

SECTION 7 — STAFFING & PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

POLICY 65 — STAFF RECRUITMENT & SAFER RECRUITMENT POLICY

65.1 Purpose

Homeward Futures LTD is committed to recruiting staff who are suitable, competent, reliable and committed to safeguarding and supporting young adults.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that recruitment is fair, consistent, transparent and conducted in a way that protects residents from unsuitable individuals.

Safer recruitment principles will be applied throughout the recruitment process, from advertising and application through to appointment and ongoing employment.

65.2 Scope

This policy applies to:

- Permanent employees.
- Temporary employees.
- Bank staff.
- Agency workers.
- Volunteers.
- Apprentices and trainees.
- Contractors where they have contact with residents.
- Managers and senior staff involved in recruitment.

65.3 Recruitment Principles

Homeward Futures LTD will:

- Recruit based on suitability, skills, experience, qualifications and values.
- Promote equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Follow safer recruitment principles.
- Verify information provided by applicants.
- Obtain appropriate references.
- Complete required background checks before employment where applicable.
- Explore employment history and any gaps appropriately.
- Assess safeguarding awareness and professional judgement.

- Ensure staff understand the responsibilities associated with working with care leavers.
- Never appoint solely on the basis of personal recommendation without appropriate checks.

65.4 Job Descriptions and Person Specifications

Every role will have an appropriate:

- Job description.
- Person specification.
- Clear responsibilities.
- Required qualifications and experience.
- Safeguarding responsibilities.
- Reporting arrangements.
- Required skills and competencies.

Job descriptions will accurately reflect the responsibilities of the role.

65.5 Application and Shortlisting

Applicants will normally be required to complete an application process that provides sufficient information to assess their suitability.

Shortlisting will consider:

- Relevant experience.
- Qualifications.
- Employment history.
- Understanding of safeguarding.
- Communication skills.
- Ability to work with young adults.
- Professional judgement.
- Ability to maintain boundaries.
- Relevant skills and competencies.

Any unexplained gaps or inconsistencies may be explored during the recruitment process.

65.6 Interviews

Interviews will be structured and may include questions relating to:

- Safeguarding.
- Professional boundaries.
- Equality and diversity.
- Working with vulnerable young adults.
- Managing challenging situations.
- Confidentiality.
- Risk management.

- Professional conduct.
- Responding to concerns or disclosures.

Recruitment decisions will be documented.

65.7 References

Appropriate references will be obtained before appointment wherever reasonably practicable.

References should, where possible, verify:

- Previous employment.
- Job title and responsibilities.
- Dates of employment.
- Suitability for the role.
- Any relevant concerns.

Where concerns arise from references, management will assess whether further clarification or investigation is required before appointment.

65.8 Recruitment Decisions

Recruitment decisions will be based on the overall evidence available.

Where concerns are identified, Homeward Futures LTD may:

- Seek additional information.
- Conduct further checks.
- Request clarification.
- Obtain additional references.
- Consider whether restrictions or additional safeguards are required.
- Decide not to appoint.

65.9 Records

Recruitment records will be maintained securely, including:

- Application forms.
 - Interview records.
 - References.
 - Identity verification.
 - DBS information where applicable.
 - Qualification checks.
 - Recruitment decision records.
 - Any relevant risk assessments.
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POLICY 66 — DBS & BACKGROUND CHECKS POLICY

66.1 Purpose

Homeward Futures LTD is committed to ensuring that individuals working with residents are appropriately checked and suitable for their role.

The organisation will undertake appropriate Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks and other background checks in accordance with the requirements applicable to each role.

66.2 DBS Checks

The level of DBS check required will depend upon the nature of the role and the duties being undertaken.

Homeward Futures LTD will:

- Determine the appropriate level of check.
- Obtain checks where legally permitted and required.
- Verify identity appropriately.
- Maintain appropriate records.
- Consider disclosed information fairly and proportionately.
- Follow applicable DBS guidance.

66.3 DBS Information

A DBS disclosure will not automatically prevent an individual from being employed.

Where information is disclosed, management will consider:

- Nature of the offence.
- Date of the offence.
- Circumstances.
- Relevance to the role.
- Pattern or frequency of offending.
- Evidence of rehabilitation.
- Potential risk to residents.
- Any legal restrictions or barring information.

A documented risk assessment may be completed where appropriate.

66.4 DBS Renewal and Monitoring

Homeward Futures LTD will maintain a system for monitoring DBS requirements.

Where staff are subscribed to the DBS Update Service, the organisation may undertake appropriate status checks where lawful and with the required consent.

A DBS check will not be treated as a substitute for ongoing safeguarding vigilance.

66.5 Other Checks

Where relevant, checks may include:

- Identity verification.
- Right to work.
- Employment references.
- Qualification verification.
- Professional registration.
- Driving licence checks where driving is part of the role.
- Overseas criminal record checks where applicable.
- Other appropriate background checks.

66.6 Ongoing Suitability

Staff have a responsibility to notify management of circumstances that may affect their suitability for their role where required by law, contract or organisational policy.

Concerns about a staff member's suitability will be assessed promptly.

POLICY 67 — STAFF INDUCTION POLICY

67.1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all new staff receive a structured induction before undertaking responsibilities independently.

67.2 Induction Principles

All staff will receive an induction appropriate to their role.

Induction will ensure staff understand:

- Homeward Futures LTD.
- The supported accommodation service.
- The needs of care leavers.
- Their role and responsibilities.
- Safeguarding expectations.

- Professional boundaries.
- Health and safety.
- Emergency procedures.
- Recording requirements.
- Confidentiality.
- Equality and diversity.
- Risk management.
- Resident rights.
- Relevant policies and procedures.

67.3 Mandatory Induction Areas

Depending on the role, induction will include:

- Safeguarding.
- Preventing exploitation.
- Mental health awareness.
- Health and safety.
- Fire safety.
- First aid arrangements.
- Lone working.
- Data protection and confidentiality.
- Medication procedures where relevant.
- Incident reporting.
- Risk assessment.
- Professional boundaries.
- Equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Emergency procedures.
- Code of conduct.

67.4 Shadowing and Supported Practice

Where appropriate, new staff will:

- Shadow experienced staff.
- Observe support sessions.
- Familiarise themselves with accommodation.
- Review relevant documentation.
- Receive guidance before working independently.

67.5 Induction Records

Completion of induction will be documented.

Outstanding training or competency requirements will be identified and monitored.

POLICY 68 — STAFF TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT POLICY

68.1 Purpose

Homeward Futures LTD recognises that appropriately trained staff are essential to delivering safe, effective and person-centred support.

68.2 Training Principles

Training will be:

- Relevant to staff roles.
- Proportionate to responsibilities.
- Reviewed regularly.
- Updated when legislation, guidance or organisational procedures change.
- Supported through ongoing professional development.

68.3 Core Training

Training requirements may include:

- Safeguarding.
- Mental health.
- Professional boundaries.
- Equality and diversity.
- Health and safety.
- Fire safety.
- First aid.
- Lone working.
- Risk management.
- Incident reporting.
- Data protection.
- Confidentiality.
- Medication awareness where relevant.
- Substance misuse awareness.
- Exploitation and trafficking awareness.
- Domestic abuse awareness.
- Prevent awareness.
- Online safety.
- Conflict management.
- Mental Capacity Act and supported decision-making.

68.4 Additional Training

Additional training may be required based on:

- Resident needs.
- Staff responsibilities.
- Identified risks.
- Incidents.
- Changes in legislation.
- Changes in service provision.
- Performance concerns.

68.5 Training Records

Homeward Futures LTD will maintain appropriate training records showing:

- Training completed.
- Date completed.
- Expiry or renewal date where applicable.
- Outstanding training.
- Additional development requirements.

68.6 Competency

Completion of training does not automatically demonstrate competence.

Where necessary, staff competency will be assessed through:

- Observation.
- Supervision.
- Discussion.
- Practical assessment.
- Review of records.
- Management oversight.

POLICY 69 — SUPERVISION & PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

POLICY

69.1 Purpose

Supervision provides staff with regular opportunities to discuss their work, residents, safeguarding, performance, wellbeing and professional development.

69.2 Supervision Principles

Supervision will be:

- Regular.
- Structured.
- Constructive.
- Confidential, subject to safeguarding and legal exceptions.
- Focused on resident outcomes.
- Used to identify support and development needs.

69.3 Supervision Content

Supervision may cover:

- Current resident issues.
- Safeguarding.
- Risk management.
- Support plans.
- Incidents.
- Professional boundaries.
- Record keeping.
- Workload.
- Training.
- Performance.
- Staff wellbeing.
- Development goals.
- Policy compliance.

69.4 Performance Management

Performance will be monitored through:

- Supervision.
- Observation.
- Feedback.
- Training records.
- Quality audits.
- Resident feedback.
- Incident reviews.
- Case-record reviews.

Where performance falls below expected standards, appropriate support and improvement measures will be implemented.

69.5 Annual Review

Staff may receive a formal performance review at least annually or in accordance with their employment arrangements.

The review may consider:

- Performance.
 - Conduct.
 - Attendance.
 - Training.
 - Competence.
 - Resident outcomes.
 - Professional development.
 - Future objectives.
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POLICY 70 — STAFF CODE OF CONDUCT POLICY

70.1 Purpose

The Code of Conduct establishes the professional standards expected of all Homeward Futures LTD staff.

70.2 Staff Expectations

Staff must:

- Treat residents with dignity and respect.
- Promote independence.
- Maintain professional boundaries.
- Act honestly and professionally.
- Safeguard residents.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Keep accurate records.
- Follow organisational policies.
- Report concerns promptly.
- Avoid discrimination.
- Use professional language and behaviour.
- Maintain appropriate communication.
- Protect organisational and resident property.

70.3 Unacceptable Conduct

Staff must not:

- Bully, threaten or intimidate residents.
- Discriminate.
- Humiliate or ridicule residents.
- Engage in sexual or romantic relationships with residents.
- Use residents for personal benefit.

- Borrow money from residents.
- Lend money to residents except where specifically authorised as part of an approved support arrangement.
- Accept inappropriate gifts.
- Share inappropriate personal information.
- Use drugs or alcohol while working.
- Attend work impaired by alcohol or drugs.
- Falsify records.
- Abuse confidential information.
- Use organisational resources improperly.
- Ignore safeguarding concerns.

70.4 Social Media

Staff must maintain appropriate professional boundaries on social media.

Staff must not:

- Post confidential resident information.
- Share identifiable resident photographs without appropriate authority and consent.
- Communicate with residents through personal social media accounts unless specifically authorised by organisational procedures.
- Post material that could undermine professional trust or resident safety.

70.5 Breaches

Breaches may result in:

- Informal management action.
- Additional training.
- Formal disciplinary action.
- Referral to safeguarding authorities where appropriate.
- Referral to other relevant professional or regulatory bodies where applicable.

POLICY 71 — PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES POLICY

71.1 Purpose

Professional boundaries protect residents and staff and ensure relationships remain safe, respectful and appropriate.

71.2 Maintaining Boundaries

Staff must maintain clear boundaries regarding:

- Personal relationships.
- Communication.
- Physical contact.
- Gifts.
- Money.
- Social media.
- Transport.
- Personal information.
- Contact outside working hours.
- Use of personal property.

71.3 Gifts

Staff should not accept significant gifts from residents.

Small tokens may only be accepted where appropriate and consistent with organisational guidance.

Any concern regarding gifts must be discussed with management.

71.4 Money

Staff must not:

- Borrow money from residents.
- Lend personal money to residents as a private arrangement.
- Use resident money for personal purposes.
- Become financially involved with residents.

Where staff support residents with money management, this must be transparent, recorded and authorised.

71.5 Physical Contact

Any physical contact must be appropriate, proportionate and respectful.

Staff must avoid unnecessary physical contact.

Any physical intervention must only occur where lawful, necessary, proportionate and consistent with organisational procedures.

71.6 Personal Information

Staff should avoid sharing unnecessary personal information with residents.

Staff must consider whether disclosure could:

- Blur boundaries.
 - Create dependency.
 - Increase risk.
 - Encourage inappropriate contact.
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POLICY 72 — STAFF-RESIDENT RELATIONSHIPS POLICY

72.1 Purpose

Homeward Futures LTD recognises that positive professional relationships are central to effective support.

However, staff must ensure relationships remain professional and do not become exploitative, dependent or inappropriate.

72.2 Professional Relationships

Staff should:

- Build trust.
- Listen respectfully.
- Encourage independence.
- Maintain appropriate boundaries.
- Avoid favouritism.
- Treat residents consistently and fairly.

72.3 Prohibited Relationships

Staff must never enter into:

- Sexual relationships with residents.
- Romantic relationships with residents.
- Financial relationships for personal benefit.
- Exploitative relationships.
- Other inappropriate personal relationships that create a conflict of interest or safeguarding risk.

72.4 Dependency

Staff should avoid creating unnecessary dependency.

Support should aim to enable residents to develop:

- Confidence.
- Independence.
- Decision-making skills.
- Community connections.
- Practical skills.
- Appropriate support networks.

72.5 Conflicts of Interest

Staff must disclose relationships, circumstances or interests that could create a conflict of interest.

Management will assess the situation and take appropriate action.

POLICY 73 — PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION & RECORD KEEPING POLICY

73.1 Purpose

Accurate communication and record keeping are essential to safe and effective supported accommodation.

73.2 Communication Standards

Staff communication must be:

- Professional.
- Respectful.
- Accurate.
- Relevant.
- Timely.
- Appropriate to the recipient.

73.3 Resident Records

Records should include relevant information regarding:

- Support provided.
- Resident progress.
- Concerns.
- Safeguarding.
- Incidents.

- Risk.
- Appointments.
- Significant changes.
- Referrals.
- Actions taken.

73.4 Recording Standards

Records must:

- Be factual.
- Avoid unnecessary opinions.
- Clearly distinguish fact from professional judgement.
- Be completed promptly.
- Be dated and attributable to the staff member.
- Avoid derogatory or judgemental language.

73.5 Confidentiality

Resident information must only be accessed, used or shared where there is an appropriate lawful basis and a legitimate professional need.

Information must be stored securely.

73.6 Handover

Where handovers are required, staff must communicate important information relating to:

- Safeguarding.
- Emergencies.
- Incidents.
- Changes in risk.
- Resident wellbeing.
- Appointments.
- Outstanding actions.

Important information must not be omitted from handover.

POLICY 74 — STAFF LONE WORKING POLICY

74.1 Purpose

This policy establishes arrangements to protect staff who may work alone or without immediate assistance.

74.2 Lone Working Risk Assessment

Homeward Futures LTD will assess lone-working risks associated with:

- Accommodation.
- Resident needs.
- Location.
- Time of day.
- Known risks.
- Staff experience.
- Environmental factors.
- Previous incidents.

74.3 Lone Working Procedures

Staff working alone must:

- Follow agreed check-in procedures.
- Carry an appropriate means of communication.
- Be aware of emergency procedures.
- Report concerns promptly.
- Follow resident-specific risk assessments.
- Avoid unnecessary exposure to known risks.

74.4 Visiting Residents

When visiting or supporting a resident alone, staff should consider:

- Current risk information.
- Location.
- Time.
- Resident behaviour.
- Potential third-party risks.
- Emergency exit routes.

74.5 Emergencies

If a staff member feels unsafe, they should:

1. Prioritise their own safety.
2. Leave the situation where possible.
3. Contact emergency services where necessary.
4. Notify management.
5. Complete an incident report.

Staff must not place themselves at unnecessary risk to resolve an incident.

POLICY 75 — STAFF SICKNESS & ABSENCE POLICY

75.1 Purpose

Homeward Futures LTD recognises the importance of managing sickness and absence fairly while maintaining safe staffing levels and continuity of resident support.

75.2 Reporting Absence

Staff must notify management as soon as reasonably practicable when they are unable to attend work.

Staff should provide:

- Reason for absence where appropriate.
- Expected duration.
- Any immediate operational information required.

75.3 Fitness to Work

Staff must not work where illness or impairment means they cannot safely perform their duties.

Staff must notify management where medication, illness or another circumstance could affect their ability to work safely.

75.4 Long-Term or Repeated Absence

Where appropriate, management may:

- Hold welfare meetings.
- Review adjustments.
- Seek occupational health advice where appropriate.
- Review staffing arrangements.
- Develop a return-to-work plan.

75.5 Return to Work

A return-to-work discussion may be completed following absence to:

- Confirm the staff member has returned safely.
- Identify any support required.
- Consider whether adjustments are necessary.
- Identify any ongoing issues.

75.6 Confidentiality

Information concerning staff health will be handled sensitively and only shared where there is an appropriate need and lawful basis.

POLICY 76 — STAFF DISCIPLINARY & CAPABILITY POLICY

76.1 Purpose

This policy provides a fair and consistent framework for addressing misconduct, poor performance and capability concerns.

76.2 Principles

Homeward Futures LTD will seek to ensure that disciplinary and capability matters are:

- Fair.
- Reasonable.
- Proportionate.
- Consistent.
- Properly investigated.
- Handled confidentially.

76.3 Misconduct

Examples may include:

- Breach of policies.
- Poor professional conduct.
- Failure to follow reasonable instructions.
- Inappropriate communication.
- Breach of confidentiality.
- Failure to maintain professional boundaries.
- Failure to report safeguarding concerns.
- Unauthorised absence.

Serious or gross misconduct may include conduct that creates significant risk to residents or staff.

76.4 Capability

Capability concerns may relate to:

- Skills.
- Knowledge.
- Performance.
- Competence.
- Failure to meet reasonable standards.
- Failure to complete required training.

Where appropriate, staff will be given reasonable opportunities to improve.

76.5 Investigation

Where a concern is raised, management may:

- Gather relevant information.
- Review records.
- Interview relevant individuals.
- Consider evidence.
- Assess safeguarding implications.

Where safeguarding concerns are involved, the organisation will consider whether external reporting or referral is required.

76.6 Disciplinary Action

Depending on circumstances, action may include:

- Informal management guidance.
- Additional training.
- Formal warning.
- Final warning.
- Dismissal, where appropriate and lawful.

The organisation will follow applicable employment law and contractual procedures.

76.7 Suspension

Suspension may be considered where necessary to protect:

- Residents.
- Staff.
- Evidence.
- The integrity of an investigation.

Suspension will not automatically indicate that misconduct has been established.

POLICY 77 — STAFF GRIEVANCE & EMPLOYMENT CONCERNS PROCEDURE

77.1 Purpose

Homeward Futures LTD is committed to providing staff with a fair process for raising concerns about their employment, working conditions or treatment.

77.2 Matters That May Be Raised

Staff may raise concerns relating to:

- Working conditions.
- Management decisions.
- Workplace treatment.
- Bullying or harassment.
- Discrimination.
- Workload.
- Employment arrangements.
- Health and safety.
- Professional concerns.
- Other employment-related matters.

77.3 Informal Resolution

Where appropriate, staff should initially raise concerns informally with their manager.

The organisation will seek to resolve concerns promptly and constructively where possible.

77.4 Formal Grievance

Where a concern cannot be resolved informally, the staff member may raise a formal grievance in accordance with the organisation's employment procedures.

The grievance should normally explain:

- The nature of the concern.
- Relevant dates or events.
- Individuals involved.
- Supporting information.
- The outcome sought.

77.5 Investigation

Where appropriate, management will investigate the concern fairly.

This may involve:

- Reviewing documentation.
- Speaking with relevant individuals.
- Reviewing policies or procedures.
- Considering supporting evidence.

77.6 Outcome

The staff member will be informed of the outcome as appropriate.

Where concerns are upheld, appropriate action may be taken.

77.7 Confidentiality

Grievances will be handled sensitively and information will only be shared with individuals who have a legitimate need to know.

77.8 Safeguarding Concerns

Where a staff member raises a concern relating to resident safety or safeguarding, the concern will be treated as a safeguarding matter and managed under the relevant safeguarding procedures.

Staff will not be disadvantaged for raising a genuine concern in good faith.

77.9 Whistleblowing

Where a concern involves serious wrongdoing, unlawful conduct, serious safeguarding failures or risks to residents and cannot appropriately be resolved through normal management channels, staff may raise the concern through the organisation's whistleblowing arrangements or with an appropriate external authority where legally protected.

77.10 Record Keeping

Appropriate records will be maintained regarding:

- Grievances.
- Investigations.
- Meetings.
- Evidence.
- Outcomes.
- Actions taken.

Records will be stored securely and handled confidentially.

78. STAFFING & PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE — RECORD KEEPING AND MONITORING

Homeward Futures LTD will maintain appropriate records relating to staffing and professional practice, including:

- Recruitment records.
- DBS and background checks.
- References.
- Identity and right-to-work checks.
- Induction records.
- Training records.
- Supervision records.
- Performance reviews.
- Disciplinary matters.
- Capability procedures.
- Grievances.
- Lone-working arrangements.
- Staff competency assessments.
- Relevant safeguarding concerns.

Management will periodically review staffing arrangements to ensure that the service has sufficient appropriately trained and suitable staff to meet residents' needs safely.

79. POLICY REVIEW

This section will be reviewed:

- At least annually.
- Following significant incidents.
- Following safeguarding concerns.
- Following relevant changes in legislation or guidance.
- Following changes to the service.
- Where monitoring or audit identifies a need for amendment.

The review will consider whether policies remain appropriate, effective and proportionate to the needs of residents and staff.

Policy Owner: Homeward Futures LTD

Responsible Person: Management

Review Frequency: At least annually

Next Review Date: _____

Version: _____