

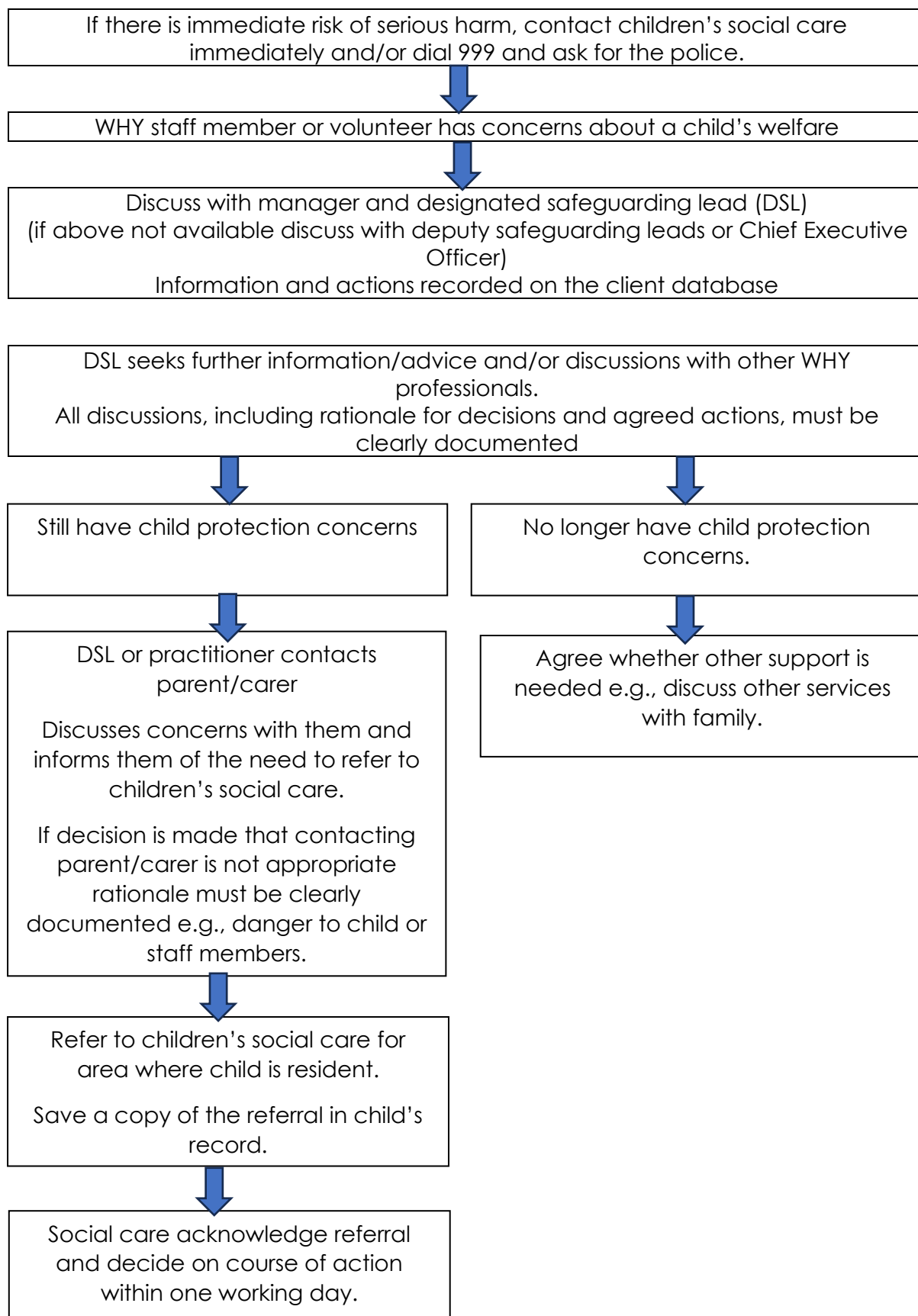
Responsibility / Author	CEO
People intended for	Employees, volunteers, trustees
Review frequency	Annually
Date last amended	11 <sup>th</sup> October 2024
Date approved by the board	11 <sup>th</sup> January 2024
Review date	January 2025
Document version	1.5

## Safeguarding children and young people procedures

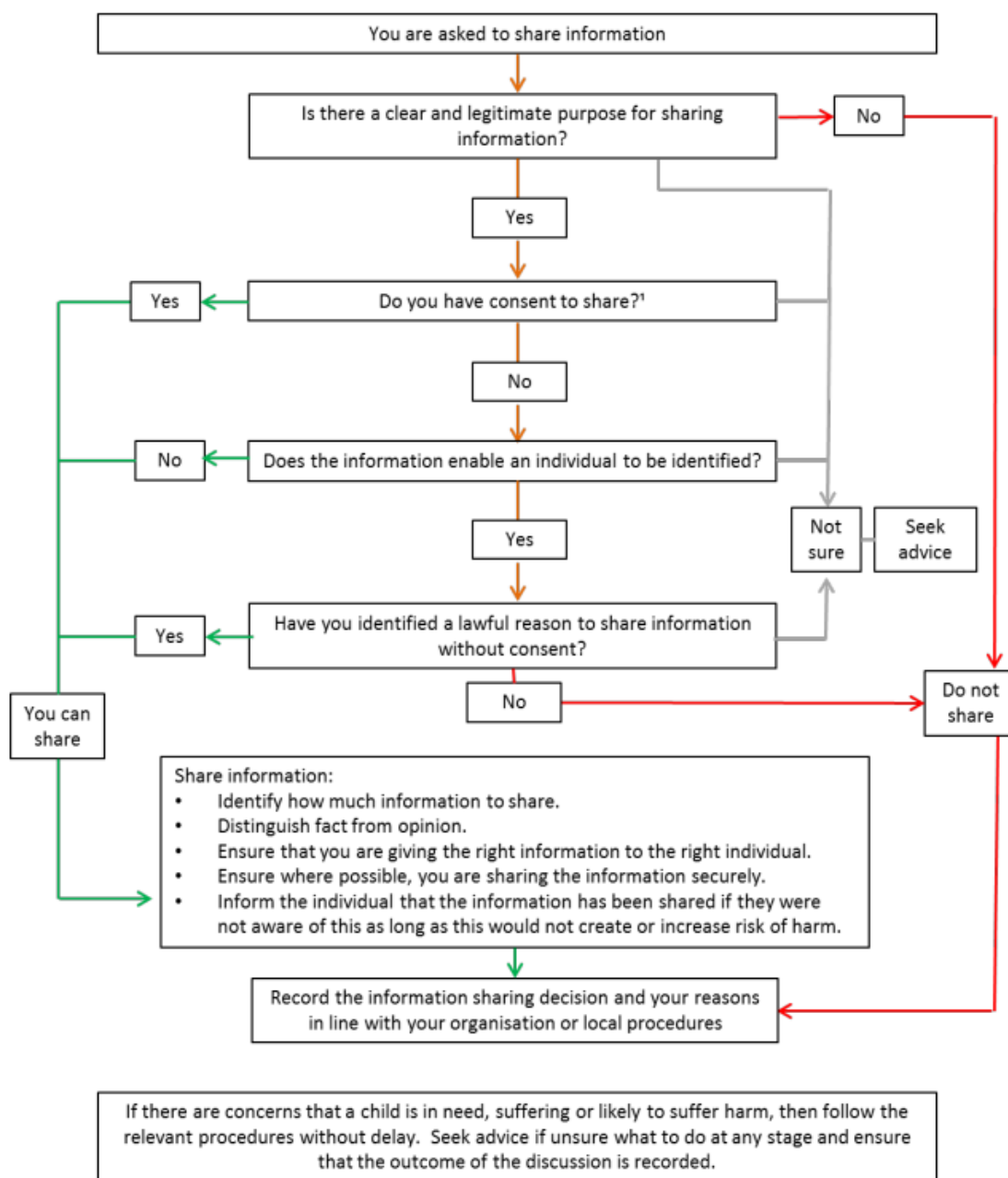
### Contents

Action in response to safeguarding concerns flowchart .....	2
Flowchart of when and how to share information .....	3
1. Introduction .....	4
2. Code of conduct.....	4
3. Types of abuse .....	6
4. Importance of raising concerns.....	6
5. Raising and reporting safeguarding issues.....	7
6. Confidentiality and information sharing.....	7
7. What to do if a child or young person tells you that they have been or are being abused .....	8
8. Allegations relating to workforce members.....	9
9. Record keeping .....	11
10. Whistleblowing .....	12
Appendix 1 Understanding and identifying abuse and neglect. ....	13
Appendix 2 NSPCC definitions and signs of child abuse .....	15
Appendix 3 Key contact numbers .....	31

## Action in response to safeguarding concerns flowchart



## Flowchart of when and how to share information



1. Consent must be unambiguous, freely given and may be withdrawn at any time

Information taken from HM Government document "Information sharing advice for safeguarding practitioners" July 2018

[Information sharing: advice for practitioners \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

# Safeguarding children and young people procedures

## 1. Introduction

We Hear You (WHY) is committed to providing a safe and supportive environment in its work with children and young people. WHY is committed to safeguarding and always promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all employees and volunteers to share this commitment.

This procedure applies to anyone working on behalf of WHY, including senior managers, the Board of Trustees, employed staff, self-employed staff, and volunteers. This procedure refers to workforce as a term which encompasses all these groups of people.

In our work with children and young people we recognise that every child has the right to live free from harm and abuse. We also recognise that every child is potentially at risk from harm and abuse. A child is defined as anyone under the age of 18 years old.

To facilitate our commitment to safeguarding, WHY has developed this safeguarding procedure and separate procedures that set out:

- Guidelines to ensure a safe and supportive environment for children, young people, and the workforce.
- Guidance on procedures the workforce should follow if they suspect a child or young person may be experiencing, have experienced, or be at risk of, harm.

## 2. Code of conduct

All members of the workforce must demonstrate exemplary behaviour to create a positive and protective culture within We Hear You.

### Staff and volunteers must:

- Always put the welfare of each child and young person first.
- Treat all children and young people with respect, dignity, and patience. Listen to, value, and take their issues seriously. Promote openness and honesty.
- Respect differences and challenge discrimination or prejudice.
- Explore the appropriateness of working in the building alone with a child. In general, it is preferable for an adult or carer to remain in the building, but we understand that this may not always be possible or necessary. When lone working, follow the health and personal safety at work policy and, for clinical staff, follow the guidance in the Counsellor's Handbook.
- Maintain a safe and appropriate distance with children and young people. Sometimes it may be necessary to do things of a personal nature for a child or young person e.g., in an emergency. If you must use physical contact, clearly tell the young person what you are doing and why, seek their permission and give choices. Unless unavoidable such as in an emergency, have another member of the workforce/adult present. Ensure that you record your actions and inform a safeguarding lead as a matter of urgency.

- Conduct appropriate risk assessments when children are known to have complex or severe physical, emotional, behaviour and/or additional needs.
- Involve children and young people in the decisions that affect them. Listen to, value, and take their contributions seriously.
- Report all concerns, suspicions, or allegations to a safeguarding lead as soon as possible. Always act.

#### Staff and volunteers must not:

- Make sarcastic, insensitive, inappropriate, derogatory, discriminatory, offensive, or sexually sensitive comments/gestures to or in front of children or young people or allow these to go unchallenged or unreported.
- Engage in or allow behaviour that is in any way harmful or abusive.
- Develop inappropriate relationships with children or young people.
- Engage in rough or physical games or play. The exception is where therapists play physically with clients. In these instances, the play must be safe and consensual.
- Have inappropriate and unnecessary contact with children or young people.
- Act in a way that can be perceived as threatening or intrusive.
- Give children or young people, or accept from them, any personal contact details or have any contact with them outside of that agreed with We Hear You, using We Hear You's official channels. This includes any form of social media, exchanging phone numbers, email, or postal addresses. Email contact with clients who are children or young people only happens where a young person over the age of 13 has given us their email address and consent to contact them using this email. Therapists use their We Hear You email addresses to exchange emails with clients, and this is also recorded on our database.
- Consume alcohol or use illegal substances, or smoke or vape whilst at work or volunteering with children or young people.
- Take any photos unless asked to do so by a WHY staff member.

Any breach of this code of conduct will result in the individual concerned being removed from contact with children and young people pending further investigations.

#### The use of mobile and smartphones in the counselling room

Our therapists recognise both the benefits and the dangers of using mobile and smartphones in the counselling of children and young people.

Where necessary, our therapists will seek to set ground rules for counselling sessions that prohibit the use of such devices while counselling is taking place.

Where necessary, therapists will inform children and young people in their first session, and where appropriate their parents and carers, in writing, if necessary, that they are not allowed to use these devices to access the internet, send messages or communicate in any way with people outside of the counselling room.

However, there may be circumstances when the use of such devices may be helpful in the counselling room, for example:

- Where the young person wants to take a photograph at the end of the session of artwork, they have completed during the counselling session.
- Where a young person has arranged in advance to listen to a piece of music or view an image that would support the counselling process.
- Where the young person refuses to take part in counselling unless they have their device with them, perhaps for security purposes, but when it is agreed that the phone is turned off or on silent, i.e., to be used only in an emergency.

### 3. Types of abuse

To ensure that children and young people are protected from harm, we need to understand what types of behaviour constitute abuse and harm.

Further information in relation to this can be found in Appendix one and two. This information is provided from HM Government's document 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused' 2015 ([Stat guidance template \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)) and the NSPCC's website ([Types of Child Abuse & How to Prevent Them | NSPCC](#)).

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 covers the legislative requirements that apply to individuals, organisations and agencies ([Working together to safeguard children 2023: statutory guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)).

### 4. Importance of raising concerns

Everyone working and volunteering within We Hear You can play an important part in promoting the safety and protection of the children and young people with whom they are working.

There are many reasons why members of the workforce may consider not reporting the matter:

- they are not sure that their concern is correct.
- they have been asked by the child/young person not to tell anyone.
- they believe the consequences of raising the issue may not be in what they believe to be the best interests of the child/young person.
- the consequences for the alleged abuser may be very serious even if the case is not proven against them.
- they are not sure if the child/young person's story is credible.
- the desire to protect a colleague or friend who is implicated.

However, it is not the responsibility of anyone working within WHY, in a paid or unpaid capacity, to decide whether abuse has taken place. It is therefore vital that all members of the workforce raise all concerns of suspected or alleged abuse; failure to do so may put a child/young person at risk. Suspicions and allegations of abuse will be reported to children's social care and/or the police (in line with the 'Actions in response to safeguarding concerns flowchart' which is found at the start of these procedures), whose duty it will be to take further steps to protect the young person and investigate the allegations or suspicions.

## 5. Raising and reporting safeguarding issues

If anyone is concerned about the safety or wellbeing of a child/young person because:

- they see or suspect abuse.
- an allegation of abuse is made.
- a child/young person reports abuse.

they must discuss their concerns with the relevant manager as a matter of urgency who will then discuss with the designated safeguarding lead.

Alternatively, they can raise the matter directly with the designated safeguarding lead. If this is the person who is suspected of abuse, they must discuss their concerns with the Chief Executive Officer or Chair of Trustees.

They should ensure that detailed written records are made of all events, what the child/young person has said (where this applies) and their subsequent actions, including details of passing on the information.

The designated safeguarding lead will decide on the next course of action as a matter of urgency, including informing the relevant external agencies.

## 6. Confidentiality and information sharing

In the event of a child/young person making a disclosure of abuse, it is important at the earliest opportunity to remind the child/young person of the issue of confidentiality and explain what this means.

Do not promise to keep information to yourself. It is essential to explain that all concerns or allegations of abuse and harm must be passed on to the relevant people as it is your duty to keep children and young people safe.

Members of the workforce are not permitted to discuss identifiable and confidential information concerning children and young people involved with WHY with anybody outside of the organisation, unless it is deemed necessary WHY as part of collaborative working to support that child or young person's safety and wellbeing.

Information sharing is vital to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. The Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulations do not prevent the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe and promoting their welfare. Fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Decisions to share information must be discussed with the designated safeguarding lead, and any information sharing should happen in line with the protocols outlined in 'Information Sharing: Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers' 2018 ([Information sharing: advice for practitioners \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/682047/Information-Sharing-Advice-for-practitioners-providing-safeguarding-services-to-children-young-people-parents-and-carers-2018.pdf)).

A flowchart summarising the key points of this document is included at the start of these procedures.

Consent to share information will be sought wherever possible from the child or young person. In the instance this is not possible, or consent is not given, a decision to go ahead and share information will be agreed with the designated safeguarding lead and a written recording will be kept outlining:

- What steps were taken to get consent.
- The person's reasons for not giving consent (if known)
- Why it was felt necessary to share information without consent.

Parents or carers and children will be informed, prior to, or at the first session that while the sessions are confidential, any indication or disclosure of risk of harm including abuse or neglect to themselves or another child will be passed to relevant agencies as part of WHY duty of care to the child concerned.

Parents and carers will also be made aware that WHY operates an inter-agency approach. When it is considered in the child's best interests, information will be shared with other agencies, even without any disclosure of abuse or neglect. Where possible consent will be sought before sharing information.

## 7. What to do if a child or young person tells you that they have been or are being abused

It can be distressing if a child tells you they're being abused, and you might not know what to do. The NSPCC has advice on what to do if a child reveals abuse: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/reporting-abuse/what-to-do-child-reveals-abuse/>.

What to say to a child and how to respond:

- Listen carefully to what they're saying.

Be patient and focus on what you're being told. Try not to express your own views and feelings. If you appear shocked or as if you don't believe them, it could make them stop talking and take back what they've said.

- Give them the tools to talk.

If they're struggling to talk to you, show them Childline's letter builder tool. It uses simple prompts to help them share what's happening and how they're feeling. [Asking an adult for help | Childline](#)

- Let them know they've done the right thing by telling you.

Reassurance can make a big impact. If they've kept the abuse a secret, it can have a big impact knowing they've shared what's happened.

- Tell them it's not their fault.

Abuse is never a child's fault. It's important they hear, and know, this.



- Say you'll take them seriously.

They may have kept the abuse secret because they were scared, they wouldn't be believed. Make sure they know they can trust you and you'll listen and support them.

- Don't confront the alleged abuser.

Confronting the alleged abuser could make the situation worse for the child.

- Explain what you'll do next.

For younger children, explain you're going to speak to someone who will be able to help. For older children, explain you'll need to report the abuse to someone who can help.

- Report what the child has told you as soon as possible.

Report as soon after you've been told about the abuse so the details are fresh in your mind and action can be taken quickly. It can be helpful to take notes as soon after you've spoken to the child. Try to keep these as accurate as possible.

If possible, make brief notes during the initial disclosure, explaining to the child/young person why you are doing this. If not possible to do so at the time, make notes as soon as possible afterwards.

Your information should include:

- The nature of the suspicion or allegation.
- A description of any visible injury.
- The child/young person's account of what has happened. Where possible try to write down the actual words used by the child/young person.
- Dates, times, details of the alleged abuser, any other factual information, such as witnesses, locations etc.
- Remember it is essential to make the distinction between fact, opinion, or hearsay in anything you write.

## 8. Allegations relating to workforce members.

Action to be taken where an incident of abuse has or potentially has taken place whilst a child or young person is under We Hear You's supervision

A child or young person may be under We Hear You's supervision when they are receiving therapy or as a young volunteer.

The overriding priority in any situation is the immediate safety of the child/young person. Consideration must be given to removing the victim from any potential harm to a place where any physical/emotional needs can be cared for.

As well as establishing initial facts, there will be a need to ensure that any victim and alleged abuser are kept apart. This could include taking immediate steps to keep a child safe by calling 999 and asking for the Police.

A full internal review will take place involving the senior management team and representation from the Board of Trustees where any learning and actions will be noted and implemented.

### Action to be taken where a report or suspicion of abuse is made concerning a paid member of staff or volunteer.

Any allegation of abuse against a workforce member must be reported immediately to the line manager who will inform the designated safeguarding lead and CEO. WHY's disciplinary policy will be followed in conjunction with specific advice given by the relevant local authority's safeguarding team.

Each situation will be considered individually, but the overriding priority will be the immediate safety and wellbeing of any children/young people concerned.

WHY will bring the allegations or suspicions to the attention of the authorities (the LADO/DOFA within the relevant social care area and/or police where required) as a matter of urgency. They will take advice from the relevant authorities on responding to the matter. They will work in partnership with young people, parents/carers, social care, the police, and any other involved authorities to ensure the best outcome.

A full internal review will take place involving the senior management team and representation from the Board of Trustees where any learning and actions will be noted and implemented.

At the conclusion of the investigation there may be a need for the employer to take disciplinary action.

### Allegations/concerns that do not meet the harm threshold – referred to for the purposes of this procedure as 'low-level concerns.'

A low-level concern does not mean that it is insignificant. A low-level concern is any concern – no matter how small, and even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt' - that an adult working or volunteering on behalf of WHY may have acted in a way that:

- is inconsistent with the code of conduct, and
- does not meet the harm threshold or is otherwise not serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO/DOFA.

Such behaviour can exist on a wide spectrum, from the inadvertent or thoughtless, or behaviour that may look to be inappropriate, but might not be in specific circumstances, through to that which is ultimately intended to enable abuse. It is crucial that any low-level concerns are shared responsibly with the right person and recorded and dealt with appropriately. This ensures the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, creates a culture of openness, trust, and transparency, helps ensure that adults consistently model and reinforce our values and expected behaviour, and protects adults from false allegations or misunderstandings.

Members of the workforce should share any concerns as a matter of priority with the designated safeguarding lead. In their absence or if the concern is about them, it should be passed straight to the Chief Executive Officer.

The designated safeguarding lead or Chief Executive Officer will gather as much information as possible by speaking directly to the person who raised the concern (unless it has been raised anonymously), and to the individual involved and any witnesses. They will record this information, decide on the response and any action, and feedback to those involved. Members of the workforce should also proactively self-refer if they find themselves in a situation which could be misinterpreted or might appear compromising to others.

#### Welfare concerns / decision not to refer.

Where it is agreed with the designated safeguarding lead that concerns do not meet the threshold for a safeguarding referral to external agencies, a full record of the concern and the reasons for not referring the situation as a safeguarding matter should be kept. Consideration should be given, and any decisions recorded, to the appropriateness of passing the information on, or not, to relevant involved agencies and the family.

## 9. Record keeping

All concerns, discussions and decisions made, and the reasons for those decisions, must be recorded in writing. A member of staff must make an accurate record as soon as possible noting what was said or seen, putting the event into context, and giving the date, time, and location.

All client records are kept on the client database, which notifies the Clinical Services Manager when a risk note has been added. If a client is at high or immediate risk, therapists are expected to discuss this with the designated safeguarding lead as a matter of urgency.

The record should include:

- date and time of incident/disclosure,
- parties who were involved, including any witnesses to an event,
- what was said or done and by whom,
- any action taken by the organisation to investigate the matter.
- any further action taken,
- where relevant, the reasons why a decision was taken not to refer those concerns to a statutory agency,
- name of person reporting on the concern, name, and designation of the person to whom the concern was reported, date and time and their contact details,
- any interpretation/inference drawn from what was observed, said, or alleged should be clearly recorded as such rather than stated as facts,
- the record should be signed and dated.

All records relating to safeguarding and welfare concerns will be kept securely and will remain confidential, in line with the WHY Data Protection Policy.

## 10. Whistleblowing

All members of the workforce should feel able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and know that such concerns will be taken seriously by the senior leadership team. Staff members should raise any concerns at the earliest opportunity with the designated safeguarding lead, or directly to the Chief Executive Officer (please see appendix three for key contact numbers). All staff must be familiar with the WHY whistleblowing policy which contains further information and details on who to contact if they do not feel able to raise concerns internally or have concerns about the way their report is being handled.

## Appendix 1 Understanding and identifying abuse and neglect.

This information is provided from HM Government's document 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused' 2015.

[Stat guidance template \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment – a person may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm.

Child welfare concerns may arise in many different contexts and can vary greatly in terms of their nature and seriousness. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or by a stranger, including, via the internet. In the case of female genital mutilation, children may be taken out of the country to be abused. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children. An abused child will often experience more than one type of abuse, as well as other difficulties in their lives. Abuse and neglect can happen over a period of time but can also be a one-off event. Child abuse and neglect can have major long-term impacts on all aspects of a child's health, development, and well-being.

The warning signs and symptoms of child abuse and neglect can vary from child to child. Disabled children may be especially vulnerable to abuse, including because they may have an impaired capacity to resist or avoid abuse. They may have speech, language and communication needs which may make it difficult to tell others what is happening. Children also develop and mature at different rates so what appears to be worrying for a younger child might be normal behaviour for an older child. Parental behaviours may also indicate child abuse or neglect, so you should also be alert to parent-child interactions which are concerning and other parental behaviours. This could include parents who are under the influence of drugs or alcohol or if there is a sudden change in their mental health. By understanding the warning signs, you can respond to problems as early as possible and provide the right support and services for the child and their family. It is important to recognise that a warning sign doesn't automatically mean a child is being abused.

There are several warning indicators which might suggest that a child may be being abused or neglected.

Some of the following signs might be indicators of abuse or neglect:

- Children whose behaviour changes – they may become aggressive, challenging, disruptive, withdrawn, or clingy, or they might have difficulty sleeping or start wetting the bed.
- Children with clothes which are ill-fitting and/or dirty.
- Children with consistently poor hygiene.
- Children who make strong efforts to avoid specific family members or friends, without an obvious reason.
- Children who don't want to change clothes in front of others or participate in physical activities.

- Children who are having problems at school, for example, a sudden lack of concentration and learning or they appear to be tired and hungry.
- Children who talk about being left home alone, with inappropriate carers or with strangers.
- Children who reach developmental milestones, such as learning to speak or walk, late, with no medical reason.
- Children who are regularly missing from school or education.
- Children who are reluctant to go home after school.
- Children with poor school attendance and punctuality, or who are consistently late being picked up.
- Parents who are dismissive and non-responsive to practitioners' concerns.
- Parents who collect their children from school when drunk, or under the influence of drugs.
- Children who drink alcohol regularly from an early age.
- Children who are concerned for younger siblings without explaining why.
- Children who talk about running away; and
- Children who shy away from being touched or flinch at sudden movements.

## Appendix 2 NSPCC definitions and signs of child abuse

Information taken from the NSPCC website: [Types of Child Abuse & How to Prevent Them | NSPCC](#).

### What is child abuse?

Child abuse is when a child is intentionally harmed by an adult or another child – it can be over a period of time but can also be a one-off action. It can be physical, sexual, or emotional and it can happen in person or online. It can also be a lack of love, care, and attention – this is neglect.

The signs of child abuse aren't always obvious, and a child might not feel able to tell anyone what's happening to them. Sometimes, children don't even realise that what's happening to them is abuse.

There are different types of child abuse and the signs that a child is being abused may depend on the type. For example, the signs that a child is being neglected may be different from the signs that a child is being abused sexually.

Child abuse can take many forms. It can be emotional, physical, sexual or neglect. And it can happen to any child, in any family, in any place or online.

### Spotting the signs

Some common signs that there may be something concerning happening in a child's life include:

- Unexplained changes in behaviour or personality
- Becoming withdrawn
- Seeming anxious
- Becoming uncharacteristically aggressive
- Lacks social skills and has few friends if any.
- Poor bond or relationship with a parent
- Knowledge of adult issues inappropriate for their age
- Running away or going missing
- Always choosing to wear clothes which cover their body.

These signs don't necessarily mean that a child is being abused, there could be other things happening in their life which are affecting their behaviour.

You may also notice some concerning behaviour from adults who you know have children in their care, which makes you concerned for the child/children's safety and wellbeing.

### Types of abuse

#### Bullying and cyberbullying

Bullying is behaviour that hurts someone else. It includes name calling, hitting, pushing, spreading rumours, threatening, or undermining someone.

It can happen anywhere – at school, at home or online. It's usually repeated over a long period of time and can hurt a child both physically and emotionally.

## Types of bullying

Bullying can take different forms. It could include:

- physical bullying: hitting, slapping, or pushing someone.
- verbal bullying: name calling, gossiping, or threatening someone.
- non-verbal abuse: hand signs or text messages
- emotional abuse: threatening, intimidating, or humiliating someone.
- exclusion: ignoring or isolating someone.
- undermining, constant criticism or spreading rumours.
- controlling or manipulative behaviour
- making silent, hoax or abusive calls.

The following types of bullying are also hating crimes:

- racial, sexual, transphobic, or homophobic bullying
- bullying someone because they have a disability.

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place online. Unlike bullying offline, online bullying can follow the child wherever they go, via social networks, gaming, and mobile phone. A person can be bullied online and offline at the same time.

Cyberbullying can include:

- sending threatening or abusive text messages
- creating and sharing embarrassing images or videos
- trolling – the sending of menacing or upsetting messages on social networks, chat rooms or online games
- excluding children from online games, activities, or friendship groups
- shaming someone online
- setting up hate sites or groups about a particular child
- encouraging young people to self-harm
- voting for or against someone in an abusive poll
- creating fake accounts, hijacking, or stealing online identities to embarrass a young person or cause trouble using their name.
- sending explicit messages, also known as sexting
- pressuring children into sending sexual images or engaging in sexual conversations.

## Child sexual exploitation

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a type of sexual abuse. It happens when a child or young person is coerced, manipulated, or deceived into sexual activity in exchange for things that they may need or want like gifts, drugs, money, status, and affection. Children and young people are often tricked into believing they're in a loving and consensual relationship so the sexual activity may appear consensual. This is called grooming and is a type of abuse. They may trust their abuser and not understand that they're being abused. CSE does not always involve physical contact and can also occur using technology.

Children and young people can be trafficked into or within the UK for sexual exploitation. They're moved around the country and abused by being forced to



take part in sexual activities, often with more than one person. Young people in gangs can also be sexually exploited.

Sometimes abusers use violence and intimidation to frighten or force a child or young person, making them feel as if they've no choice. They may lend them large sums of money they know can't be repaid or use financial abuse or blackmail to control them.

Anybody can be a perpetrator of CSE, no matter their age, gender, or race. The relationship could be framed or viewed as friendship, someone to look up to or romantic. Children and young people who are exploited may also be made to 'find' or coerce others to join groups.

It's important to recognise that although the age of consent is 16 years old, children and young people over 16 can be exploited. Child sexual exploitation is a very complex form of abuse. It can be difficult for parents and carers to understand and hard for the young person to acknowledge that they are being exploited.

CSE can happen in person or online. An abuser will gain a child's trust or control them through violence or blackmail before moving onto sexually abusing them. This can happen in a short period of time.

When a child is sexually exploited online, they might be persuaded or forced to:

- send or post sexually explicit images of themselves.
- film or stream sexual activities.
- have sexual conversations.

Once an abuser has images, video, or copies of conversations, they might use threats and blackmail to force a young person to take part in other sexual activity. They may also share the images and videos with others or circulate them online.

Gangs use sexual exploitation:

- to exert power and control
- for initiation
- to use sexual violence as a weapon.

Children or young people might be invited to parties or gatherings with others their own age or adults and given drugs and alcohol. They may be assaulted and sexually abused by one person or multiple perpetrators. The sexual assaults and abuse can be violent, humiliating and degrading. It's important to remember an intoxicated person cannot give consent to sexual activity.

Signs of sexual exploitation and grooming:

- Unhealthy or inappropriate sexual behaviour.
- Being frightened of some people, places, or situations.
- Being secretive.
- Sharp changes in mood or character.
- A sudden change in their family relationships/dynamics.
- Having money or things they can't or won't explain, such as hotel key cards or unexplained gifts.

- Physical signs of abuse, like bruises or bleeding in their genital or anal area.
- Sudden change in physical appearance including clothes and hygiene levels.
- Alcohol or drug misuse.
- Sexually transmitted infections.
- A sudden and urgent request to go onto contraception or to obtain the 'morning after pill'.
- Pregnancy.

## Child trafficking

Child trafficking and modern slavery are child abuse.

Trafficking is where children and young people tricked, forced, or persuaded to leave their homes and are moved or transported and then exploited, forced to work, or sold. Children are trafficked for:

- sexual exploitation
- benefit fraud
- forced marriage.
- domestic slavery like cleaning, cooking, and childcare
- forced labour in factories or agriculture.
- committing crimes, like begging, theft, working on cannabis farms or moving drugs.

Trafficked children experience many types of abuse and neglect. Traffickers use physical, sexual, and emotional abuse as a form of control. Children and young people are also likely to be physically and emotionally neglected and may be sexually exploited.

Traffickers often groom children, families, and communities to gain their trust. They may also threaten families with violence or threats. Traffickers often promise children and families that they'll have a better future elsewhere.

Trafficking is also an economic crime. Traffickers may ask families for money for providing documents or transport and they'll make a profit from money a child "earns" through exploitation, forced labour or crime. They'll often be told this money is to pay off a debt they or their family "owe" to the traffickers.

Traffickers may:

- work alone or in small groups, recruiting a small number of children, often from areas they know and live in
- be medium-sized groups who recruit, move and exploit children and young people on a small scale.
- be large criminal networks that operate internationally with high-level corruption, money laundering and a large number of victims.

Knowing the signs of trafficking can help give a voice to children. Sometimes children won't understand that what's happening to them is wrong. Or they might be scared to speak out.

It may not be obvious that a child has been trafficked, but you might notice unusual or unexpected things. They might:

- spend a lot of time doing household chores.
- rarely leave their house or have no time for playing.
- be orphaned or living apart from their family.
- live in low-standard accommodation.
- be unsure which country, city, or town they're in
- can't or are reluctant to share personal information or where they live.
- not be registered with a school or a GP practice.
- have no access to their parents or guardians.
- be seen in inappropriate places like brothels or factories.
- have money or things you wouldn't expect them to
- have injuries from workplace accidents.
- give a prepared story which is very similar to stories given by other children.

### Criminal exploitation and gangs

Criminal exploitation is child abuse where children and young people are manipulated and coerced into committing crimes.

The word 'gang' means different things in different contexts, the government in their paper 'Safeguarding children and young people who may be affected by gang activity' distinguishes between peer groups, street gangs and organised criminal gangs.

- Peer group  
A relatively small and transient social grouping which may or may not describe themselves as a gang depending on the context.
- Street gang  
"Groups of young people who see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group for whom crime and violence is integral to the group's identity."
- Organised criminal gangs.  
"A group of individuals for whom involvement in crime is for personal gain (financial or otherwise). For most crime is their 'occupation.'"

It's not illegal for a young person to be in a gang – there are different types of 'gangs' and not every 'gang' is criminal or dangerous. However, gang membership can be linked to illegal activity, particularly organised criminal gangs involved in trafficking, drug dealing and violent crime.

County Lines is the police term for urban gangs exploiting young people into moving drugs from a hub, normally a large city, into other markets - suburban areas and market and coastal towns - using dedicated mobile phone lines or "deal lines". Children as young as 12 years old have been exploited into carrying drugs for gangs. This can involve children being trafficked away from their home area, staying in accommodation, and selling and manufacturing drugs. This can include:

- Airbnb and short term private rental properties
- budget hotels
- the home of a drug user, or other vulnerable person, that is taken over by a criminal gang- this may be referred to as cuckooing.

Signs that cuckooing has taken place include:

- signs of drugs use
- more people coming and going from the property.
- more cars or bikes outside
- litter outside
- you haven't seen the person who lives there recently or when you have, they've seemed anxious, distracted or not themselves.

Children living in these properties are at risk of neglect and other types of abuse. If you're worried, it's important to contact the Police immediately.

There are some signs to look out for if you're worried a child or young person has joined a gang or is being criminally exploited. It might be hard to spot at first, but the sooner you're able to talk to the young person the more you'll be able to help them.

Signs you may notice:

- Frequently absent from and doing badly in school.
- Going missing from home, staying out late and travelling for unexplained reasons.
- In a relationship or hanging out with someone older than them.
- Being angry, aggressive, or violent.
- Being isolated or withdrawn.
- Having unexplained money and buying new things.
- Wearing clothes or accessories in gang colours or getting tattoos.
- Using new slang words.
- Spending more time on social media and being secretive about time online.
- Making more calls or sending more texts, possibly on a new phone or phones.
- Self-harming and feeling emotionally unwell.
- Taking drugs and abusing alcohol.
- Committing petty crimes like shop lifting or vandalism.
- Unexplained injuries and refusing to seek medical help.
- Carrying weapons or having a dangerous breed of dog.

## Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is any type of controlling, bullying, threatening or violent behaviour between people who are or have been in a relationship. It can also happen between adults related to one another. It can seriously harm children and young people, and experiencing domestic abuse is child abuse.

It's important to remember that domestic abuse:

- can happen inside and outside the home.
- can happen over the phone, on the internet and on social networking sites.

- can happen in any relationship and can continue even after the relationship has ended.
- both men and women can be abused or abusers.

Domestic abuse can be emotional, physical, sexual, economic, coercive, or psychological, such as:

- kicking, hitting, punching, cutting, or throwing objects
- rape (including in a relationship)
- controlling someone's finances by withholding money or stopping someone earning.
- controlling behaviour, like telling someone where they can go and what they can wear.
- not letting someone leave the house.
- reading emails, text messages or letters
- threatening to kill someone or harm them.
- threatening to another family member or pet.

It can be difficult to tell if domestic abuse is happening and those carrying out the abuse can act very different when other people are around. Children and young people might also feel frightened and confused, keeping the abuse to themselves.

Signs that a child has experienced domestic abuse can include:

- aggression or bullying
- anti-social behaviour, like vandalism
- anxiety, depression, or suicidal thoughts
- attention seeking
- bed-wetting, nightmares, or insomnia
- constant or regular sickness, like colds, headaches, and mouth ulcers
- drug or alcohol use
- eating disorders
- problems in school or trouble learning.
- tantrums
- withdrawal.

### Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is any type of abuse that involves the continual emotional mistreatment of a child. It's sometimes called psychological abuse. Emotional abuse can involve deliberately trying to scare, humiliate, isolate, or ignore a child.

Emotional abuse is often a part of other kinds of abuse, which means it can be difficult to spot the signs or tell the difference, though it can also happen on its own.

Emotional abuse includes:

- humiliating or constantly criticising a child.
- threatening, shouting at a child, or calling them names
- making the child the subject of jokes or using sarcasm to hurt a child.
- blaming and scapegoating
- making a child perform degrading acts.

- not recognising a child's own individuality or trying to control their lives.
- pushing a child too hard or not recognising their limitations
- exposing a child to upsetting events or situations, like domestic abuse or drug taking
- failing to promote a child's social development.
- not allowing them to have friends.
- persistently ignoring them
- being absent
- manipulating a child
- never saying anything kind, expressing positive feelings or congratulating a child on successes
- never showing any emotions in interactions with a child, also known as emotional neglect.

There might not be any obvious physical signs of emotional abuse or neglect. And a child might not tell anyone what's happening until they reach a 'crisis point'. That's why it's important to look out for signs in how a child is acting.

As children grow up, their emotions change. This means it can be difficult to tell if they're being emotionally abused. But children who are being emotionally abused might:

- seem unconfident or lack self-assurance.
- struggle to control their emotions.
- have difficulty making or maintaining relationships.
- act in a way that's inappropriate for their age.

The signs of emotional abuse can also be different for children at different ages.

### Female genital mutilation

FGM is when a female's genitals are deliberately altered or removed for non-medical reasons. It's also known as 'female circumcision' or 'cutting' but has many other names.

FGM is a form of child abuse. It's dangerous and a criminal offence in the UK. We know:

- there are no medical reasons to carry out FGM.
- it's often performed by someone with no medical training, using instruments such as knives, scalpels, scissors, glass, or razor blades.
- children are rarely given anaesthetic or antiseptic treatment and are often forcibly restrained.
- it's used to control female sexuality and can cause long-lasting damage to physical and emotional health.

FGM can happen at different times in a girl or woman's life, including:

- when a baby is new-born
- during childhood or as a teenager
- just before marriage
- during pregnancy.

A child who's at risk of FGM might ask you for help. But some children might not know what's going to happen to them. So, it's important to be aware of the signs.

Signs FGM might happen:

- A relative or someone known as a 'cutter' visiting from abroad.
- A special occasion or ceremony takes place where a girl 'becomes a woman' or is 'prepared for marriage'.
- A female relative, like a mother, sister or aunt has undergone FGM.
- A family arranges a long holiday overseas or visits a family abroad during the summer holidays.
- A girl has an unexpected or long absence from school.
- A girl struggles to keep up in school.
- A girl runs away – or plans to run away - from home.

Signs FGM might have taken place:

- Having difficulty walking, standing, or sitting.
- Spending longer in the bathroom or toilet.
- Appearing quiet, anxious, or depressed.
- Acting differently after an absence from school or college.
- Reluctance to go to the doctors or have routine medical examinations.
- Asking for help – though they might not be explicit about the problem because they're scared or embarrassed.

## Grooming

Grooming is when someone builds a relationship, trust and emotional connection with a child or young person so they can manipulate, exploit, and abuse them.

Children and young people who are groomed can be sexually abused, exploited, or trafficked.

Anybody can be a groomer, no matter their age, gender, or race. Grooming can take place over a short or long period of time – from weeks to years. Groomers may also build a relationship with the young person's family or friends to make them seem trustworthy or authoritative.

Children and young people can be groomed online, in person or both – by a stranger or someone they know. This could be a family member, a friend or someone who has targeted them – like a teacher, faith group leader or sports coach.

When a child is groomed online, groomers may hide who they are by sending photos or videos of other people. Sometimes this'll be of someone younger than them to gain the trust of a "peer". They might target one child online or contact lots of children very quickly and wait for them to respond.

The relationship a groomer builds can take different forms. This could be:

- a romantic relationship
- as a mentor
- an authority figures.
- a dominant and persistent figure.

A groomer can use the same sites, games and apps as young people, spending time learning about a young person's interests and use this to build a relationship with them. Children can be groomed online through:

- social media networks
- text messages and messaging apps, like WhatsApp
- email
- text, voice and video chats in forums, games, and apps.

Whether online or in person, groomers can use tactics like:

- pretending to be younger
- giving advice or showing understanding
- buying gifts
- giving attention
- taking them on trips, outings, or holidays.

Groomers might also try and isolate children from their friends and family, making them feel dependent on them and giving the groomer power and control over them. They might use blackmail to make a child feel guilt and shame or introduce the idea of 'secrets' to control, frighten and intimidate.

It's important to remember that children and young people may not understand they've been groomed. They may have complicated feelings, like loyalty, admiration, love, as well as fear, distress, and confusion.

It can be difficult to tell if a child is being groomed – the signs aren't always obvious and may be hidden. Older children might behave in a way that seems to be "normal" teenage behaviour, masking underlying problems.

Some of the signs you might see include:

- being very secretive about how they're spending their time, including when online.
- having an older boyfriend or girlfriend
- having money or new things like clothes and mobile phones that they can't or won't explain.
- underage drinking or drug taking
- spending more or less time online or on their devices
- being upset, withdrawn or distressed
- sexualised behaviour, language, or an understanding of sex that's not appropriate for their age.
- spending more time away from home or going missing for periods of time.

A child is unlikely to know they've been groomed. They might be worried or confused and less likely to speak to an adult they trust.

## Neglect

Neglect is the ongoing failure to meet a child's basic needs and the most common form of child abuse. A child might be left hungry or dirty, or without proper clothing, shelter, supervision, or health care. This can put children and young people in



danger. And it can also have long term effects on their physical and mental wellbeing.

Neglect can be a lot of different things, which can make it hard to spot. Broadly speaking there are 4 types of neglect.

- Physical neglect  
A child's basic needs, such as food, clothing, or shelter, are not met or they aren't properly supervised or kept safe.
- Educational neglect  
A parent doesn't ensure their child is given an education.
- Emotional neglect  
A child doesn't get the nurture and stimulation they need. This could be through ignoring, humiliating, intimidating, or isolating them.
- Medical neglect  
A child isn't given proper health care. This includes dental care and refusing or ignoring medical recommendations.

Neglect can be difficult to spot. Having one of the signs doesn't necessarily mean a child is being neglected. But if you notice multiple signs that last for a while, they might show there's a serious problem. Children and young people who are neglected might have:

- Poor appearance and hygiene
  - being smelly or dirty
  - being hungry or not given money for food
  - having unwashed clothes
  - having the wrong clothing, such as no warm clothes in winter
  - having frequent and untreated nappy rash in infants.
- Health and development problems
  - anaemia
  - body issues, such as poor muscle tone or prominent joints
  - medical or dental issues
  - missed medical appointments, such as for vaccinations.
  - not given the correct medicines
  - poor language or social skills
  - regular illness or infections
  - repeated accidental injuries, often caused by lack of supervision.
  - skin issues, such as sores, rashes, flea bites, scabies, or ringworm
  - thin or swollen tummy
  - tiredness
  - untreated injuries
  - weight or growth issues.
- Housing and family issues
  - living in an unsuitable home environment, such as having no heating
  - being left alone for a long time
  - taking on the role of carer for other family members

- Change in behaviour.
  - becoming clingy
  - becoming aggressive
  - being withdrawn, depressed or anxious
  - changes in eating habits
  - displaying obsessive behaviour
  - finding it hard to concentrate or take part in activities.
  - missing school
  - showing signs of self-harm
  - using drugs or alcohol.

### Non-recent abuse

Non-recent child abuse, sometimes called historical abuse, is when an adult was abused as a child or young person under the age of 18. Sometimes adults who were abused in childhood blame themselves or are made to feel it's their fault. But this is never the case: there's no excuse for abuse.

You might have known you were abused for a very long or only recently learnt or understood what happened to you. Whether the abuse happened once or hundreds of times, a year or 70 years ago, whatever the circumstances, there's support to help you. It's never too late.

### Online abuse

Online abuse is any type of abuse that happens on the internet. It can happen across any device that's connected to the web, like computers, tablets, and mobile phones. And it can happen anywhere online, including:

- social media
- text messages and messaging apps
- emails
- online chats
- online gaming
- live-streaming sites.

Children can be at risk of online abuse from people they know or from strangers. It might be part of other abuse which is taking place offline, like bullying or grooming. Or the abuse might only happen online.

Children and young people might experience different types of online abuse, such as:

- cyberbullying
- emotional abuse
- grooming
- sexting
- sexual abuse
- sexual exploitation

A child or young person experiencing abuse online might:

- spend a lot more or a lot less time than usual online, texting, gaming, or using social media.
- seem distant, upset, or angry after using the internet or texting.
- be secretive about who they're talking to and what they're doing online or on their mobile phone.
- have lots of new phone numbers, texts or email addresses on their mobile phone, laptop, or tablet.

### Physical abuse

Physical abuse is when someone hurts or harms a child or young person on purpose. It includes:

- hitting with hands or objects
- slapping and punching
- kicking
- shaking
- throwing
- poisoning
- burning and scalding
- biting and scratching
- breaking bones
- drowning.

It's important to remember that physical abuse is any way of intentionally causing physical harm to a child or young person. It also includes making up the symptoms of an illness or causing a child to become unwell.

Bumps and bruises don't always mean a child is being physically abused. All children have accidents, trips, and falls. And there isn't just one sign or symptom to look out for. But it's important to be aware of the signs.

If a child regularly has injuries, there seems to be a pattern to the injuries or the explanation doesn't match the injuries, then this should be reported.

Physical abuse symptoms include:

- bruises
- broken or fractured bones
- burns or scalds.
- bite marks.

It can also include other injuries and health problems, such as:

- scarring
- the effects of poisoning, such as vomiting, drowsiness or seizures
- breathing problems from drowning, suffocation, or poisoning.

Head injuries in babies and toddlers can be signs of abuse so it's important to be aware of these. Visible signs include:

- swelling
- bruising

- fractures
- being extremely sleepy or unconscious
- breathing problems
- seizures
- vomiting
- unusual behaviour, such as being irritable or not feeding properly.

## Sexual abuse

When a child or young person is sexually abused, they're forced, tricked, or manipulated into sexual activities. They might not understand that what's happening is abuse or that it's wrong for the abuser to do this to them. They might be afraid to tell someone or behave as though this is normal for them to experience, both are valid for the child to be displaying. Sexual abuse can happen anywhere – and it can happen in person or online.

It's never a child's fault they were sexually abused – it's important to make sure children know this.

There are two types of sexual abuse – contact and non-contact abuse. And sexual abuse can happen in person or online.

- Contact abuse

Contact abuse is where an abuser makes physical contact with a child or forces the child to make physical contact with someone else. This includes:

- sexual touching of any part of a child's body, whether they're clothed or not.
- using a body part or object to rape or penetrate a child.
- forcing a child to take part in sexual activities.
- making a child undress or touch someone else.

Contact abuse can include touching, kissing and oral sex – sexual abuse isn't just penetrative.

- Non-contact abuse

Non-contact abuse is where a child is abused without being touched by the abuser. This can be in person or online and includes:

- exposing or flashing
- showing pornography
- exposing a child to sexual acts
- making them masturbate
- forcing a child to make, view or share child abuse images or videos.
- making, viewing, or distributing child abuse images or videos
- forcing a child to take part in sexual activities or conversations online or through a smartphone.

Knowing the signs of sexual abuse can help give a voice to children and can get support for that child earlier on. Sometimes children won't understand that what's happening to them is wrong. Or they might be scared to speak out. Some of the signs you might notice include:

- Emotional and behavioural signs
  - Avoiding being alone with or frightened of people or a person they know.
  - Language or sexual behaviour you wouldn't expect them to know.
  - Having nightmares or bed-wetting.
  - Alcohol or drug misuse.
  - Self-harm.
  - Changes in eating habits or developing an eating problem.
  - Changes in their mood, feeling irritable and angry, or anything out of the ordinary.
  - Change in normal behaviour for the child, for example suddenly not attending education or avoiding wanting to go home/running away.
  
- Physical signs
  - Bruises.
  - Bleeding, discharge, pains, or soreness in their genital or anal area.
  - Sexually transmitted infections, including in the throat.
  - Pain/soreness in throat
  - Pregnancy.
  - Difficulty in walking/sitting that are not usual for the child.

If a child is being or has been sexually abused online, they might:

- spend a lot more or a lot less time than usual online, texting, gaming, or using social media.
- seem distant, upset, or angry after using the internet or texting.
- be secretive about who they're talking to and what they're doing online or on their mobile phone.
- behaving as though they must be online at a certain time or rushing to get on their phone.
- have lots of new phone numbers, texts or email addresses on their mobile phone, laptop, or tablet.
- Expressing the need for money, this may be used if they are being blackmailed.

Children and young people might also drop hints and clues about the abuse.

## Prevent

[Get help for radicalisation concerns - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

Prevent is a national programme that aims to stop people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. It works to ensure that people who are susceptible to radicalisation are offered appropriate interventions, and communities are protected against radicalising influences.

Radicalisation can happen when a person develops extreme views or beliefs that support terrorist groups or activities.

There are different types of terrorism and Prevent deals with all of them.

The most common types of terrorism in the UK are Extreme Right-Wing terrorism and Islamist terrorism.

Prevent is run locally by experts who understand the risks and issues in their area, and how best to support their communities. These experts include local authorities, the police, charities, and community organisations.

Radicalisation can happen both in person and online.

Everyone is different, and there is no checklist that can tell us if someone is being radicalised or becoming involved in terrorism. But these signs may mean someone is being radicalised:

- accessing extremist content online or downloading propaganda material
- justifying the use of violence to solve societal issues.
- altering their style of dress or appearance to accord with an extremist group.
- being unwilling to engage with people who they see as different.
- using certain symbols associated with terrorist organisations.

WHY recognises that workforce members may meet and work with people (adults and children) who are vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. Being drawn into terrorism includes not just violent extremism but also non-violent extremism, which can popularise views which terrorists exploit.

Workforce members should be able to recognise the signs that someone has been or is being drawn into terrorism and know what support is available.

If workforce members have any concerns about a client or client's family member, they must speak to the designated safeguarding lead.

The client / family member must be kept fully informed unless this places anyone at significant risk of harm.

## Appendix 3 Key contact numbers

### We Hear You key contacts:

- Head of Counselling and Wellbeing Services and designated safeguarding lead – Joe Cleaver: 07735 373745
- Chief Executive Officer and deputy safeguarding lead – Lucy Kitchener: 07917 134758
- Chair of trustees and deputy safeguarding lead – Anne Montague: 07545 860013
- Board of Trustees safeguarding lead – Tessa Warry: 07763 216516

### Local safeguarding contacts

#### Somerset

<https://swcpp-somerset.trixonline.co.uk/chapter/reporting-concerns>

If you are worried about a child or young person who could be in danger, please contact:

Children's Social Care on 0300 123 2224.

By e-mail at: [childrens@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:childrens@somerset.gov.uk)

Or the Police.

You can contact the police directly by dialling 101 and they will discuss with Children's Social Care what action should be taken. In an emergency always contact the police by dialling 999.

#### Bath and North East Somerset

<https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/report-concern-about-child>

Report a concern about a child or young person online here:

<https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/webforms/concerned-about-a-child-or-family/>

If you need to talk to us about a child with disabilities or additional needs, call us on 01225 39 69 67, or email us at [ChildCare\\_Duty@bathnes.gov.uk](mailto:ChildCare_Duty@bathnes.gov.uk)

Out of office hours - if you think a child is in immediate danger, please call our Emergency Duty Team on 01454 61 51 65. Report all other concerns on our online form.

#### Swindon

[https://safeguardingpartnership.swindon.gov.uk/info/15/for\\_professionals/34/referral\\_guidelines\\_and\\_mash\\_contact\\_information](https://safeguardingpartnership.swindon.gov.uk/info/15/for_professionals/34/referral_guidelines_and_mash_contact_information)

New referrals and referrals on closed cases should be made to the Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). Referrals on open cases should be made to the allocated social worker for the case, or in their absence their manager or the duty social worker.

E-mail: [Swindonmash@swindon.gov.uk](mailto:Swindonmash@swindon.gov.uk)

Telephone: 01793 466903 (during normal office hours - 8.30am to 4.40pm, Monday to Thursday and 8.30am to 4.00pm Friday)

Emergency Duty Service (EDS) is available outside office hours on 01793 436699.

## Wiltshire

<https://www.wiltshiresvpp.org.uk/p/children/about-safeguarding-children>

Enquiries should be made when you have concerns for the welfare and or safety of any child or young person under 18. If you are not sure about the needs of the child, you can call the MASH using the contact details below to discuss the case with professionals in the MASH.

If you think a child or young person is at risk of significant harm, or is injured, contact the Integrated Front Door (IFD) on 0300 4560108, 8.45am-5pm, Monday-Thursday and 8.45am-4pm Friday; Out of Hours 0300 456 0100.

Or if there is immediate danger, phone the police or emergency services on 999.

For less urgent enquiries, email [mash@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:mash@wiltshire.gov.uk)