

Staff Personal Safety

1. Background

Abbeyfield The Dales Limited (ATD) is committed to ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of all personnel, including permanent employees, agency workers, contractors, and volunteers. This commitment extends to all working environments, including all communal areas and residents' homes in ATD premises, and any external locations such as residents' or relatives' homes.

Working alongside unfamiliar colleagues or in environments outside organisational control presents additional risks. This policy establishes clear expectations and safeguards to ensure that all staff are protected from harm and feel confident raising concerns about their safety.

2. Objectives

The objective of this policy is to provide a consistent framework that promotes safe working practices when staff are working with others, particularly in mixed teams or unfamiliar settings. Abbeyfield aims to foster a working culture where communication is clear, risks are effectively managed, and staff always feel supported.

In addition, the organisation seeks to minimise risks associated with lone working and home visits, ensure that appropriate escalation procedures are in place, and protect staff from physical, emotional, or psychological harm. The policy also reinforces the importance of maintaining professional boundaries and mutual respect in all working relationships.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all individuals working on behalf of ATD, including permanent staff, bank staff, agency workers, contractors, and volunteers. It covers all work activities undertaken on ATD premises as well as duties carried out off-site, such as visits to residents or their relatives.

The policy is particularly relevant where staff are working in mixed teams, with unfamiliar colleagues, or in situations where direct supervision may be limited.

This policy applies to Abbeyfield the Dales Limited and its corporate trustee responsibilities for registered providers Charles Edward Sugden Almshouses, and Frank Crossley's Almshouses, also for the non-registered provider The Pawson Cottage Homes, and its subsidiary Abbeyfield Court Limited.

4. Policy

4.1. Responsibilities

4.1.1. Managers / Team Leaders / Senior Care Assistants

Are responsible for the safe running of mixed-team operations and will:

- Ensure all staff feel safe, supported, and empowered to raise concerns
- Ensure all agency workers receive a site induction before starting work covering emergency procedures, PPE, reporting lines and task-specific risks.
- Additional training must be provided where tasks involve higher-risk activities.
- Verify competence and certification for assigned tasks.
- Ensure clear communication of roles, responsibilities and expectations at the start of each shift.
- Provide clear instructions, supervision and monitoring throughout the shift.
- Conduct & review risk assessments.
- Maintain emergency communication processes and practices.
- Address unsafe behaviour immediately and report incidents promptly.
- Investigate all incidents and concerns properly.

4.1.2. Contracted Staff

Contracted staff are expected to:

- Follow organisational safety procedures and model safe behaviour.
- Maintain professional boundaries.
- Support agency workers by clarifying safe working practices when needed.
- Report hazards, concerns, or incidents without delay.
- Not delegate unsafe or unsuitable tasks to agency workers.

4.1.3. Agency Workers

Agency workers are required to:

- Comply fully with ATD policies and procedures, in addition to any agency guidance
- Provide evidence of relevant training.
- Comply with site rules, training requirements and safe systems of work.
- Report any lack of understanding, unsafe conditions or incidents.
- Use PPE and equipment correctly and request guidance when unsure.
- Agency workers should not undertake high-risk tasks without appropriate supervision.

4.2. Wellbeing & Support

Abbeyfield recognises the impact that safety incidents can have on staff wellbeing. Following any incident, staff will be offered appropriate support, including debriefing and access to wellbeing resources.

Managers are responsible for monitoring staff wellbeing and ensuring that individuals are not exposed to ongoing or repeated risks without appropriate support.

Additional support may include:

- Counselling support
- Occupational Health referrals
- Return-to-work meetings after incidents
- Trauma support following serious events

4.3. Induction & Training

All staff, including agency workers, must complete a relevant induction before commencing duties. This induction will include emergency procedures, reporting processes, and an overview of risks associated with the role.

Training will be provided as necessary to ensure staff are competent to carry out their duties safely. This may include training in subjects such as lone working, safeguarding, conflict resolution, and incident reporting.

4.4. Equality & Respect

ATD is committed to providing a working environment that is safe, inclusive, and respectful. All staff have the right to be treated with dignity, and any form of discrimination, harassment, or intimidation will not be tolerated.

4.5. Safeguarding & Professional Boundaries

Abbeyfield is committed to safeguarding both staff and residents. Any concerns relating to abuse, harassment, or inappropriate behaviour must be reported in accordance with safeguarding procedures.

Staff must maintain professional boundaries at all times and must not accept behaviour that compromises their safety or wellbeing.

4.6. Risk Assessments

Abbeyfield will ensure that risk assessments are completed and regularly reviewed for all work activities. These assessments must take account of the presence of agency workers and the additional risks associated with unfamiliarity or differing levels of experience.

Where staff are required to visit residents or relatives in their homes, a specific risk assessment will be undertaken. This will consider factors such as location, environmental conditions, known behaviours, and any other potential hazards within the home.

Control measures must be communicated clearly to both contracted and agency staff.

4.7. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) & Equipment

Appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) will be provided where required, and staff must use it correctly at all times. Equipment must only be used by individuals who have received appropriate training and authorisation.

Where appropriate, additional safety measures such as lone worker devices or alarm systems may be considered to enhance staff protection.

4.8. Personal Safety

Personal safety refers to the protection of staff from physical injury, violence, aggression, harassment, bullying, intimidation, psychological harm, discrimination and other risks encountered whilst undertaking work activities.

All staff are expected to take reasonable precautions to ensure their own personal safety. This includes:

- Regular contact by phone.

- Staff member on duty to ensure that they always have the senior mobile with them and that it is fully charged to enable them to call for assistance. That they have a handset with them to enable them to contact other staff in the building.
- Contact the Residential unit at the start of the shift to inform them that you are working with an agency worker.
- Remaining aware of their surroundings.
- Positioning themselves safely within environments
- Avoiding situations that may present a risk.

Staff should trust their instincts and withdraw from any situation that makes them feel uncomfortable or unsafe. Personal information should not be shared with residents or relatives, and clear professional boundaries must be always maintained.

4.9. Managing Unsafe Situations

ATD has a zero-tolerance approach to violence, threats, abuse, intimidation and harassment towards employees, volunteers, contractors or agency workers.

Staff who feel unsafe while working with others must take immediate steps to protect themselves. This may include seeking assistance from colleagues, removing themselves from the situation, or contacting a manager.

If a situation presents an immediate risk of harm, staff should contact emergency services. No member of staff will face disciplinary action for prioritising their safety. All incidents must be reported and reviewed to identify learning and prevent recurrence.

If the contracted staff feels uncomfortable with the person you are working with they can use the following steps to alert another member of staff:

- Telephone another staff member on duty and say “please can you bring me the red file for Mr Smith?” I am working on (state which area of the building you are in).
- This will alert the other staff member that you are in an uncomfortable position with the other person you are working with.
- The staff member should come to check that you are alright and safe.
- If you continue to feel unsafe call the Manager or Assistant Manager.

4.10. Incident Reporting

All incidents, near misses, and situations where staff feel unsafe must be reported through the ATD’s standard reporting process. This includes incidents involving verbal abuse, threats, or unsafe working conditions.

Where staff do not feel able to raise concerns with their line manager, concerns may be escalated to a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) or through the Whistleblowing Policy.

Reports will be reviewed to identify trends and areas for improvement, and a no-blame approach will be taken to encourage open and honest reporting. Findings will be shared with the agency provider where appropriate.

4.10.1. Malicious False Allegation

ATD will treat malicious false allegations very seriously and this may result in disciplinary action against the complainant, as will any witnesses who have deliberately misled ATD during its investigation.

4.10.2. Protection and support for those involved

Staff (including bank staff or agency workers) who report that they have witnessed wrongdoing, or who participate in good faith in any investigation must not suffer any form of retaliation or victimisation as a result. Anyone found to have retaliated against or victimised someone in this way will be subject to disciplinary action under our Disciplinary Procedure.

If you believe you have suffered any such treatment you should inform your line manager, or the HR & Volunteer Manager. If the matter is not remedied, you should raise it formally using our Grievance Procedure or this procedure if appropriate.

We will monitor the treatment and outcomes of any reports of sexual harassment, improper behaviour or victimisation we receive to ensure that they are properly investigated and resolved, those who report or act as witnesses are not victimised, repeat offenders are dealt with appropriately, cultural clashes are identified and resolved and workforce training is targeted where needed.

4.10.3. Reporting outcomes, confidentiality and record-keeping

Confidentiality is an important part of the procedures provided under this policy. Details of the investigation and the names of the person raising the grievance and the person accused must only be disclosed on a "need to know" basis. Breach of confidentiality may give rise to disciplinary action under our Disciplinary Procedure.

When appropriate and possible, where a grievance/complaint is upheld, we will advise the victim of the action that has been taken to address their grievance and any measures put in place to prevent a similar event happening again.

Information about a grievance/complaint by or about a staff member, agency or bank worker may be placed on their personnel file, along with a record of the outcome and of any notes or other documents compiled during the process. These will be processed in accordance with our Data Protection Policy.

4.11. Partnerships with Agencies

Abbeyfield works in partnership with staffing agencies to ensure that agency workers are suitably qualified and competent. Agencies are expected to provide accurate information regarding staff training and experience.

The organisation will provide feedback to agencies where concerns arise and reserves the right to refuse placements where safety standards are not met.

5. Finance, Value for Money & Social Value

N/A

6. Supported Appendices

N/A

7. Linked Policies

Lone Working
Sexual Harassment
Equality, Diversity & Inclusion
Professional Boundaries
Whistleblowing

8. Legislation/Regulation

Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
Relevant CQC regulations

9. Review

Copilot was used to assist in the production of this policy.
Annually or following any significant incident, operational change, or regulatory update.

10. Procedure/Guidance

N/A