SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE POLICY

Specialist SEND Short Breaks Provision

Seen. Supported. Understood. Valued.

Policy title	Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy
Applies to	All employees, bank/agency workers, volunteers, students, directors and contractors
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	Manager
Deputy DSL	Deputy Manager
Responsible persons / Directors	Kathryn O'Hara
Service	Community-based SEND Targeted and Specialist short breaks, currently age 8 up to the date of their 18th birthday
Version	1.0
Date	27 July 2026
Review	26 July 2027 or sooner following significant change

Quick Safeguarding Response

If a child is in immediate danger or requires urgent medical attention: call 999. Do not delay action while trying to contact the DSL.

Situation	Action
Concern about a child	Listen, make safe, record facts, report immediately to DSL / Deputy DSL.
Urgent safeguarding concern in St Helens	Contact MASH / Children's Social Care: 01744 676767 option 2 and follow local referral procedure.
Out of hours urgent concern	Emergency Duty Team: 0345 050 0148.
Allegation about a staff member / volunteer	Contact DSL / Responsible Person immediately and follow LADO procedure. St Helens LADO: 01744 671252 / sthelenslado@sthelens.gov.uk.
Concern about DSL	Report to Responsible Person / Director and contact LADO or Children's Social Care directly where required.
Immediate danger / crime in progress	999. For non-emergency police matters: 101.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. A member of staff does not need proof before reporting a concern. If something does not feel right, report it.

1. Purpose

New Beginnings Children's Day Care is committed to providing a safe, inclusive and respectful short-break environment in which children and young people with SEND are protected from abuse, neglect, exploitation and avoidable harm.

This policy explains how New Beginnings prevents harm, recognises concerns, responds to disclosures, records and shares information, manages allegations about adults working with children, and works with statutory safeguarding partners.

Safeguarding at New Beginnings is not a standalone process. It is reflected in recruitment, staffing, assessment, communication, personal care, medication, behaviour support, risk management, online safety, transport, community activities, complaints and day-to-day relationships with children and families.

2. Scope

This policy applies to every person working for or on behalf of New Beginnings, including employees, bank and agency workers, volunteers, students, directors and contractors. It applies at James House, during community activities, transport undertaken as part of service delivery, online communication connected to the service and any other setting in which staff are responsible for a child or young person.

New Beginnings currently supports children and young people aged 8 up to the date of their 18th birthday.

Where a child is placed or funded by another local authority, New Beginnings will cooperate with that authority's safeguarding arrangements while also following the safeguarding and LADO arrangements applicable to the location of the service.

3. Our Safeguarding Commitment

At New Beginnings, children should not only be safe; they should feel safe. We recognise that children with SEND may experience additional barriers to recognising, communicating or reporting harm, and that changes in behaviour or presentation must never automatically be attributed to disability.

Our safeguarding culture is built around our values: Seen. Supported. Understood. Valued.

- Seen - staff notice changes, injuries, behaviour, communication and emotional presentation and remain professionally curious.
- Supported - children are given accessible ways to communicate concerns and are helped to understand who can keep them safe.
- Understood - staff learn each child's communication, sensory, behavioural, health and support needs so that signs of distress are recognised in context.
- Valued - every child is listened to, taken seriously and treated with dignity, regardless of disability, communication method, background or level of need.

We maintain the principle that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and that the welfare of the child is paramount.

4. Legal and Practice Framework

This policy is informed by the Children Act 1989, Children Act 2004, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, Sexual Offences Act 2003, Modern Slavery Act 2015, Domestic Abuse Act 2021, Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, Equality Act 2010, Human Rights Act 1998, Mental Capacity Act 2005 where relevant to young people aged 16 and over, and applicable data-protection and information-sharing law and guidance.

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 is statutory guidance for schools and colleges, rather than New Beginnings as a short-break service. However, New Beginnings uses relevant principles from KCSIE - including safer recruitment, allegations management, staff awareness, child-centred practice and safeguarding culture - as an additional benchmark of good practice where appropriate.

5. What Safeguarding Means

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children means protecting children from maltreatment, whether that risk is inside or outside the home and including online; preventing impairment of children's health or development; ensuring children grow up in circumstances consistent with safe and effective care; and taking action to enable children to have the best outcomes.

Safeguarding includes prevention, early identification of need, responding to abuse and neglect, safe recruitment, safe care, information sharing, multi-agency working and creating a culture in which concerns can be raised without fear.

6. Recognising Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation

Staff must be alert to the possibility that a child may be experiencing harm even where there has been no direct disclosure. Indicators may be physical, behavioural, emotional, social, medical, financial, online or environmental.

- Physical abuse - including hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning, suffocating, fabricated or induced illness, or otherwise causing physical harm.
- Emotional abuse - persistent emotional maltreatment, humiliation, rejection, intimidation, threats, exposure to frightening experiences, serious bullying or cyberbullying, or inappropriate expectations that adversely affect development.
- Sexual abuse - forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, including contact and non-contact abuse, grooming and online sexual harm.
- Neglect - persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, including adequate food, clothing, shelter, supervision, medical care, protection or emotional care.
- Exploitation - including child sexual exploitation, child criminal exploitation, county lines, trafficking, modern slavery and financial exploitation.
- Domestic abuse - including the impact on children who see, hear or experience the effects of abusive behaviour in the family home.
- Online harm - including grooming, sexual abuse, coercion, bullying, exploitation, exposure to harmful content and inappropriate contact.

- Radicalisation and extremism - concerns that a child is being influenced, groomed or drawn towards extremist ideology or terrorism.

7. Safeguarding Children with SEND

Children with SEND can face additional safeguarding vulnerabilities. They may rely on adults for intimate care, mobility, communication, medication or regulation support; may have reduced danger awareness; may communicate distress non-verbally; or may find it difficult to describe what has happened.

New Beginnings therefore requires staff to actively guard against diagnostic overshadowing - the assumption that a new behaviour, injury, withdrawal, distress or change in presentation is simply part of a child's disability or diagnosis.

- Know and use the child's preferred communication method, including symbols, AAC, signing, communication passports or other accessible tools where applicable.
- Take unexplained changes in behaviour, sleepiness, distress, avoidance, injury, toileting, eating, interaction or regulation seriously.
- Observe patterns and context, not isolated incidents only.
- Consider whether intimate care, moving and handling, restrictive practice or dependency on adults may increase vulnerability.
- Ensure the child's disability never results in a lower standard of protection or a lower expectation that concerns will be investigated.

8. Child Voice, Communication and Accessible Safeguarding

A child's voice is not limited to spoken words. At New Beginnings, staff consider speech, signing, AAC, symbols, gesture, facial expression, body language, behaviour, emotional presentation and other individual communication methods.

Children are supported to understand, in a way that is meaningful to them, that they have the right to feel safe and that they can tell a trusted adult if something worries, frightens or hurts them.

Staff must not assume that a child who is non-speaking, has a learning disability or communicates differently is unable to disclose harm or express a preference.

9. Responding to a Disclosure or Concern

When a child discloses abuse or a member of staff becomes concerned, the immediate priorities are to listen, protect, record and report - not to investigate.

- Stay calm and give the child time to communicate.
- Listen carefully and take what the child says seriously.
- Reassure the child that they were right to tell someone.
- Do not promise confidentiality. Explain that information may need to be shared with people who can help keep them safe.
- Do not ask leading, repeated or investigative questions. Use only minimal open questions where necessary to clarify immediate safety.
- Do not confront the person alleged to have caused harm.
- Take immediate protective action if the child is in danger or requires medical attention.
- Report to the DSL or Deputy DSL without delay. If they are unavailable or implicated, escalate directly to the Responsible Person, Children's Social Care, LADO or police as appropriate.
- Make a factual written record as soon as possible.

10. Recording Safeguarding Concerns

Safeguarding records must be clear, timely, factual and sufficiently detailed to explain what was seen, heard or reported and what action followed.

- Record date, time, location and who was present.
- Use the child's own words as closely as possible where a disclosure has been made.

- Distinguish fact, observation, professional opinion and information reported by another person.
- Record visible injuries accurately and use a body map where appropriate, without taking photographs unless specifically authorised under safeguarding procedures.
- Record who was informed, when, advice received, referrals made and decisions taken.
- Do not alter, embellish or retrospectively rewrite a child's account.
- Store safeguarding records securely with access restricted to those who need the information for safeguarding purposes.

11. Reporting and Referral Pathway

All safeguarding concerns must be passed to the DSL or Deputy DSL immediately. Internal reporting must never delay an urgent referral to Children's Social Care, the police or emergency services.

For a child in St Helens, professionals should follow the St Helens safeguarding referral process. Where a concern indicates immediate or significant risk, staff should telephone Children's Social Care / MASH and follow the required professional referral process. Where a child already has a social worker, concerns should also be shared with the allocated or duty social worker.

If a member of staff believes that a child remains at risk despite a decision made internally or by another agency, they must escalate the concern using professional challenge/escalation arrangements and continue to pursue the matter until satisfied that appropriate safeguarding action has been considered.

12. Allegations and Concerns About Adults Working with Children

Any allegation or concern that a member of staff, volunteer, contractor, director or other person working with children may have harmed a child, may have committed an offence against or related to a child, may pose a risk of harm to children, or may have behaved in a way that calls their suitability to work with children into question must be reported immediately.

The person receiving the concern must not investigate the allegation or question the adult involved beyond what is necessary to establish immediate safety. The concern must be referred to the DSL and Responsible Person, unless either is implicated.

The St Helens Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) process will be followed where applicable. A LADO referral does not replace a separate child safeguarding referral where a child may have been harmed or be at risk.

New Beginnings will cooperate with LADO, Children's Social Care, police, Ofsted or other relevant regulators/commissioners as appropriate. Suspension is not automatic and any employment action will be considered proportionately, taking account of safeguarding advice and the need to protect children while ensuring a fair process.

An allegation may involve up to three strands, which proceed in co-ordination: a police investigation of a possible criminal offence; enquiries and assessment by children’s or adult social care; and the employer’s consideration of disciplinary action. Some cases will also require a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service, or to a professional regulator. A member of staff who is the subject of an allegation will be treated fairly, kept informed so far as possible, and given access to support while any investigation continues; the detail is set out in the Managing Allegations Policy. New Beginnings is also alert to any associations a staff member may have that could pose a risk, which are considered at recruitment and thereafter.

13. Low-Level Concerns, Professional Boundaries and Safer Culture

New Beginnings expects all adults to maintain safe, respectful and professional boundaries. Behaviour that may not meet the threshold for a formal safeguarding allegation can still be concerning and must not be ignored.

Concerns may include over-familiarity, favouritism, inappropriate private communication, unnecessary physical contact, breaches of confidentiality, inappropriate social-media contact, inappropriate photography, humiliating language or conduct that is inconsistent with the Code of Conduct.

Staff should report these concerns promptly so patterns can be identified and addressed. A culture in which minor concerns are discussed early is safer than one in which staff wait for behaviour to become serious.

14. Personal Care, Medication and Intimate Support

Children attending New Beginnings may require personal care, medication, mobility support or other close physical assistance. These activities can increase safeguarding vulnerability and must therefore be delivered transparently, respectfully and in accordance with the child's assessed needs and agreed plans.

- Explain care in an accessible way and seek the child's cooperation and assent wherever possible.
- Respect privacy and dignity while maintaining safe working practices.
- Follow agreed personal-care and medication procedures and record support accurately.
- Use only the level of physical assistance that is necessary.
- Report unexplained injuries, changes in presentation, concerns about intimate areas, repeated distress around particular care tasks or any other safeguarding concern immediately.
- Never use personal care, medication or withholding of support as a punishment, reward or behaviour-management tool.

15. Behaviour, Distress and Restrictive Practice

New Beginnings recognises behaviour as communication. Staff should seek to understand unmet need, pain, sensory overload, anxiety, communication difficulty, trauma or environmental factors that may contribute to distress.

Any restrictive intervention must be lawful, necessary, proportionate, the least restrictive option available and consistent with the child's assessed needs and relevant policy. Restrictive practice must never be used for punishment, humiliation, staff convenience or retaliation.

Any use of restrictive practice, significant physical intervention or incident raising safeguarding concerns must be recorded, reviewed and communicated in accordance with policy. The DSL must be informed where the circumstances indicate possible harm, inappropriate practice or a safeguarding concern.

16. Missing Child / Absconding

Where a child is missing from the service or leaves an agreed safe area without authorisation, staff must treat the situation according to the child's individual risk assessment and missing-child procedure. The response will consider the child's age, communication, vulnerability, danger awareness, health needs, mobility and known risks.

Staff must act immediately to protect the child, notify management, contact the parent/carer and police where required, and preserve sufficient staffing to safeguard other children. The incident must be recorded and the child's risk assessment and support arrangements reviewed before future attendance where appropriate.

17. Online Safety, Photography and Communication

Children may experience harm through phones, social media, messaging, gaming, image sharing and other online activity. Staff must remain alert to grooming, exploitation, bullying, sexual harm, coercion and inappropriate contact.

Only authorised devices, accounts and communication channels may be used for service-related contact with children and families. Staff must not establish private social-media relationships with children attending New Beginnings.

Photographs or recordings of children may only be taken, stored and used in accordance with New Beginnings' consent, privacy and safeguarding arrangements. A parent's general consent does not override a safeguarding concern or a child's dignity.

18. Information Sharing and Confidentiality

Safeguarding information is shared on a need-to-know basis and only to the extent necessary to protect a child, enable appropriate support or meet legal and safeguarding responsibilities.

Data protection law must not be treated as a barrier to proportionate information sharing where a child may be at risk of harm. Staff must record the reasons for significant decisions to share or not share information.

A child or parent must never be promised absolute confidentiality in relation to a safeguarding concern. Where informing a parent/carer may increase risk to the child, prejudice an investigation or place another person at risk, advice should be sought from the DSL and Children's Social Care before contact is made.

19. Safer Recruitment and Suitability

New Beginnings uses safer recruitment to reduce the likelihood of unsuitable people gaining access to children. Recruitment arrangements include identity and right-to-work checks, scrutiny of employment history and gaps, references, qualification checks where relevant, role-appropriate enhanced DBS checks and Children's Barred List checks where legally applicable.

Suitability does not end at appointment. Staff conduct, concerns, allegations, training, supervision and changes relevant to suitability are kept under review throughout employment or engagement.

Where the legal criteria for a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service are met, New Beginnings will make the required referral.

20. The Designated Safeguarding Lead

New Beginnings appoints a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Deputy DSL. They have sufficient authority, time, training and access to senior leadership to carry out the role effectively.

- Act as the primary safeguarding point of contact for staff.
- Provide advice and support on child-protection concerns.
- Make or coordinate referrals to Children's Social Care, LADO, police and other agencies as appropriate.
- Maintain oversight of safeguarding records and ensure actions are followed through.
- Ensure staff understand referral routes and escalation procedures.
- Support effective information sharing with parents, professionals and commissioning authorities where appropriate.
- Identify themes, repeated concerns, training needs and learning from incidents.
- Ensure safeguarding arrangements reflect the additional vulnerabilities and communication needs of children with SEND.
- Maintain role-specific safeguarding knowledge through appropriate training and regular updates.

The Deputy DSL acts in the DSL's absence. Safeguarding action must never be delayed because a particular designated person is unavailable.

21. Responsibilities of All Staff

Every member of the workforce is responsible for safeguarding. Staff are expected to recognise concerns, act immediately, record accurately, report without delay, maintain professional boundaries, complete required training, follow individual plans and risk assessments, cooperate with safeguarding investigations and challenge unsafe practice.

Staff are not expected to diagnose abuse or prove that harm has occurred. Their responsibility is to notice, listen, record and report.

22. Training, Supervision and Support

All staff receive safeguarding training appropriate to their role at induction and through ongoing updates and refreshers. Training includes recognising and responding to abuse and neglect, SEND-specific safeguarding

vulnerability, disclosures, recording, local referral arrangements, allegations about adults, whistleblowing, online safety and relevant exploitation risks.

DSLs and deputies receive role-specific safeguarding training and maintain current knowledge of local and national procedures.

Safeguarding is included within supervision and reflective practice. Staff are encouraged to raise uncertainty early and seek advice rather than carrying concerns alone.

23. Whistleblowing and Professional Challenge

New Beginnings expects staff to speak up where practice is unsafe, inappropriate or inconsistent with children's welfare. Staff who raise concerns in good faith will be supported in accordance with the Whistleblowing Policy.

Where a concern relates to senior leaders or where the normal internal route is inappropriate, staff may contact Children's Social Care, LADO, police, Ofsted or another relevant external body directly as appropriate. No employee is required to obtain management permission before making an emergency safeguarding referral.

24. Working with Parents, Carers and Professionals

Parents and carers are important safeguarding partners and New Beginnings aims to work openly and respectfully with them. Information will normally be shared with parents about concerns affecting their child unless doing so would increase risk, compromise a safeguarding enquiry or be contrary to advice from statutory agencies.

Where appropriate, New Beginnings will work with social workers, health professionals, education professionals, commissioners and other agencies to ensure that the child's wider safeguarding picture is understood and that relevant actions are coordinated.

25. Quality Assurance and Learning

Safeguarding quality assurance includes review of concerns, referrals, allegations, incidents, safer-recruitment records, staff training, supervision, complaints, restrictive practice, medication incidents, missing-child incidents and feedback from children and families.

New Beginnings will look for patterns rather than treating every event in isolation. Learning may result in changes to staffing, training, risk assessments, support plans, environment, policies or wider service practice.

Serious safeguarding incidents and external reviews will be used as opportunities for organisational learning and improvement.

26. Breaches of this Policy

Failure to recognise, report, record or appropriately respond to a safeguarding concern may place a child at risk and may be treated as a serious disciplinary matter. Depending on the circumstances, concerns may also be referred to the police, LADO, Disclosure and Barring Service, a professional regulator, commissioning authority or other relevant body.

27. Related New Beginnings Policies and Records

- Safer Recruitment Policy and Pre-employment Checklist
- Managing Allegations / LADO Procedure
- Whistleblowing Policy and Whistleblowing Report Form
- Code of Conduct and Professional Boundaries
- Online Safety / Photography and Social Media
- Positive Behaviour Support / Restrictive Practice
- Medication Policy and Medication Administration Record
- Personal Care / Intimate Care arrangements
- Missing Child / Absconding Procedure
- Complaints Policy

- Data Protection, Confidentiality and Information Sharing
- Health and Safety / Fire and Emergency procedures
- Incident and Accident Recording
- Child Needs Assessment, Risk Assessment and Support Planning

28. Key Safeguarding Contacts

Contact	Details
New Beginnings DSL	Michelle Welburn - Manager
New Beginnings Deputy DSL	Olivia Stocks – Deputy Manager
Responsible Person / Director	Kathryn O'Hara - 07860222905
St Helens Children's Social Care / MASH	01744 676767 option 2 | MASH@sthelens.gov.uk | Professionals follow the Service Request Form process
St Helens Emergency Duty Team	0345 050 0148
St Helens LADO	01744 671252 | sthelenslado@sthelens.gov.uk
Police	999 emergency | 101 non-emergency
NSPCC	0808 800 5000
Childline	0800 1111
NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line	0800 028 0285

Where a child is placed by another local authority, staff must also follow the safeguarding and commissioning notification arrangements relevant to that child. In an emergency, action to protect the child must not be delayed while confirming administrative routes.

29. Key Legislation and Guidance

Legislation / guidance	How it informs New Beginnings
Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004	Welfare and protection of children; local authority and multi-agency safeguarding duties.
Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026	Current statutory multi-agency safeguarding guidance and organisational expectations.
Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026	Statutory for schools/colleges; relevant safeguarding and safer-recruitment principles used by New Beginnings as a good-practice benchmark where applicable.
Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006	DBS barring framework and employer referral duties.
Sexual Offences Act 2003	Sexual offences and abuse of positions of trust.
Modern Slavery Act 2015	Trafficking, exploitation and modern slavery concerns.
Domestic Abuse Act 2021	Recognition of domestic abuse and its impact on children.
Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015	Prevent-related safeguarding responsibilities where applicable.
Equality Act 2010 / Human Rights Act 1998	Equality, non-discrimination, dignity and rights.
Mental Capacity Act 2005	Relevant decision-making principles for young people aged 16+ where applicable.

St Helens Safeguarding Children Partnership procedures	Local thresholds, referral pathways, allegations/LADO and multi-agency practice.

30. Review and Approval

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner where there is a significant safeguarding incident, change in legislation or statutory guidance, change in local safeguarding procedures, change to the New Beginnings service model, or learning indicating that revision is required.

The most current approved version must be accessible to staff. Material changes will be communicated through training, briefing or supervision as appropriate.

Approved by	Kathryn O'Hara
Role	Director
Signature	Kathryn O'Hara
Date	27 July 2026
Next review date	26 July 2027 or sooner if required