**Safeguarding Policy and Procedure**

**PROCESS OF SAFEGUARDING**

Shekinah Support aims to ensure that full and part time employees comply with all legal, contractual, and professional standards and responsibilities in their work with young people and children – whether in a group work setting or on an individual basis.

High-quality recording, record keeping, and records management are essential in this context, and procedures for these are saved and managed on the care management system which related organisations or associated care authorities have direct access. Relevant safeguarding information will be readily available and editable to cater for changing safety needs or circumstances.

Shekinah Support’ policies on safeguarding commits to building and embedding a culture that places transparency and sound safeguarding practice at the center of all its activities – from the services delivered, to partnership work with multi-agencies and external stakeholders.

Shekinah Support will continually strive to strengthen its ways of working to ensure all employees feel safe to raise any safeguarding concerns and are fully supported if this occurs.

All staff at Shekinah Support has a responsibility to make sure that children are safeguarded and protected from abuse, exploitation and neglect. The Care Act 2014 sets out a clear legal framework for how local authorities and other stakeholders should protect adults at risk of abuse or neglect. These safeguarding duties include the requirement for a multi-agency, local service user safeguarding system that seeks to prevent abuse and neglect and stop it quickly, preferably before it happens. This is why unhindered communication and sharing of information is a major process of the care delivered.

Acting on any safeguarding concerns is an important aspect of achieving this vision. One of our strategic focus is to address severe and multiple disadvantages among the most marginalised young people. Young people who are more prone to such dangers and compromise to their wellbeing. Employees must aim to speak up for them and protect them from harm. They must read and understand this policy and procedures, be aware of their responsibilities, and undertake their duties with care for quality, efficiency and effectiveness.

1. **RESPONSIBILITIES AND PROCESS**

All staff and partners have a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information, and taking prompt action. Shekinah Support ensures that employees are provided with training and support to equip them to safeguard effectively within their day to day professional practice. The Safeguarding Officer or the Area Manager are mainly responsible for dealing with all safeguarding matters and it is their responsibility to review and update the policies. The Safeguarding Manager drafts the safety plans for each young person covering individual safety concerns as they arise. This is populated on the care management system (Solaris Careware) and is made available for reference to individual concerns. It explains the course of action to diminish or minimise the individual risk.

**3.0 EMPLOYEE SAFEGUARDING PROCEDURES**

If an employee is informed about or concerned about the abuse of a child, young person, or adult at risk, they must take the following steps: Always place the child’s welfare and interests as the paramount consideration. Ensure safeguarding is embedded into their day to day roles and responsibilities. Employees must talk with the child, young person, or adult at risk about how best to respond to their safeguarding situation in a way that enhances their involvement, control and choice throughout the safeguarding process.

Listen carefully and actively to the person – at this stage, there is no necessity to ask questions. Let the person guide the pace and remember their ability to recount an allegation will depend on age, culture, language and communication skills and disability. Do not show shock at what is being said. This may discourage the young person from talking, as they may feel you are unable to cope with what they are saying, or perhaps that you may be making judgments about them. Do not investigate. If anything needs to be clarified in order to understand the safeguarding risk, ask clear, open questions: tell, explain and describe or ask ‘what, when, who, how, where’ questions or ask ‘do you want to tell me anything else?’ Do not ask any ‘why’ questions as these can suggest guilt or responsibility. Remain calm and reassure the person that they have done the right thing by talking to a responsible adult. Never promise to keep a secret or confidentiality. Shekinah Support works within wider statutory systems and must collaborate in order to effectively support and care for children, young people and adults at risk. It is important that this fact and its implications of transparency and reporting are emphasised in early and ongoing conversations.

**3.1** Ensure the child or adult at risk understands what will happen next. In cases where a person disclosing is a child, employees have a duty to ensure that the information is passed on in order to keep the child safe. If a child requests confidentiality, employees must explain Shekinah Support requirements, for example, ‘I’m really concerned about what you have told me and I have a responsibility to ensure that you are safe’.

Shekinah Support employees must talk to their manager or, if they are not available, they must approach another senior manager. Where there are concerns or allegations about an adult employee or volunteer who is working with children or adults at risk (often called someone in a “position of trust”) within Shekinah Support, employees must follow the Managing Allegations and Concerns process about an employee who works with children, young people or adults at risk.

**3.2 Responding to a safeguarding concern** - Immediate risk of harm - If an employee believes a child or young adult may be at immediate risk of harm, exploitation or abuse, and/or a criminal offence is taking place, they must take immediate steps to protect that person by calling the authorities. Employees must then contact the unit or area manager to let them know what has happened and to take advice on next steps.

The manager on call must then consult the safeguarding manager who advises on other steps that may be required. If an emergency arises outside of a service’s usual working hours, employees must contact the deputizing Safeguarding Manager who will respond with out of hours procedures. Employees must seek advice on any further steps required and refer to the operating hours Principles document for further information.

Employees must record their safeguarding concerns and actions on the care management system and forward the access link to next level management and the safeguarding officer.

In cases where there is no immediate risk of harm. Employees must consult with a line manager as soon as possible on the same working day of the safeguarding concern.

**3.3** If there are concerns that a child is, or has been, at risk of abuse, employees must make a referral on the same working day to the local authority children’s services in the area where the child is living (or is found). Employees must take guidance from their manager as needed.

**3.4 Safeguarding concerns raised by non-Shekinah Support staff** - A service manager must appoint an appropriate employee to make the referral. This must be done as soon as possible on the same working day. Employees must (subject to issues of confidentiality or other sensitivities) keep these individuals informed as to the outcome of the referral. A safeguarding report must be started on the care management system on the same day.

 **4.0 CONSIDERATION OF EMPOWERMENT**

What rights need to be respected? Is there a duty to act, are others at risk of harm? Protection – is this person at risk? What support do they need? Is capacity an issue? Should others (such as other support workers) be involved? Proportionality – have risks been weighed up? Does the nature of the concern require referral through multi-agency procedures? Partnership – what is the view of others involved? How do multi-agency procedures apply? Accountability – is there a clear rationale on which to base a decision? All these options are included in the safeguarding training extended to all employees at Shekinah Support.

**4.1 CONCERNS FROM THE GENERAL PUBLIC -** Employees in the support care team may receive safeguarding concerns from the general public via email or the supporter care telephone line. Where such concerns are received via email, these must immediately be passed onto the safeguarding lead and the Area Manager. If practical barriers exist to prevent employees making timely entries on the care management system, they must discuss this with their manager on the same day as the safeguarding concern at least over the phone or in person.

Employees must not contact any individual about whom an allegation or concern is being raised. This could be putting the person making the allegations in serious danger. If the unit /area manager decides that a referral to the local authority children’s services or adults social care is not warranted, this decision must be recorded by the service manager on the care management system as a case note under the case note type: ‘Decision not to make a referral to social care’ (with evidence to support decision making). Managers must be sure to include the reasons why this decision was reached

**4.2 MAKING AN EXTERNAL REFERRAL**

- Making a referral to the local authority - Any sensitive information sent outside of Shekinah Support to multi agencies and authorities must be sent using a secure email. The content of the referral can be sent directly from the care management system accessed on the other side through permission- based usernames and logins. Filtered information will only include details of the safeguarding incident or concerns and there will be limited or no access to other young person information not directly relevant to safeguarding issues.

**4.3 Involving the parent** - Where possible, employees must discuss their concerns with the child’s parent, and an agreement should be sought for a referral to the local authority children’s social care. Employees must only do this if it does not increase risk to the child (through either delay, or the parent’s possible actions or reactions). If employees decide not to seek parental permission before making a referral to children's social care, they must record and date this in the child's daily log /weekly report along with reasons. This must also be confirmed in the referral to children's social care via secure email. The decision not to immediately inform the parent should be taken only if the parent is responsible or connected to the safeguarding issue.

**5.0 ASSESSMENT OF UNDERSTANDING**

A person is unable to make their own decision if they cannot do one or more of the following: understand information given to them or retain that information long enough to be able to make a competent decision and communicate such a decision – this could be by talking, using sign language, or even simple muscle movements such as blinking an eye or squeezing a hand. Every effort must be made to find ways of communicating with someone before deciding that they lack capacity to make a decision based solely on their inability to communicate or comprehend one’s communication. Employees will need to involve family, friends, carers, or other professionals if this is feasible. The assessment must be made on the balance of probabilities, for example, is it more likely than not that the person lacks the capacity to understand and respond? Employees must be able to show in their records why they have reached the conclusion that capacity is either present or lacking for the particular decision.

If a young person at risk of abuse or exploitation is perceived to lack the mental capacity to make the decision regarding a referral, employees and their managers must consider what is in the child / young person’s best interests. A referral without consent must be made in cases where: there is an emergency or life-threatening situation to other people who may be at risk.

**5.1 REFERRAL** - If the safeguarding concern arises within the context of Shekinah Support working with a partner organisation or service (for example a school or college), employees must check with the Safeguarding Officer for any agreed safeguarding processes. Usually, this will involve contacting the designated officer within the partner organisation. In such cases, both Shekinah Support and the partner organisation’s policies must be followed.

Referral responses: What to expect from the local authority - For a child: Shekinah Support services are required to provide referrers with a response within 24 hours of receiving a referral and acknowledge receipt to the referrer. Responses may include referral progressing to a social work. If no response has been received within 48 hours, Shekinah Support employee or their supervising manager must contact the local authority children’s social care services again and, if necessary, ask to speak to a line manager to establish progress.

If the local authority’s response is inadequate, or doesn’t sufficiently address the risk of abuse, employees must discuss this with the area or unit manager on the same day. The Safety Officer must then review the details on the same day and make a decision to take action regarding any escalation required.

**5.2 Employee’s active involvement -** In conversations, meetings, and individual risk management or strategy development adds depth and detail to statutory processes. While employee’s relationships with children, young people at risk are unique and personal, work cannot effectively take place in isolation. Children who have had previous risks identified should already have a child protection or safety plan drafted on the care management system. Where employees have safeguarding concerns about a child or young person who already has a child protection plan, there should be sufficient measures available to use as a guide to what happens next.

**5.3 Multi - agency checks -** If the safeguarding concern is fully addressed within the existing child protection plan, this must still be reported to the social worker in line with the plan and confirmed in writing in the same timescales as above. The employee attending the response meeting must take a full record of decisions made at the meeting within 5 working days. These minutes and other documents from this meeting must be read and saved to the care management system when they are received. If support or advice is needed, employees may contact the local authority’s safeguarding team. Multi-agency checks as part of the eventual process decides that multi-agency checks are required, it is likely that the relevant service will be contacted to contribute to these inquiries. In such cases, employees must notify their manager on the same day they are contacted by the local authority. Managers must then ensure that employees understand the purpose of the checks and what is required. An employee must respond to such inquiries as soon as possible. Case records must be read, and any employee who have had recent contact with the child or family should be invited to share their views. Any new concerns, changes in circumstances, unusual activity from family or friends, or changes in behaviour in the child must be shared with the local authority. Additionally, the local authority must be made aware of any involvement from other agencies with the child or family.

Agency checks that are made by telephone – including the information shared must be confirmed in writing to the local authority on the same day as the call. Shekinah Support staff may be approached during such an inquiry and employees must inform their service manager in such circumstances. Shekinah Support staff and management will aim to provide swift and personalised safeguarding responses and involve the young person at risk in the decision-making process as far as possible. Local authorities should also be kept informed about all the stages of the internal actions being made or planned. Shekinah Support employees must make a record on the care management system of all relevant information in relation to decisions, outcomes, actions, advice and information shared.

**5.4 Ongoing safeguarding responsibilities -** Employees and management must play an active role in managing safeguarding risk by: identifying safeguarding concerns (new or changed), quickly discussing these with managers as soon as possible, sharing concerns quickly with local authority and police as relevant. Quickly escalating concerns - where the response is insufficient or slow with the multi-agencies, young people and adults at risk are supported to consider how they can take action to help protect themselves, recording their conversations, decisions and actions. The Area /Safeguarding manager will play an active role in managing safeguarding risk by: prioritising conversations with employees who have safeguarding concerns supporting employees to think through concerns and decide a suitable course of action with statutory partners, quickly escalating concerns within the local authority as required , discussing safety planning strategies for the young person at risk. Area managers are expected to play an active role in assisting the Safeguarding Officer by: prioritising conversations with support staff and team leaders who have safeguarding concerns requiring escalation, taking swift action to escalate concerns with the local authority as circumstances require and ensures effective safety planning assuring employees and service managers of competent involvement.

**6.0 THE SAFETY PLAN.**

When escalating concerns, a safety plan drafted on the set template in the care management system is an action plan specifically addressing one or more safeguarding concerns and risks affecting the child /young person. When escalating concerns, there may be a delay between informing the local authority of new or changed concerns and receiving a suitable response. Employees may therefore have information about a young person at risk that the local authority has not yet been informed about and acted upon.

After escalating a concern in a local authority and waiting for an appropriate response, employees and managers will likely share a sense of needing to manage or “hold” risk in the intervening period until the local authority responds suitably. This risk management is best done through safety planning with the young person or adult at risk in order to help them remove, mitigate and better manage risks present. Shekinah Support believes that safety planning is best done in partnership with the young person or adult involved, and should feature: identifying the risks present to the individual, considering potential changes to current circumstances that can be made to reduce the risks present, generating practical, realistic responses to risks, considering the physical and emotional needs of the person at risk when exploring potential actions and changes, encouraging the person to make positive decisions in the interest of their own self-protection, developing an emergency safety plan with suitable contact numbers. The safeguarding team will provide tailored support depending on the circumstances of the safeguarding issue. This may be guidance, advice or instruction.

**7.0 COMPLICATED SAFEGUARDING**

Risk management and safety planning must be regularly updated.
**Age assessment and age disputes** - Most unaccompanied children arriving in the have their age accepted upon arrival, but in some cases, where there is little or no documentary evidence of the child's age or if the child looks like an adult, the Home Office or local authorities may dispute the age stated by the child. In cases where there is a dispute regarding the age of the young person, the young person must be treated as a child by the local authority while the dispute is ongoing (refer to local statutory guidance).

Contextual safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It recognises that the different relationships young people form – in their neighborhoods, through their networks, at school and online – can feature violence and abuse because young people are vulnerable to abuse in a range of contexts. Responding to contextual safeguarding concerns means working with children’s social care, and other relevant partners, to collectively assess the risks for young people and plan suitable interventions.

The action plans will assess and execute interventions in all the spaces in which a young person (or group of young people) are deemed vulnerable to abuse. Employees may refer to Shekinah Support’ safeguarding guidance document for more information on contextual safeguarding resources, risk assessment and sharing soft intelligence. Soft intelligence is very important when working contextually to safeguard children and young people and must be treated as a safeguarding concern. Sharing intelligence (information employees have gathered that may be relevant to crimes being committed) can help establish patterns and themes and improve clarity on the risks present.

If employees are given information that relates to a child or young person at risk or immediate harm, they must call the authorities immediately and make a referral to social care in accordance with this policy. If an employee receives information about criminal activity or exploitation – either through direct practice with young people and adults or via members of the public – this must be reported by calling the police 101 line. Employees must conduct a risk assessment for the sharing of this information with the police before doing so, including a consideration of the risks present for the child or young person. Conversations with the police must be recorded on the care management system under the young person’s profile update, saved on the miscellaneous upload area and the weekly reports. Employees must ensure they receive a crime reference number for the information shared with the police or EDT .

 **8.0 LOCAL AREAS AND COUNTY LINES**

Where employees have concerns about a child, young person at risk that is connected to travel on public transport, they can also contact the British Transport Police – who will also participate in multi-agency strategy meetings where relevant. Employees may be aware of local “hot spot” areas of concern. Sharing information on these can help police target resources effectively and build a more detailed picture of the safeguarding risks within neighborhoods or communities. Employees may also present information at multi agency child exploitation (MACE) meetings or the local area equivalent. These are exploitation-centered meetings facilitated by local authorities. Intelligence will be recorded in the meeting minutes and information shared effectively with statutory bodies. Employees must discuss any information with their area/unit manager ahead of sharing it and record the discussion in the child’s safety report on the care management system and in a safeguarding workflow document.

**9.0 CRIMINAL GANGS AND NETWORKS**

Young people involved with criminal gangs or networks are extremely vulnerable to violence and attempts on their life. They may also be a risk to others. They are usually victims of child criminal exploitation. Young people involved in drug consumption may have high debt (whether real or manufactured by the gang/network to intimidate the young person) called “debt bondage”. Such debt poses threats to a young person’s life, and “near miss” events must be considered as safeguarding concerns and reported to both the local authority and police as relevant using the procedures outlined in this document.

Partnership working is extremely important when supporting young people involved with criminal gangs or networks. Young people may need to be moved out of borough or the local area in order to protect them. Thorough risk assessments and safety planning (for the young person, their wider family and friends as relevant) are critically important. If an employee suspects that a child or young person is being, or has been, subjected to physical, sexual and emotional abuse through the use of internet activity or communication technology – mobile telephones or social media, they must forward details to management and the local authority using the existing procedure as explained earlier. As for unit /area managers, if the concern is related to the sexual abuse or grooming of a child online, a referral should be made to the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command (CEOP), which is part of the 's National Crime Agency (NCA). CEOP is tasked to work both nationally and internationally to bring online child sex offenders, including those involved in the production, distribution, and viewing of child abuse material to the courts. Referrals can be made at www.ceop.police./ceop-reporting.

The police will often be interested in securing any evidence of online abuse. Employees must take advice from the police regarding deleting content and taking steps to preserve or record evidence of online harm (e.g. screenshots).

If the concerns present an immediate threat to the safety and welfare of the individual, employees must take care not to put themselves at risk, and to seek the assistance of the police. A child who spends some authorised time with their parents where there is domestic abuse, steps will immediately be taken. There would be a suspension on contact arrangements until a full investigation is completed.

**10.0 HISTORICAL ABUSE**

If an employee becomes aware of a historic abuse allegation, they must discuss this with the Safety Officer /Area Manager or a member of the safeguarding team as soon as possible on the same day. Employees must retain notes of any conversations regarding historical allegations.

**11.0 MANAGING SAFEGUARDING ALLEGATIONS**

This deals with concerns regarding employees or other external individuals authorised to work within the unit or with the child, such as tutors, lawyers, therapists etc - If safeguarding allegations or concerns surface, they must refer to the separate Managing Allegations policy document. This policy will apply when there are allegations or concerns raised, from any source, that an internal employee or external worker is behaving in a way that may pose a present or future risk of harm /exploitation/abuse to a child. This may be about their behaviour, both within or outside work. Employees must not alert the individual in question of their concerns before taking advice from a member of the management /safeguarding team, as subsequent enquiries may potentially be compromised. Where there is a specific identified child at risk of significant harm from that employee, the children’s safeguarding process must run in parallel. Management will advise on this. If an employee receives a complaint that includes a concern or allegation of potential risk or abuse about an employee or volunteer, the complaints process must be suspended. The safeguarding allegations policy and process (and where applicable, the safeguarding policy and process) must instead take precedence.

**12.0 MISSING YOUNG PEOPLE AT RISK**

When determining whether a person is missing, employees should trust their instincts and knowledge of the person’s circumstances. The usual procedure reporting the child missing is to report this to the care authorities EDT call handlers and the police. Where appropriate, employees may contact relevant family, carers, or other professionals to discuss concerns or if they are with the young person. Notifying authorities if employees are concerned that someone is missing under suspicion of exploitation including all the signs of complex safeguarding issues is paramount.

Employees must give police all the important information about the person’s vulnerability and any threat to life they are aware of. The police will assess and grade the missing report as low, medium or high based on the information provided. If an employee makes a missing person’s report, they must inform their manager and record all action taken on the care management system. All reports of missing persons must be recorded by the receiving by management.

The police will reassess each individual who is reported missing at regular intervals. They will be considered missing until located and their well-being or otherwise is established. Employees must also inform the allocated social worker of the child or young person at risk, along with other professionals in the network.

**12.1** **Taking action during the period a person is missing** - If employees are concerned that someone is missing, they should take steps to locate them, alongside notifying the authorities as outlined in the missing persons guideline. Children or young people may go missing in the context of multiple vulnerabilities and risk factors. This may include factors connected to criminal gangs, modern slavery, trafficking or sexual / criminal exploitation. When at-risk people with multiple vulnerabilities go missing, it is critical employees work closely with their professional network.

**12.2** When a person goes missing, the local authority must have oversight of the situation. Local authorities will usually have their own response to reports of concerns that a child or young person has gone missing. In some cases, employees may need to advocate for the young person to be considered as missing where the local authority is reluctant to do so, or where action is slow or inadequate. This should be undertaken as per the escalation processes.

For missing children and young people, local authority responses may include one or more strategy meetings involving family and key professionals. The meeting aims must be to: assess risks, agree a plan to locate the child or young person, identify actions to reduce the likelihood of the child or young person going missing in the future, ask the network about potential disruption activity that may recover the child or prevent future missing episodes. If employees are concerned this is not happening, they must escalate this following the usual processes. Alongside the professional network, employees must think contextually and refer to the risk assessment and safety plan to agree on the next steps.

**12.3** **Repeated missing episodes or prolonged missing scenarios** - Where an employee has concerns about a pattern of a young person's frequent short missing episodes, or when a person is missing in the long-term, they must request regular strategy meetings with management and then the local authorities if needed (if these are not already happening). Where the local authority has a disrupting exploitation team, strategy meetings usually take place weekly (where risks are very high) or fortnightly. If employees are concerned about potential trafficking or modern slavery, they must request that the appropriate referral is made. If employees are concerned about a lack of proactivity at any stage regarding a person being missing for any length of time, they must escalate their concerns using the usual process and this should be led by the Safety Officer.

When a child or young person is found or returns to their home or care setting, they must be offered an independent return interview (also known as a return home interview). Independent return interviews provide an opportunity to uncover information that can help protect children from: the risk of going missing again, risks they may have been exposed to while missing, risk factors in their home and getting more information to use should there be a repeat missing episode. Return home interviews must be carried out within 72 hours of the child returning to their home or care setting. This must be an in-depth interview and is normally best carried out by an independent person or management instead of the duty support worker.

**13.0 RADICALISATION**

Current legislation requires all agencies working with children, young people, and adults at risk to play a role in preventing and deterring their possible radicalisation – whether on grounds of religion, culture, or for other ends. Extremism can take many different forms, including far-right extremism. While the PREVENT duty is a high-profile one, it is quite rare as a practice issue for Shekinah Support employees. Certain behaviors or risks for a young person can indicate criminal exploitation as opposed to radicalisation and are far more likely. Employees are strongly encouraged to closely examine available evidence, assess indicators, and discuss these with a manager experienced in work with such issues, or the safeguarding team before taking a view on the potential of radicalisation risk.

While the nature of the risk to the child or young person may raise security issues, the process for responding to likelihood of significant harm or vulnerability is the same as for any other safeguarding concern. If an employee becomes aware of a situation or information that a violent act is imminent, or where weapons or other materials may be in the possession of a young person at risk, or member of their family, they must take the following steps: call the authorities as soon as it is safe to do so, contact the Safeguarding Officer /Area manager immediately for guidance and support and consider together whether further information-sharing is required. Consideration must be given to the possibility that sharing information about the concerns with the child’s parents/carers may increase the risk to the child and it may therefore not be appropriate to inform the parents/carers at the referral stage. Make a referral to the local authority. Whilst many of these referrals will be received by local authorities as early intervention services, the referral must be recorded on the care management system in a safeguarding workflow.

**13.2** **Management may make a referral to the Channel Panel** - Channel is an early intervention, multi-agency panel designed to assess risk, safeguard vulnerable individuals from being drawn into extremist or terrorist behaviour and arrange intervention or support to be provided to those individuals. Each local authority was required to establish a Channel panel under provisions in the Counterterrorism and Security Act 2015.

The employee making the referral should be invited to be part of that multi agency forum and be part of a multi-agency plan.

**13.3 Safeguarding children and young people who may have been trafficked -** All children and young people at risk of exploitation are entitled to safeguarding and protection under the law irrespective of their immigration status. While for slightly older children or young people it is necessary to identify an element of coercion in the context of trafficking, children are recognised as being unable to consent to their own exploitation. Therefore, for a child to be recognised as trafficked, employees only need to identify that a child /young person has been recruited, moved, or held by individuals for the purpose of exploitation. If an employee comes into contact with a child who may have been exploited or trafficked, they must immediately notify the local authority social care and the police.

**13.4** Where employees are working with a child who is approaching the age of 18 and where safeguarding concerns exist, they must establish with the local authority how the care needs of the young person will be placed at the forefront of any future support planning. Assessment of care needs must include issues of safeguarding and risk and must ensure the young person’s safety is not put at risk through delays in provision of the services needed to maintain their independence, well-being and choice. The planning process must also consider: the information and advice the young person has received about safeguarding whether advocacy and support needs have been addressed, whether a mental capacity assessment is needed and who will undertake it, if Shekinah Support staff are advocating for the young person, plans must be established for this provision. If the young person is a care leaver, they are entitled to a personal advisor from the local authority’s children’s social care until the age of 25 years. The safeguarding adult’s referral route must be followed for anyone over the age of 18 years. However, for care leavers, their personal advisor in the relevant local authority team must also need to be made aware of any concerns.

Managers must ensure that any gaps in safeguarding transition planning with other agencies are discussed in supervision with employees, and that a clear plan is developed on how this will be responded to. Employees must inform their line manager of any responsibilities for safeguarding transition planning that Shekinah Support has taken on. The manager is responsible for ensuring such responsibilities are fully covered in the provision of the service.

**14.0 Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) SAFEGUARDING**

Child prostitution /sexual exploitation is becoming more prevalent in today’s society and exposes young people to differing forms of abuse, assault and emotional vulnerability. Additionally, it can threaten the well-being of young people and lead to a loss of self-esteem. A young person involved in prostitution is likely to have been subjected to physical and/or sexual abuse.

The young people (unaccompanied minors) in the care of Shekinah Support may, at times have been involved in prostitution prior to arrival or enroute to the United Kingdom and as a result of this they may have little or no understanding of the risks they may be exposed to. All staff employed by Shekinah Support must be aware of the potential risks open to young people accommodated by us. All staff will receive training in this area as part of their induction.

Abusers/ coercers will identify vulnerable young people and we must ensure that we act in conjunction with other local agencies to act swiftly and sensitively in the best interests of the young person concerned. It is vital that support and strategies are in place to ensure a positive outcome for the young person concerned.

Shekinah Support management Safeguarding Officer will work with local agencies and adhere to local protocols developed within the framework of “Working Together” 2006 to address issues of this form of abuse. It is the primary aim of Shekinah Support to safeguard and promote the welfare of young people in our care. We will encourage and support any investigation and prosecution of criminal activity by any person/s that coerces young people or abusing them through prostitution.

It is the policy of Shekinah Support to discuss at a multi-agency level, any/all concerns regarding young people involved in exploitation of prostitution, pornography, etc.

Staff should be particularly alert and identify signs such as:

* Encouraged visits to individuals outside of the property
* Frequent absences from the property
* Older, particularly males observed loitering around the property or vicinity
* Young people getting into cars, being picked up by strangers/ persons unknown
* Young people returning to the property with alcohol/ illegal substances
* Young people returning to the property with expensive gadgets or electronics - other such items that they were not in possession of at an earlier stage.
* Young people returning to the property with expensive items of clothing, cosmetics, footwear, jewelry that they were not in possession of at an earlier stage.
* Young people returning to the property with money that they were not in possession of at an earlier stage.
* Young people’s relationships with older persons.

This list is not exhaustive.

Consideration must always be given to the needs of the young person and arrangements for their immediate safety put in place. Protection and safeguarding the young person is paramount and diversion/s strategies from exploitation should be in place. The longer-term needs of the young person must be assessed with clear plans in place to include sexual health education and other associated needs.

**15.0 SAFER RECRUITMENT**

Shekinah Support maintains a robust approach when it comes to the recruitment and selection of permanent and temporary staff. Shekinah Supportrecognizes that it has a responsibility, an obligation and a duty of care, as we an organization that works with children, young people and vulnerable adults as covered in the Children Act 1989 and 2004, the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and the Protection of Freedom Act 2012.

As part of our pledge to manage the process of care to our young people, we take their wellbeing and daily experiences at our units quite seriously. Staff are recruited according to their ability to meet or exceed a list of criteria relating to their skills, empathy, passion for care, experience, qualifications.

**15.1 Recruitment steps**

The Operations Manager has the responsibility to ensure that effective policies and procedures are in place for recruitment of all staff and volunteers.

The Manager is involved in recruitment:

* to ensure that we operate safe recruitment procedures and makes sure all appropriate checks are carried out, and
* to monitor contractors’ and agencies compliance with our policy and legislative requirements, and
* to promote the welfare of young people at every stage of the procedure. A record of staff trained in Safer Recruitment is kept by the HR Department.
* To be the first point of contact within the organisation if staff, volunteers, or external agencies have a safeguarding concern.

Shekinah Support maintains a pool of suitable staff either on a full-time basis or on standby working casual part -time hours. Staff are screened and selected, usually recruited from reputable agencies or partner care homes who cross - share staff on a zero-hour contract.

15.1 In most cases, Shekinah Support management can anticipate the need to recruit additional staff due to increased placements per unit or the setup of additional units. There will usually be a list of appropriate pre-screened staff that meet our safer recruitment criteria.

15.2 Where Shekinah Support makes use of external personnel sub- contractors or service partnerships. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks will extend to all persons in contact with the young people within our units or young people we offer contractual support to. This is completed before any form of work begins. Shekinah Support will conduct a vetting process for direct or partnership recruitment, ensuring we follow a compulsory checklist consisting of the following:

1. Full and detailed recent background checks (enhanced DBS) prior to starting work
2. Work/employment chronology beyond a standard resume.
3. Detailed reference requests and receipt of references prior to starting work
4. Confirmation of qualifications
5. Verification and proof of the right to work in the .
6. interview process to assess a candidate’s ability to achieve the person specifications
7. Scenario test - candidates will need to demonstrate their response to simulated situations.

8. Proof of National Insurance number

9.Photographic proof of identification and address confirmation

We will ensure that all staff have a thorough and rigorous induction period that is properly supervised and supported by a manager. Safeguarding training is mandatory for all staff before commencement of duties.

All staff will be offered regular opportunities to receive training, shadowing or other forms of personal development. Some mandatory and others voluntarily.

Supervision will be used to usefully maintain effective dialogue with workers. We aim to maintain good retention of workers and offer them a positive stimulating environment.

Further information can be found in our Safer Recruitment policy.

Shekinah Support Safer recruitment policies are subject to an annual review annually.

**16.0** **STAFF TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT**

The training and development policy forms a major part of Shekinah Support’ continuous development of its staff as a company. All staff receive Training to Local Safeguarding Board standards and also ADASS adults safeguarding Board standards for our vulnerable 18-year olds in our care. We ensure that all staff are aware of indicators of child abuse, CSE, Gangs, county lines and other current issues relating to exploitation and contextual safeguarding. They are aware of how to raise timely alerts and know how to follow processes and procedures correctly to keep our young people safe. All staff receive induction training and complete mandatory training as well as additional support. Staff have training and development plans to ensure they commit to ongoing continuing professional development.

Staff skills and personal development plans are designed to offer progressive skills in the area of care for young people all the way up to management level. Staff are encouraged to be ambitious and are free to propose a training programme course that offers relative value in terms of the acquisition of higher skills. Staff skills progression forms part of the deciding factors of employment to new recruits.

New recruits without the base qualifications (NVQ level 3 health and social care/care skills) are immediately put on the course with a contractor training service within 3 weeks of employment. They are also encouraged to eventually complete level 5 of the same course as part of a voluntary self - development plan for staff wishing to progress their career in the care industry. This arrangement extends to full and part time staff.

At Shekinah Support, our ideal employee is someone who:

* Has a good mix of ambition, care and empathy for our service users.
* Short- and long-term plans to develop skills in social care.
* Completion of main and secondary training within 12 months.
* A desire to advance from front line staff to management.
* The ability to apply training and learning to the actual job.
* A clear interest /contribution to our policies and procedures at work.

**INVESTMENT IN PEOPLE**

Shekinah Support sets aside a specified budget dedicated to staff skills and knowledge development every year. This is open to review and adjustment due to various factors which usually includes a growing need for a particular skill for workers in care or a change in care legislation.

Shekinah Support will support staff to access some courses outside of the list of mandatory training courses. This includes training in the completion of management led courses. Once a staff member notifies management of their desire to complete a course, management will pay half the fee if it is reasonably related to Shekinah Support care category.

Compulsory qualifications/training

1. Health & Social Care NVQ Levels 3 or 5
2. Leadership & Management Diploma ,level 5 (For managers and supervisors)

3.Care skills (Where NVQLevel 3 health and social care is being completed)

4. At least 6 modules of safeguarding training

5. Health & safety
6. First aid

Support training

All members of staff are expected to commence these certificated courses within 1-2 months from the start of their employment. They are available on rotation as delivered by contractor trainers. Some members of staff are required to take refresher courses over a period. All the listed courses are mandatory but are completed in order of importance. Staff are not expected to repeat a training course for which they have received a certificate 24 months ago but is optional and usually encouraged so as to refresh the memory and application.

Fire and electrical safety
Health and safety at work (General)
First aid
Food and nutrition
Restraint and protection

Food safety and hygiene

CSE and safeguarding
Records management / Use of care management system

Dealing with ADHD

Lone Working Awareness

Care certificate (skills for life)

Ex social worker recruits are not expected to complete certification in the main training areas though this can be seen as a bonus. They will need to complete support training they have never completed from the list:

**17.0 INTERNET USE**

We take internet safety seriously. This is outlined in our young person’s guide and behaviour agreement.

We have individual internet routers in each of the properties that we can switch off in our aim to safeguard young people from the dangers of the internet - particularly during the early hours of the morning.

As part of our agreement with young people, they are asked to sign an Internet Acceptable Use Statement relating to the use of the unit’s wifi and any related computers. The agreement can be adapted to make it relevant to their needs and risk assessment, at the time of moving in or at a later date if their risks increase. The agreement must be signed by a member of staff and the social worker to certify that the conditions were explained to the young people. Young people must also sign to indicate that they agree with the terms. This must take place ideally at the beginning of the placement or when the young person starts to have access to the Internet or computer. All service users who intend to use the Wi-Fi or computers must sign an agreement.

The agreement includes time limits, type of sites or specific sites that the young person is not permitted to use- such as pornographic, suicide or self-harm sites.

 In addition, young people will need to tell someone if inappropriate content is accessed or they are upset by anyone while online. Young people are not allowed to take part in internet bullying or racist or discriminatory conduct.

Computers for use by young people will be monitored by staff. Computers will also have firewalls and anti-virus software.

Young people will be supported and given guidance about the dangers of the internet by our key workers and staff on an ongoing basis.

We will discuss with them accessing the internet and the implications of internet use including:

• Websites that show images and inappropriate material such as those that are discriminatory or pornographic.

• The dangers of using chat rooms or social networking sites, such as pedophiles and how trolling or cyber bullying takes place.

Location based apps that identify where a person is based.

• Unsolicited e-mail also known as Spam, which may contain viruses.

• Suspicious software or websites that could contain viruses or spyware that puts computers and data at risk of being deleted or stolen.

• Phishing scams aimed at stealing your identity.

• Hacking, where people attempt to remotely take control of your computer whilst you are online.

**18.0 PLACEMENT MATCHING**

All prospective placements should be carefully considered and the risks of the existing young people in placement should be taken into consideration. Only after this has taken place and agreed should a placement be agreed. The social work placements team should seek to provide as much information as possible and the company should seek to share safeguarding concerns and issues with social workers.

We will seek to gather as much written information as possible and seek to securely store this information according to our records and GDPR policies.

Young people should be consulted with and we should gather as much information as possible about their preferences and wishes.

All young people who move into the unit should be given opportunities to express their preferences and have their voice heard.

They should be made aware of how to complain or record compliments and comments. They should begiven access to the complaints and compliments policy.

Risk assessments for young people should be updated within four weeks of the young person moving into the unit.

Risk assessments should be regularly reviewed and a young person’s wellbeing, emotional and physical health should be monitored and recorded in order to keep them safe.

If there is a change in behaviour, habits and practices we should record and inform the social work department of these changes particularly when they are negatively affecting the young people or others within the unit. Everyone's safety is paramount.

Where young people share standalone accommodation or flats, we will endeavour to ensure that we match the inhabitants as closely as possible and consider their preferences, interests and behaviours to mitigate the possibilities of risk occurring.

Wherever possible, the young person should have the opportunity to visit the unit prior to admission. This has the following objectives:

● To give them the opportunity to meet the staff and other young people.

● To give an opportunity to inspect the unit and the facilities.

● To provide the young person and their family with information and to explain key Policies, the ethos of our services and the expectations from our young people.

Prior to admission to the unit, the young person will receive a “Welcome Pack” and behaviour agreement. They will be given a set of necessary equipment that are theirs.

**19.0 PERSONAL BOUNDARIES AND INTERACTIONS**

This Code is based on the principles of protecting the public by promoting best practice. It will ensure that you are ‘working to standard’, providing high quality, compassionate **care and support**. The Code describes the standards of conduct, behaviour and attitude that the public and people who use our care services should expect. You are responsible for and have a duty of care to ensure that your conduct does not fall below the standards detailed in the Code. Nothing that you do, or **omit** to do, should harm the safety and **wellbeing** of people who use our care services, and the public.

All members of staff are expected to uphold high standards of care and conduct themselves in a professional manner. As a member of staff you are expected to respect personal boundaries.

You are expected to respect physical and emotional boundaries with young people.

Where we encourage people to behave and work with empathy warmth and care : we do not expect staff to become too close to young people in a way that can be interpreted as an equal friendship or a close personal relationship

Where staff are concerned about another member of staff or managers conduct, we would expect them to report this to us using any of the methods of communication including whistle blowing, a complaint or through communications with a manager.

**20.0 Phone Use and Images**

Staff are expected to safeguard themselves against allegations by being careful. Staff where possible will be issued with a work mobile and this is expected to be the main means of communication with young people. Any images of young people must be securely transmitted and deleted and must not be unnecessarily kept. Young people must be asked for their permission for photographs to be taken and it must be clear what will happen to these images - whether they are for use on their file, for general use on publicity or websites etc. Permission must be regularly sought.

**21.0** **Safe Spaces within buildings**

**Shekinah Support** have CCTV Cameras at the entrance and in the communal areas in order to maintain the safety of young people who live in the building.

The cameras are designed for safe keeping and to quickly alert staff to the presence of people who do not have permission or who have not asked to enter the building. This helps to keep residents safe. CCTV cameras on site are in no way meant to impinge on the privacy of young people or the staff who work here. Cameras are not allowed in private living areas or workspaces. They are installed for safety and not for any other reasons. Cameras will be monitored by staff who have received safeguarding training and are aware of issues related to privacy, GDPR, keeping information safe and who are also aware of issues such as dignity and respect.

The main staff office is a safe space should young people need to talk privately or confidentiality or if they need to meet a member of social care staff or related professionals.

Young people have their own front door key and enjoy the privacy of their home. Staff can and will undertake safety checks to keep young people safe or if we suspect they are at risk of harm or in danger. If we believe young people are intending to self-harm or have harboured illicit substances, weapons or persons that are not authorised to be in the premises we will check their premises to ensure they are safe and well. .

We are committed to reviewing our safeguarding policy annually and all relevant sections updated accordingly. All staff members will be informed and provided with the updated version, ensuring adherence to the contents therein.