

Policy

TITLE	Safeguarding Children Policy		
Policy ref:	LG043P	Approval date	September 2026
Owner	Head of Customer Quality	Planned review date	September 2026
Approved by	Customer Committee on behalf of the Board		

1 Background	Abbeyfield has a zero tolerance approach to abuse and neglect and will ensure all staff and volunteers are clear about their duty to safeguard not only the people they support, but also any children with whom they come into contact during the course of their working activities. This policy has been developed in recognition of the legislative requirements and expectations on individual services to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. In this document a child is defined as anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. 'Children' therefore means children and young people throughout.
2 Objectives	The aim of this policy is to ensure that all staff understand their duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children with whom they come into contact during the course of their working activities. All staff will be guided by the following principles: • children have a right to be safe and should be protected from all forms of abuse and neglect; • safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility; • it is better to help children as early as possible, before issues escalate and become more damaging; and • children and families are best supported and protected when there is a co-ordinated response from all relevant agencies. Abbeyfield will work in partnership with other multi-agency partners in order that the protection and safeguarding of children is consistent with current policy and guidance.
3 Scope	All established staff, agency staff and volunteers working for the Abbeyfield Living Society (ALS).

4 Policy	Even though the primary responsibility of Abbeyfield staff does not relate to children, they may encounter visiting children during the course of their working activities. All staff have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and should be alert to the signs of abuse and neglect and know what to do if they suspect that a child is at risk of harm.
4.1	Defining child abuse and neglect Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment – a person may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or by a stranger, including via the internet. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children. An abused child will often experience more than one type of abuse, as well as other difficulties in their lives. Abuse and neglect can happen over a period of time, but can also be a one-off event. Child abuse and neglect can have major long-term impacts on all aspects of a child's health, development and well-being.
4.2	Types of child abuse and neglect There are four main categories of abuse and neglect:
4.2.1	PHYSICAL ABUSE Physical abuse is deliberately physically hurting a child. Some of the following signs may be indicators of physical abuse: • Children with frequent injuries • Children with unexplained or unusual fractures or broken bones • Children with unexplained: ○ bruises or cuts ○ burns or scalds ○ bite marks
4.2.2	EMOTIONAL ABUSE Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child. It is also sometimes called psychological abuse and it can have severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's emotional development. Some of the following signs may be indicators of emotional abuse: • Children who are excessively withdrawn, fearful, or anxious about doing something wrong • Parents or carers who withdraw their attention from their child, giving the child the 'cold shoulder' • Parents or carers blaming their problems on their child

4.2.3	• Parents or carers who humiliate their child, for example, by name-calling or making negative comparisons. SEXUAL ABUSE Sexual abuse is any sexual activity with a child. Many children who are victims of sexual abuse do not recognise themselves as such. A child may not understand what is happening and may not even understand that it is wrong. Sexual abuse can have a long-term impact on mental health. Some of the following signs may be indicators of sexual abuse: • Children who display knowledge or interest in sexual acts inappropriate to their age • Children who use sexual language or have sexual knowledge that you wouldn't expect them to have • Children who ask others to behave sexually or play sexual games • Children with physical sexual health problems, including soreness in the genital and anal areas, sexually transmitted infections or underage pregnancy. 4.2.4 NEGLECT Neglect is a pattern of failing to provide for a child's basic needs, whether it be adequate food, clothing, hygiene, supervision or shelter. It is likely to result in the serious impairment of a child's health or development. Some of the following signs may be indicators of neglect: • Children who are living in a home that is indisputably dirty or unsafe • Children who are left hungry or dirty • Children who are left without adequate clothing, e.g. not having a winter coat • Children who are living in dangerous conditions, i.e. around drugs, alcohol or violence • Children who are often angry, aggressive or self-harm • Children who fail to receive basic healthcare Parents who fail to seek medical treatment when their children are ill or are injured. This includes risks such as child sexual exploitation, child criminal exploitation and county lines, as defined in statutory guidance.
4.3 4.3.1	Safety and welfare of visiting children Children may visit Abbeyfield premises for a number of reasons:

	• They (or the adult responsible for them) have a relative or friend living at the premises; • They have a parent, relative or acquaintance who works at the premises; or • They are visiting the premises in the company of a professional, for example from a school or church, in order to take part in an internally or externally organised event.
4.3.2	Children visiting Abbeyfield premises must be accompanied by a responsible adult who must personally supervise the children at all times. Groups of children visiting with professionals must be accompanied by a sufficient number of responsible adults to ensure their safety and welfare.
4.3.3	Adults visiting with children must be reminded to sign the children in and out of the premises' Visitors Book.
4.3.4	Where play areas are provided for the benefit of visiting children, the Manager must ensure that signage is displayed stating "Safety Notice: Children must be supervised at all times".
4.3.5	Any known or foreseeable risks to visiting children should be assessed and mitigated, for example, where a Person Posing a Risk to Children lives at the service.
4.3.6	Staff must not provide care or have any unsupervised contact with visiting children.
4.3.7	Staff who bring their children to visit Abbeyfield residents or to attend social events are reminded that they are responsible for personally supervising their children at all times. Staff are not allowed to bring their children with them when they are on duty. Should an occasion arise where a member of staff has problems with their child care arrangements, they must speak with their line manager. Any decision to allow children of a member of staff to be on Abbeyfield premises whilst the member of staff is working may only be taken by the Manager and will only be allowed in exceptional circumstances and for the shortest time possible.
4.4	The Prevent Strategy
4.4.1	<i>Prevent</i> is about safeguarding people and communities from the threat of terrorism. <i>Prevent</i> is 1 of the 4 elements of <i>Contest</i> , the Government's counter-terrorism strategy. The main aim of <i>Prevent</i> is to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. At the heart of <i>Prevent</i> is safeguarding children and

4.4.2 4.4.3	adults and providing early intervention to protect and divert people away from being drawn into terrorist activity. Certain specified authorities have a legal duty, known as the Prevent Duty, to have “due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism”. Whilst this legal duty does not extend to Abbeyfield, we are committed to our role in safeguarding staff, residents, visiting students and children and other stakeholders from becoming radicalised and being drawn into terrorism. If anyone has concerns about their own safety or the safety and wellbeing of others in relation to <i>Prevent</i>, they can contact Abbeyfield’s Safeguarding Lead by emailing safeguarding@abbeyfield.com who will explore their concerns and where necessary report them to professional organisations for appropriate action and support. Alternatively, concerns may be raised by: • calling the police hotline on 0800 789 321 • calling the local police force by dialling 101 • summoning urgent police assistance by dialling 999 • reporting suspicious activity online: https://act.campaign.gov.uk/ Concerns about radicalisation of a child can also be reported to NSPCC by: • calling 0808 800 5000 • contacting help@nspcc.org.uk reporting concerns online https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/reporting-abuse/dedicated-helplines/protecting-children-from-radicalisation/
4.5	Designated Safeguarding Lead The Designated Safeguarding Lead is the Head of Customer Quality (currently Helen Gilbert). The role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead is to: • Act as a champion of Abbeyfield’s safeguarding vision • Raise the profile of safeguarding across the organisation • Serve as a visible point-of-contact for anyone who may have safeguarding concerns • Report safeguarding issues and strategic risks to the Executive and to the Board, via the Customer Committee. • Promote strategic ownership of safeguarding by ensuring it remains at the forefront of Executive and Board decisions • Support effective safeguarding governance arrangements • Serve as the named Lead for external partners and agencies, where required.

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	Information may be shared without consent where a child is at risk in line with: • Children Act duties • Data Protection Act 2018 • Working Together guidance The Designated Safeguarding Lead can be contacted via email: safeguarding@abbeyfield.com, mobile: 07867049009 or via the safeguarding page on the Abbeyfield intranet (Connect).
4.6 4.6.1 4.6.2	Staff Awareness and Training All employees are required to attend regular safeguarding training, which includes safeguarding children. The level and frequency of the training will ensure individuals attain the competences appropriate for their role, as agreed corporately. Safeguarding children should periodically be discussed in staff meetings.
5 Finance, Value for Money & Social Value	Abbeyfield will add social value by taking a proactive role in safeguarding children and tackling child abuse wherever it occurs, even if this is not within its own premises.
6 Linked policies	Safeguarding Adults (LG031P) Visitors (Care Home) (C028P) Visitors (Housing) (R022P)
7 Relevant Legislation / Regulation	• Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) 2014 • Regulation 13: Safeguarding service users from abuse and improper treatment – applies where regulated activities are delivered and safeguarding children is addressed through policy, risk management and duty of care, not direct service provision. • Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 • Children Act 1989 • Children Act 2004 • Keeping Children Safe in Education (latest edition)
8 Guidance	• Working together to safeguard children (as updated) • Prevent Duty Guidance

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9 Review	Annually, subject to any regulatory or legislative updates.
10 Procedure(s) 10.1	Responding to Possible Child Abuse

Version	Purpose/change	Author	Date
1.0	New policy	L Garrett	02/02/2018
2.0	Sections added: 4.6 Safety and welfare of visiting children 4.7 The Prevent Strategy Training section renamed Staff Training and Awareness and expanded.	L Garrett	25/04/2019
3.0	Reviewed and updated to include correct hyperlinks, details of Abbeyfield's Safeguarding Lead and Abbeyfield's safeguarding email address. Transfer to new policy format with separate SOP Responding to Possible Child Abuse	L Garrett	June 2022
4.0	Reviewed. Minor title changes made. Update to procedure to include involvement of Police form and revision of numbering.	J. Conway	July 2023
5.0	Updated to remove Involvement of Police form from SOP 10.1	H. Gilbert	January 2025
6.0	The Safeguarding Children Policy remains appropriate and proportionate to Abbeyfield's activities. Minor updates applied to reflect current statutory guidance and core children's legislation.	H. Gilbert	April 2026
6.1	Safeguarding Lead – Contact details changed	H. Gilbert	July 2026