PARTNERSHIP WORKING AND EXTERNAL AGENCIES POLICY

PRN-92: Partnership Working and External Agencies Policy
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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. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish a framework for effective partnership working with external organisations, agencies, professionals, community groups, and stakeholders.

As a Non-Accommodation Companionship and Wellbeing Support Service supporting older people and adults with disabilities, the organisation recognises that collaborative working is essential to achieving positive outcomes, safeguarding individuals, promoting wellbeing, and supporting independence.

This policy aims to:

- Promote effective inter-agency working.
- Improve outcomes for service users.
- Support safeguarding responsibilities.
- Encourage information sharing where appropriate.
- Clarify roles and responsibilities.
- Strengthen community connections and resources.

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2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Employees
- Volunteers

- Managers
- Directors
- Trustees
- Contractors acting on behalf of the organisation

The policy covers relationships with:

- Local Authorities
- Adult Social Care Services
- NHS organisations
- GP practices
- Community healthcare professionals
- Advocacy services
- Charities and voluntary organisations
- Housing providers
- Emergency services
- Safeguarding partnerships
- Community and faith groups
- Funding bodies
- Regulatory agencies

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3. Policy Statement

The organisation is committed to developing positive and professional partnerships that support:

- Safe service delivery.
- Person-centred support.
- Safeguarding.
- Community inclusion.
- Effective information sharing.
- Improved health and wellbeing outcomes.

Partnership arrangements will be built upon:

- Respect
- Trust
- Transparency
- Accountability
- Cooperation
- Shared objectives

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4. Principles of Partnership Working

The organisation will promote the following principles:

Respect

Recognising the expertise, responsibilities, and contribution of partner organisations.

Collaboration

Working together to achieve shared goals.

Communication

Maintaining effective and timely communication.

Accountability

Understanding and respecting professional responsibilities.

Person-Centred Practice

Ensuring the needs and wishes of individuals remain central.

Safeguarding

Working together to protect individuals from harm.

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5. Objectives of Partnership Working

Partnership working aims to:

- Improve outcomes for service users.
- Promote independence and wellbeing.
- Reduce social isolation.

- Improve access to services and support.
- Strengthen safeguarding arrangements.
- Prevent duplication of services.
- Encourage coordinated support planning.
- Promote community participation.

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6. Types of External Agencies

The organisation may work with a range of external agencies, including:

Health Services

- General Practitioners (GPs)
- District Nurses
- Occupational Therapists
- Physiotherapists
- Mental Health Services
- Hospitals

Social Care Services

- Adult Social Care Teams
- Safeguarding Teams
- Social Workers

Community Organisations

- Charities
- Volunteer organisations
- Community groups
- Faith organisations

Public Services

- Police
- Fire and Rescue Services
- Local Authorities

Advocacy and Support Services

- Independent advocates
- Carer support organisations
- Welfare support services

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7. Person-Centred Partnership Working

Partnership working should always focus on the individual.

Employees and volunteers should:

- Respect individual preferences.
- Promote choice and control.
- Involve individuals in decisions affecting them.
- Seek consent where appropriate.
- Consider communication needs.

Support should be tailored to the individual's circumstances and desired outcomes.

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8. Information Sharing

Appropriate information sharing is an important part of partnership working.

Information may be shared where:

- Consent has been obtained.
- There is a lawful basis for sharing.
- Safeguarding concerns exist.
- Legal obligations require disclosure.
- Sharing is necessary to protect an individual from harm.

Information sharing must comply with:

- Data Protection and GDPR requirements.
- Confidentiality obligations.
- Safeguarding procedures.

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9. Consent and Information Sharing

Where appropriate, consent should be sought before sharing information.

Individuals should understand:

- What information is being shared.
- Why it is being shared.
- Who it will be shared with.

Consent should be recorded where appropriate.

Where consent cannot be obtained, information sharing decisions must be lawful and justified.

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10. Safeguarding Partnerships

The organisation recognises the importance of working closely with safeguarding partners.

Partnership working may involve:

- Safeguarding referrals.
- Multi-agency meetings.
- Risk management plans.
- Safeguarding enquiries.
- Information sharing arrangements.

The organisation will cooperate fully with safeguarding investigations and processes.

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11. Multi-Agency Working

There may be situations where several organisations are involved in supporting an individual.

Employees and volunteers should:

- Cooperate with relevant agencies.
- Respect professional roles.
- Share relevant information appropriately.
- Attend meetings where required.

- Contribute to agreed plans.

Multi-agency approaches can improve coordination and reduce risks.

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12. Professional Relationships

Employees and volunteers should maintain professional relationships with external agencies.

Relationships should be based on:

- Mutual respect.
- Courtesy.
- Professional conduct.
- Clear communication.
- Appropriate boundaries.

Disagreements should be managed constructively and professionally.

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13. Referrals to External Agencies

Employees and volunteers may identify circumstances where external support would benefit a service user.

Referrals may be made to:

- Social care services.
- Health services.
- Advocacy services.
- Community support organisations.
- Specialist services.

Referrals should follow organisational procedures and be appropriately documented.

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14. Joint Working Arrangements

Where joint working arrangements exist, responsibilities should be clearly understood.

This may include:

- Roles and responsibilities.

- Communication arrangements.
- Information sharing requirements.
- Safeguarding procedures.
- Escalation processes.

Clarity helps ensure accountability and effective service delivery.

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15. Managing Professional Differences

Occasionally, differences of opinion may arise between organisations or professionals.

Where this occurs:

- Concerns should be discussed respectfully.
- The individual's wellbeing should remain central.
- Escalation procedures should be followed where necessary.
- Records should be maintained.

Professional disagreements should not delay safeguarding actions or essential support.

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16. Community Partnerships

The organisation values relationships with local community organisations and groups.

Partnerships may support:

- Social inclusion.
- Community engagement.
- Wellbeing activities.
- Volunteer opportunities.
- Access to local resources.

Community partnerships help reduce social isolation and improve quality of life.

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17. Partnership Meetings

Employees may be required to participate in:

- Case discussions.

- Community meetings.
- Partnership forums.
- Safeguarding meetings.
- Networking events.

Participation should be professional, constructive, and focused on positive outcomes.

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18. Confidentiality in Partnership Working

Confidentiality must be maintained when working with external agencies.

Employees and volunteers must:

- Share only necessary information.
- Follow confidentiality procedures.
- Respect privacy rights.
- Keep records secure.

The need to protect individuals from harm may override confidentiality in certain circumstances.

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19. Record Keeping

Records relating to partnership working should include:

- Referrals made.
- Information shared.
- Meetings attended.
- Decisions reached.
- Actions agreed.
- Outcomes achieved.

Records should be:

- Accurate
- Timely
- Secure

- Factual

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20. Resolving Concerns About Partner Agencies

If concerns arise regarding the actions of an external agency, employees and volunteers should:

- Discuss concerns with their manager.
- Record concerns appropriately.
- Follow escalation procedures where necessary.
- Continue to prioritise the individual's wellbeing.

Concerns should be addressed professionally and constructively.

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21. Partnership Working During Emergencies

During emergencies or significant incidents, effective partnership working becomes particularly important.

This may involve cooperation with:

- Emergency services.
- Local Authorities.
- Health services.
- Safeguarding agencies.
- Community support groups.

Partnership arrangements should support coordinated responses and business continuity.

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22. Training and Awareness

Employees and volunteers may receive training covering:

- Partnership working principles.
- Professional boundaries.
- Information sharing.
- Safeguarding partnerships.

- Communication skills.
- Multi-agency collaboration.

Training helps build confidence and effective working relationships.

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23. Case Study

Scenario: Coordinated Support for an Older Adult

A service user receiving companionship support begins experiencing mobility difficulties and increasing social isolation.

Action Taken

- The service user consents to information being shared.
- The organisation contacts Adult Social Care.
- A referral is made to an Occupational Therapist.
- A local community transport scheme is identified.
- A community wellbeing group is introduced.

Outcome

The individual receives coordinated support, remains active in the community, and reports improved wellbeing.

Learning Point

Effective partnership working can significantly improve outcomes and promote independence.

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24. Responsibilities

Directors

Responsible for:

- Promoting collaborative working.
- Developing external partnerships.
- Providing governance oversight.

Managers

Responsible for:

- Supporting partnership arrangements.
- Managing referrals and information sharing.
- Resolving partnership issues.
- Supporting staff and volunteers.

Employees and Volunteers

Responsible for:

- Working professionally with partner agencies.
- Following information sharing procedures.
- Maintaining confidentiality.
- Supporting coordinated service delivery.

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25. Monitoring and Quality Assurance

The organisation will monitor:

- Partnership effectiveness.
- Referral outcomes.
- Safeguarding partnerships.
- Multi-agency working arrangements.
- Service user feedback.
- Complaints involving partnership working.

Learning will be used to strengthen relationships and improve outcomes.

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26. Review Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed:

- Annually
- Following significant incidents
- Following safeguarding reviews
- Following legislative changes
- Following organisational or partnership changes

Related Policies

- Adult Safeguarding Policy
- Confidentiality Policy
- Data Protection and GDPR Policy
- Records Management and Record Keeping Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Business Continuity and Emergency Planning Policy