Working with Vulnerable Children Policy

PRN-161: Working with Vulnerable Children Policy
Company Name: AI Auto-Tech Ltd
Trading/Business Name: CAREHOPES
Company Registration Number: 15556946
SIC Code: 88100 – Social Work Activities Without Accommodation for the Elderly and Disabled
Email: admin@carehopes.com
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1. Policy Introduction

CAREHOPES, the trading name of AI Auto-Tech Ltd, is committed to safeguarding and supporting vulnerable children who may be present during companionship sessions. Although CAREHOPES does **not** provide childcare services, companions may encounter children in private homes, community environments, or family-based companionship activities.

This policy outlines the rules, expectations, and safeguarding controls for working safely, professionally, and ethically with vulnerable children.

2. Key Principles

- **Zero tolerance:** Abuse, neglect, exploitation, and harm are never acceptable.
- **Protection:** Children's safety overrides all other considerations.
- **Boundaries:** Companions must avoid unsupervised contact with children.
- **Awareness:** Staff must recognise signs of vulnerability and risk.
- **Immediate action:** Safeguarding concerns must be reported without delay.
- **Compliance:** All actions align with UK child protection legislation.
- **Non-duplication:** Companions must not duplicate services already provided by external professionals.

3. Policy Statement

CAREHOPES ensures that companions:

- Recognise vulnerability and risk in children
- Maintain professional boundaries
- Avoid unsupervised contact

- Report concerns immediately
- Document observations accurately
- Follow allocation rules strictly
- Avoid proxy working or misrepresentation
- Respect external professionals' roles
- Support children sensitively and safely

Companions must **not**:

- Provide childcare
- Supervise children alone
- Transport children without authorisation
- Engage in inappropriate physical contact
- Share personal contact details
- Ignore signs of harm or distress

4. Purpose

- Protect vulnerable children from harm, abuse, neglect, and exploitation
- Ensure staff understand child safeguarding responsibilities
- Provide clear operational guidance
- Strengthen organisational safeguarding culture
- Ensure compliance with UK child protection legislation

5. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Employees
- Volunteers
- Contractors
- Agency workers
- Zero-contract workers (**PRN-149**)

It covers vulnerable child safeguarding in:

- Private homes
- Community settings

- Public spaces
- Holiday companionship
- Overnight companionship
- Digital environments
- Multi-staff working
- Group companionship

6. Related Policies

Safeguarding & Protection

PRN-003 Adult Safeguarding Policy PRN-136 Safeguarding Children Policy PRN-144 Child Abuse Policy PRN-143 Working with Vulnerable Adults Policy PRN-116 Domestic Abuse Policy PRN-131 Prevent Duty Awareness Policy PRN-129 Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Policy PRN-070 Safeguarding Reporting and Escalation Procedure

Operational Delivery

PRN-145 Working in Pairs and Multi-Staff Working Policy PRN-146 Working with Other Social Workers and Carers Policy PRN-147 Proxy Working Principle PRN-109 Companionship Standards Policy PRN-017 Companion Charter PRN-018 Companion Completion Checklist

Conduct, Ethics & Behaviour

PRN-014 Code of Conduct Policy PRN-015 Code of Ethics PRN-099 Professional Boundaries Policy PRN-004 Anti Harassment & Anti Discrimination Policy PRN-139 Staff Conduct and Behaviour Policy

7. Definitions

Vulnerable Child: A person under 18 who is at increased risk of harm due to disability, illness, mental health, environmental factors, or family circumstances.

DSL: Designated Safeguarding Lead responsible for managing child safeguarding concerns.

Unsupervised Contact: Any situation where a companion is alone with a child without a parent or authorised adult present.

8. Staff Allocation Rules (Mandatory Safeguarding Controls)

These rules apply to **all staff**, including employees, volunteers, contractors, agency workers, and zero-contract workers.

8.1 Female Companions

Female companions may work with **all children**, including:

- Male children
- Female children
- Transgender children
- Non-binary children

Female companions have **no allocation restrictions**, except where a male child displays sexually inappropriate behaviour — in such cases, only a male companion will be assigned.

8.2 Male Companions

Male companions may **ONLY** work with **male children**.

Male companions may **NOT** work with female children unless:

- Senior management approves the case
- Written parental/guardian consent is obtained
- Internal written approval is stored securely
- A risk assessment is completed and documented

This rule also applies to:

- Transgender male children (female at birth → male)

Reason: Organ transformation cannot be confirmed; therefore, all such cases are treated as female for safeguarding purposes.

8.3 Transgender Staff Allocation

Transgender Female Companions

(Assigned male at birth → female)

- **May NOT** be allocated to female children
- This prevents safeguarding risks due to the inability to confirm organ transformation

Transgender Male Companions

(Assigned female at birth → male)

- May work with **all children**
- Follows the same rule as female companions

General Rule: All female staff — including transgender male companions — may work with all children, except transgender female companions (male at birth), who cannot work with female children.

8.4 No Proxy Working

Companions must **not** carry out their work in proxy or in the company of any third party.

The **ONLY** exceptions are:

- A family member of the client
- A registered carer

This rule applies to **both adult and child safeguarding**.

9. Recognising Vulnerability and Risk

Companions must be alert to:

Physical Indicators

- Injuries
- Poor hygiene
- Malnutrition
- Unsafe home conditions

Emotional Indicators

- Fear
- Withdrawal
- Anxiety
- Depression

Behavioural Indicators

- Distress
- Confusion
- Signs of coercion
- Reluctance to speak freely

Environmental Indicators

- Domestic abuse
- Substance misuse
- Aggressive individuals
- Financial exploitation
- Unsafe living conditions

10. Working with Vulnerable Children in Different Settings

10.1 Private Homes

Companions must:

- Avoid unsupervised contact
- Observe interactions sensitively
- Maintain boundaries
- Report concerns discreetly

10.2 Community Settings

Companions must:

- Maintain public professionalism
- Avoid unsafe environments
- Avoid physical contact

10.3 Digital Environments

Companions must:

- Avoid digital contact with children
- Report unsafe digital behaviour
- Avoid sharing personal information

10.4 Holiday & Overnight Companionship

Companions must:

- Maintain boundaries
- Avoid informal behaviour
- Ensure safe sleeping arrangements
- Avoid unsupervised contact

11. Avoiding Duplication of Services

If external professionals are already providing a service:

- Companions must skip that service
- Document: *"Service already being provided by other service: {name of service}."*
- Avoid duplication
- Avoid conflict

- Avoid boundary confusion

Companions must **not**:

- Debate roles
- Negotiate responsibilities
- Initiate discussions with external professionals

All clarifications must be handled by TC management.

12. Responding to Safeguarding Concerns

12.1 Immediate Actions

Companions must:

- Treat concerns as emergencies
- Report concerns to the DSL
- Document factual observations
- Avoid assumptions
- Avoid confronting suspected perpetrators

12.2 Emergency Situations

If a child is in immediate danger:

- Call emergency services
- Move to a safe location
- Inform the office immediately

12.3 External Reporting

The DSL may contact:

- Children's Services
- Police
- MASH
- Child Protection Teams

Companions must **not** contact external agencies directly.

13. Confidentiality

Information is shared only:

- With safeguarding authorities

- With emergency services
- On a strict need-to-know basis

Records must be stored securely.

14. Documentation & Record Keeping

Records must include:

- Observations
- Reports
- Actions taken
- Safeguarding escalations
- External professional involvement
- “Service already being provided” entries

Records must be factual, objective, and stored securely.

15. Training Requirements

Staff must receive training in:

- Child safeguarding
- Trauma-informed practice
- Professional boundaries
- Domestic abuse awareness
- Prevent Duty
- Digital safety
- Multi-staff working
- Proxy working prevention

16. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if required due to:

- Legislative changes
- Safeguarding updates
- Organisational changes
- Incident trends