause the child to 'shut down', retract or stop talking
- **Let them know they've done the right thing.** Reassurance can make a big impact to the child who may have been keeping the abuse secret
- **Tell them it's not their fault.** Abuse is never the child's fault and they need to know this

- **Say you will take them seriously.** A child could keep abuse secret in fear they won't be believed. They've told you because they want help and trust you'll be the person who will listen to and support them.
- **Don't talk to the alleged abuser.** Confronting the alleged abuser about what the child's told you could make the situation a lot worse for the child
- **Explain what you'll do next.** If age appropriate, explain to the child you'll need to report the abuse to someone who will be able to help
- **Don't delay reporting the abuse.** The sooner the abuse is reported after the child discloses the better. Record the conversation in the child's words as soon as possible. The record must include dates and times to insure the record is accurate. Report it to the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately so details are fresh in your mind and action can be taken quickly.

All Staff and Homestays should be aware that a child may not feel ready or know how to tell someone that they are being abused, exploited, or neglected, and/or they may not recognise their experiences as harmful. This should not prevent Staff and Homestays from speaking to the Designated Safeguarding Lead if they have concerns about the child.

Alpha Plus Guardians will ensure that where there is a safeguarding concern, the child's wishes and feelings will be taken into account when determining what action to take and what services to provide.

What is a designated safeguarding lead person?

While every member of staff in a school, college or education setting should be up to date with their safeguarding training and should understand the safeguarding policies and procedures for their setting, there are some members of staff who will take an extra responsibility for safeguarding. These individuals are known as the designated safeguarding lead person (formerly the Child Protection Officer) and every school and guardianship organisation should have at least one member of staff fulfilling this duty. Within Alpha Plus Guardian Services Ltd the Designated Safeguarding Lead is the responsibility of Emma Ryan, Director. Her full contact details are :

email: office@alphaplusguardians.co.uk

+44 (0) 7981 705275 24 hours

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2018 (Part 1) defines a designated safeguarding lead as the following:

'Governing bodies, proprietors and management committees should ensure an appropriate senior member of staff, from the school or college leadership team, is appointed to the role of designated safeguarding lead. The designated safeguarding lead should take all responsibility for safeguarding and child protection (including online safety). This should be explicit in the role holder's job description. This person should have the appropriate status and authority within the school to carry out the duties of the post. They should be given the time, funding, training, resources and support to provide advice and support to other staff on child welfare and child protection matters, to take part in strategy discussions and inter-agency meetings and/or to support other staff to do so, and to contribute to the assessment of children.'

According to *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2018 (Part 1)*:

- 'Every school and college should have a designated safeguarding lead who will provide support to staff to carry out their safeguarding duties and who will liaise closely with other services such as children's social care.'
- 'The designated safeguarding lead (and any deputies) are most likely to have a complete safeguarding picture and be the most appropriate person to advise on the response to safeguarding concerns.'

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2018 (Part 1) also states that every member of staff in each setting should be aware of the role of the designated safeguarding lead and the identity of the designated safeguarding lead and any deputies.

Safeguarding Training

All Alpha Plus staff are trained to a minimum standard Level 1. The Designated Safe Guarding Lead is trained to Level 3. Host families are given safeguarding advice by the Designated Safeguarding Lead and they are required to have standard Level 1 training on an annual basis.

Communication with Parents, Schools, Agents and the Local Safeguarding Children Board

The Designated Safe Guarding Lead (DSL) of Alpha Plus will liaise (where appropriate) with parents, the school and local authority when a safeguarding concern is reported. All concerns will be listened to and assessed by the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Action will be taken if the student is considered at risk of harm.

A Local Safeguarding Children Board (**LSCB**) is a multi-agency body set up in every local authority. Each local authority has a Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

Contact details for your Local Safeguarding Children Board:

Oxfordshire

Contact: 0345 0507666

Emergency duty team: 0800 833 408

Gloucestershire

Contact: 01452 426565

Emergency duty team: 01452 614194

Cambridgeshire

Contact: 0345 045 5203

Emergency duty team: 01733 234724

Hampshire

Contact: 0300 5551384

Emergency duty team: 01329 225379

Berkshire

Contact: 0118 3973641

Emergency duty team: 01344 351999

Buckinghamshire:

Contact: 01296 383962

Emergency duty team: 0800 999 7677

Wiltshire:

Contact: 0300 456 01108

Emergency duty team: 0300 456 0100

Storage of Safeguarding Records

- Information about child protection concerns and referrals will be kept in a separate child protection file for each child and the file will be started as soon as any concern is raised.

- The child protection files will be kept separate from the child's general record. The general record will be marked to indicate that there is a separate child protection file.
- Files will be kept until the child is 25 (this is seven years after school leaving age) (Information and Records Management Society IRMS 2016; Department of Education 2016)

The child protection file will keep an accurate record of:

- the date and time of the incident/disclosure
- the date and time of the report
- the name and role of the person to whom the concern was originally reported and their contact details
- the names of all parties who were involved in the incident, including any witnesses
- what was said or done and by whom
- any action taken to look into the matter
- any further action taken such as a referral
- the reasons why the organisation decided not to refer those concerns to a statutory agency (if relevant)

Whistleblowing:

Whistleblowing procedures are intended to provide a means of making serious allegations about standards, conduct, financial irregularity or possible unlawful action in a way that will ensure confidentiality and protect those making such allegations in the reasonable belief that it is in the public interest to do so from being victimised, discriminated against or disadvantaged.

Any staff member who has concerns and feels unable to speak to anyone within the organisation can call the NSPCC. They have a whistleblowing helpline: 0800 028 0285 (Monday to Friday 8am-8pm) or email: help@nspcc.org.uk.

All allegations of abuse made against a member of staff or homestay should be reported to the DSL:

Any concern that indicates a person who works with children has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed or may have harmed a child
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
- Behaved towards a child/children in a way that indicates he/she would pose a risk of harm to a child
- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children

Low Level Concerns about a member of staff or homestay should also be reported to the DSL:

These concerns may include (but not limited to):

- Being over friendly with children
- Engaging with a child on a one to one basis in a secluded area or behind closed doors
- Having favourites
- Humiliating a child

Procedure following a low-level concern:

Low-level concerns cover a broad spectrum of actions and can include both intentional and unintentional or inadvertent behaviour or consequences. It is therefore important the response is proportionate and appropriate.

- The DSL will meet with the individual and discuss the concern.
- The DSL will reinforce the Code of Conduct and Safeguarding Policy and give guidance on appropriate behaviour
- The DSL will monitor and review the individual

All allegations and reporting of abuse will be dealt with the utmost confidentiality and information will only be shared when permission has been given.

Supporting Policies:

Please find the supporting policies on the Alpha Plus Guardian Services Ltd website: www.alphaplusguardians.co.uk
Here you will find the following policies: Missing Students, Student Code of Conduct, Anti-bullying, Staff Code of Conduct, Anti-radicalisation, Grievance, Complaints, Whistleblowing, Low Level Concerns and Emergency Plan.

Contact details

The Designated Safeguarding Officer: Mrs Emma Ryan

email: office@alphaplusguardians.co.uk

+44 (0) 7981 705275 24 hours

Next review date: 30th March 2024