

Inclusive Safeguarding of

Children/PREVENT

Safeguarding and Welfare of

Children Policy

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Introduction

Chickenshed believes every child should have access to a safe, creative inclusive environment. Where members are children it is necessary to ensure that their welfare, care and protection are actively planned for.

The key to planning for the welfare, care and protection of children is knowledge of the individual child and his/her needs, experiences, hopes, fears and anxieties. This information will inform all aspects of a child's inclusive progress, welfare, care and protection.

Chickenshed will ensure that all children are treated as individuals with their progress, welfare and needs monitored and planned for on an individual basis. This policy will outline the ways in which a child's welfare, safeguarding and protection can be planned for through procedures that emanate from knowledge of the individual child's needs and inclusive development. The policy and procedures reflect the child's right in Chickenshed to have their welfare and protection needs met in a genuinely inclusive way which supports their individual, creative progress and development.

The following policy is presented in two sections:

Section 1 Addresses the procedures and practices that will actively and positively promote an individual child's welfare and protection in the context of their progress and development.

Section 2 Outlines procedures to be implemented where it becomes apparent that there are concerns about a child's welfare and possible abuse either outside the theatre in the child's own social environment or within the activities of the theatre.

Section 3 Outlines general Safeguarding management and oversight factors which Chickenshed takes into account when delivering and developing positive Safeguarding practice.

This policy applies to all individuals who are under 18 and thus classed as children under UK Law. The policy thus applies to the following groups;

- 1. Students under 18 – in the main BTEC Further Education students or students who are younger and have been placed with Chickenshed by Schools or Local Authorities with agreement in place.**
- 2. Children's and Youth Theatre Members under 18 years of age.**
- 3. Children under 18 years of age from external organisations and agencies visiting Chickenshed for Inreach activity.**
- 4. Children under 18 who connect with Chickenshed for 'Tales from the Shed' Early Years work or holiday activity.**
- 5. Young people under 18 who are volunteering with Chickenshed for formal organised or informal 'Work Experience'. In situations where external organisations are involved, Chickenshed will liaise with those organisations so that Safeguarding and Prevent Practice and oversight can be shared and maintained.**

Safeguarding and Prevent Policies for both Children and Adults at Risk/ Vulnerable Adults are reviewed annually by Chickenshed's Trustee Board and Chickenshed Trustee Education Committee. The Trustee Board sign off annually on the Prevent Policy and Report as part of their ongoing Safeguarding oversight. Safeguarding reporting happens regularly at all Management Board and Staff Meetings and the Trustee Board Education Committee. The Education Committee then report to the full Trustee Board.

Section 1

Guidelines to promote the inclusive welfare and protection of children within Chickenshed

1. **Staff – Child and Inclusive Support Worker – Child Ratios** – Chickenshed will ensure that there are strong Staff to Child and Inclusive Support Worker to Child Ratios in workshops, rehearsals and performances involving children of 18 years and under. Staff and Inclusive Support Workers will offer a range of direct and indirect support experiences to ensure children are able to both progress steadily to managing their own inclusion with as much independence as possible – while at the same time being as “safe” as possible. These ratios will for example, in most cases, exceed the legal 1 adult to 10 children ratio for comparable leisure activities or 1 to 8 (with identified inclusive priority needs).
2. During workshops and rehearsals children will be supported by:-
 - a) Theatre Group Director
 - b) Workshop/Rehearsal Director
 - c) Specific discipline directors – Music, Dance and Drama
 - d) Inclusive Director for sessional/rehearsal and Inclusive Support staff
 - e) Students, Company and Youth Theatre (16+) members taking on a variety of support and Group Director roles
 - f) Production Department support worker.

Liaison with Parents and Carers

In all areas regarding the welfare, care and provision for their children, parents and carers will be encouraged to contribute information orally, in writing, via the company application form and subsequent opportunities to update information, in order to assist planning. Parents and carers will be made aware of the accessibility of relevant staff for consultation before and after sessions and at other times during the week.

Where there are specific issues related to a child’s personal care and welfare (e.g. changing, toileting), Chickenshed staff will consult with parents/carers to ensure a child’s needs can be met in as inclusive and discreet manner as possible. Awareness of procedures and routines used at home will inform procedures and routines to be used at the theatre. Where variations to personal care and welfare need to be made (e.g. in long rehearsals, performances) parents and carers will be consulted.

Chickenshed staff and inclusive support workers will work together when providing for the personal care needs of individual children – sharing experience and responsibility and encouraging as much independence in the individual child as possible.

Staff and inclusive support workers will take the lead in managing provision for children’s individual welfare, care and progress.

3. **Liaison with Children** – Children will always be consulted on the provision of their inclusive progress, welfare and care within Chickenshed – with their views informing all aspects of planning. Chickenshed staff

and inclusive support workers are very much aware of the need to use as many opportunities as possible to talk to children about their progress, welfare and care.

4. Dissemination of Information – Chickenshed will ensure that information about the inclusive progress, welfare and care of individual children which can inform planning and provision is appropriately disseminated to staff and inclusive support workers who are helping manage the individual child's progress. Meeting structures are put in place to ensure information from parents, carers, children and staff is disseminated and acted upon while remaining confidential.

5. Older Children Training in the Inclusive Support of Younger Children – It is crucial that children are encouraged to see the inclusion of their peers in activities as a natural, instinctive, positive process. To do this, children should not see inclusion as adult-led, rather they should see the process of including as child-led and capable of being taken on by their own peer group. Children need to see older children modelling inclusive support and helping them to manage the inclusive, creative support of their own peer group. In these situations trained staff will clearly manage the process so that children taking on these support roles are supervised and boundaries made clear.

Where older children are training in the inclusive support of younger children, Chickenshed staff and inclusive support workers will provide ongoing training for the older children. Comprehensive monitoring of both older and younger children will ensure that the inclusive process is well supported.

In all such inclusive training situations involving older and younger children, the Chicken Shed directors, staff and inclusive support workers will of course ultimately be, responsible for the inclusive progress, welfare and care of all children.

6. Registration Procedures – Chickenshed will ensure that in workshops, rehearsals and performances. Children are registered on entering a session with immediate information regarding any aspects of progress, welfare and care disseminated to relevant staff and inclusive support workers.

Registration procedures will monitor absence and lateness. In some situations extra registration procedures will be put in place i.e. a fire register prior to entering the space and a register taken within the child's small group inside the session to ensure group leaders and inclusive support workers can act immediately on any issues concerning the child's progress and care.

7. Staff will be police checked to ensure the protection of children. Chickenshed will constantly strive to keep abreast of changes in Police/Disclosure and Barring Service procedures (see Disclosure Policy & Procedure).

8. Students and prospective students and members of the Youth Theatre or Company members over the age of 16 years will also be police-checked, again to ensure the protection of children.

9. Students and members of the Youth Theatre or Company involved in work or training supporting children under the age of 16 will be made aware of Chickenshed's Child Welfare Safeguarding and Protection policies and procedures and their own responsibilities within the framework.

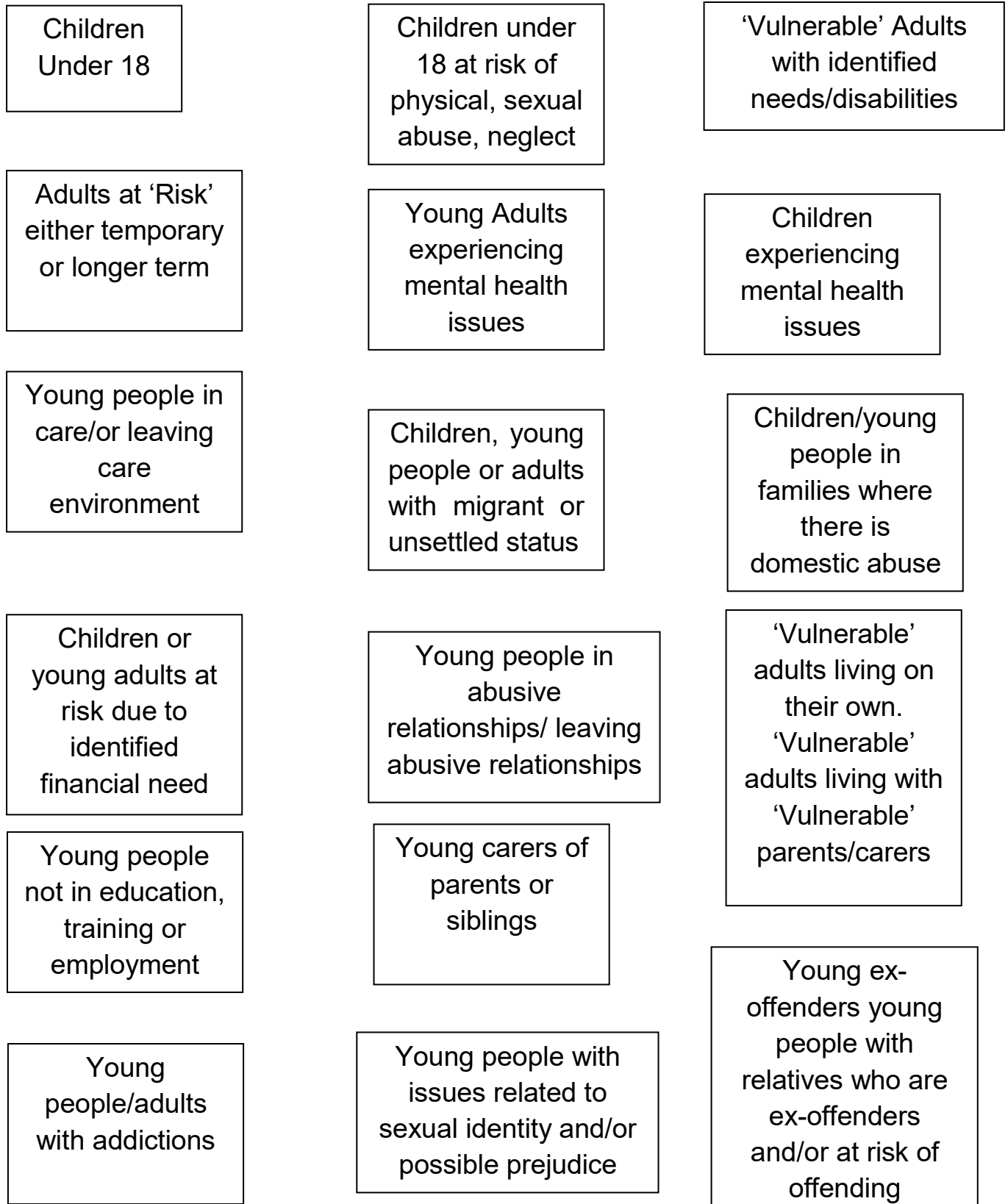
In performances Front of House staff will also be available to assist with the welfare of children where necessary – with Duty Managers assisting in making staff and volunteers aware of the Company's inclusive child welfare safeguarding and protection policies.

10. Where an individual member needs support to manage their behaviour this will be done in an inclusive manner with staff and inclusive support workers working together and liaising with parents/carers key workers to encourage the child to manage their behaviour with as much independence as possible, ensuring their creative contributions can be acknowledged.

11. Chickenshed will liaise with the Area Safeguarding of Children Team and the Local Authority on aspects of child welfare and protection – updating policy whenever necessary. Good practice wherever it occurs within the theatre or elsewhere will be disseminated as a matter of policy so that children's progress can be supported in as consistent a manner as possible.

12. Children have a right to expect a caring, safe, secure environment within Chickenshed – free from abuse and discrimination of any sort. Staff who are found practicing such abuse or discrimination will be subject to the Company's disciplinary procedures.

13. Where a child is acting aggressively towards or knowingly discriminating against another child he/she will be counselled with a view to discovering the causes of such behaviour and ultimately changing the behaviour. Where such behaviour persists parents/carers would be consulted and the child's future in Chickenshed would be discussed. In such situations counselling and support for those on the receiving end of aggression or discrimination would be given the highest priority.

Section 2 - Chickenshed Safeguarding/Prevent Process 1a**Why Safeguarding? Some context on Safeguarding/Prevent Importance.****Who is Safeguarding for? Who needs Safeguarding and why?**

Chickenshed Safeguarding/Prevent Training

Types of Abuse – Child (NSPCC Definitions)

* Denotes categories which have most referrals nationally

Child (NSPCC)
1. Sexual abuse
2. Physical abuse *
3. Neglect *
4. Domestic abuse *
5. Online abuse *
6. Emotional abuse
7. Child sexual exploitation
8. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
9. Bullying and Cyber bullying *
10. Child Trafficking
11. Grooming
12. Harmful Sexual Behaviour by Child

Note – Please see Appendix One for NSPCC explanations and definitions of categories of Child Abuse – with categories changing or sub-dividing or cross filtering often. Proactive safeguarding will consider both the main areas of abuse and also the related or potentially related areas.

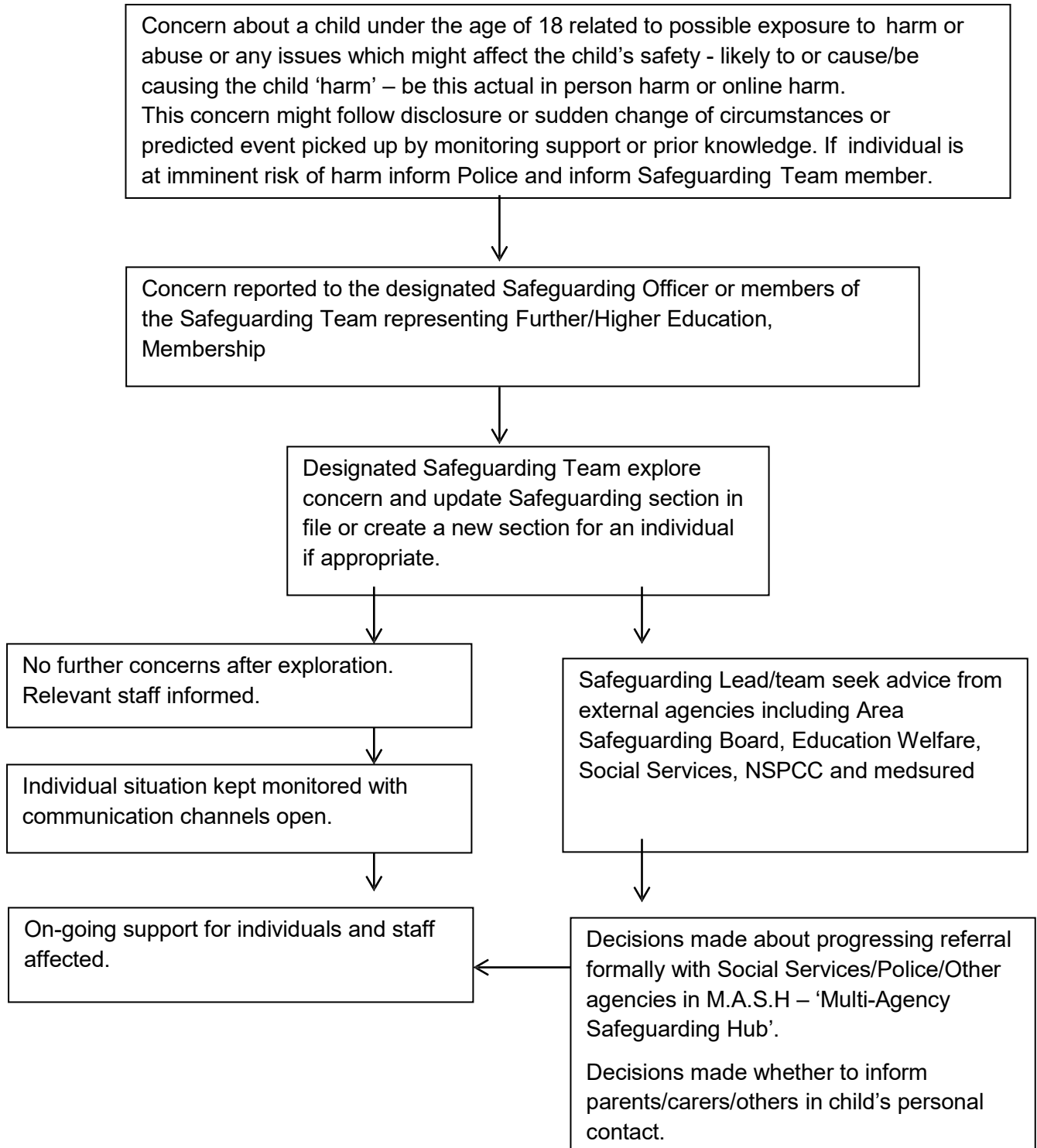
Chickenshed Safeguarding/Prevent Training

What are the main differences between Safeguarding of children and safeguarding of adults at risk/vulnerable adults? Awareness of these differences and crossovers can be particularly helpful when a child reaches 18 years of age.

Child (NSPCC)	Vulnerable Adult/Adult at Risk
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does not need consent to act 2. Disclosure usual way of hearing – current or recent. Not always through, sometimes behaviour is first sign without disclosure 3. More often listened to. 4. Support from others less likely to be resisted. 5. 1989 children Act ‘Working Together’ ‘Every Child Matters’ Framework. Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) Revised 2022 6. Dependent on parents/carers for ‘Care’. 7. Privacy and confidentiality not the main concern – though important 8. All children need protecting 9. Reporting process now more often multi-agency MASH – ‘Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub’. Local Children Safeguarding Boards (LCSB) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. More likely to need consent to act 2. Disclosure more often retrospective 3. Less likely to be discovered 4. Support more likely to be resisted 5. Care Act 2015 provides legal framework 6. Adults normally considered to have mental capacity to make decisions for themselves – with restricted means to override this. Adult has more control. 7. Privacy and confidentiality one of the main concerns and areas of discussion. 8. It has to be proven that an adult needs protecting 9. Reporting to Adult Services Care less likely to be a Multi-Agency approach. Safeguarding Adult Boards (SAB)

Chickenshed Safeguarding/Prevent

Safeguarding of Children Referral Process – steps to take and decisions to be made.



Chickenshed Safeguarding/Prevent

"Potential Signs of General or Specific Safeguarding Need - Child

A. Children Potential Signs of Safeguarding Need and Possible Risk of Abuse

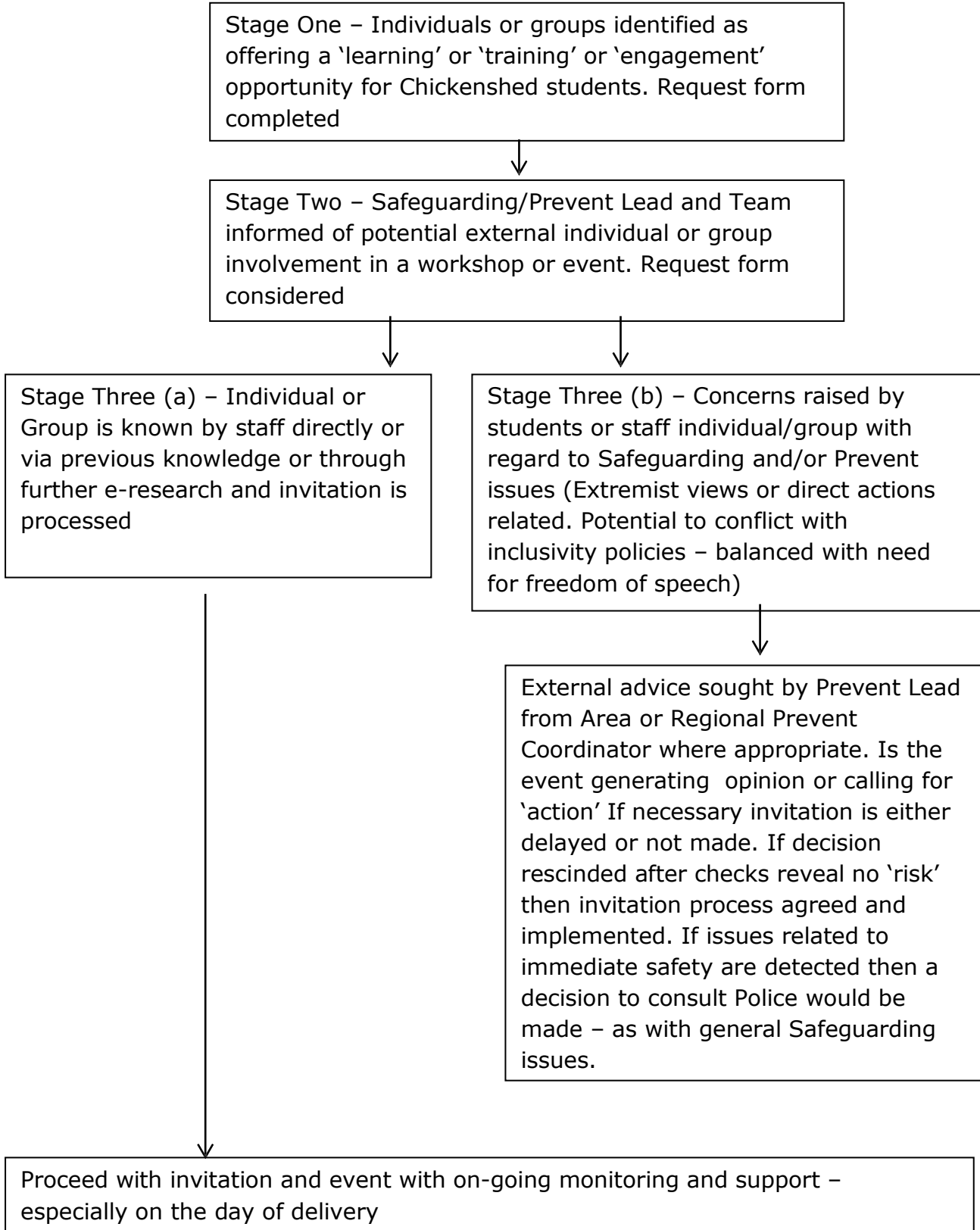
1. Signs of failure to meet usual developmental goals or achievements for unexplained reasons.
2. Sudden and/or Marked changes in behaviour for no obvious reason.
3. Unusual levels of secrecy and hidden behaviours
4. Unusual levels of lack of trust - particularly for adults and adults outside usual circles.
5. Attempts to hide or explain away signs of injury or illness.
6. Unexplained and/or unexpected lack of basic food, clothing, care necessities
7. Unexplained or unexpected levels of withdrawn or introvert behaviour.
8. Sudden unexplained verbal aggression or overreaction to usual events
9. Sudden changes in schedules or routines which child can't explain
10. Unexpected fear of social media or over dependence on social media and online contact.

Note – Please also see Appendix One for further signs of specific areas of abuse from NSPCC Guidance.

Extract from Prevent section of Chickenshed Safeguarding Policy

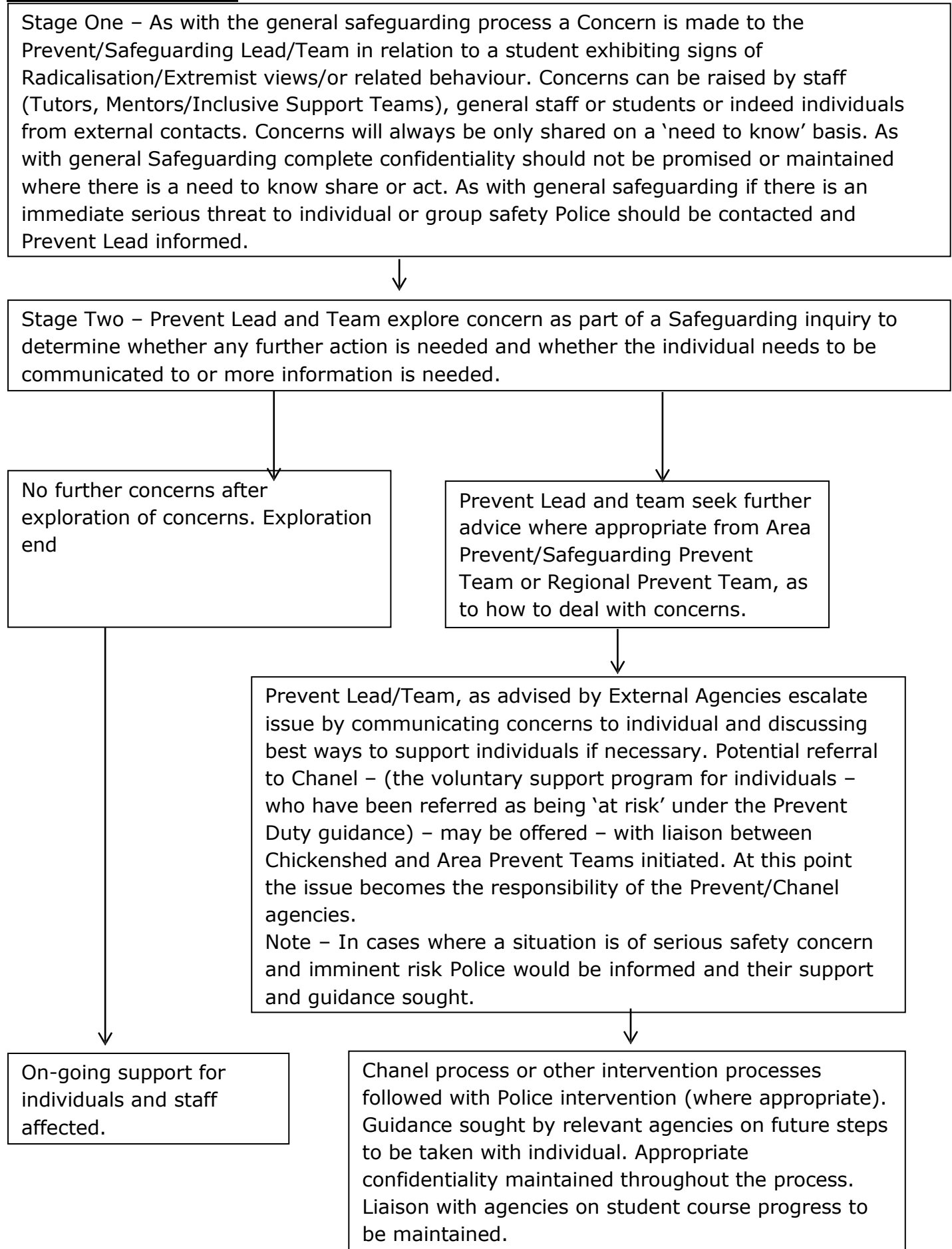
**Consultation on External Practitioner Groups/Individuals in relation to Prevent issues
(Please also see the Freedom of Speech Policy/Code of Practice on External Delivery
Agencies)**

External



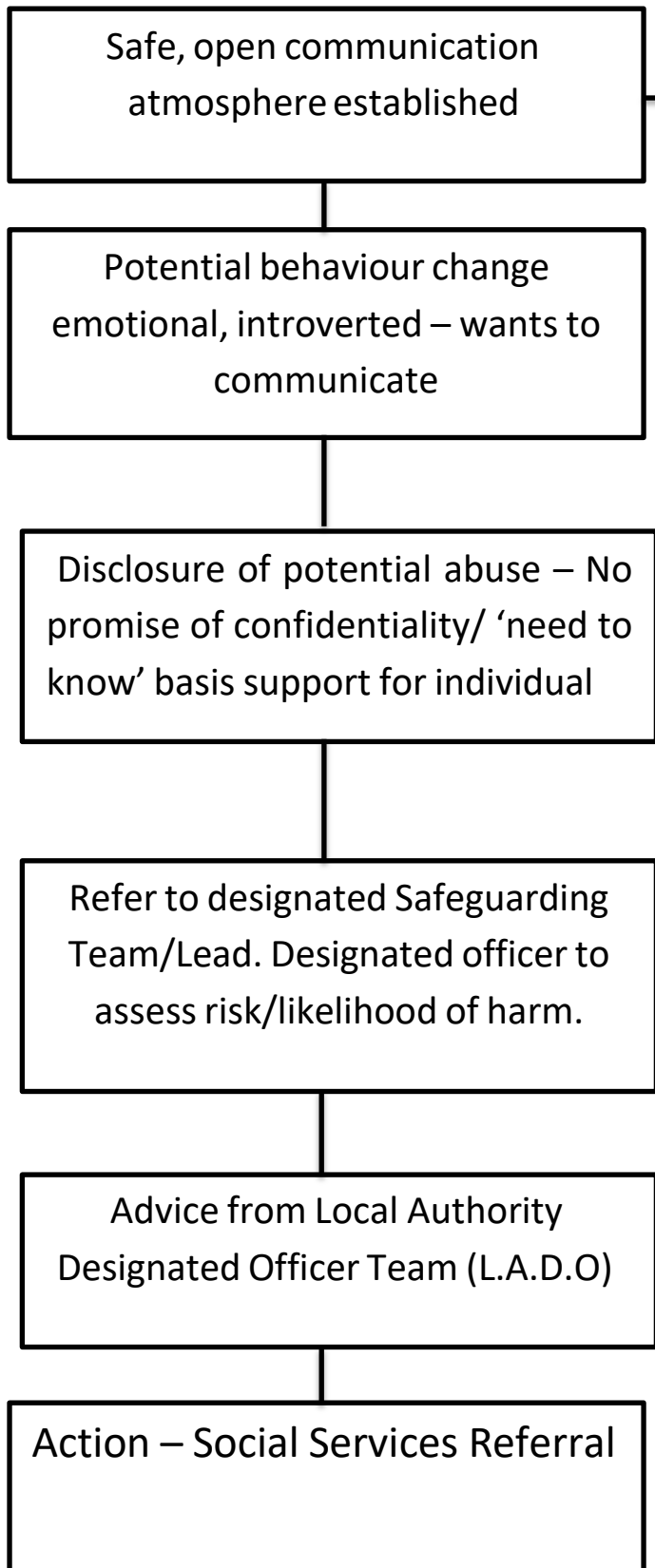
Extract from Prevent section of Chickenshed Safeguarding Policy

Chickenshed 'Prevent Duty – Decision on Referral Process to Safeguarding/Prevent Team – steps to be taken – decisions to be considered.

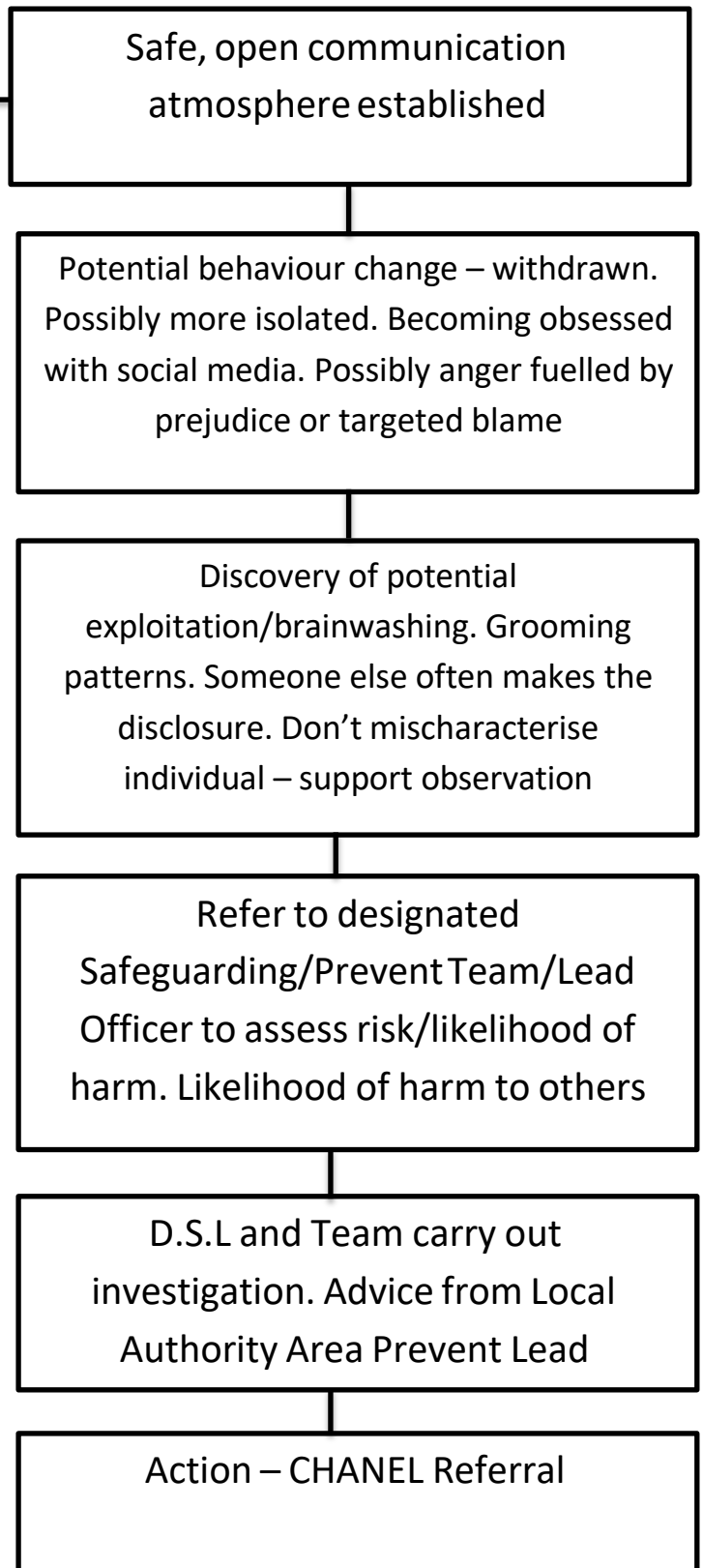


Safeguarding and Prevent Disclosure – Processes Some Parallels and differences for working with children and/or adults at risk/vulnerable adults

Safeguarding



Prevent



Safeguarding/Prevent Areas for Consideration – In order of usual awareness by Professionals – These areas of experience can all be factors in Safeguarding need and Prevent need so practitioners should be aware of the oversight which can be required

(1) Well known

Safeguarding Areas

Disclosures of
Harm/Abuse children
U18 Adults at Risk

**(9) Discipline/
Behaviour and
Safeguarding Risk**

(7) Progression/
Employability Need.

1. Limited expectations
and opportunities leads
to Safeguarding/Prevent
Risk

(4) Medical Need
Addiction/Therapy Need
and Risk

(2) Mental Health Need

Safeguarding related to
externally
identified/self-
Identified. Mental
Health Need.
Counselling/Mentoring
Provision (Prevent
Need)

(3)
Education/Learning
Safeguarding Need

Damage of past
Education
experiences.
Damage of accessing
support to achieve.
Frustrating of access
(Prevent Need)

**Safeguarding/Prevent
Need Wider Relevance
in Everyday Issues**

(5)

Communication/
Socialising Need

Self-Identified or
externally
Identified
loneliness/
isolation/disconnec
tion (Counselling,
Potential Prevent
Need)

(6) Social Priority
Need

Poverty/Cost of
living crisis.
Inadequate parental
contribution
(Hardship
Support/Prevent
Support)

(8)

Equality/Diversity
Inclusion (EDI)
Safeguarding Need

Damage of
prejudice

Damage of living
with or having to
ignore prejudice
(Prevent need)

Section 3 – Safeguarding/Prevent contexts and processes for Designated Staff and all staff.

1. Introduction - These procedures are part of an Enfield strategy to deal with child abuse, coordinated by the Area Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (M.A.S.H) and the Local Safeguarding Board (Police, Social Services, Health and Education).

The definition of 'child' in the Children Act 1989 is 'a person under the age of 18' and this document uses the term 'young person' to refer to children and young people aged 0 – 21 years.

The procedures indicate the action to be taken if there is evidence or cause for concern that young people have suffered from or are at significant risk of:

- a) Any form of abuse, including physical injury, neglect, emotional abuse and sexual abuse.
- b) Any other significant harm.

Throughout the document, the term 'member of staff' includes all management, teaching and support staff in Chickenshed, both full-time and part-time.

2. Lead Designated Staff Member and Designated Staff - Staff at senior management level are designated to act as the people responsible for ensuring that appropriate action is taken in case of abuse. The designated members of staff are responsible for co-ordinating policy and action on child protection and for informing all appropriate agencies.

3. Confidentiality and trust– Confidentiality and trust should be maintained as far as possible, but staff must act on the basis that the safety of the young person is overriding concern. Suspicion of abuse, or concern that a young person is at risk of abuse although not yet a victim, is sufficient cause to contact a designated member of staff, and the young person should be made aware of the need to do so at the earliest possible stage of disclosure. Young people may, however, wish to involve as few people as possible and every effort should be made to respect their wishes for confidentiality provided this does not prevent any action which is necessary for their protection.

An abused young person may be under severe emotional stress and may feel anxious about taking a member of staff in to their confidence. Care and sensitivity are needed to ensure firstly that the young person feels as supported

and reassured as possible, and secondly that s/he understands the need for action which will require the involvement of other staff/agencies.

4. Action to be taken

4.1 Referral to designated staff

- a) Any member of staff who suspects or knows of abuse to any child or young person aged between 0 and 21 years of age will immediately inform one of the designated staff.
- b) Disclosures to staff may also be made by members themselves who are not necessarily subject to abuse themselves but are aware or suspicious that a child is at risk in their household. In these cases too, members of staff should pass the information immediately to a designated person.
- c) Information about any case will be confined to the designated staff and executive unless it is in the interests of the young person that other members of staff involved in their welfare are informed. At all times confidentiality will be strictly respected.

4.2 Advice available to designated staff

- a) A designated member of staff may feel that there is cause for concern about a young person, but may wish to discuss the case before deciding whether or not it should be formally reported under Child Safeguarding Procedures. If the young person is an Enfield Resident, the following Officers at the London Borough of Enfield can be consulted:

The Senior Education Welfare Officers, the Chief Education Welfare Officer, the Child Safeguarding Co-ordinator, Duty Officers in area teams of Social Services or staff in the Police Safeguarding of Children Protection Unit.

- b) If the young person lives outside Enfield, consultation should be with Social Services in the borough or county of residence.

4.3 Referral to appropriate agencies

- a) Once the designated person is satisfied that there are clear grounds for suspicion or evidence that a young person has been abused, s/he will pass the information immediately by telephone to Education Welfare. Following the telephone referral, copies of the 'Child Safeguarding Referral Form' or 'Child Safeguarding Further Education Referral Form' will be sent to Education Welfare, the Child Protection Co-ordinator (Social Services, St. Andrew's House) and the Education Officer Continuing Education (the latter when concerning BTEC students).
- b) If the young person is resident in another borough, the designated person will refer the case by telephone to the appropriate home-based Social Services team. This will be followed by a 'Child Safeguarding Form: Referral from LBE', copies to Child Safeguarding Co-ordinator and Education Officer Continuing Education (the latter when concerning BTEC students).
- c) Emergency Referral: In the unusual event of an urgent, possibly life threatening situation in which staff are unable to contact the people specified in the referral procedures, emergency referral should be made to the Police Child Safeguarding Unit.
- d) The Area Child Safeguarding Team, Social Services and Education Welfare Office are always available for advice on child protection issues.

5. Recording information

- 5.1 All records should be signed and dated and placed in the Safeguarding file.
- 5.2 Designated staff will be responsible for recording information about each case and for collecting reports and notes as appropriate. The designated staff should not collect statements from the young person but should ask the member of staff who initially received the disclosure from the young person to record what s/he said.
- 5.3 The records will document every aspect of the case as it develops including grounds for initial concern, where appropriate descriptions of injuries to the young person or any worrying behaviour, records of what the young person has said, notes of any decisions reached, details of telephone calls, copies of referral forms and any information of outcomes from case conferences or other enquiries conducted by Social Services.
- 5.4 Access to records will be confined to designated staff. All records will be kept in a safe and secure place. Records should be destroyed when the person concerned reaches their 18th birthday.

6. REVIEW PROCEDURES

- 6.1 If cases have been dealt with under these procedures, designated staff will meet regularly to review the effectiveness of the process. These questions will need to be addressed:
 - a) How well was the case managed by staff?
 - b) Were the guidelines followed and were they appropriate?
 - c) Did the Company collaborate with the agencies involved in the case and how effective and co-operative were the other agencies in working with the Company? (If appropriate)
 - d) Was the right balance maintained between confidentiality and 'need to know'?
 - e) How did the Company manage the relationship with the young person and their family (if appropriate)?
 - f) Are changes needed in the procedures?
- 6.2 Any recommendations for change in the procedures will be put to the Area Child Safeguarding Team.

7. Abuse by Staff

- 7.1 It is essential in all cases of suspected abuse by a member of staff that action is taken quickly and professionally in the interest of the young person's welfare.

- 7.2** In the rare event that any member of staff suspects any other member of staff of abusing a member or student, it is their responsibility to discuss these concerns with the designated staff except where the suspect is one of these in which case the matter should be referred direct to the Executive.
- 7.3** The Executive will decide on the action to be taken in relation to the member of staff in accordance with the Company's Disciplinary Policy and Procedures. In addition the normal procedures for Child Safeguarding will be followed.

8. Disclosure of abuse at an earlier age

- 8.1** Members or students of any age may disclose to staff that they were abused as children. If the young person does not want further action to be taken, her/his wishes should be respected. However, where there is reasonable cause for concern that other children in the discloser's family may currently be at risk, Social Services in the relevant borough or county should be contacted. The young person should be made aware of this requirement at the earliest possible stage of any disclosure.
- 8.2** If the young person wants to pursue the possibility of counselling, they should be referred whether to designated staff (who hold information about external counselling agencies) or to the borough Area Child Safeguarding Committee, who will be able to provide an appropriate referral.

9. Staff Training and support

- 9.1** Training will be available:
- a) to designated staff, to enable them to perform their duties
 - b) to other staff, to raise awareness of the procedures and the issues involved
 - c) to staff who need to develop skills in relating to children, young people and parents in this context.
- 9.2** Support will be required for staff who have received disclosures; in many cases, this can be a painful and disturbing experience for the recipient, who may in some cases require counselling support. In some situations, staff may feel competent to give the victim their continuing help as a listener until professional counselling is available; in these cases, staff must ensure that designated staff are aware of the situation, that they themselves have support of some sort of appropriate counselling and that they are not drawn into a pseudo-counselling relationship with the discloser.

10. Responses by staff to members/students: some definitions

- a) Information: Usually of a general nature related to basic needs and covering many areas. Direction to further sources of information is usual.
- b) Advice: More specific at a personal level and usually related to family, school/social/economic/financial matters dependent on age. Referral to external agencies, where appropriate, can be made. Information should be related to parents/carers through the directors who have responsibility for the child's progress.
- c) First Aid Counselling: Also on a personal one-to-one level usually in a situation where confusion and distress can be apparent. The area of major concern is not always initially clear. During the course of investigation it could become evident that specialist professional counselling is essential.
- d) Professional Counselling: Conducted by qualified counsellors bound by a code of ethical practice especially related to confidentiality.

Responses to (a) and (b) can be made by all members of the Company staff (not in training) to the extent of their capabilities and knowledge of the child concerned. Information should be passed as soon as possible to the appropriate Director of either Education and Outreach or Membership or Director of Artistic Development who would be directly responsible for the young person in question and their progress and welfare. The strict bounds of confidentiality are not an integral part of these interactions, although mutual trust and respect are usually present.

Response to (c) should be through the Director who has responsibility for the child's welfare and progress – except in exceptional circumstances where there is a need for quick action and appropriate staff are not available.

Response to (d) can be made by those with a current full qualification from the British Association of Counsellors.

In all issues which involve additional action to promote the Safeguarding of an individual or group – Directors and Managers should inform the Safeguarding/Prevent Lead Officer through a member of the Designated Safeguarding Team.

11 - Procedures for Protection of Data, Photographs, Recordings and Images of children, young people and vulnerable/at risk adults.

Introduction

Children, young people and vulnerable/at risk adults need to have their data, images and recordings protected appropriately from misuse and Safeguarding breaches whether intentional or unintentional. The parents/carers, families and responsible agencies overseeing care also have the

right to be assured of this protection and Safeguarding oversight. Chickenshed's General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) Policy and arrangements deal with the legalities behind this protection. However the Safeguarding aspects of this protection are covered by this Safeguarding and Prevent Policy as outlined in the following processes in Section 11.1

- 11.1 Processes to Safeguard the data, photographs, film and images of children and vulnerable /at risk adults include the following;
- A. Only designated staff from Education and divisions dealing with children and vulnerable/at risk adults have access to and are able to give permission for any data, photographs, film and images for those target groups to be taken or used for designated, safe, appropriate purposes. Parent/ Carer permission to take, store and use this information as appropriate has been sought at application and acceptance stages and again if any specific, appropriate events require the use and protection of this information.
 - B. All data, photographs, film and images are securely stored in locked and key code protected offices or alternatively in secure data storage electronically protected with regularly reviewed and amended log in and password procedures overseen by ICT and Data Managers.
 - C. Any breaches regarding the misuse, abuse or potential misuse or abuse of children's data and other information by staff or volunteers will make the staff member or volunteer responsible subject to disciplinary proceedings and potential termination of employment and if necessary and where appropriate - referral to the police.
Staff, volunteers, students, adult members and adult youth company members are all subject to Enhanced DBS procedures to ensure any historical propensity to misuse of data or images etc is picked up and acted on for the protection of children and vulnerable/ at risk adults.
 - D. Chickenshed staff work tirelessly with its children, students, members, vulnerable /at risk adults, volunteers, and all adults to advise, train and disseminate appropriate information on the safe, personal use of data, internet, social media and other areas where personal data, images and information need to be protected for Safeguarding purposes from unrestricted or careless sharing. Children and young people are also made aware of their own responsibilities to treat the data of others including social media interchanges with care and respect.
 - E. Wherever possible DBS checked staff and volunteers known to and recommended to Chickenshed are used to take necessary photographs or filmed material. Where external providers are used strict checks are made by Chickenshed managers to ensure that providers negotiate a clear, appropriate brief which is fit for purpose and which limitations are observed under supervision by those managers.
 - F. Chickenshed has a Designated Safeguarding/Prevent Team of 6 members who occupy senior staff roles in all organisation areas where data, photographs, filmed material and images of children students and vulnerable/at risk adults are likely to be taken. This provision allows for a quick flow and interchange of advice, guidance and clarification on all potential Safeguarding issues in relation to data, information etc - ensuring an extra layer of safety and care for target groups.

Section 4

General Safeguarding Management Oversight and Training

1. Chickenshed reviews its Safeguarding and Prevent Policies for Children and Vulnerable Adults/Adults at Risk annually.
2. Chickenshed Executive and Management Board meeting have Safeguarding and Prevent issues as an Agenda item with Management Board meeting minutes circulated to the Trustee Board.
3. Chickenshed embed Safeguarding and Prevent training for Staff and Students and Youth Company into regular Staff Meeting, Student Representation and Youth Company meeting cycles. Training couples general safeguarding and Prevent definitions and procedural advice with direct links and connections to Chickenshed's inclusive practice and situation as a Theatre, Further and Higher Education provider, Outreach provider and Youth/Child Community Company.

Home/Education Venue/Chickenshed

4. Chickenshed is very much aware of the need to create and maintain positive, inclusive and adaptable communication channels for the young people and vulnerable/ at risk adults who collectively form the organisation's beneficiary groups. Only with such channels being open, well-resourced and responsive will children, young people and other beneficiaries feel confident to communicate safeguarding or potential safeguarding issues whether these occur at home, school, work or even within Chickenshed itself.
Chickenshed maintain high staff/adult to child/ student ratios in order to maintain these positive, open communication channels. Chickenshed also maintain a strong, responsive Mentor/ Support team working closer to beneficiaries to in turn enable those beneficiaries to discuss Safeguarding (including Prevent) issues at an earlier stage of potential advice and support.

Mental Health

5. Chickenshed understand and actively plan and cater for issues where safeguarding and the mental health of beneficiaries are directly or indirectly linked. For teenagers and young adults at risk within Chickenshed activities the connection of mental health and safeguarding issues is always one of the most important and pressing areas of need. Chickenshed provide a network of Mentor, Specialist Mentor and Counselling support systems to enable open, communication channels to be maintained and intensified to respond to this need.

Grooming and Exploitation

6. Chickenshed are very conscious of the multiple threat to safeguarding posed by both adults-grooming children and young people AND older teenagers/young adults potentially grooming younger teenagers. These threats can lead both to more recognised abusive situations across the abuse spectrum, particularly sexual, physical, emotional and online abuse) but also leave younger and older teenagers open to the less known exploitation and gang/drug-related, organised paedophile network abuse prevalent in County Lines, Modern Day Slavery, Prevent and other types of organised abuse with multiple perpetrator networks.
Chickenshed works actively across its beneficiary groups both internally and externally through Outreach to educate children and young people in the Safeguarding risks posed by exploitation in its many modern forms. Provision of the wide Mentor/Support staff systems and ratios together with open inclusive communication channels work towards the goals of both preventative advice and guidance and also proactive support if beneficiaries find themselves already exposed to risk. Links

to local Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (Safeguarding Boards) and Prevent local and regional advisory services (including Channel) are known and ready to be activated in situations of need by Chickenshed designated Safeguarding staff.

Safeguarding Experience, Knowledge and Understanding

7. Chickenshed as a proactive, inclusive provider seeks to minimise and ultimately reduce and eliminate the equality gaps which may occur between beneficiaries from so called "mainstream" and "special" or "discrete" or "separate" education and community backgrounds. Sometimes this difference in past experience and expectations can relate directly or indirectly to differences and gaps in knowledge and understanding of Safeguarding expectations and behavioural and emotional boundaries. This can be particularly in relation to adult - child, adult - young person boundaries and communication and emotional relationship boundaries.

Chickenshed is committed first and foremost as an important part of safeguarding policy to ensure all children, young people and vulnerable adults/ adults at risk are safe and benefit from robust safeguarding support and oversight. Where there are gaps in understanding of safe behaviour and boundaries in any individuals- ongoing consultation and support will be put in place by the Designated Safeguarding team. Also managers working with beneficiaries will accelerate education and understanding and both protect all beneficiaries whilst ensuring that individuals are not placed in positions where they are at risk of blurring or misunderstanding safeguarding boundaries.

External Agencies

8. Chickenshed makes every effort possible to ensure that the external agencies which relate to a beneficiary's past experience of safeguarding issues and interventions at any stage of the awareness, communication or referral process – are consulted and communicated to. This is to ensure further the open, multi-agency approaches to safeguarding are used – and also to acknowledge that a beneficiary's safeguarding issues may well need, or already have, multi-agency involvement.

Online Abuse

Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable/At Risk Adults and Online Abuse.

Chickenshed is extremely aware of the risks to children, young people and vulnerable/ at risk adults represented by potential and real online abuse. Where individuals are harassed, bullied, groomed online or are exposed to inappropriate material online it can damage both feelings of safety and security with technology and its benefits and also damage an individual's Mental Health and well-being in temporary or permanent ways. Such online abuse can also lead to very real Safeguarding dangers with individuals being potentially coerced and/or groomed to carry out inappropriate, unsafe actions which could put them in physical harm unknown to parents/carers/responsible agencies looking out for their welfare.

Processes in place where potential online abuse of an individual is suspected follow the same general structure for all safeguarding and prevent issues and are set out in section 2 of this policy. Additional issues to be aware of where online abuse situations are discovered through oversight or disclosure are as follows.

- A. The disclosure of abuse or discovery may be vital but should still be treated within good safeguarding practice guidelines in terms of listening without prejudice, not leading disclosure, not promising confidentiality and reassuring the victim.
- B. Record keeping, as in any safeguarding situation is important and may involve screen shots text messages, social media posts and other virtual records. Individuals may need support to access and communicate disclosure information.

- C. The same processes regarding informing the head Safeguarding Officer and/or Safeguarding Team members for advice, guidance and process information apply as in usual Safeguarding Policy practice. Contacting external agencies or police if an individual appears to be in immediate danger and Safeguarding Team cannot be contacted, would also apply.
- D. Post disclosure protection advice may be needed to block further abuse and the Safeguarding Team may need and take technical advice internally or externally to implement this. Ongoing advice and guidance will be needed.
- E. The need to inform parents/carers and/or responsible external agencies overseeing the care of the individual will be necessary unless the online abuse disclosure relates to these individuals. Advice from the Safeguarding Team will be necessary in order to communicate effectively and safely with those who may need information.
- F. General advice and guidance on following issues of internet safety, security and potential abuse/misuse of online processes will then be needed or reinforced to other groups of children, young people, students and vulnerable adults with Policies and processes also reviewed within the ever-changing online environment.

Section 5

Chickenshed Prevent Policy

As part of Chickenshed's Safeguarding for Children and Vulnerable Adults/Adults at Risk Policy

Chickenshed's Prevent Policy is a subsection of the Organisation's overall Safeguarding Policy Framework. Whilst Prevent Policy and guidelines are more relevant to Chickenshed's Adult and Higher Education Provision – the Policy is also included in Chickenshed's Safeguarding of Children Policy due to the fact that Further Education Students and some members of the Youth Company are under the age of 18 and are thus defined under Safeguarding guidance as Children/ therefore the Prevent Policy guidance sub-section is included in both the Child and Adult Safeguarding Policy Framework.

Chickenshed **PREVENT POLICY**

1. Introduction

Chickenshed is an Alternative Higher Education provider and FE and Youth beneficiary provider is committed to both enabling its current processes to follow Prevent procedures – but also to maintain

Policy contexts for potential future developments. Chickenshed is an inclusive organisation – widely respected for its inclusive policies and practice across its education and theatre arts activities. The organisation aims to follow these inclusive aims in relation to its Safeguarding and Prevent provision.

1.1 Government Policy dictated the need to legislate in order to reduce the terrorism threat to the UK. In 2015 the Government passed the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act which specifically addresses the role of Universities and Alternative HE Providers (APs) and for the first time brings them under direct statutory provision in this respect under the Prevent Duty. Chickenshed is housing its Prevent Duty Policy and processes within its Safeguarding Policy and processes.

1.2 The Act covers a number of areas including monitoring of students the use of IT on campus, the management of premises, as well as the provision of adequate student welfare support. Key Issues covered include:

1.2.1 Risk Assessment

Chickenshed has carried out a risk assessment proportionate to the size and complexity of the institution which will always be under review and formally once a year. This will include satisfying itself and partners that appropriate policies and procedures are in place to help identify and support any individuals who may be vulnerable to issues related to the Prevent Duty and provide clear management oversight of risks. Chickenshed is a small Alternative Provider (A.P.) with 70+ Higher Education students on site. This is the current position and thus as a small provider the strength of our Prevent and Safeguarding provision is in the provision of excellent inclusive support, mentoring and monitoring which is managed and regularly evaluated and strengthened – so maximising the monitoring and sharing of information process and thus minimising risk.

1.2.2 Prevent Policy as part of overall Chickenshed Safeguarding Policy

This Policy constitutes a clear individualised to Chickenshed Prevent Policy which although part of the Company's Safeguarding of Adults 'at risk' policy is best treated as a separate document and represented by a single named person who is the 'Prevent Coordinator' for the organisation. Paul Morrall is the Prevent Lead and LEAD Safeguarding Officer for children and for Adults "at risk". Safeguarding processes are related directly to Prevent processes as concerns which may require investigation, support and possible referral following similar processes with borough Safeguarding Boards/Teams also being the Single Point of Entry (SPOE) for Prevent purposes. 'Prevent' Duty boards in Enfield, (Chickenshed's host borough) come under the Area Safeguarding Board processes with defined 'Area Leads'. Chickenshed would look to these Area Board representatives for guidance where appropriate and also consult with Higher Education or Regional representatives should this prove necessary (See Figure 1)

1.2.3 External Speakers

Chickenshed has clear policies and procedures for deciding how individuals or groups are invited on to the theatre venue to provide learning or training opportunities for students. Individuals with "extreme" views across the political spectrum who may potentially compromise Chickenshed's Inclusive policies and practices would be subject to internal scrutiny prior to invitation with advice sought where appropriate. There is a Prevent Risk Assessment and Freedom of Speech Policy/Code of Practice for 'External Delivery Agencies' which cover these invitation and internal scrutiny processes. Chickenshed offers small individualised inclusive HE provision with open clear inclusive support offered to, and asked for by students throughout course work and non-curriculum activity. This open communication relationship between students and students and staff is key to ensuring concerns about 'external'

groups/individuals can be raised and supported before, during or after events.

1.2.4 Safeguarding/Prevent Boards – Single Point of Entry (SPOE) Area Prevent Leads and Channel

The 'Channel' program is a voluntary process for people at risk of radicalisation. The process of engagement with the Channel process will be a recommendation where there is significant risk of potential 'Radicalisation' or 'Extremism' with clear expectations for individuals to receive support and benefit from multi-agency working. Chickenshed will regularly update itself on the requirements of "Channel" as part of its Prevent Policy.

For the purposes of this Policy the 'Channel' program is only activated as a potential 'Red' stage process in the Red, Amber, Green risk weighting procedure. Referral to Chickenshed Prevent/Safeguarding Lead, investigation followed if necessary by, referral to Area Prevent Lead and/or Policy – are all stages which precede the more formal and rare Government 'Channel' process. The 'Channel' process is 'usually triggered through Area Lead or Police advisory processes and intervention. Chickenshed would be open to providing information at any of these stages and liaising with all required agencies in this process. (Please see Figure 2)

2.2 Three main counter terrorism strategies relevant to Chickenshed policy have been identified by government as to be covered by the Prevent agenda and processes.

(a) The use of ICT filtering processes as appropriate. Chickenshed has processes in place to satisfy requests for information on these procedures and discuss these with students and staff. 9See Chickenshed Prevent Duty Risk Assessment and Action Plan)

(b) Advice by Area Prevent Leads and informal advice from Police agencies/Social Services agencies – Chickenshed has positive Safeguarding advisory links with local police/social services both distance and in person – which are activated when community Safeguarding issues, which affect the Safeguarding of children or adults 'at risk' - arise.

(c) Awareness of the potential targeting of individuals (particularly students) who may be susceptible to grooming by radical or terrorist groups. Chickenshed has inclusive mentor and support systems and extremely positive staff to student ratios to raise awareness of and counter concerns wherever they arise.

2.3 All of these strategies have a direct impact on Chickenshed HE student operations particularly in relation to protecting students from radicalisation/extremist influences. Chickenshed recognises the wide range of anti-equality/inclusion, extremist radicalisation strands which can take place and will act to ensure none of these strands compromise the Company's Inclusive equality agenda or compromise the Safeguarding of our students.

2.4 Currently the law affecting Higher Education Organisations in relation to radicalisation includes:

- (i) The UK Human Rights Act 1998
- (ii) The Race Relations Act (Amended) 2000
- (iii) The Terrorism Act 2000 (Section 1:1 & 1:4)
- (iv) The Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001
- (v) The Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005
- (vi) The Terrorism Act 2006
- (vii) The Counter-Terrorism Act 2008
- (viii) The Equality Act 2010
- (ix) The Counter Terrorism and Security Bill (2015)

Other Potential Guidance Documents

Additionally there exists a range of policy documents issued from, or in relation to, the Home Office which directly relate to Alternative Providers and universities in relation to the Prevent Agenda including:

- (1) Protecting children and young people from Radicalisation. The Prevent Duty (D.F.E 2015)
- (2) Promoting Good Campus Relations (Universities UK/Equality Challenge Unit) 2005 & Institutional Imperative Update 2007.

(3) Religious Observance in Higher Education. Equality Challenge Unit 2009. (Chickenshed does not at present have direct facilities for religious observance (eg prayer rooms/chapels/chaplaincy etc. These have not been indicated yet as a need by our Student Engagement processes. Should this provision become a future need. Chickenshed would, at present, seek permission for our students to use partner facilities. We would buy this process in for our students to use education partner venues and access partner policies for this. There are no plans or resources at present to organise prayer rooms/chapels etc. within theatre grounds.

(4) HM Prevent Strategy 2011.

(5) Prevent, Police and Universities: Guidance for Police Staff to Help Higher Education Institutions Contribute to the Prevention of Terrorism. ACPO 2012.

(6) Working together to Safeguard Children and Young People (HM Government 2015)

3. **The Prevent Agenda in Chickenshed**

3.1 The Prevent agenda is led in Chickenshed by the Prevent Lead reporting to the Executive who is the single named person titled 'Prevent Lead' (PL) as required by the 2015 Act. This post holder liaises with the wider Safeguarding Team, Executive Management Board and Support/Mentoring Team together with all staff who work with students. This staff member will deal with immediate risk assessments in conjunction with advice from partners, Area Prevent Boards or representatives from Police where necessary or appropriate. The Prevent lead will also facilitate training in Prevent processes either through attending training and cascading information or organising training engagement for staff.

4. **Student Representation Processes**

4.1 Student Representatives look to Higher Education staff to be responsible for protecting students in the Theatre from exposure to dangerous or radical bodies who may affect the inclusion of students. The overall control of access lies firmly with Chickenshed in the final instance and any student body is specifically subject to Chickenshed's Prevent Policy. The student representative body at Chickenshed is the 'Student Experience Committee' who have direct access to support and staff advice and training on all issues, including Safeguarding and Prevent.

4.2 Students are asked to follow specific policies related to Safeguarding issues including Prevent, this to include on-line activities. Students will be enabled to safely report extremist activities that e.g. legitimise terrorism or any form of anti-equality, anti-inclusion activity and help Chickenshed to maintain awareness of such activity or issues. Students will have a direct working relationship with the Prevent Lead and Safeguarding staff. To enable this key process and cross-university working relationships, Students will receive and discuss Prevent information both as a Student Experience Group and in the wider student body. This is to enable safe respectful and open communication on all Safeguarding, including Prevent, issues and concerns – with this being an important aspect of the culture of inclusion within the organisation.

4.3 In order to ensure student protection therefore Chickenshed requires that the Student Experience Group acting with the University complies with the following:

4.3.1 **Access and Control**

- (i) No presentation performance artistic, spiritual or philosophical event hosted by students (internal or external) may be permitted unless cleared by Chickenshed and the Prevent Lead following the Freedom of Speech/Code of Practice 'External Delivery Agencies' document.
- (ii) Any student group wishing to host such an event will speak to the Prevent Coordinator for consultation, detailing participant/organiser/performer/speaker history and background and purpose of the event.
- (iii) The Prevent Coordinator will, as part of Due Diligence action a check on all events, and proposed performers, groups, speakers using prior knowledge or if appropriate advice through the Red Amber, Green/Single Point of Entry (RAG/SPOE) processes. External Agencies will be asked to provide advice and guidance, where necessary,(eg if the past history and background of the participant is unclear or not known to Chickenshed)

(iv) External bookings for conferences, hospitality and/or academic speakers are treated in the same way thus ensuring that Chickenshed knows at all times who is at the Theatre and why, in compliance with statutory Prevent legislation. At present, these bookings are not an issue and staff and students often discuss and agree potential external invitations which are usually to well-known performance practitioners or for specific productions. However, clear Policy is in place for use, as appropriate, to avoid complacency.

(v) Chickenshed follows regular Higher Education partner practice in that; No specific religious, spiritual or philosophical groups may form societies if identified with a single denominational or sectarian perspective. No such groups exist at present in our small Higher Education cohort. Specific churches, mosques, etc., would not become a society as these would be in competition with generic student groups/representative groups. External leadership to a society is not permitted. Chickenshed, at present, has not had an issue with groups requesting separate set-up. However this policy would be updated if such requests come forward.

(vi) All speakers/groups addressing students or staff dealing with artistic religious, spiritual or philosophical issues (who have been RAG/SPOE vetted and approved through consultation with Prevent Lead) must comply with 'Freedom of Speech/Code of Practice' practices as must all students within Chickenshed inclusive Policy and practice processes.)

(vii) Any contentious or security issues that might affect the safety of staff or students or the reputational integrity of Chickenshed are referred to the Prevent/Safeguarding Lead, Director of Education and Outreach.

5. Matters of Concern or Instances Requiring Immediate Response

5.1 In the event of a staff member, student, volunteer or member becoming concerned by an event, occurrence or person at the Theatre; they will, in the first instance, inform their line manager/Director who will then contact the Prevent Lead. The Prevent Lead will assess the situation and, in consultation with the Safeguarding team and Executive, make a decision about the seriousness of the situation documenting process and gathering evidence as needed and storing securely and confidentially.

5.2 If necessary the Prevent Lead will then contact the appropriate Area Prevent Lead and/or Police representation dependent on the severity of the situation, in consultation with the Executive. The Prevent Lead, having contacted the agencies, will then copy emails and relevant documents, including timelines and a narrative of events from the staff concerned and hold them in the Safeguarding/Prevent file for reference which is confidential and kept secure.

5.3 If there is grave or immediate concern of danger to life, individuals would call 999 first and then inform the Prevent Lead.

6. Advanced Referral – Police and 'Channel'

6.1 The Prevent Lead will maintain the primary link with the Area Prevent Team/Board, the Police and other agencies. Under the 2015 Act universities are required to provide information and cooperate with locally appointed Channel panels that may be assessing the needs of at risk students. The Prevent Lead will action any such request with Area Prevent Lead/Police consultation. S/he will attend all meetings, training and briefing events offered by statutory agencies in this regard and be primarily responsible for maintaining Chickenshed's statutory Prevent response, under the authority of the Executive.

8. Staff Training and Awareness

8.1 Prevent and Safeguarding Training is an important priority aspect of Chickenshed's response to the Prevent Duty – with different levels of training needed for staff with direct or indirect contact with students and vulnerable groups. Training and advice for students as part of this process is also important to enable them to be proactive with their understanding and awareness. Students should engage in debate and workshop activity to extend, deepen and test this understanding.

8.2 The Prevent Coordinator will attend training events and briefings for Prevent Development as appropriate and will brief relevant staff and student groups.

8.3 Training, review and specific briefing are key components of the Prevent agenda and are a central part of the Prevent. In this regard:

- Staff will be trained on an on-going process so that specific training can be delivered to individual staff bespoke to their needs in accordance with statutory requirements. Groups to be trained include Executive/ Management Board, Higher Education (Further Education) Course teams and Inclusive Support/ Mentor Teams plus student experience group and students. This list is not exclusive.
- Training will need to be refreshed each year or earlier to ensure currency and to take new developments into account.

9. Requests from the Police/Security Services and the Sharing of Information

9.1 All such requests are handled by the Prevent Lead, Executive and Building Manager (representing the Management Board) in accordance with current legislation. The Prevent Lead is informed of any 'Prevent' relevant information requests. There is however a duty under the 2015 Act requiring the sharing of information, under specific circumstances, in relation to multi-agency forums including Channel and the Home Office HE/FE Prevent Coordinator. When considering sharing personal information Chickenshed will take account of:

9.1.1 Necessity, Proportionality and Confidentiality

Key to determining the necessity and proportionality of sharing information will be the professional judgement of the risks to the individual concerned or the public as advised by the Prevent Lead/Safeguarding Team after consultation where necessary the area with Safeguarding Board and/or Area Prevent Lead.

9.1.2 Consent

Wherever possible the consent of the person concerned would be obtained before sharing the information.

10. Risk Assessment

10.11 Risk Assessment is actioned through constant monitoring by Chickenshed in terms of external access and by referral and review. Additionally Chickenshed Risk Assessment issues, are to be kept under constant review and reported on at least annually to the Executive/ Education/ Artistic Management Board. The Prevent Lead is also to maintain a research link to Area Prevent Lead guidance to establish best practice and emerging risk in this regard. Safeguarding and Prevent are to be kept as regular agenda items for Chickenshed management meetings with senior staff including Executive and Senior Higher Education staff.

11. Policy Review

The Prevent situation in terms of both statutory regulation and emerging risk factors, is changing rapidly. It is essential therefore that this policy is kept under constant review by the Prevent Coordination and brought back to the Executive and Education and Artistic Management Board on at least an annual basis for formal review.

Figure One – Consultation on External Groups/Individuals in relation to Prevent issues (Please also see the Freedom of Speech Policy/Code of Practice on External Delivery Agencies)
External

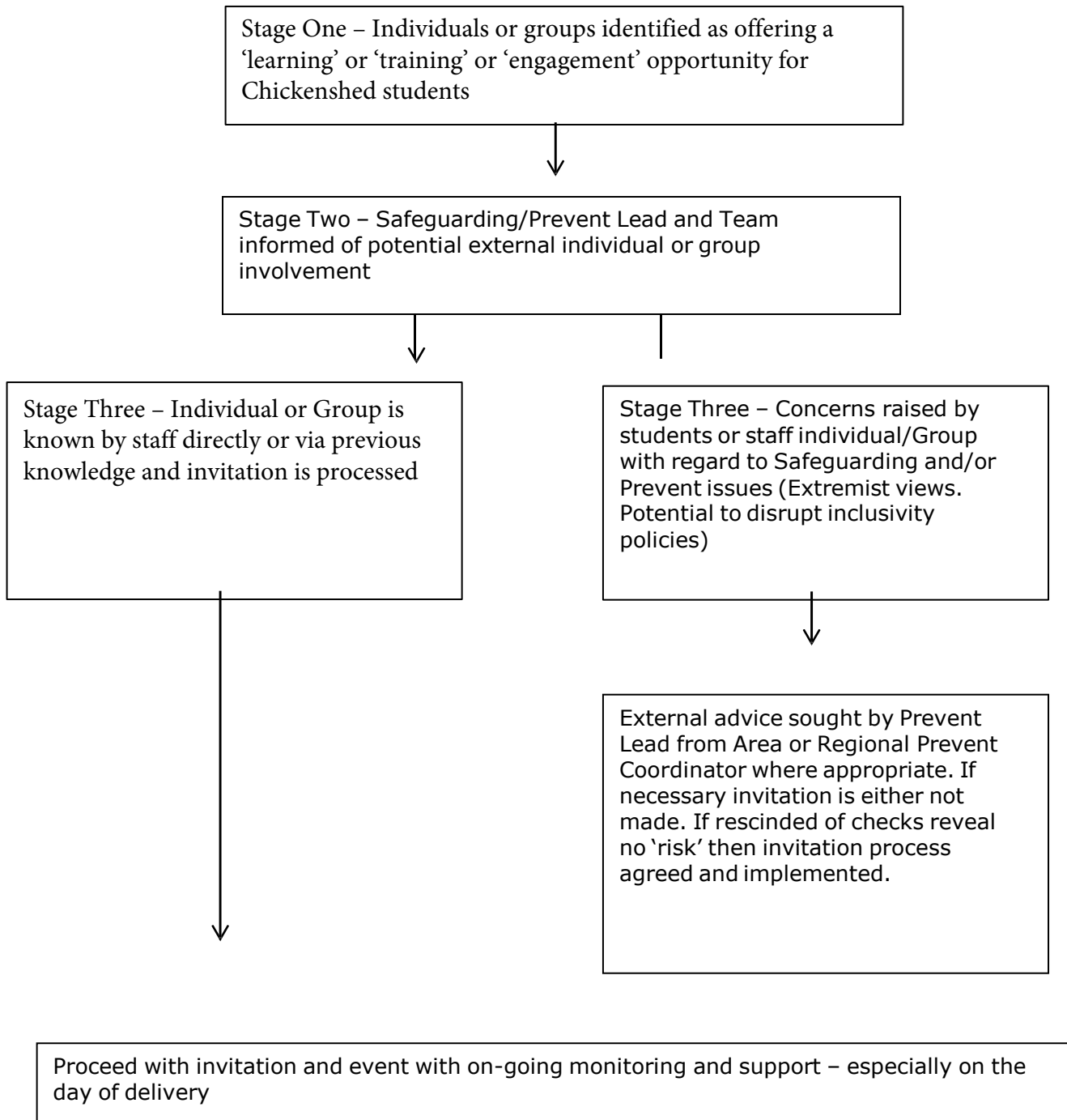
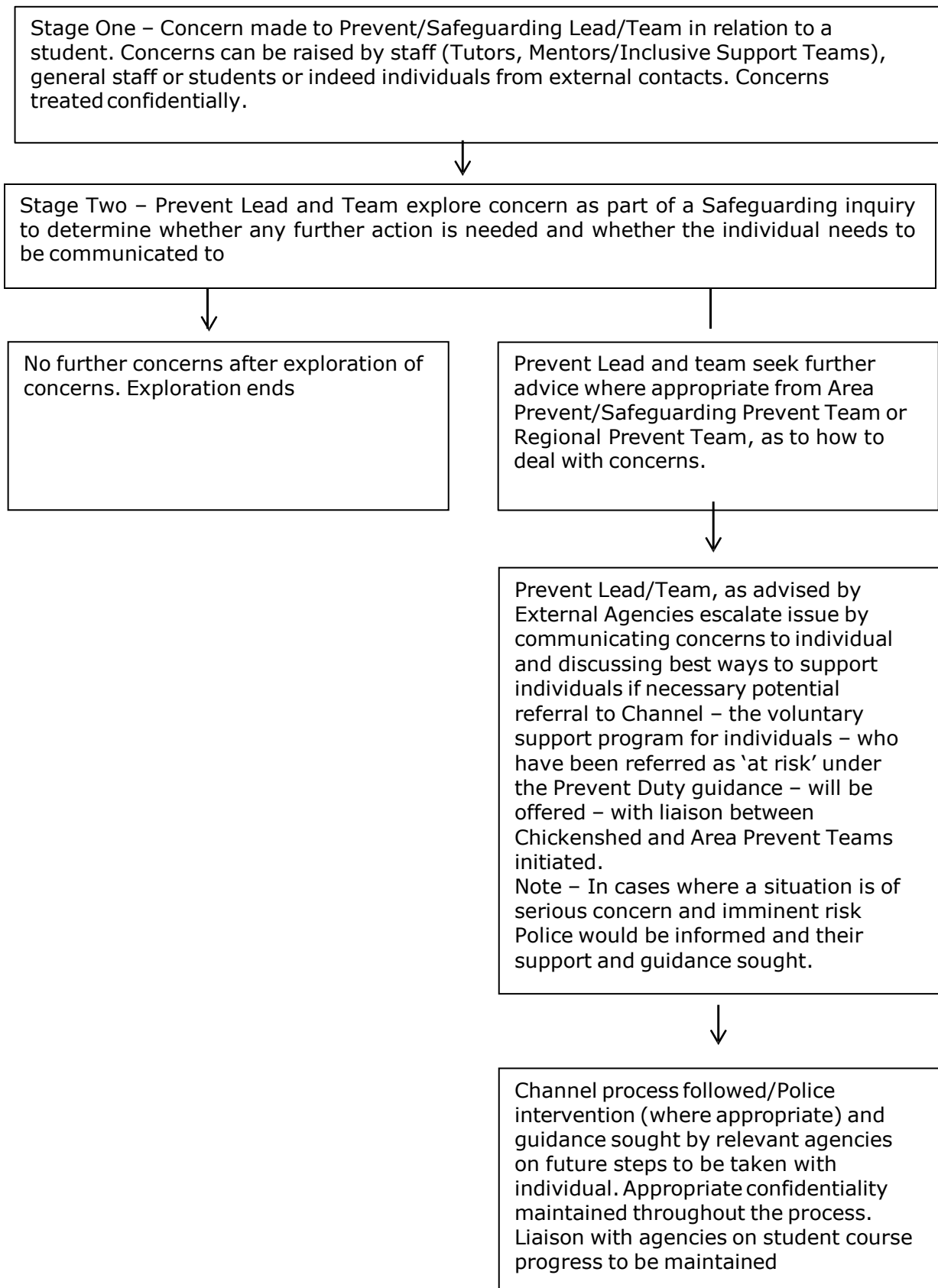


Figure 2
Chickenshed 'Prevent Duty – Decision on Referral Process



Chickenshed Signs of Potential Safeguarding Concern/Path to Abuse, Neglect or Barriers of Development to Regular Milestones

1. Sudden or prolonged difficulty in communication with individual and/or home
2. Prolonged absence or very intermittent attendance
3. Sudden and prolonged need for an individual to isolate themselves even within a group.
4. Obsessive Social Media behaviour or need or fear (Radicalisation, Sexual grooming, online bullying or exploitation)
5. Sudden possible over dependence on an adult or older young person - unexplained. Unusual demands. Potential grooming.
6. Repeated lateness of pick up time or bringing in with patchy reasons
7. Prolonged unexplained shortages of money and signs of lack of care. Prolonged unexplained access to larger sums of money.
8. Sudden unexplained long breaks from Chickenshed activity through holiday.
9. Sudden unexplained or not realistically explained changes in behaviour or attitudes or language. Potential exposure to inappropriate behaviour from others or inappropriate material.
10. Unexplained or possibly unreasonable requests not to mention something to family or "hide" something from family.
11. Over dependence on / access to substances
12. Sudden signs of an individual being over-controlled in a relationship. Or being over controlling.
13. Signs of vulnerability due to change in personal or family circumstances.
14. Signs of vulnerability around creative themes or subject matter.

Section 6 - Chickenshed Safeguarding Advantages and Extra Focus Areas of an Inclusive Approach

1. Team Approach.

Team Teaching, Team Mentoring, Team Support, Team working Approach

Team Safeguarding oversight better than Single oversight

2. Inclusive support from beneficiaries.

Who notices what first?

Chains of oversight

Peer to peer Safeguarding

3. Communication

Child, Youth and "Vulnerable/At risk adult voice"

You can most easily safeguard what you hear and see.

Open channels of communication and expression make Safeguarding clearer and easier

4. High Expectations vs Awareness of differences in experiences.

Experience can be limited generating naivety with boundaries.

5. Mixed Age Groups

Extra focus area.

Extra layers of support both for staff and from staff.

6. Everyone's Responsibility

Safeguarding is a "Direct" and "less direct" (not indirect) responsibility for all staff.

7a Comparison of Safeguarding Need or Comparison of Vulnerability

Area of extra focus

Inclusive environment can lead to a "how can my issue be important in comparison to his/her issue" question.

So individuals may keep an issue hidden.

7b The opposite of 7a also can exist. The availability of care, mentoring, support can occasionally lead to "need envy". That in itself can be another level of need.

8. Theatre, Performing Arts and Safeguarding

Whether Theatre allows for mental "escape" from a situation OR it allows for a parallel life situation to be explored OUTSIDE the individual - Or both -

Theatre can lead Safeguarding practice in the same way we believe it can lead other aspects of the curriculum.

WHISTLEBLOWING: POLICY & PROCEDURE INCLUDING SAFEGUARDING AND PREVENT RELATED WHISTLEBLOWING PROCESSES

POLICY

The Company encourages a free and open culture in its dealings between the Executive, employees and all people with whom it engages in business and legal relations. In particular, the Company recognises that effective and honest communication is essential if concerns about breaches or failures are to be effectively dealt with and the Company's success ensured. This is particularly relevant to concerns related to Safeguarding/Prevent Policy breaches which it is essential to communicate as and when they occur and whomsoever they may involve.

This policy is designed to provide guidance to all those who work with or within the Company who may from time to time feel that they need to raise certain issues relating to the Company with someone in confidence or in relation to Safeguarding/Prevent either with Designated Team members or Managers who can communicate with this team.

PROCEDURE

1. This policy will apply in cases where employees genuinely and in good faith believe that one of the following sets of circumstances is occurring, has occurred or may occur within the Company:

- That Safeguarding/Prevent abuse issues or events have occurred or suspected to have occurred or where there has been disclosure of abuse or potential abuse.
- That a criminal offence has been committed, is being committed or is likely to be committed.
- That a person has failed, is failing or is likely to fail to comply with any legal obligation he or she is subject.
- That a miscarriage of justice has occurred, is occurring or is likely to occur.
- That the health and safety of any individual has been, is being or is likely to be endangered.
- That the environment has been, is being or is likely to be damaged.
- That information tending to show any matter falling within any one of the preceding points has been, is being or is likely to be deliberately concealed.

While it is not necessary that employees prove the breach or failure that they are alleging has occurred or is likely to occur, and are simply raising a reasonable suspicion, they should note that they will not be protected from the consequences of making such a disclosure if, by doing so, they commit a criminal offence or if they make the disclosure motivated by a reason which is proven to be not in good faith and to be malicious and motivated by a personal self-interest and possibly vexatious.

2. If employees wish to raise or discuss any issues which might fall into the above category they should contact the Safeguarding Team H.R. Administrator or in his or her absence or in any other circumstances the Theatre Manager, who will treat the matter in confidence. In such cases it is likely that further investigation will be necessary and employees may be required to attend a disciplinary or investigative hearing as a witness. Appropriate steps will be taken to ensure that their working environment and/or

working relationship are not prejudiced by the fact of the disclosure.

In the case of a Safeguarding concern the Safeguarding Lead and your Line Manager should be contacted and the Safeguarding Lead will advise on recording of concerns if there is a disclosure and will discuss suspicious in a confidential manner. In the event a child or vulnerable adult is in immediate danger – it may be necessary to call the Police or Social Services. The Lead Safeguarding Officer and Safeguarding/Prevent Team can advise.

3. If employees reasonably believe that the relevant failure (one of the set of circumstances listed above under Clause 1) relates wholly or mainly to the conduct of a person other than their employer or any other matter for which a person other than the Company has legal responsibility, then they should make that disclosure to the relevant Safeguarding Team Member, Manager and/or HR representative. (If the whistleblowing issue is not related to Safeguarding)

Also employees may make such a disclosure to <http://www.pcaw.co.uk/>, the leading authority on public interest whistleblowing, if they consider that it has an interest in the matter and, despite the best efforts of the Company, employees believe that disclosure within the Company is inappropriate or has been unsuccessful. Disclosures made to employees' legal advisors in the course of obtaining legal advice will be protected.

In the case of a Safeguarding/Prevent issue – the appropriate external Safeguarding Prevent Area Board/Safeguarding Hub can be contacted if there is a concern that the issue is not being heard or dealt with appropriately.

4. Employees should be aware that the policy will apply where a disclosure is made in good faith and where you reasonably believe that the information disclosed and any allegation contained in it are substantially true. If any disclosure is made in bad faith (for instance, in order to cause disruption within the Company), or concerns information which employees do not substantially believe is true, or indeed if the disclosure is made for personal gain, then such a disclosure will constitute a disciplinary offence for the purposes of the Company's Disciplinary Policy & Procedures. In the case of a Safeguarding/Prevent disclosure the 'bad faith' use of such a disclosure is also relevant. However it should also be noted that the Safeguarding of children, young people and vulnerable/at risk adults is the overriding primary concern and so, when in doubt, the employee should err on the side of safety and report concerns for discussion with Safeguarding Lead or Team – who can advise on the viability of concerns and also advise on next steps. If their concerns involve another employee Chickenshed has a duty to protect employees making or reporting disclosure – from any repercussions associated with their 'good faith' reporting.

Chickenshed Safeguarding of Children/PREVENT & Child Welfare Policy

Chickenshed has a designated Safeguarding/Prevent Team of six managers who cover all areas of the organisation's activity.

Safeguarding Officers

Our Safeguarding Officers lead on ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our learners. If you are experiencing abuse, violence, bullying or neglect – or if you know of someone who is – talk to us.

Who do you talk to about Safeguarding?



Paul Morrall Lead Safeguarding and Prevent Officer
Director of Education,
Training & Outreach



Matthew Lyons
Head of Young Company



Charlotte Bull
Children's Theatre
Programme Manager



Jojo Morrall
Head of Education
Programmes & Projects



Robin Shillinglaw
Youth Theatre & BTEC
Yr 1 Programme Manager



Georgie Jacobs
Children's Theatre &
CKC Creative
Producer

Paul Morrall

Paul Morrall Lead Safeguarding and Prevent Officer Email:
PaulM@chickenshed.org.uk Tel: 02082162741

Section 7 – Virtual Delivery to External Organisations and Beneficiaries

Appendix for Chickenshed Safeguarding of Children

Chickenshed Guidance for Working Virtually/ Remotely with Outreach Groups and Beneficiaries

Introduction

In general the Safeguarding steps which Chickenshed takes for working live, in person, with external beneficiary groups, either in their venues or at Chickenshed should be reproduced as far as possible when working virtually with these groups. The inclusive care oversight and communication channels which are arranged for beneficiaries in person should be arranged for beneficiaries in virtual situations. For the most part though there will be an external organisation Chickenshed will be liaising with when delivering activities and this organisation will, in the vast majority of situations, have it's own Safeguarding strategies and mechanisms which Chickenshed will need to link up with and adhere to. Where it becomes obvious that an organisation does not operate sufficient Safeguarding oversight policies and procedures a decision should be taken as to whether the activity can run under Chickenshed's own Safeguarding policy and processes. If not a further decision as to whether the activity should go ahead or be cancelled in light of potential Safeguarding risk should be made.

Issues for Safeguarding oversight for delivery of Outreach activity to external beneficiary groups would include the following;

1. External Delivery Situations

Chickenshed teams delivering the external virtual activity should be aware of and plan for the type of virtual delivery situation they are managing.

- A. A situation where the Chickenshed delivery team is in one place and the beneficiary group are in one space should always be aimed for as a first choice. The fewer technical virtual connections that need to be made the more effective Safeguarding monitoring will be.
- B. A Secondary delivery choice would be where the Chickenshed team is in one space and the beneficiary group are in multiple spaces eg homes. Or the beneficiaries are in one space and the Chickenshed team are in multiple spaces.
- C. The third choice delivery model is where both the Chickenshed team AND the beneficiary team are in multiple spaces. Again minimising the number of spaces where virtual activity is delivered or received minimises Safeguarding risk. Where there are multiple delivery spaces and multiple beneficiary spaces then the Safeguarding oversight for Chickenshed and the external organisation needs to be extended with additional support from staff usually being the most effective method of extending support.

2. Virtual Session and beneficiary organisation

Wherever possible Chickenshed should arrange for the external organisation or partner being worked with to take responsibility for setting up virtual connection links, invitations and waiting room management.

Chickenshed, as the external provider, should avoid wherever possible taking responsibility for these virtual responsibilities. The external organisation should be given the names of the Chickenshed team and the team invited in the same way as beneficiaries.

This is desirable to avoid a situation where Chickenshed knows little about the beneficiary group and therefore cannot control invitations and waiting room session entry with as effective Safeguarding oversight as should occur with the external organisation or partner. Knowledge of the individuals and associated Safeguarding risks needs to guide, wherever possible, the arrangements for organising and managing virtual sessions. Where this avoidance of virtual session organisation responsibility with external groups is impossible for Chickenshed due to issues with the external partner itself, Chickenshed will need to risk assess with the partner the potential Safeguarding management issues which may occur eg access from individuals not invited or registered, beneficiaries connecting late and in waiting rooms experiencing anxiety, vulnerable beneficiaries registering and leaving early together with other risks.

3. Hosting and Early Communication with Beneficiary Organisation Pre- Session

Where external organisations are arranging virtual sessions Chickenshed teams need to be aware that organisation staff will host themselves and may not permit co - hosting or transfer of hosting due to Safeguarding concerns (see those listed in point 2) In these situations Chickenshed team representatives will need to enter virtual sessions early to discuss with the partner host the best ways to manage technical aspects of the session which rely on hosting responsibility eg Music, Share Screen, muting processes amongst others.

4. Making Delivery Settings Safe

Chickenshed teams delivering virtual sessions with external partners should ensure their delivery areas are clear and safe with no obvious surrounding material eg posters which might pose a Safeguarding concern and/or which may cause offense.

5. Interruptions in Delivery Spaces

Chickenshed teams delivering external beneficiary activities should avoid, wherever possible and safe, other individuals entering the delivery space. Where this is impossible then the situation should be explained to the external organisation and the potential interruption situation minimised as far as possible. If the potential interruption either makes or is likely to make the delivery situation unworkable then alternative delivery arrangements should be made or, if necessary and safe, the delivery activity suspended.

6. Personal Information Identification Restriction

Chickenshed teams should operate a process where personal information is not visible or given to beneficiary groups or discussed. This includes not putting surnames on screens or asking beneficiaries for information such as surnames or addresses or schools. Taking advice from external partners and their Safeguarding processes will always be advisable.

7. Virtual Breakout Spaces

Where possible Chickenshed teams will have more secure Safeguarding oversight for beneficiaries, in liaison with external organisations, if delivery methods keep the target group in one space. Where virtual breakout spaces are required in a delivery situation due to group size, the need to split age groups or separate delivery material then Safeguarding oversight needs to be as vigilant as it would be for onsite, live delivery.

So wherever possible Chickenshed teams in liaison with external organisation teams need to be able to split between breakout rooms with a Chickenshed team member and external organisation team member in each breakout space with beneficiaries - this to ensure that both delivery and knowledgeable oversight for individuals can take place. Other oversight models may be negotiated dependent on the age and independent working confidence of the groups involved.

Where possible breakout groups coming back together at the end of a session is advisable to round off the session and make sure issues are dealt with prior to session end.

Chickenshed should liaise with external organisation staff to ensure that beneficiaries connecting late to sessions and unaware of breakout room arrangements can be catered for and registered so that Safeguarding grey areas like waiting rooms and inability to be admitted late do not occur with corresponding lack of Safeguarding oversight. Chickenshed will not usually be managing these processes but should advise and support external organisation staff when they are doing this.

8. Types of Beneficiary Set Up for Delivery

Chickenshed teams need to be aware of the different ways external organisations set up virtual delivery models for their beneficiaries and the Safeguarding processes they are working with. Some models, for example, will involve beneficiaries having cameras off for the whole session with only vocal contributions recognised with this being managed wholly by external staff. Other situations will require beneficiaries to be mainly muted with permission sought to speak or communicate.

Chickenshed teams will need to liaise in advance on the delivery restrictions for each session and the Safeguarding issues they address.

CHICKENSHED

THEATRE CHANGING LIVES

**Chickenshed Safeguarding
Young Company &
Education**

**Guidelines for Online
Participation**

This is not a stand alone document; it is an addition to our current risk assessments.

41 Chickenshed Young Company & Education Outline for Online Content

During this period of social distancing, Chickenshed staff will be working from home and connecting online with the Young Company. This document provides the guidelines and an agreement for this new way of working. It is an attachment to Chickenshed's Safeguarding Policy which is available upon request.

We want to be able to maintain a connection with our members, create and share work, and support our families and members. We will be using a variety of online platforms to communicate and engage with Young Company members. When using these platforms it is important that you protect yourselves and your families and follow our online code of conduct. The use of these platforms may change as time goes on. For now, our main methods of working will be:

1. YouTube videos on our Young Company channel sent to you via an email to view at that time or at your leisure. These videos will not be available for the public to view. The information about the content of these videos and if we are asking for responses will be detailed in the email sent to you. Each video shared will be age appropriate and contributions will be saved on the Chickenshed server and not on staff personal computers. We will collate contributions via WeTransfer which is a free and easy website to use to share images, videos and files. Some of these responses will be edited into online content which will then be shared back with the project group.
2. Zoom, an online live video conferencing service, for meetings with smaller groups. An email will be sent with information about when these meetings will take place, with an agenda attached. Guidelines and an agreement for participating in Zoom meetings is further down in this document.
3. We will also continue to engage with our members and interested parties mainly via our Instagram account (@chickenshed_yc), and our Twitter (@chickenshedyc).
4. If you have trouble accessing any of the above, please let us know and we can contact you to discuss an individual package.

If you and/or your child engages with us and other members of the Young Company in this way, you must follow the online code of conduct, at all times, and agree to our terms and conditions detailed below. Parents of younger members please can you ensure that they understand and follow the rules outlined on the following pages. These terms may be updated if we change the channels in which we provide content and engage with Young Company members.

Chickenshed Young Company & Education's Terms and Conditions for Online Activities

1. All online sessions or activities will be moderated. This means that in addition to the Workshop/Group Leader there will always be a staff member taking part in each session and monitoring the content and activities.
2. Activity and material delivery will be made available to you at a given time each week via a YouTube link that will be sent via email from the Project Manager with the rest of the workshop team cc'd. The Project Manager and team will be available for immediate email response to any questions or 'how to's' on the material that has been delivered for an hour and a half after the material has been dropped, as they would be in a regular session.
3. Do not share the link you are sent with anyone the session is not intended for.
4. Unless otherwise notified, Chickenshed will assume that all information and permission granted and saved against your record will remain the same for our online activities, including all photo/video/audio/social media consent
5. Anyone taking part in the online activities is not permitted to video/photograph/record or use any form of social media to display the activity. The only party allowed to do this is Chickenshed. Our recordings will be used as a record of the activity. Extracts may be shared with other partners for research purposes and on our social media.
6. You understand that Chickenshed is in no way affiliated with the video conferencing software, and is not responsible for any changes, data loss or software/hardware malfunction as a result of using the equipment. You also agree to their separate terms of use.
7. Make sure that any activity you engage with or make in your home or garden is safe and that you are not taking risks while making content. Ensure that parents/carers are happy with what you are planning.
8. You fully understand that as Chickenshed staff are not providing these services in person, we are unable to provide any direct first aid, but we will adhere to our Safeguarding policies at all times.
9. You will not hold Chickenshed responsible for any injury sustained as part of these online sessions. It is the parent/carer's responsibility to monitor their child for signs of sickness, tiredness, injury or anything which may prevent them from taking part.
10. Keep yourself safe. Don't share anything you don't want to or anything that feels too personal, complicated or sad.

⁴³ ZOOM

1. Arrangements for the date and time of any Zoom meetings will be given to the parent/carer and participant (where appropriate) by the host of the meeting. Hosts will always be a member of Chickenshed staff working on the project being discussed.
2. There will be no direct Zoom communication of any kind between Chickenshed staff and the participant outside the agreed discussion. Any necessary communication outside the Zoom meeting will be made through the normal channels of email and phone conversation.
3. If a parent/carer needs to be in the same room as the participant some of or the duration of the discussion, they must also accept and adhere to the Code of Conduct.
4. Get in touch with the member of staff leading the meeting if you are worried or upset about something and they will deal with this as they would in a normal session.

Code of Conduct for Online Working

SUBMITTING VIDEOS and IMAGES

1. In videos or images you send in, do not use your full name
2. Don't film things that might reveal your exact address
3. Wear appropriate clothing
4. Keep yourself safe - don't share something that feels too personal, complicated or sad.

Code of Conduct for Online Working

ZOOM MEETINGS

1. All participants have read and understand our Zoom Meeting Agreement, see below.
2. Participants are aware we will disable your access to the Zoom meeting if you have broken the code of conduct or flouted the Meeting Agreement.
3. Do not use full names when signing in or referring to others during the meeting. First names will do.
4. Make sure people you are living with know you are on a live video zoom meeting. Don't include them in the meeting unless pre-agreed with your host.
5. Wear appropriate clothing, even on parts of you that you think won't be seen
6. Remember it's easy to misinterpret things online. Be clear and kind.
7. Refer to the staff member directly if you feel worried about anything.
8. Do not record or take photos of anything during the meeting.

Questions Chickenshed staff will ask before the meeting/session gets started:

1. Have you read and understood the Meeting Agreements?
2. Does everyone in your home know you are now in a Zoom meeting?
3. Are you aware that this session is being recorded by the Chickenshed staff member?
4. Are you aware that this is not a private space and whatever you share online will be seen by the group?
5. Are you aware that anyone who breaks the Agreement and Code of Conduct will be removed from the platform by staff and parents/carers will be informed?

Agreement for Zoom Meetings

We keep our audio on mute unless we are taking part in an activity and have been asked to unmute.

We give the session our full attention. We make sure we are in an appropriate room where only those happy and supposed to be in shot are filmed.

We don't talk over people; we listen to everyone.

We only use the chat box for questions/comments related to the session we are in and we always make sure we send messages to 'everyone'.

We only call ourselves by our first names on Zoom.

If something upsets you or is bothering you, inform Chickenshed staff so you can be supported in the best way possible.

We don't use our phones during the session for anything other than the Zoom session we are in. So no photographs, videos or recordings of the session should be taken.

We treat everyone with the same respect as we would if we were in a session at Chickenshed.

Section 9

Sexual Awareness Statement

Chickenshed Statement of Intent on issues of Sexual Harassment

Section 1 – Introduction

Chickenshed is committed to a zero tolerance approach to sexual harassment and the behaviour that can potentially lead to harassment. This zero tolerance approach applies equally to any examples and incidents of sexual harassment behaviour for all gender/gender neutral/equality group situations as defined by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and also the government Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) report recommendations and revisions.

Chickenshed proactively supports the "remember it can happen here" approach which has been advised by Ofsted and the Office for Students - which dictates that education organisations should proactively assume that sexual harassment may be prevalent amongst individuals for whom they take responsibility for - rather than assume that their organisations are safe and sexual harassment in some way "cannot" occur or be occurring or is "highly unlikely" to occur or be occurring. This approach promotes the necessary proactive vigilance that is needed to anticipate and negate obvious, less obvious and also hidden, latent harassment behaviour together with the conditions and attitudes which may lead it.

Chickenshed is working with the Office for Students terms and definitions from their expectations in relation to harassment including sexual harassment and those definitions and explanations are outlined below

2. Staffing Resources

2.1 Chickenshed believes that sexual harassment both thrives and also goes under the radar in situations where staff support and oversight is diluted due to it being underresourced. Chickenshed is committed to maintaining staff support resources for students to 1 to 5/6 beneficiaries to ensure that, in a relatively small venue there are always staff and Mentors close to hear, understand and anticipate concerns whilst monitoring and affecting the early potential stages of pre - sexual harassment behaviour preferably before it becomes an issue.

2.2 Chickenshed will ensure there is structured awareness amongst staff and students of the potential of less seen/hidden coercive relationship behaviour which may lead to sexual harassment or may already satisfy the conditions of sexual harassment. Safeguarding and mentoring/support resources will be targeted at these situations to ensure individuals are supported.

2.3 Chickenshed will ensure there is a named member(s) of the Support/Mentor team who reports to the wider Delegated Safeguarding Team regarding the welfare of students in relation to potential or actual sexual harassment issues.

2.4 Chickenshed will maintain a wide Delegated Safeguarding Team of 6 working across its beneficiary operations to generate and sustain awareness of sexual harassment issues and potential issues. This allows a ratio of one Safeguarding team Officer to 25 - 30 students or approximately one per cohort. This ratio will be monitored and added to when needed.

2.5 Chickenshed will maintain and extend, wherever needed, counselling resources to respond to the potential sexual harassment impact of external student home community situations and

relationships. Extra counselling support systems will be provided as required.

Section 3 Awareness and Training

3.1 Chickenshed will maintain and extend, wherever needed, the positive levels of Safeguarding awareness and training activity to reflect the growing impact of sexual harassment issues with Safeguarding an agenda item for Management, Education and Support Management and also whole staff meetings.

3.2 Chickenshed will provide, wherever possible, opportunities for students to reflect on issues of sexual harassment and related bullying, manipulation and coercive behaviour issues in curriculum creative material exploration with a parallel understanding that this can be an important vehicle for understanding, empathy and support in inclusive environments and indeed all environments. Issues of gender and LGBTQ rights and identity will be explored in impactful settings with curriculum links serving to reinforce the fact that these are not issues separate to the main educational experience but central to an understanding of inclusion and inclusive working.

3.3 Chickenshed will ensure that potential issues of sexual harassment, bullying, coercive relationship control and their impact can apply to situations across the gender, heterosexual and LGBTQ spectrum. Chickenshed is always actively seeking representation from all these groups across its beneficiary spectrum to develop its inclusivity response and provision. Therefore it is vital that awareness of sexual harassment issues and harassment issues in general recognise these aspects of lived experience.

3.3 In terms of training and awareness Chickenshed recognises that for some individuals amongst beneficiary groups past education and social experiences may have been more limited or restricted with their own exposure to routine social communication situations being potentially also limited and restricted. This can occasionally lead to a mismatch between communication/relationship expectation and appropriate behaviour when in wider, inclusive settings Chickenshed's wide mentor/ safeguarding team provision will work hard to ensure sensitive and measured awareness for all young people of the sexual harassment "it could happen here" approach is also balanced with an awareness of appropriate communication behaviour and appropriate boundaries.

Section 4 - Acting on Sexual Harassment Issues and Reporting

4.1 - Chickenshed will use its commitment to extend safeguarding and mentoring/inclusive support resources to make communication and reporting re sexual harassment concerns as accessible and sensitive as possible. Individuals need to feel reassured to communicate with staff members they themselves feel comfortable to discuss issues with. They also need to feel comfortable in the event of feeling the need for others to communicate on their behalf if they are unsure of the best approach to suit their needs. This may be a member of staff but also may be another student.

Section 10

Safeguarding Process for Disciplinary Investigation Issues Disciplinary Policy & Procedure

Introduction

Where there are Safeguarding of young people and/or Vulnerable Adults/ Adults at Risk issues which are clearly known or become evident for individuals undergoing potential and actual disciplinary investigation then the following are the steps which should be considered by managers conducting the process.

1. Wherever it is appropriate and possible a family member or trusted adult should be communicated to together with the individual whose actions are going to be investigated. This should happen close to the time that the individual is informed there are actions which need to be investigated.

2. Whilst confidentiality considerations do need to be taken into account for individual students who are over 18 and thus entitled to confidentiality - managers conducting the investigation should consult with the Designated Safeguarding Lead Officer (or Deputy Safeguarding Lead if Lead unable to be contacted) a decision made as to whether the Safeguarding issues involved should override the confidentiality issues. This to ensure the individual involved has access to support at this time of heightened anxiety and stress.

3. Each of any further communication and investigation processes will be assessed as to whether subsequent confidentiality issues should be operated. This is to take into account the individual over 18 having some agency and choice over decisions about confidentiality and the "need to know" communication basis wherever possible and wherever Safeguarding issues will not be directly compromised. Consultation with Safeguarding team representatives will again be important.

4. The family representatives/trusted adult can be invited to share any information related to the Safeguarding needs and vulnerability of the individual involved in the investigation in order to give context to the actions being investigated. Again the individual whose actions are being investigated should have some say in the decision making in relation to this information sharing if they are over 18 and Safeguarding issues will not be compromised.

5. Staff conducting the investigation should consider ways to provide reassurance in relation to the investigation processes wherever it is possible to do so without compromising the investigation or the confidentiality of others. This may include reassurance about "worst fears" in relation to the investigation outcome and any disciplinary steps it may be necessary to take. The intention of this reassurance would be to give extra Safeguarding support without compromising however the integrity of the investigation and the potential disciplinary actions which may need to be taken.

6. Wherever possible individuals will be strongly advised by staff conducting the investigation and/ or students and/or Safeguarding team to engage in post - disciplinary ongoing external support in relation to the actions which have led to the investigation - should the investigation confirm this need. This ongoing advice step may be considered whatever the outcome of the investigation and disciplinary action. Such support could take the form of eg counselling, behaviour management, addiction support amongst other support areas. This strongly advised action would enable students to consider the ongoing Safeguarding needs they may have and to maintain support to negate potential future occurrences of the behaviour which has been the subject of investigation.

7. Where the outcome of an investigation is disciplinary process and action the individual should be guided and supported through any recommendations for disciplinary action eg verbal warnings, written warnings and stages and other stages. Safeguarding oversight should be maintained through any warning process - and after the warning issue process - to enable the

positive progress of the individual and avoidance of the negative behaviour and actions which led to the investigation.

These processes are there as a general source of advice but should also remain adaptable dependent on the changing Safeguarding needs and welfare situation of the individual whose behaviour has been subject to investigation.

Formal Warnings for Disciplinary Action

Stage One: Cause for concern – not kept on file, action plan issued. **Stage**

Two: Verbal warning – not kept on file, action plan issued.

Stage One and Stage Two – First Written Warning followed, if warranted by a Second Written Warning

If the conduct or performance does not meet the required standards there will be a disciplinary interview. If appropriate, and after due consideration, the student will be given a first written warning that continued or repeated misconduct or unsatisfactory performance may result in further disciplinary action being taken. The student will be informed that this is the first stage of the disciplinary procedure and their right to appeal against the decision. For further repeated misconduct a second written warning can be issued if the misconduct does not warrant moving to the final warning stage.

Stage Three – Final Written Warning

If the offence is sufficiently serious, or, if following a previous warning under Stage 1 a further offence occurs (whether or not of the same nature) within the period specified or if the student's performance does not improve to the standards required, the student will be interviewed by:

- their tutor, or where their tutor dealt with any earlier related disciplinary offence and provided it is practicable in the circumstances, by a staff member more senior than the person who dealt with any previous disciplinary issues (the Head of Department/ Education Manager/Management Board member/Executive Director of Education) who will decide on the action to be taken.

The student may be given a Final Written Warning which will warn that dismissal may result if there is no satisfactory improvement. If it is determined that dismissal is not appropriate, the student will be informed that this is the third stage of the disciplinary procedure and of his or her right to appeal against the decision of the line manager or Head of Department/Management Board member.

Stage Four – Dismissal or action short of dismissal

If the student's conduct and/or performance is sufficiently serious and the student still fails to reach the prescribed standards, permanent exclusion from the course may result. Only the Executive Director of Education, Training and Outreach can take the decision to dismiss.

After the disciplinary meeting the student will be provided with written details of the exclusion and the date on which their course place will be withdrawn.

Gross Misconduct

Chickenshed reserves the right to terminate the course progress of a student immediately, without notice, in the event of gross misconduct. No termination will take place without a formal, thorough investigation and a formal meeting in line with the process detailed above. The following list provides examples of offences which will normally be regarded as gross misconduct but the list is **not** exhaustive.

- (i) Fraud, dishonesty, falsifying expense claims
- (ii) Being under the influence of drink or drugs such as to impinge upon performance or conduct whilst at work on course – including attending any Company event, whether social or business related or otherwise on the premises of Chickenshed or elsewhere
- (iii) Being charged with or convicted of any criminal offence (whether related to the employment or not) which in the opinion of Chickenshed seriously undermines Chickenshed's confidence in the student's ability to fulfil course study
- (iv) Deliberate damage to any Company property or property which is not owned by Chickenshed but which is on premises occupied by Chickenshed (including but not limited to unauthorized use of fire equipment or property of other students or of third parties)
- (v) Disorderly or indecent conduct, fighting on Company premises or threatening to use physical violence
- (vi) Acts of discrimination, harassment or victimization
- (vii) Bullying, intimidation or any other treatment of students, staff, members or suppliers which undermines them or otherwise violates their dignity.
- (viii) Making statements prior to commencing study on course which are discovered to be false
- (ix) Making false statements about one's own work or another student's work, the falsification of working papers, or the making of any statements likely to be detrimental to the goodwill and reputation of Chickenshed
- (x) Deliberately refusing, or failing, to comply with any policy or rule of Chickenshed or, when off-site, Chickenshed with whom the student is currently on placement.
- (xi) Removing or tampering with any of Chickenshed's network stations; loading onto or using any of Chickenshed's computers or any software or program which has not been specifically authorized or virus checked for such loading or use
- (xii) Serious misuse of Chickenshed's telephone system, email, internet. Serious misuse of any mobile telephone provided by Chickenshed. Deliberately flouting the terms of Chickenshed's PC usage policy
- (xiii) Deliberately blocking access to, or gaining any unauthorized access to, any computer software or computer records of Chickenshed
- (xiv) Deliberately compromising the copyrights, trademarks or other intellectual property of Chickenshed
- (xv) Misusing, destroying, damaging, stealing or committing any other negligent act or taking unauthorized possession of property of Chickenshed or of their respective suppliers or his/her colleagues

Any student who is accused or suspected of gross misconduct will be suspended from course placement, while Chickenshed investigates the alleged offence. He/She will be permitted to submit work from home.

Safeguarding Embedding in Curriculum and in Lived Experience Programme

Chickenshed, following best NSPCC guidance and practice, works hard to embed Safeguarding into the regular curriculum, curriculum support interventions and lived experience programmes. This is to ensure that Safeguarding is not seen as a separate entity or separate practice only referred to when something negative occurs. These are some of the ways that Safeguarding, as a matter of educational policy, is embedded into overall Chickenshed educational experience.

1. Chickenshed's professional Artistic programme offers regular large and small scale opportunities for student Safeguarding issues to be explored and creatively expressed.

2. Chickenshed's Foundation Degree programme proactively enables the exploration of Safeguarding issues across the individual performing arts disciplines through Elective modules

3. Chickenshed's BA programme enables students to liaise with external organisations to understand their Safeguarding needs and creative expression of those needs where appropriate as they devise issue based productions which represent both their lived experience and the lived experience of the beneficiaries they work with.

4. Chickenshed Young People Development modules enable students to explore and understand the potential developmental nature of Safeguarding need and how those needs can be met.

5. The policy of enabling Higher Education students to regularly work with and model achievement for younger Further Education students also enables the modelling of Safeguarding oversight further opening up vital communication channels.

6. Chickenshed respects and embeds exploration of and overcoming of barriers for - positive Mental Health development. This allows for fluent and seamless links between Mental Health provision and Safeguarding provision.

7. Chickenshed's team teaching approach and its team assessment, monitoring and mentoring approaches further enable the open communication of Safeguarding need and provides a range of opportunities for those needs to be met

8. Chickenshed's professional Outreach programme discusses and devises safeguarding creative products with both students and external Outreach groups - based on the lived experience of beneficiaries.

9. Chickenshed's Inclusive Mentoring and Support Programme is geared to working with Mentors who see themselves as creative inclusive practitioners in their own right capable of both mentoring and modelling processes (including Safeguarding processes) in real curriculum workshop, rehearsal and performance situations AND mentoring away from curriculum in wider interventions. This allows for seamless less fragmented mentoring and Safeguarding practice with Mentors closer to the individual's learning experience and able to offer more relevant and responsive support.

Safeguarding and Outreach Links and Synergies as part of the Outreach Process

There are important ways in which Chickenshed develops and implements Safeguarding practice with professional Outreach organisations as a matter of policy. These are some of those considerations.

1. Chickenshed will work with Outreach organisations to link enhanced DBS processes when working in an organisation's venue

2. Chickenshed provide ample and indeed larger than needed Outreach teams for external projects and events to enable Safeguarding oversight from Chickenshed teams to both complement and also supplement the Safeguarding provision of the external organisation

3. Where there are external issues out of the control of Chickenshed and external organisations such as cost of living crises, outbreak issues, issues affecting education, venue complications- Chickenshed will work with the organisation to enable support to beneficiaries to be sustained and remain stable and also to maintain continuity of practice and mental health support provision

4. Chickenshed will always liaise with external organisations in relation to specific Safeguarding adaptations, support provision to meet the needs and lived experience of individuals whose Safeguarding needs warrant this support. Creative material will be adjusted to promote positive development for individuals in specific circumstances AND to avoid negative repercussions and triggers.

5. Chickenshed will ensure that any Safeguarding developments either it makes or that are made by the external organisations - are shared to mutual benefit where appropriate and needed.

Appendix One

Safeguarding of Children – Types and Indicators of Abuse from NSPCC

Protecting children from neglect

Neglect is not meeting a child's basic physical and psychological needs (Department for Education, 2018; Department of Health, 2017; Scottish Government, 2021; Wales Safeguarding Procedures Project Board, 2020).

It is a form of child abuse that can have serious and long-lasting impacts on a child's life - it can cause serious harm and even death.

The four main types of neglect are:

- **physical neglect:** not meeting a child's basic needs, such as food, clothing or shelter; not supervising a child adequately or providing for their safety
- **educational neglect:** not making sure a child receives an education
- **emotional neglect:** not meeting a child's needs for nurture and stimulation, for example by ignoring, humiliating, intimidating or isolating them
- **medical neglect:** not providing appropriate health care (including dental care), refusing care or ignoring medical recommendations (Horwath, 2007).

Neglect can happen at any age, sometimes even before a child is born. If a mother has mental health problems or misuses substances during pregnancy, for example, she may neglect her own health and this can damage a baby's development in the womb (Haynes et al, 2015).

Impact of child neglect

"I am at home on my own a lot. Things are difficult at home and mum is really struggling - she gets stressed and angry a lot. I have to do a lot of the house work and help with chores. I feel lonely and have not got anyone to talk to."

Childline counselling session with a girl aged 10

Children can experience neglect at any age – from birth to adolescence. Neglect can cause a range of short- and long-term effects which may vary depending on the age of the child affected.

Brain development

If a baby is malnourished, neural cells can become weak or damaged and this can cause lowered brain function. If a child has little interaction with their caregiver, it can

change how emotional and verbal pathways develop and impact their ability to learn. This may have consequences for brain functioning in later life.

[> Read more about how neglect can impact child brain development and how you can encourage healthy brain growth](#)

[> Sign up for our training course on understanding child brain development and the impact of trauma](#)

Physical development

Parents and carers need to help young children to develop gross motor skills. If they are being neglected, or if parents don't know how to stimulate their child, this process may not happen effectively and the child's development may be delayed (Horwath, 2013).

Physical health

If a child isn't given enough food, they will immediately experience hunger and discomfort and may have trouble concentrating. But longer-term malnourishment will also affect their physical health and development.

Having an unhealthy diet can also lead to obesity-related health problems.

Not receiving appropriate medical care can result in poor health, dental decay and in some circumstances, death.

Mental health

Children who have experienced neglect are more likely to experience mental health problems, including:

- depression
- post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- dissociative disorders
- memory impairments
- panic disorder
- attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2015).

Relationships and attachment

Children who don't get the love and care they need may develop problems with attachment – they may struggle to form a strong relationship or bond with their caregiver. This can lead to a child becoming isolated and affect their ability to maintain healthy relationships with others later in life (including their own children).

[> Find out more about child attachment and how to support parents and carers in building positive relationships with their children](#)

Risk-taking behaviour

Young people who have experienced neglect may take more risks, such as:

- running away from home
- breaking the law
- abusing drugs or alcohol
- becoming involved in unhealthy and/or abusive relationships.

Safety

If children and young people aren't being supervised appropriately by their parents and carers they may have accidents which can cause injury, illness, disfigurement, disability or even death.

Recognising child neglect Signs

and indicators

There's often no single indicator that a child is being neglected. You may notice more than one sign and your concerns might become more frequent if problems are mounting up. This could indicate that a child and their family need support.

Children who are neglected may:

- live in an unsuitable home environment, for example in a house that isn't heated throughout winter
- be left alone for a long time
- be smelly or dirty
- wear clothing that hasn't been washed and/or is inadequate (for example, not having a winter coat)

- seem particularly hungry, seem not to have eaten breakfast or have no packed lunch/lunch money.

They may suffer from poor health, including:

- untreated injuries
- medical and dental issues
- repeated accidental injuries due to lack of supervision
- untreated and/or recurring illnesses or infections
- long term or recurring skin sores, rashes, flea bites, scabies or ringworm
- anaemia.

Babies and young children may:

- have frequent and untreated nappy rash
- be failing to thrive (not reaching developmental milestones and/or not growing at an appropriate rate for their age).

A child who is experiencing neglect may display unusual behaviour, or their behaviour may change. You may notice or become aware that a child:

- has poor language, communication or social skills
- withdraws suddenly or seems depressed
- appears anxious
- becomes clingy
- is aggressive
- displays obsessive behaviour
- shows signs of self-harm
- is particularly tired
- finds it hard to concentrate or participate in activities
- has changes in eating habits
- misses school
- starts using drugs or alcohol
- isn't brought to medical appointments such as vaccinations or check-ups.

Risk and vulnerability factors

Any child can suffer neglect, but research shows that some children are more vulnerable including those who:

- have a disability
- are born prematurely or with a low birth weight
- have complex health needs
- are in care
- are seeking asylum.

[> Find out more about children in care](#)

[> Find out more about safeguarding d/Deaf and disabled children](#)

All families come under pressure from time to time. Although many parents are able to provide loving care for their children during difficult periods, increased or continued stress can affect how well a parent can look after their child.

Research shows that parents with a low income, or living in poorer neighbourhoods, are more likely to feel chronically stressed than other parents (Jütte et al, 2014); and parents who are facing complex problems such as domestic abuse or substance misuse can struggle to meet their children's needs (Haynes et al, 2015).

If parents are feeling particularly isolated, this can make it harder for them to ask for help and increases the risk of child abuse or neglect (Jütte et al, 2014).

Responding to child neglect

Reporting

If you think a child is in immediate danger, contact the police on **999**. If you're worried about a child but they are not in immediate danger, you should share your concerns.

- **Follow your organisational child protection procedures.** Organisations that work with children and families must have [safeguarding policies and procedures](#) in place.
- **Contact the NSPCC Helpline** on [0808 800 5000](tel:08088005000) or by emailing help@nspcc.org.uk. Our trained professionals will talk through your concerns with you and give you expert advice.

- **Contact your local child protection services.** Their contact details can be found on the website for the local authority the child lives in.
- Contact the police.

Services will risk assess the situation and take action to protect the child as appropriate either through statutory involvement or other support. This may include making a referral to the local authority.

[> See our information about recognising and responding to abuse](#)

Recording concerns

Neglect is a long-term pattern of behaviour. Adults who are concerned that a child's needs are not being met should record individual incidents to build up an overview of the child's lived experience. These records should be shared with other agencies as appropriate and used to decide what support a child and their family need.

Assessing neglect

Assessment tools can help practitioners get a clear picture of how well parents are able to look after their children. This helps professionals make timely evidence-based decisions to improve the child's quality of life.

The NSPCC uses assessment tools in our work with families where neglect may be taking place.

Graded Care Profile 2 (GCP2) helps professionals measure the quality of care a child is receiving. We've evaluated GCP2 and found that it's successful in helping to identify neglect. We're now supporting other organisations to deliver GCP2 in local areas.

[> Find out more about how to deliver Graded Care Profile 2 \(GCP2\)](#)

Infant and Family Teams helps social workers and judges decide whether a child should stay with their birth family or enter care permanently.

[> Find out more about Infant and Family Teams](#)

Preventing child neglect

By identifying circumstances that put parents and carers under stress and getting them the right help at the right time, people who work with children can protect them from possible neglect.

Protective factors that can reduce the risks to children's wellbeing include:

- a strong social support network for the family
- income support, benefits and advice
- good community services and facilities (Cleaver, Unell and Aldgate, 2011).

Early help

Practitioners have a key role to play in providing early help and empowering parents to care for their families. This includes:

- developing long-term positive relationships with parents
- encouraging parents to seek help when problems first emerge
- talking to a child and their parents and carers to understand what support they need
- sharing information about a child and their family with relevant agencies
- identifying which services are best placed to help a family
- monitoring a child's situation
- providing direct practical and emotional support to a child and/or their parents
- signposting families to other specialist services where necessary. Successful early intervention can improve the attachment bond a child has with their caregivers, reduce harm and help children form positive relationships in adulthood (Howe, 2011).

NSPCC services that support parents to provide safe and loving care for their families include:

- [Domestic Abuse, Recovering Together \(DART\)](#) - helps children and their mothers talk to each other about domestic abuse, learn to communicate and rebuild their relationship. We're also supporting other organisations to deliver DART in local areas.
- [Pregnancy in Mind](#) - designed to support parents who are at risk of, or are experiencing, mild to moderate anxiety and depression during their pregnancy

- [Together for Childhood](#) - an innovative, evidence-informed approach to bring local partners and families together to make our communities safer for children.

> [Find out more about our services for children and families](#)

We are also working with communities and local authorities across the UK to provide tailored support to professionals, children and families to help prevent neglect.

> [Find out more about how we can help you develop a campaign in your area](#)

Giving children a voice

It's vital to build safe and trusting relationships with children so they can speak out about any problems they are experiencing. This involves teaching children what neglect is and how they can get help.

Our Speak out Stay safe service for schools teaches children how to recognise abuse and neglect in all its forms and empowers them to speak out if they are worried about anything.

Legislation and guidance

Statutory guidance across the UK highlights the responsibility of those in the education, community and care sectors to safeguard children from all forms of abuse and neglect.

- [Child protection in England](#)
- [Child protection in Northern Ireland](#)
- [Child protection in Scotland](#)
- [Child protection in Wales](#)

See also [Key guidance for schools in the UK](#)

Prevention strategy

The Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI) has developed a [Multi-Agency Neglect Strategy for 2018-2022](#). This aims to help agencies in **Northern Ireland** who are involved with children, young people and parents to take actions to prevent, reduce and manage effects of neglect on children and families (SBNI, 2018).

Cruelty and neglect

Legislation across the UK makes it an offence to neglect children and young people under the age of 16.

In **England** and **Wales** the [Children and Young Persons Act 1933](#) specifies when someone can be prosecuted for child cruelty or neglect.

In **Northern Ireland** this is covered by the [Children and Young Persons Act \(Northern Ireland\) 1968](#).

In **Scotland** it is Part II of the [Children and Young Persons \(Scotland\) Act 1937](#).

In all parts of the UK, a person over 16 could be prosecuted for child cruelty if they:

- ill-treat a child
- neglect a child
- abandon a child

Harmful sexual behaviour

What is harmful sexual behaviour?

Harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) is developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour displayed by children and young people which is harmful or abusive¹.

Peer-on-peer sexual abuse is a form of HSB where sexual abuse takes place between children of a similar age or stage of development. Child-on-child sexual abuse is a form of HSB that takes place between children of any age or stage of development.

Problematic sexual behaviour (PSB) is developmentally inappropriate or socially unexpected sexualised behaviour which doesn't have an overt element of victimisation or abuse.

Understanding sexualised behaviour in children

Children and young people typically display a range of sexualised behaviours as they grow up. However some may display problematic or abusive sexualised

behaviour. This is harmful to the children who display it as well as the people it's directed towards.

Everyone who works or volunteers with children should be able to distinguish developmentally typical sexual behaviour from sexual behaviours that are problematic or harmful. This will help you respond appropriately and provide children and young people with the right protection and support.

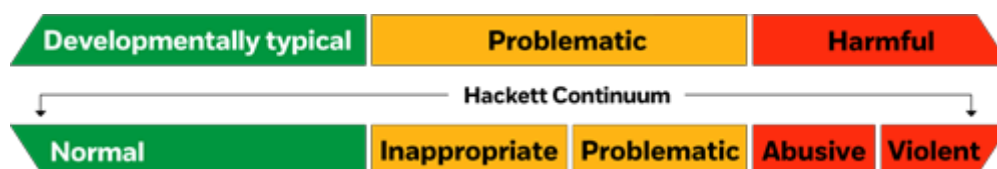
We've put together four steps to help you decide what kind of sexualised behaviour a child or young person is displaying so you can respond in the right way.

How to prevent harmful sexual behaviour in children and young people

Find out more about how organisations can take action to prevent problematic or harmful sexual behaviour from happening.

Step one: understanding Hackett's sexualised behaviour continuum

Hackett's continuum presents sexualised behaviour as a range from 'normal' to 'inappropriate', 'problematic', 'abusive' and 'violent' (Hackett, 2010¹).



Developmentally typical (green) behaviours

At the NSPCC, we use the term 'developmentally typical' to describe behaviours that are green on the continuum – but you might also hear green behaviours called 'healthy', 'normal' or 'developmentally expected'.

Green sexual behaviour:

- is developmentally expected and socially acceptable
- is consensual, mutual and reciprocal
- involves shared decision making.

[> Find out more about developmentally typical sexual behaviour for different age ranges](#)

Problematic (amber) behaviours

At the NSPCC, we use 'problematic sexual behaviour' (PSB) as an umbrella term for all amber behaviours. On the Hackett continuum, amber behaviours are described as 'inappropriate' or 'problematic'.

Inappropriate behaviour

- Single instances of developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour.
- Behaviour that is socially acceptable within a peer group but would be considered inappropriate outside that group.
- Generally consensual and reciprocal.
- May involve an inappropriate context for behaviour that would otherwise be considered normal.

Problematic behaviour

- Developmentally unusual and socially unexpected behaviour.
- May be compulsive.

□

- Consent may be unclear and the behaviour may not be reciprocal.
- May involve an imbalance of power.
- Doesn't have an overt element of victimisation.

Harmful (red) behaviours

Red sexualised behaviours are harmful to the child who displays them, as well as the people the behaviour is displayed towards. At the NSPCC, we refer to all red sexual behaviours as 'harmful sexual behaviour' (HSB). Hackett divides these into 'abusive' and 'violent' behaviours.

Abusive behaviour

- Intrusive behaviour.
- May involve a misuse of power.
- May have an element of victimisation.
- May use coercion and force.
- May include elements of expressive violence.

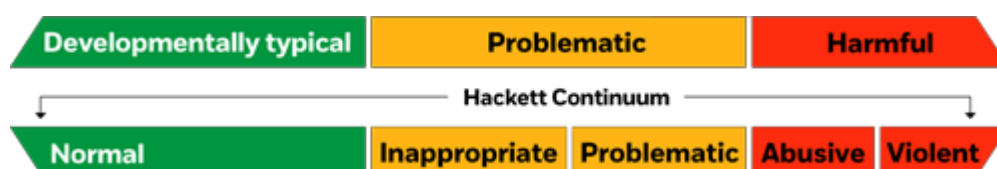
- Informed consent has not been given (or the victim was not able to consent freely).

Violent behaviour

- Physically violent sexual abuse.
- Highly intrusive.
- May involve instrumental violence which is physiologically and/or sexually arousing to the perpetrator.
- May involve sadism.
 - If you have a concern about a child and you work in an education setting, you can call our [Report Abuse in Education Helpline](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/keeping-children-safe-education/education-helpline/) at [0800 136 663](tel:0800136663) or email help@nspcc.org.uk.
 - Work in a different sector? Contact the NSPCC helpline on [0808 800 5000](tel:08088005000) or email help@nspcc.org.uk.
 - Printable continuum guide
 - In partnership with Hackett, Durham University and NHS Health Education England, we've created a quick printable guide to help you remember how to recognise sexualised behaviour.
 - [> Download the quick guide \(PDF\)](#)

Step two: identifying sexualised behaviour

In order to respond appropriately to a child displaying problematic or harmful sexual behaviour, you need to decide where a child's behaviour sits on the continuum.



A child's behaviour can change depending on the circumstances they are in and sexual behaviour can move in either direction along the continuum. So you should look at each situation individually, as well as considering any patterns of behaviour.

Indicators that behaviour is problematic or harmful

Children naturally explore and experiment with their sexuality as they grow up. If the behaviour seems to go beyond curiosity, for example if it is obsessive or compulsive, this might indicate it is problematic or harmful.

[> Find out more about what is considered developmentally typical sexual behaviour](#)

What to consider

The age of the child or young person who has displayed the sexual behaviour.

As children grow up they develop sexually. What is developmentally typical sexual behaviour for a 15-year-old may be problematic or harmful for an eight-year-old. Consider the child's developmental ability as well as their chronological age.

The age of the other children or young people involved.

If the children involved are the same age or developmental ability the behaviour may be considered developmentally typical. But if the children are of different ages or developmental abilities, the behaviour might be problematic or harmful.

Is the behaviour unusual for that particular child or young person?

If a child's behaviour is out of character, it's important to take time to consider why the child is behaving unusually.

Have all the children or young people involved freely given consent?

If the behaviour involves coercion, intimidation or forcing others to take part, it should be considered harmful.

Are the other children or young people distressed?

If the behaviour is upsetting others, this could indicate it is problematic or harmful.

Is there an imbalance of power?

If the child displaying the behaviour is in a more powerful position than the other children involved, this indicates it is problematic or harmful. This might happen if there are significant differences in age, size, power or developmental ability.

Is the behaviour excessive, degrading or threatening?

Excessive behaviour means behaviour that is obsessive, persistent, compulsive or

has been going on for a long time. Any behaviour that involves force, coercion, bribery or threats is harmful.

Is the behaviour occurring in a public or private space?

Some behaviours, for example masturbation, might be considered developmentally typical if they are being carried out in private. But if they are being displayed in public, they would be considered problematic or harmful.

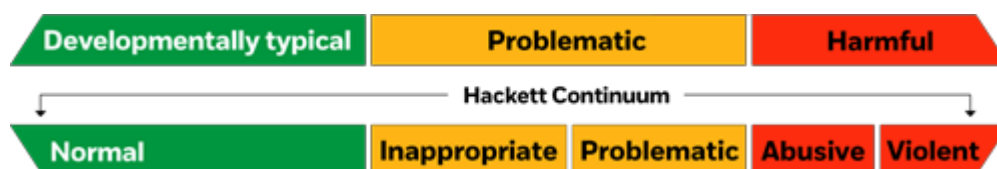
Other behaviours might give cause for concern if they are particularly secretive or are being carried out in private after intervention from adults.

Step three: taking appropriate action

Your response to a child displaying sexualised behaviours should vary depending on:

- the child's age
- their stage of development
- where their behaviours sits on Hackett's sexualised behaviour continuum.

Your approach should focus on the needs of the children involved at all times.



Developmentally typical (green) behaviours

It's normal for children to be curious about their own and other people's bodies. The process of experimentation and exploration mean that children and young people might get it wrong from time to time but this doesn't necessarily indicate a serious concern.

[> Learn more about developmentally typical sexual behaviours](#)

How to respond

- Listen to what children and young people have to say and respond calmly and non-judgementally.

- Talk to children about sexual development and healthy relationships. This might include having discussions with older children and young people about behaving responsibly and safely (for example, two 15-year-olds having consensual sex might benefit from a conversation about contraception and consent).
- Talk to parents and carers about developmentally typical sexualised behaviours and explain how they can have discussions about appropriate sexual behaviour with their children.
- Let children and young people know they can always talk to you if they are ever worried about anything.
- Remind children and young people they can contact Childline if they need confidential help and advice. Calls to [0800 1111](tel:08001111) are free and children can also contact Childline online or get information and advice on the [Childline website](#). You can download or order Childline posters and wallet cards to keep on display and give to children and young people.
- Talk to your nominated [child protection lead](#) if you're unsure or have any concerns. Sharing information can help to identify any patterns or escalation of behaviour. If you are a lone worker or have concerns you can always call the NSPCC helpline for advice and support on [0808 800 5000](tel:08088005000) or by emailing help@nspcc.org.uk

Recognising and responding to abuse

It can be very hard for children and young people to speak out about abuse. Often they fear there may be negative consequences if they tell anyone what's happening to them.

Some may delay telling someone about abuse for a long time, while others never tell anyone, even if they want to.

It's vital that children and young people are able to speak out and that whoever they tell takes them seriously and acts on what they've been told.

Even if a child doesn't tell someone verbally about what's happened to them, there may be other indicators that something is wrong. People who work with children need to be able to recognise the signs and know how to respond appropriately.

This page outlines best practice for recognising and responding to abuse and some of the issues which may arise when working with children who have been abused.

You should use this information when writing your group or organisation's child protection procedures.

Identifying concerns Disclosure

Disclosure is the process by which children and young people start to share their experiences of abuse with others. This can take place over a long period of time – it is a journey, not one act or action.

Children may disclose directly or indirectly and sometimes they may start sharing details of abuse before they are ready to put their thoughts and feelings in order.

Not all disclosures will lead to a formal report of abuse or a case being made or a case being taken to court, but all disclosures should be taken seriously.

It takes extraordinary courage for a child to go through the journey of disclosing abuse.

It's vital that anyone who works with children and young people undertaking this journey is able to provide them with the support they need.

How disclosure happens

Children and young people may disclose abuse in a variety of ways, including:

- directly– making specific verbal statements about what's happened to them
- indirectly – making ambiguous verbal statements which suggest something is wrong
- behaviourally – displaying behaviour that signals something is wrong (this may or may not be deliberate)
- non-verbally – writing letters, drawing pictures or trying to communicate in other ways.

Children and young people may not always be aware that they are disclosing abuse through their actions and behaviour.

Sometimes children and young people make partial disclosures of abuse. This means they give some details about what they've experienced, but not the whole picture. They may withhold some information because they:

- are afraid they will get in trouble with or upset their family
- want to deflect blame in case of family difficulties as a result of the disclosure
- feel ashamed and/or guilty
- need to protect themselves from having to relive traumatic events.

When children do speak out it is often many years after the abuse has taken place (McElvaney, 2015).

Barriers to disclosure

Some children and young people are reluctant to seek help because they feel they don't have anyone to turn to for support.

They may have sought help in the past and had a negative experience, which makes them unlikely to do so again.

They may also:

- feel that they will not be taken seriously
- feel too embarrassed to talk to an adult about a private or personal problem
- worry about confidentiality
- lack trust in the people around them (including parents) and in the services provided to help them
- fear the consequences of asking for help
- worry they will be causing trouble and making the situation worse
- find formal procedures overwhelming

(Mental Health Foundation and Camelot Foundation, 2006).

Not all children and young people realise they have experienced abuse, for example if they have been [groomed](#).

Spotting the signs of abuse

Children and young people who have been abused may want to tell someone, but not have the exact words to do so. They may attempt to disclose abuse by giving adults clues, through their actions and by using indirect words (Allnock and Miller, 2013; Cossar et al, 2013).

Adults need to be able to notice the signs that a child or young person might be distressed and ask them appropriate questions about what might have caused this.

Child protection training can help increase adults' confidence in recognising the indicators of abuse and understanding the different ways a child might try to share what they have experienced.

You should never wait until a child or young person tells you directly that they are being abused before taking action. Instead, ask the child if everything is OK or discuss your concerns with your organisation's designated safeguarding lead, or the NSPCC helpline.

Waiting for a child to be ready to speak about their experiences could mean that the abuse carries on and they, or another child, are put at further risk of significant harm (Cossar et al, 2013).

Not taking appropriate action quickly can also affect the child's mental health. They may feel despairing and hopeless and wonder why no-one is helping them. This may discourage them from seeking help in the future and make them distrust adults.

Helping children disclose abuse

It's important to create an environment where children and young people are comfortable about speaking out if anything is worrying them. They need to:

- be able to recognise abuse and know it is wrong
- know who they can talk to about it.

The people they choose to disclose to need to listen, understand and respond appropriately so the child gets the help, support and protection they need.

Talking PANTS (the underwear rule) is a simple way to talk to children as young as four about staying safe from sexual abuse. It helps children to:

- name their body parts and know which parts should be private
- know the difference between appropriate and inappropriate touch
- understand they have the right to say "no"
- think about who they trust and who they can ask for help.

[> See the PANTS resources for schools and teachers](#)

[> Find Talk PANTS resources for parents on the NSPCC website](#)

Our Speak out Stay safe service for primary schools helps children understand abuse in all its forms and know how to protect themselves.

[> Find out more about Speak out. Stay safe](#)

Our Childline service offers children and young people confidential help and advice. Calls to 0800 1111 are free and children can also contact Childline online or find advice on the Childline website.

[> Visit the Childline website](#)

[> Download or order Childline posters and wallet cards](#)

Encouraging children and young people to seek help and support

Many children and young people will seek help because they know where to go and believe that it will make a difference.

Others may not have the confidence to seek support or be too scared to ask for help. They may not get the help they need until they reach crisis point (Garvey et al, 2009).

Make it as easy as you can for young people to find and take up the offer of help.

- Reinforce positive messages about those who seek help – seeking help is a sign of strength.
- Encourage parents to support their children in seeking help.
- Be positive about young people, their capacity for change and their resilience.
- Listen to the people you help – improve your services using feedback from service users.

- Shout about your work – lack of awareness is a significant barrier to young people seeking help.
- See the whole person – engage with young people both in terms of their strengths and their weaknesses.
- Build trust – treat young people with respect.
- Help young people to help each other – equip young people with the skills and tools to support their friends/peers and family members.
- Consider the role of new technologies – these should be complementary to other ways of supporting young people.

(Garvey et al, 2009).

[> Read our tips on having difficult conversations with children and young people](#)

Through Childline, children and young people can access a range of support including:

- information and advice
- online and telephone counselling
- peer support message boards
- therapeutic tools.

Responding to disclosures

We carried out research to find out how adults can better respond to a child who is disclosing abuse (Baker et al, 2019). We found three key interpersonal skills that help a child feel they are being listened to and taken seriously:

- **show you care, help them open up:** Give your full attention to the child or young person and keep your body language open and encouraging. Be compassionate, be understanding and reassure them their feelings are important. Phrases such as ‘you’ve shown such courage today’ help.
- **take your time, slow down:** Respect pauses and don’t interrupt the child – let them go at their own pace. Recognise and respond to their body language. And remember that it may take several conversations for them to share what’s happened to them.
- **show you understand, reflect back:** Make it clear you’re interested in what the child is telling you. Reflect back what they’ve said to check your understanding – and use their language to show it’s their experience.

[> Download our free poster to help you remember these skills and embed them in your practice](#)

If a child tells you they are experiencing abuse, it's important to reassure them that they've done the right thing in telling you. Make sure they know that abuse is never their fault.

Never talk to the alleged perpetrator about the child's disclosure. This could make things a lot worse for the child.

Non-biased approach

It's vital that any child who is trying to disclose abuse feels that they are being listened to and taken seriously.

But there can be a risk that if professionals just believe the child's account without thoroughly investigating the situation, this can lead to unfair bias against the alleged abuser as formal investigations progress (Child Protection Resource, 2021; Transparency Project, 2018).

This means it's important to maintain an unbiased approach when responding to disclosures and follow your organisation's procedures to ensure each case is treated in a fair and transparent manner and that the child gets the protection and support that they need.

Making notes

It's important to keep accurate and detailed notes on any concerns you have about a child. You will need to share these with your nominated child protection lead.

Include:

- the child's details (name, age, address)
- what the child said or did that gave you cause for concern (if the child made a verbal disclosure, write down their exact words)
- any information the child has given you about the alleged abuser.

For more information about child protection and how to record concerns, [sign up for one of our child protection elearning courses](#).

[> Find out more about how people who work or volunteer in schools should respond to concerns about abuse](#)

[> Contact the NSPCC helpline to get advice or share your concerns about a child](#)

Information sharing

Why information sharing is important

Sharing information about a child's welfare helps professionals build a clearer picture of the child's life and gain a better understanding of any risks the child is facing.

Information sharing helps to ensure that an individual receives the right services at the right time and prevents a need from becoming more acute and difficult to meet (DfE, 2018a).

General principles of best practice for information sharing are outlined below. Refer to your organisation's procedures as well as local multi-agency arrangements to ensure you are following the information sharing processes that are most appropriate for your role.

[> Find out more about best practice for multi-agency working](#)

When to share information

Timely information sharing is key to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

People who work with children, whether in a paid or voluntary role, may need to share information about the children and families they are involved with for a number of reasons. These include:

- you are making a referral to arrange additional support for someone in the family
- someone from another agency has asked for information about a child or family
- someone in the family has asked to be referred for further help
- a statutory duty or court order requires information to be shared
- you are concerned that a child or a member of their family may be at risk of significant harm
- you think a serious crime may have been committed or is about to be committed which involves someone in the family.

You must always have a clear and legitimate purpose for sharing a child's personal information. Keep a record of the reasons why you are sharing or requesting information about a child or their family.

You should also make sure you are not putting a child's safety and welfare at risk by sharing information about them.

Some professionals have a legal duty to share information relating to safeguarding concerns. More information about this is available in the Mandatory reporting tab.

Always seek consent to share information about a child and their family. However if consent isn't given, you can still share information with relevant professionals under certain circumstances, for example if you are protecting a child from significant harm. The [Data Protection Act 2018](#) and [General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\)](#) do not affect this principle.

To learn more about getting permission to share information, see the Consent tab.

[> Find out more about GDPR and children](#)

What information to share

You need to decide what specific information is appropriate to share and who to share it with.

- Prioritise the safety and welfare of the child and anyone else who may be affected by the situation.
- Make sure you share the information quickly and securely. The sooner you report your concerns the better. This means the details will be fresh in your mind and action can be taken quickly.
- Identify how much information should be shared. This will depend on the reasons for sharing it.
- Use language that is clear and precise. Different agencies may use and understand terminology differently.
- Make sure the information you are sharing is accurate. Make it clear what information is factual and what is based on opinion (yours or other people's).

Facts and opinions

When working with children and families you will gather information from a variety of sources. How you interpret this information can depend on:

- any previous information received
- your knowledge of research and theory
- your own frame of reference.

When recording information you should be as factual as possible. If you need to give your own or somebody else's opinion make sure it is clearly differentiated from fact. You should identify whose opinion is being given and record their exact words.

[> Contact the NSPCC helpline to share your concerns about a child](#)

Seeking consent to share information

Children should be given the opportunity to decide whether they agree to their personal information being shared. If a child doesn't have the capacity to make their own decisions ask their parent or carer (unless doing so would put the child at risk of harm).

The Gillick competency and Fraser guidelines help professionals to assess whether a child is mature enough to make decisions.

[> See our guidance on the Gillick competency and Fraser guidelines](#)

You should always seek consent to share information about an adult.

Tips for getting consent:

- be open and honest
- make sure the person you're asking for consent understands what information will be shared and why
- explain who will see the information and what it will be used for
- make sure the person you're asking for consent understands the consequences of their information not being shared
- get the consent in writing, in case there are any disputes in the future. If it's only given verbally, make a written record of this

- make sure the person knows they can withdraw consent at any time.

Sharing information without consent

If consent is refused or if you're unable to seek consent, you can still share information with relevant professionals if this is in the public interest.

This includes protecting children from significant harm and promoting the welfare of children.

The [Data Protection Act 2018](#) and [General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\)](#) do not affect this principle.

[> Find out more about GDPR and children](#)

When deciding whether to share information without consent, you should consider each case individually.

- Decide if the need to share information is in the public interest and whether it outweighs the need to maintain confidentiality.
- Consider all the implications of sharing the information, for example if you are sharing sensitive details about a person's life.

If you're not sure what to do, [contact the NSPCC helpline for advice](#).

Make sure you are following the relevant legislation and guidance. More information about this is available in the Legislation and guidance tab.

If you're sharing information without consent keep a written record explaining:

- what steps you took to get consent
- the person's reasons for not giving consent (if known)
- why you felt it was necessary to share information without consent.

Pass a copy of this record on to the agency/agencies you're sharing the information with.

[> Contact the NSPCC helpline to share your concerns about a child](#)

Confidentiality

Never promise a child that you will keep the things they're telling you a secret. Explain that you need to share what they've told you with someone who will be able to help.

If a child or young person needs confidential help and advice direct them to Childline. Calls to 0800 1111 are free and children can also [contact Childline online](#).

Reporting concerns

If a child is suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm, you can share information with appropriate agencies or professionals without the child's or their parent's consent

If a child is in immediate danger, call the police on 999. If a

child is not in immediate danger:

- **Follow your organisation's safeguarding policies and procedures** as soon as possible. These should provide clear guidelines on the steps you need to take if a child discloses abuse. They will state who in your organisation has responsibility for safeguarding or child protection and who you should report your concerns to.

Mandatory reporting

Female genital mutilation (FGM)

It is illegal to carry out FGM in the UK. It is also a criminal offence for UK nationals or permanent UK residents to perform FGM overseas or take their child abroad to have FGM carried out.

In England and Wales, regulated health and social care professionals and teachers must make a report to the police, if, in the course of their duties:

- they are informed by a child under the age of 18 that they have undergone an act of FGM
- they observe physical signs that an act of FGM may have been carried out on a child under the age of 18.

In Wales, professionals who identify cases of FGM need to make a report to both the police and the local authority.

[> Find out about FGM](#)

Criminal Law (Northern Ireland) Act 1967

Under [Section 5](#) of the Criminal Law (Northern Ireland) Act 1967 it is an offence to fail to report a 'relevant offence' to the police. This includes:

- knowing or believing that an offence has been committed
- having information which could lead to the apprehension, prosecution or conviction of an offender.

This legislation covers offences against children and adults.

Duty to report in Wales

"Relevant partners" are required to inform the local authority if they have reasonable cause to suspect a child within the local authority's area is at risk of experiencing abuse, neglect or other types of harm. This includes people who work for the local authority such as teachers and social work practitioners, health practitioners, the police, probation services and others.

[> More information about reporting concerns and the child protection system in Wales](#)

Obligation to report in the Catholic church

Under a [law issued by Pope Francis](#) in May 2019, all clerics in the Catholic Church are obliged to inform Church authorities if they are aware of or suspect sexual abuse, sexual assault or a cover-up in the management of abuse. Anyone experiencing and reporting abuse will be protected. Dioceses or Eparchies must establish a public and accessible system for reporting, and laypeople are encouraged to use these systems to report violence and abuse.

Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing is when someone reports wrongdoing on the basis that it is in the public interest for the wrongdoing to be brought to light. This is usually something they've seen at work but not always. The wrongdoing might have happened in the past, be happening now, or be something the whistleblower is concerned may happen in the near future (Gov.uk, 2019).

Our Whistleblowing Advice Line offers free advice and support to professionals with concerns about how child protection issues are being handled in their own or another organisation.

Contact the Whistleblowing Advice Line on:

- [0800 028 0285](tel:08000280285)
- help@nspcc.org.uk

Contact the Whistleblowing Advice Line if:

- your or another organisation doesn't have clear safeguarding procedures to follow
- concerns aren't dealt with properly or may be covered up
- a concern that was raised hasn't been acted upon
- you are worried that repercussions are likely to arise if you raise a concern.

This applies to incidents that happened in the past, are happening now, or may happen in the future.

[> Find out more about the Whistleblowing Advice Line on the NSPCC website](#)

[> Find out more about the legislation and guidance for whistleblowing](#)

Responding to concerns and sharing information

Key legislation

Article 16 of the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child \(PDF\)](#) states that all children have a right to privacy.

The convention also states that children should be protected from abuse and that their best interests should be prioritised when making decisions that affect them.

This means that, if a child is at risk of harm, it is in their best interests for an adult to share information with relevant agencies – even without the child's consent.

In England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, the [Data Protection Act 2018](#) sets out how personal information should be processed under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

The introduction of GDPR does not affect the principle that adults should share child protection information with other agencies in order to keep a child safe.

Key guidance

Statutory guidance across the UK highlights the responsibility of those in the education, community and care sectors to safeguard children from all forms of abuse and neglect. It explains how practitioners should respond to concerns and how agencies should work together to protect children.

- [Child protection in England](#)
- [Child protection in Northern Ireland](#)
- [Child protection in Scotland](#)
- [Child protection in Wales](#)
- [Key legislation and guidance for schools in the UK](#)

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has published [a quality standard on child abuse and neglect](#). This describes how child abuse and neglect should be recognised, assessed and responded to by health and social care practitioners in England (NICE, 2019).

There is also specific guidance on data protection and sharing personal information.

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has provided a [Data sharing code of practice \(PDF\)](#) to help UK organisations that need to share personal data (ICO, 2011).

In **England**, the Department for Education (DfE) provides guidance for sharing information relating to children's services in [Information sharing: advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers \(PDF\)](#) (DfE, 2018a).

In **Northern Ireland**, Chapter five of the [Code of practice on protecting the confidentiality of service user information \(PDF\)](#) by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS), covers disclosing personal information relating to children (DHSSPS, 2012).

The Department of Health has also provided [Guidance on information sharing for child protection purposes](#) (Department of Health, 2021).

In **Wales**, the Government has produced non-statutory guidance on [information sharing to safeguard children](#) (Welsh Government, 2019).

Guidance for schools

In **England** and **Wales**, the [Data protection: toolkit for schools](#) provides guidance on how schools should process and record personal information in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (DfE, 2018b).

In **Northern Ireland**, the [Think data online resource hub](#) hosts resources that schools can use to ensure they are GDPR compliant (Education Authority, 2021).

In **Scotland**, [Getting it right for every child \(GIRFEC\): information sharing](#) sets out guidance on information sharing for schools (Scottish Government, 2021).

Guidance for charities

In **England**, The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has created an [online portal to help charities manage allegations of abuse or harm](#) made against an employee or volunteer.

Complaints and whistleblowing

If you are worried that your organisation or another organisation is not responding to or sharing child protection information appropriately, it's vital that you share your concerns to keep children safe.

Legislation across the UK ensures that you shouldn't be treated unfairly or lose your job because you 'blow the whistle' (Gov.uk, 2021).

In **England**, **Scotland** and **Wales**, whistleblowers are protected by law under the [Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998](#).

In **Northern Ireland**, [The Public Interest Disclosure \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1998](#) protects workers who 'blow the whistle' over wrongdoing.

The government provides [guidance on whistleblowing for employees](#) in **England**, **Scotland** and **Wales** (Gov.uk, 2021).

The Department for the Economy in Northern Ireland provides [guidance on the Public Interest Disclosure \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1998](#) (Department for the Economy, 2017).

Protecting children from sexual abuse

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is when a child is forced or persuaded to take part in sexual activities. This may involve physical contact or non-contact activities and can happen online or offline (Department for Education, 2018; Department of Health 2017; Scottish Government, 2021a; Wales Safeguarding Procedures Project Board, 2020). Children and young people may not always understand that they are being sexually abused.

Contact abuse involves activities where an abuser makes physical contact with a child. It includes:

- sexual touching of any part of the body, whether the child is wearing clothes or not
- forcing or encouraging a child to take part in sexual activity
- making a child take their clothes off or touch someone else's genitals
- rape or penetration by putting an object or body part inside a child's mouth, vagina or anus.

Non-contact abuse involves activities where there is no physical contact. It includes:

- flashing at a child
- encouraging or forcing a child to watch or hear sexual acts
- not taking proper measures to prevent a child being exposed to sexual activities by others
- making a child masturbate while others watch
- persuading a child to make, view or distribute child abuse images (such as performing sexual acts over the internet, sexting or showing pornography to a child)
- making, viewing or distributing child abuse images
- allowing someone else to make, view or distribute child abuse images
- meeting a child following grooming with the intent of abusing them (even if abuse did not take place)
- sexually exploiting a child for money, power or status (child sexual exploitation).

Impact of child sexual abuse

Experiencing sexual abuse can have a long-lasting negative impact on a child's wellbeing that can reach into adulthood. Effects include:

- mental health issues – such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety and depression
- challenging behaviour – such as substance misuse, sexualised behaviour, offending
- relationship problems – for example intimacy issues, having unstable relationships
- being vulnerable to further sexual abuse or other types of abuse

(Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, 2017).

[> Take our training course to better understand child brain development and the impact of trauma](#)

Impact of online sexual abuse

Research suggests that online child sexual abuse can have as much of an impact on a child as abuse that only takes place offline and can lead to the same psychological difficulties (Hamilton-Giachritsis et al, 2017).

[> Find out more about online abuse](#)

Brain development

Trauma and adverse experiences, such as sexual abuse, can negatively affect the development of a child's brain. Abuse may alter brain architecture, lead to heightened stress responses and weaken cognitive development.

(Shonkoff et al, 2008; Shonkoff et al, 2014).

Recognising child sexual abuse Signs

and indicators

Not all children will realise they are being sexually abused, particularly if they have been groomed. But there may be physical, behavioural and emotional signs that indicate a child has experienced sexual abuse.

Physical indicators include:

- bruising
- bleeding
- discharge
- pain or soreness in the genital or anal area
- sexually transmitted infections (Lindon and Webb, 2016).

Pregnancy at a young age can also be an indicator of sexual abuse.

Emotional and behavioural indicators include:

- being afraid of and/or avoiding a particular person (including a family member or friend)
- having nightmares or bed-wetting
- being withdrawn
- alluding to 'secrets'
- self-harming
- running away from home
- developing eating problems
- displaying sexualised behaviour or having sexual knowledge that's inappropriate for their stage of development
- misusing drugs or alcohol (Lindon and Webb, 2016).

Our Childline service offers support and advice to children and young people who have been sexually abused. One young person told us about how it affected them:

"I do not feel safe at home as my stepbrother has been touching me inappropriately for many years. I've been self-harming and I feel clueless: I don't want to die but I am scared to keep living."

Childline counselling session with a girl aged 15 Risk

and vulnerability factors

Any child or young person could potentially experience sexual abuse – but some groups of children may be more at risk:

- disabled children (Jones et al, 2012)
- girls aged between 15 and 17 years (Radford et al, 2011)
- children who have experienced other forms of abuse (Finkelhor, Ormrod, and Turner, 2007).

[> Find out more about safeguarding D/deaf and disabled children](#)

[> For information about adolescents' experiences of abuse see our How safe are our children? report for 2020](#)

Who sexually abuses children?

Child sexual abuse is committed by men, women, teenagers and other children. Offenders come from all parts of society and all backgrounds. They often seem 'normal' to others and in many cases their friends, relatives and co-workers find it hard to believe that they have abused a child.

Relationship between the child and their abuser

Many children who have experienced sexual abuse were abused by someone they know. This may be:

- a member of their family
- a friend
- an adult who has sought out and targeted them as a potential victim.

Perpetrators of child sexual abuse may look for weak spots in a family, community or organisation so they can gain unsupervised access to children. They often plan the abuse in advance and start grooming the child, the child's family and the child's environment. The victim may believe they have a sincere or loving relationship with their abuser and their family and friends may trust and respect the abuser.

Research suggests that child sexual abuse can be carried out in different ways.

- Inappropriate relationships where an older abuser has some kind of power over the child. This could be physical, emotional or financial.
- The "boyfriend" model involves the abuser grooming the child by exchanging gifts and other normal dating activities. The child may think they are in a conventional relationship.

- Organised exploitation and trafficking where children are abused by more than one adult as part of a network. The child may be forced or manipulated into taking part in sexual acts with other people. Organised exploitation may involve the movement of victims into and across the country, as well as exchanging images of child abuse (Dagon, 2012; Pemberton, 2011).

Responding to child sexual abuse Reporting

If you think a child is in immediate danger, contact the police on **999**. If you're worried about a child but they are not in immediate danger, you should share your concerns.

- **Follow your organisational child protection procedures.** Organisations that work with children and families must have [safeguarding policies and procedures](#) in place.
- **Contact the NSPCC Helpline** on [0808 800 5000](tel:08088005000) or by emailing help@nspcc.org.uk. Our trained professionals will talk through your concerns with you and give you expert advice.
- **Contact your local child protection services.** Their contact details can be found on the website for the local authority the child lives in.
- Contact the police.

Services will risk assess the situation and take action to protect the child as appropriate either through statutory involvement or other support. This may include making a referral to the local authority.

> [See our information about recognising and responding to abuse](#)

Assessment

Most sexual abuse isn't reported, detected or prosecuted. This may be because adults in the child's life do not recognise the signs that they are being abused, the child may not understand what's happening to them is abuse or may be too afraid to speak out.

When assessing a child who has been sexually abused, it's important to focus on the child's individual needs.

- Listen to the child's point of view.
- Ensure the child knows they are taken seriously and that they will be protected. Make it clear that abuse is never a child's fault.
- Include children in making decisions that affect them.
- Remember that children don't always respond to direct questions and may not have the words to describe their experience or its impact.
- Identify the child's support network. Do this with the child where possible.
- Assess parents' and carers' ability to protect the child from further abuse.
- Identify roles and responsibilities of all professionals involved with the child, and follow agreed procedures to share information about child protection concerns.

Preventing child sexual abuse

Creating safer environments

Using a contextual safeguarding approach to prevent child sexual abuse allows adults to think about the places where abuse might happen outside of the home and take action to mitigate potential risks in each location (Firmin, 2017).

Physical environments

Young people are likely to spend time in environments with little or no adult supervision. It's important to consider the risks posed to young people in these areas. Keep children safe by checking regularly on areas that are infrequently used or left unsupervised, such as quiet corridors or outdoor spaces. Also ensure all areas are well lit.

Online environments

Children can be vulnerable to sexual abuse and inappropriate content in the online world. There are actions parents, carers and organisations can take to keep online spaces safe for children. It's also important children are given the knowledge and skills needed to keep themselves safe online, to build their own resilience.

[> Find out more about preventing online abuse](#)

People who work or volunteer with children

Follow safer recruitment practices to ensure that only suitable adults work with children and that everyone working or volunteering with children has regular child protection training so they know the signs of sexual abuse and how to respond appropriately.

Protecting children from bullying and cyberbullying

Bullying is when individuals or groups seek to harm, intimidate or coerce someone who is perceived to be vulnerable (Oxford English Dictionary, 2021).

It can involve people of any age, and can happen anywhere – at home, school or using online platforms and technologies (cyberbullying). This means it can happen at any time.

Bullying encompasses a range of behaviours which may be combined and may include the behaviours and actions we have set out below.

Verbal abuse:

- name-calling
- saying nasty things to or about a child or their family.

Physical abuse:

- hitting a child
- pushing a child
- physical assault.

Emotional abuse:

- making threats
- undermining a child
- excluding a child from a friendship group or activities.

Cyberbullying/online bullying:

- excluding a child from online games, activities or friendship groups
- sending threatening, upsetting or abusive messages

- creating and sharing embarrassing or malicious images or videos
- 'trolling' - sending menacing or upsetting messages on social networks, chat rooms or online games
- voting for or against someone in an abusive poll
- setting up hate sites or groups about a particular child
- creating fake accounts, hijacking or stealing online identities to embarrass a young person or cause trouble using their name.

Bullying can be a form of discrimination, particularly if it is based on a child's disability, race, religion or belief, gender identity or sexuality.

Impact of bullying

The emotional effects of being bullied include:

- sadness, depression and anxiety
- low self-esteem
- social isolation
- self-harm
- suicidal thoughts and feelings (Bainbridge, Ross and Woodhouse, 2017).

"Every day I wake up scared to go to school, scared about the comments people will make and scared about walking home. Then I get in and log onto my social networking site and there are horrible messages everywhere. It's like there's no escaping the bullies. I'm struggling to cope with how upset I feel so sometimes I cut myself just to have a release but it's not enough. I can't go on like this."

Childline counselling session with a girl aged 13

Bullying can affect children's performance and attendance at school. They may find it hard to concentrate on schoolwork and homework, or be too afraid to go to school (Brown, Clery and Ferguson, 2011).

Bullying can happen at any time or anywhere - a child can be bullied online when they are alone in their bedroom trying to relax or do homework - so it can feel like there's no escape (NSPCC, 2016). This can make it even more difficult for children to cope with being bullied.

If a child is being bullied online, they may not know who is bullying them (the bully may have created an anonymous online account). This can be extremely frightening.

Children who have witnessed another child being bullied may also be distressed. They may not know the best way to help the person being bullied. They may fear for their own safety and experience feelings of guilt for not stepping in (Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2017; NSPCC, 2016).

Who is involved?

Why children bully others

There are many reasons why children bully others and it's not always a straightforward situation. Some of these include:

- peer pressure and/or wanting the approval of others
- wanting to feel powerful over someone with a perceived disadvantage
- being bullied themselves
- being worried, unhappy or upset about something
- lacking social skills or not understanding how others feel.

Children who bully others may not understand that they are making life difficult for another child, and may find this realisation very distressing. It can be difficult for them to get the support they need to change their behaviour (NSPCC, 2016).

When posting online, children may not consider the impact their actions will have on others. Some children may be more likely to engage in bullying behaviour online as they can create anonymous accounts which may make them feel as if they can't be 'found out'.

Vulnerability factors

Any child can be bullied. Children who are seen by others as 'different' in some way may be targeted (Children's Commissioner for Wales, 2017).

This might be because of their:

- physical appearance
- race
- faith or culture

- gender identity
- sexuality
- disability or additional needs.

(Ditch the Label, 2019)

Or it could be because they:

- appear anxious or have low self-esteem
- lack assertiveness
- are shy or introverted.

It may also be because of a child's family circumstances or home life, for example if they are adopted or in care (Department for Education, 2017) or receiving free school meals (Anti-Bullying Alliance, 2019).

Recognising and responding to bullying Signs

and indicators

Indicators that a child could be experiencing bullying include:

- being reluctant to go to school
- being distressed or anxious
- losing confidence and becoming withdrawn
- having problems eating and/or sleeping
- having unexplained injuries
- changes in appearance
- changes in performance and/or behaviour at school.

Adults may notice that a child isn't spending time with their usual group of friends, has become isolated or that other children's behaviour towards a child has changed.

Reporting

If you have a concern about bullying, you should follow your organisation's anti-bullying procedures as soon as possible.

If you think a child is in immediate danger, contact the police on **999**. If you're worried a child is at risk of serious harm but they are not in immediate danger, you should share your concerns.

- **Follow your organisational child protection and procedures.** Organisations that work with children and families must have [safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures](#) in place.
- **Contact the NSPCC Helpline** on [0808 800 5000](tel:08088005000) or by emailing help@nspcc.org.uk. Our trained professionals will talk through your concerns with you and give you expert advice.
- **Contact your local child protection services.** Their contact details can be found on the website for the local authority the child lives in.
- Contact the police.

Services will risk assess the situation and take action to protect the child as appropriate either through statutory involvement or other support. This may include making a referral to the local authority.

[> See our information about recognising and responding to abuse](#)

Responding to incidents

All organisations that work with children should have a consistent approach to how they respond to bullying, which should be outlined in an anti-bullying policy. This should be linked to your child protection policy.

We've created an example anti-bullying policy statement that you can tailor according to the context of your organisation. It covers the key topics you need to consider and gives examples of some of the supporting documents you need to put in place.

[> Find out more about writing an anti-bullying policy statement](#)

When responding to incidents or allegations of bullying it's important for staff and volunteers to:

- listen to all the children involved to establish what has happened
- record details of the incident and any actions you've taken
- inform your nominated child protection lead

- inform parents and carers (unless doing so would put a child at further risk of harm)
- provide support to the child/children being bullied, children who witnessed the bullying and the child/children who has been accused of bullying
- ask the child/children who have been bullied what they would like to happen next
- consider appropriate sanctions for children that have carried out bullying
- continue to monitor the situation even if the situation has been resolved.

It's important to review your anti-bullying policies and procedures regularly in the light of any incidents that have taken place, any new information learned and best practice.

Your anti-bullying procedures should include information about how you will respond to bullying that takes place outside your organisation, but involves children who know each other through your activities. This should include online bullying, bullying that happens on the way to and from school, and bullying that happens in other public places.

When responding to online bullying:

- make sure children know not to retaliate online or reply to any bullying messages
- make sure children understand how they can take steps to prevent online bullying from happening again, for example by changing their contact details, blocking contacts or leaving a chat room
- ask the child if they have shared the bullying content with anyone else (if so, who).

If bullying content has been circulated online, take action to contain it:

- if appropriate, ask the person responsible to remove the content
- contact the host (such as the social networking site) and ask them to take the content down
- contact the [NSPCC helpline](#) for advice about what to do.

If the content is illegal, contact the police who can give advice and guidance.

Preventing bullying

It's important for organisations to create a culture where it is clear bullying will not be tolerated and children feel they can tell someone if they have a problem..

This might include:

- talking to young people about healthy relationships and challenging unhealthy behaviours
- promoting sources of help and information such as [Childline](#).

[> View our resources on promoting healthy relationships](#)

[> Visit the Childline website](#)

You should produce accessible versions of your anti-bullying policy and procedures, and share these with children, parents and carers.

Talk to children about:

- what bullying is
- how it affects the people involved
- why people bully others
- what bystanders should do when they witness bullying
- the importance of children telling someone if they or someone else is being bullied.

[> Find out more about how to have difficult conversations with children](#)

Consider whether there are any areas where bullying may be more likely to happen, for example in toilets or areas of the school that feel unsupervised. You should take steps to make these areas safer, for example making sure staff do regular checks.

Keep up to date with new legislation and guidance by [signing up to CASPAR](#), our current awareness service for policy, practice and research.

Sexting: advice for professionals

Sexting is when people share a sexual message and/or a naked or semi-naked image, video or text message with another person. It's also known as nude image sharing.

Children and young people may consent to sending a nude image of themselves. They can also be forced or coerced into sharing images by their peers or adults online.

If a child or young person originally shares the image consensually, they have no control over how other people might use it.

If the image is shared around peer groups it may lead to bullying and isolation. Perpetrators of abuse may circulate a nude image more widely and use this to blackmail a child and/or groom them for further sexual abuse.

It's a criminal offence to create or share explicit images of a child, even if the person doing it is a child. If sexting is reported to the police, they will make a record but may decide not take any formal action against a young person.

> [Read more about online abuse](#)

> [Read more about harmful sexual behaviour](#)

> [Find out more about understanding and responding to sexting in our How safe are our children? report for 2020 \(PDF\)](#)

It's important that anyone working or volunteering with children and young people understands the dynamics of sexting. You should know what to do if you ever need to help a young person who has received or sent an explicit image, video or message; or had an image shared without their consent.

> [Read our practice example about responding to sexting](#)

We've put together some information to help you respond appropriately to incidents of nude image sharing. This includes:

- what policies and procedures you need to have in place
- what to do if you are concerned a sexting incident has taken place
- reporting concerns and getting images removed from the internet
- raising awareness about sexting

Writing a sexting policy and procedures

All organisations must have a clear policy statement about sexting. This should sit alongside and be embedded with your overarching safeguarding and child protection policy and your online safety policy. It should outline your commitment to raising awareness of the issues surrounding sexting and supporting children who have been involved in sexting incidents.

You should also have clear procedures that detail the actions which staff and volunteers must take if a child makes a disclosure about sexting or if they have any concerns that a child has been involved in a sexting incident.

All staff and volunteers must be familiar with these documents and understand how to follow them. It's good practice to make them available to parents and young people - you might want to consider creating a young person friendly version.

[> Find out more about writing a safeguarding policy](#)

[> See our example online safety policy statement and agreement](#)

Policy statement

Your sexting policy statement should set out:

- what sexting is
- reasons why young people might create and send sexual images of themselves
- how sexting can be used to harm or abuse a child
- what the law says about sexting
- how your organisation will raise awareness about the issues surrounding sexting
- your organisation's intention to respond appropriately to any incidents of sexting that might involve the children and young people you work with.

Procedures

There should be clear steps for staff and volunteers to follow if they have concerns about or become aware of young people sharing explicit images or videos of themselves or others.

Your procedures should cover:

- how to talk to and support children and young people who have been involved in a sexting incident
- reporting concerns
- assessing risk
- how to take appropriate action.

Keeping children safe should always be the focus of any response to sexting incidents.

Your sexting policy and procedures should follow best practice guidance. More information about this is available in the Legislation and guidance tab.

Recognising concerns

Children and young people who are involved in a sexting incident might have:

- shared an image of themselves
- received an image from someone else
- shared an image of someone else more widely.

This may have happened with or without consent of all the people involved. And children may have been coerced or pressured into giving consent.

Sometimes a child might tell you directly that they have been involved in sexting. Or they might mention something which gives you cause for concern. Other times you might notice that a child is behaving differently or being bullied, and the sexting might come to light when you try to find out what's going on.

Sometimes you might overhear a conversation between children, or see something that makes you worried.

[> Learn how to spot the signs that a young person is in an unhealthy relationship](#)

Never wait for a child to tell you directly that they have been involved in sexting. You should follow your organisation's policy and procedures and make your nominated child protection lead aware of the situation as soon as possible.

Talking to a young person who has been involved in sexting

If you're talking to a young person who has been involved in sexting, it's important to remain calm, reassuring and non-judgmental. Give them time to talk and check that you understand what they have said.

[> Find out more about how to talk to a child who is disclosing abuse](#)

[> Read our blog post about why language matters when talking about taking, sending or receiving naked or semi-naked images or videos](#)

Gathering information

Your nominated child protection lead should take the lead on responding to incidents of sexting, working closely with your senior leadership team. They should also liaise with agencies such as the police or children's social care as appropriate.

They should talk to the young people involved, to find out what's happened, how they are feeling and what support they need.

Your nominated child protection lead should try to find out:

- if it's an image, video or message
- who sent it
- who is featured in it
- if there were any adults involved
- if it's on an organisational or personal device.

Safeguarding and child protection should be the main concern of any investigation into a sexting incident and you should avoid criminalising young people unnecessarily (College of Policing, 2016). If sexting is reported to the police, they will make a record but may decide not to take any formal action against a young person. Your local police force will be able to give you more information about this.

What to do with a sexting image

It's best practice never to view any sexting images. If the image is on a device belonging to your organisation, you need to isolate it so that nobody else can see it. This may involve blocking the network to all users.

You should never copy, print or share sexual images of a child or young person (Childnet, 2016; UKCCIS, 2017a and 2017b).

You should only search devices if the child is at immediate risk of harm. The Department for Education (DfE) provides guidance for head teachers, staff and governing bodies in England on [searching electronic devices](#) (DfE, 2018).

Continued support for children and young people

It's essential all children and young people involved in sexting receive ongoing support. You should also involve parents and carers, unless doing so might pose a risk to their child.

It may also be appropriate to make a referral to a counselling service or therapeutic support.

[> Find out more about support for children who have displayed harmful sexual behaviour](#)

The [NSPCC helpline](#) is available to anyone worried about a child.

Our Childline website has a range of resources for children and young people. Childline also provides [free confidential support](#) through online chat, phone or email.

[> Look at Childline's age-appropriate information about sexting and sending nudes](#)

Recording and reviewing

Your nominated child protection lead should make a written record of the incident and all the actions taken.

Following a sexting incident, your organisation will need to review what happened and how it was dealt with to ensure that you learn and improve procedures.

Reporting

When to make a child protection referral

You should follow a considered and detailed process when deciding whether or not to make a child protection referral about an incident of nude image sharing.

You should make a child protection referral if:

- the incident involves an adult
- there is reason to believe that a child or young person has been coerced, blackmailed or groomed, or there are concerns about their capacity to consent (for example, if they have a learning disability)
- what you know about the image(s) suggests the content depicts sexual acts which are unusual for the young person's developmental stage, or are violent
- the image(s) involves sexual acts and any child in the image(s) is under 13
- you have reason to believe a child or young person is at immediate risk of harm due to the sharing of the image, for example if they are presenting as suicidal or self-harming.

If you think a child is in immediate danger, contact the police on 999. If you're worried about a child but they are not in immediate danger, you should share your concerns.

- **Follow your organisational child protection procedures.** Organisations that work with children and families must have [safeguarding policies and procedures](#) in place.
- **Contact the NSPCC Helpline** on [0808 800 5000](tel:08088005000) or by emailing help@nspcc.org.uk. Our trained professionals will talk through your concerns with you and give you expert advice.
- **Contact your local child protection services.** Their contact details can be found on the website for the local authority the child lives in.
- Contact the police.
- **Inform CEOP** (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command) if you think a child has been groomed or sexually abused online. You can [report on their website](#).

The NSPCC and police will risk assess the situation and take action to protect the child as appropriate either through statutory involvement or other support. This may include making a referral to the local authority.

[> See our information about recognising and responding to abuse](#)

Getting an explicit image removed from the internet

To get an explicit image removed from the internet you can:

- report the image to the site or network hosting it

- contact the [Internet Watch Foundation \(IWF\)](#)
- encourage the child or young person to get in touch with Childline.

Young people under 18 who are worried that a sexual image or video of them may have been shared online can use Childline and IWF's [Report Remove tool](#) to see if it can be taken down.

Protecting children from sexual exploitation

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a type of [child sexual abuse](#). It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (Department for Education, 2017; Nldirect, 2021; Scottish Government, 2018; Wales Safeguarding Procedures Project Board, 2020a).

Children and young people in sexually exploitative situations and relationships are persuaded or forced to perform sexual activities or have sexual activities performed on them in return for gifts, drugs, money or affection.

CSE can take place in person, online, or using a combination of both.

Perpetrators of CSE use a power imbalance to exploit children and young people. This may arise from a range of factors including:

- age
- gender
- sexual identity
- cognitive ability
- physical strength
- status
- access to economic or other resources (Department of Education, 2017).

Sexual exploitation is a hidden crime. Young people have often been groomed into trusting their abuser and may not understand that they're being abused. They may depend on their abuser and be too scared to tell anyone what's happening because they don't want to get them in trouble or risk losing them. They may be tricked into believing they're in a loving, consensual relationship.

Some children and young people are trafficked into or within the UK for sexual exploitation.

[> Find out more about child trafficking and modern slavery](#)

[> Find out more about grooming](#)

Child sexual exploitation online

When sexual exploitation happens online, young people may be persuaded or forced to:

- have sexual conversations by text or online
- send or post sexually explicit images of themselves
- take part in sexual activities via a webcam or smartphone (Hamilton-Giachritsis et al, 2017).

Abusers may threaten to send images, video or copies of conversations to the young person's friends and family unless they take part in further sexual activity. Images or videos may continue to be shared long after the sexual abuse has stopped.

Impact of child sexual exploitation

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) can have long-term effects on young people's wellbeing, impacting on their life into adulthood.

Some difficulties faced by children and young people who have been sexually exploited include:

- isolation from family and friends
- falling behind on schoolwork, failing exams or dropping out of school altogether
- teenage parenthood
- unemployment
- mental health problems
- alcohol and drug addiction
- having a criminal record
- suicidal thoughts and attempts

(Parents against child sexual abuse, 2013; Safe and Sound, 2013; Berelowitz et al, 2012).

[> Understand the impact of stressful and traumatic experiences on a child's brain development with our face-to-face training course](#)

Impact of online child sexual exploitation

Research suggests that online child sexual abuse can have as much of an impact on a child as abuse that only takes place offline and can lead to the same psychological difficulties (Hamilton-Giachritsis et al, 2017). Effects can include:

- self-blame
- flashbacks or intrusive thoughts
- difficulties sleeping
- nightmares
- extreme tiredness
- difficulties concentrating
- difficulties keeping up with school work
- behavioural problems at school
- depression
- low self-esteem
- social withdrawal
- panic attacks and anxiety
- eating disorder or eating difficulties
- self-harm

(Hamilton-Giachritsis et al, 2017).

Digital technology makes it possible to be contacted at any time – day or night. Contact at night increases the abuser's control over the child's life and increases secrecy around the abuse itself. A child may feel powerless, like there is no escape from the abuse (Munro, 2011; Hamilton-Giachritsis et al, 2017).

“Over the last year I have been groomed by a man who lives in America. I have sent him pictures and other things and I know he exploits many other girls. He gives us

hush money and threatens to send your family the pictures if you refuse to do as he asks. I am too scared to contact the police.”

Childline counselling session with a girl aged 16

If children have been sexually exploited and evidence is shared online (such as explicit images), they are being abused again every time somebody views it. As it's very difficult to track and remove online images, it can be very traumatic for young people and make it very difficult for them to move forward following the abuse.

Recognising child sexual exploitation

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) can be very difficult to identify. Warning signs can easily be mistaken for 'normal' teenage behaviour.

Behavioural indicators

Children and young people who are being sexually exploited may display certain behaviours:

- displaying [inappropriate sexualised behaviour](#) for their age
- being fearful of certain people and/or situations
- displaying significant changes in emotional wellbeing
- being isolated from peers/usual social networks
- being increasingly secretive
- having money or new things (such as clothes or a mobile phone) that they can't explain
- spending time with older individuals or groups
- being involved with gangs and/or gang fights
- having older boyfriends or girlfriends
- missing school and/or falling behind with schoolwork
- persistently returning home late
- returning home under the influence of drugs/alcohol
- going missing from home or care
- being involved in petty crime such as shoplifting
- spending a lot of time at hotels or places of concern, such as known brothels

- not knowing where they are, because they have been [trafficked](#) around the country (Department for Education, 2017).

Physical signs include:

- unexplained physical injuries and other signs of [physical abuse](#)
- changed physical appearance - for example, weight loss
- scars from self-harm (Department for Education, 2017).

Repeat sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy and terminations can also be a sign of CSE (Coffey and Lloyd, 2014).

[> Find out how to recognise the signs of healthy and unhealthy relationships](#)

Risks and vulnerability factors

Child sexual exploitation can happen to any child or young person. But research has identified certain factors that may make a child or young person more vulnerable to CSE. These include:

- low self-esteem or self-confidence
- lacking friends from the same age group
- being a young carer
- being in or leaving care
- a history of abuse, particularly [sexual abuse](#)
- recent bereavement or loss
- homelessness
- links to a gang through relatives, peers or intimate relationships
- living in a gang-affected neighbourhood (Department for Education, 2017).

There are some factors affecting LGBTQ+ children and young people that can put them at risk of sexual exploitation. For example, they don't always receive relevant sex and relationships education and may not be able to find safe spaces where they can meet peers. If the young person feels isolated and unsupported, they may go online and/or build relationships with strangers. This can mean they are more easily influenced by exploitative adults (Barnardo's, 2016).

Perpetrators of child sexual exploitation

CSE can be perpetrated by:

- individuals or groups
- males or females
- children or adults.

The abuse can be a one-off occurrence or a series of incidents over time and range from opportunistic to complex organised abuse (Department for Education, 2017).

Identifying perpetrators is difficult because:

- data isn't always recorded or is inconsistent or incomplete
- children and young people may only know their abuser by an alias, nickname or appearance
- victims may be 'passed between' abusers and assaulted by multiple perpetrators
- children and young people are often moved from location to location and abused in each place
- young people may be given alcohol or drugs, so may not remember details clearly (Berelowitz et al, 2012).

People who sexually exploit children are often described as highly manipulative individuals. They exert power over young people through physical violence, emotional blackmail or financial pressure, for example holding them in debt.

Perpetrators may use one victim to gain access to others, persuading or forcing a child or young person to bring their friends along to pre-arranged meetings or 'parties'. In some cases, if a child or young person tries to break free, the perpetrator will use their peers to draw them back in (Child Exploitation and Online Protection command (CEOP), 2011).

[> Find out more about grooming](#)

Responding to child sexual exploitation

Reporting

If you think a child is in immediate danger, contact the police on **999**. If you're worried about a child but they are not in immediate danger, you should share your concerns.

- **Follow your organisational child protection procedures.** Organisations that work with children and families must have [safeguarding policies and procedures](#) in place.
- **Contact the NSPCC Helpline** on [0808 800 5000](tel:08088005000) or by emailing help@nspcc.org.uk. Our trained professionals will talk through your concerns with you and give you expert advice.
- **Contact your local child protection services.** Their contact details can be found on the website for the local authority the child lives in.
- Contact the police.

Services will risk assess the situation and take action to protect the child as appropriate either through statutory involvement or other support. This may include making a referral to the local authority.

> [See our information about recognising and responding to abuse](#)

> [Find out how to recognise the signs of healthy and unhealthy relationships](#)

Removing explicit images

You should take steps to report and remove evidence of online child sexual exploitation, such as explicit images.

- Report the image to the site or network hosting it.
- Contact the [Internet Watch Foundation \(IWF\)](#).
- Young people under 18 who are worried that a sexual image or video of them may have been shared online can use Childline and IWF's [Report Remove tool](#) to see if it can be taken down. The tool can be used with the support from a trusted adult, and support is available from Childline.

Assessment

When assessing the risk of CSE, it's important for professionals to:

- take a collaborative and supportive approach
- remember that the victim is not to blame
- use professional judgement
- gather as much narrative information as possible - this helps to see the bigger picture and understand risk and protective factors
- include all potential indicators of risk such as:

- online/social media communication
- gaming
- drug and/or alcohol use
- gang involvement
- deprivation/poverty
- disability
- sexual interests and attitudes
- focus on factors that may put a child at risk of harm, rather than assessing incidents that have already taken place
- make sure the tool you're using is appropriate for the child (some risk assessment tools don't contain indicators for boys, younger children and disabled children)
- look at protective factors or strengths of young people, their families and their immediate environment
- make sure professionals are trained to assess the risk of CSE - it may also be useful to provide lists of risk and protective indicators to help less experienced staff (Brown et al, 2017).

Preventing child sexual exploitation

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) can be stopped. To prevent CSE and keep children safe, it's vital to:

- raise awareness of the signs of CSE
- teach children and young people about healthy relationships
- make sure everyone knows how to report concerns (Coffey and Lloyd, 2014).

Schools

Schools are in a good position to promote healthy relationships and make sure children and young people know who to talk to if they ever need support.

[> Find out more about promoting healthy relationships](#)

Community awareness

Building community awareness of what CSE is and the signs to watch for is key to help keep children and young people safe. Communities can be the strongest allies in protecting children from exploitation (Coffey et al, 2014).

We are working with communities and local authorities across the UK to raise awareness of CSE and to inform young people, professionals and parents about the risks. If you are looking to develop an initiative or campaign, do get in touch with us.

[> Find out more about what we do and how we can help you create a local campaign](#)

The night-time economy

Businesses and services in the night-time economy – such as fast-food outlets, accident and emergency, security services, bars and night clubs, taxi firms, hotels and bed and breakfasts are well placed to identify children at risk of CSE and report concerns to the relevant authorities (D'Arcy and Thomas, 2016).

It's important that workers in the night-time economy:

- understand what CSE is and who it affects
- recognise possible signs that a young person is being sexually exploited
- understanding how to share concerns and help keep young people safe (D'Arcy and Thomas, 2016).

Multi-agency approach

Sharing information across agencies/organisations is key to identifying early indicators of CSE – for example, a child or young person missing from home, school or care – and taking action to support children at risk (Coffey and Lloyd, 2014).

It's important that all partners take responsibility for their roles, work collaboratively with each other and have a shared understanding of how to tackle CSE (HM Inspectorate of Probation, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), Care Quality Commission, and Ofsted, 2016).

Protecting children from online abuse

Online abuse is any type of abuse that happens on the internet, facilitated through technology like computers, tablets, mobile phones and other internet-enabled devices (Department for Education, 2018; Department of Health, 2017; Scottish Government, 2021; Welsh Assembly Government, 2018).

It can happen anywhere online that allows digital communication, such as:

- social networks
- text messages and messaging apps
- email and private messaging
- online chats
- comments on live streaming sites
- voice chat in games.

Children and young people can be revictimised (experience further abuse) when abusive content is recorded, uploaded or shared by others online. This can happen if the original abuse happened online or offline.

Children and young people may experience several types of abuse online:

- [bullying/cyberbullying](#)
- [emotional abuse](#) (this includes emotional blackmail, for example pressuring children and young people to comply with sexual requests via technology)
- [sexting](#) (pressure or coercion to create sexual images)
- [sexual abuse](#)
- [sexual exploitation](#).

Children and young people can also be groomed online: perpetrators may use online platforms to build a trusting relationship with the child in order to abuse them. This abuse may happen online or the perpetrator may arrange to meet the child in person with the intention of abusing them.

> [Find out more about grooming](#)

> [See what data we uncovered about child abuse online in our How safe? 2019 report](#)

Impact of online abuse

Whether abuse happens online or offline it can have a long-lasting impact on a child's overall wellbeing. Online abuse can lead to:

- anxiety
- self-harm

- eating disorders
- suicidal thoughts

(Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and Home Office, 2020).

Research shows that cyberbullying has similar effects to offline bullying. It can lead to:

- falling behind at school
- depression
- anxiety
- other mental health difficulties.

Cyberbullying can make children feel more frightened and helpless than bullying that happens offline. Contact from cyberbullies can happen at any time, anywhere and this can make children feel like they can't escape (Munro, 2011).

[> Find out more about the impact of cyberbullying](#)

Online child sexual abuse has as much of an impact on a child or young person as sexual abuse that takes place offline only (Hamilton-Giachritsis et al, 2017). Effects of online sexual abuse can include:

- self-blame
- flashbacks or intrusive thoughts
- difficulties sleeping
- nightmares
- extreme tiredness
- difficulties concentrating
- difficulties keeping up with school work
- behavioural problems at school
- depression
- low self-esteem
- social withdrawal
- panic attacks and anxiety

- eating disorder or eating difficulties
- self-harm

(Hamilton-Giachritsis et al, 2017).

However, experiencing abuse online and/or using technology can cause additional effects:

- young people may be afraid of sexual images being shared online or being viewed in the future, particularly if the perpetrator has made threats about sharing sexual images in order to blackmail the young person into complying with further abuse
- being filmed can lead some young people to feel uncomfortable around cameras
- young people who have been in constant contact with the person who abused them via digital technology can become very fatigued – especially if they were in contact during the night. They may also feel powerless and frightened.
- some young people who were abused online feel that this made them more vulnerable to further abuse by sexualising them, leading them to drink heavily or take risks or reducing their sense of self-worth and confidence

(Hamilton-Giachritsis et al, 2017).

“Within a week, we were, like, in what I considered to be a relationship and, erm, first of all, it started off just normal, as any, like, relationship would, just telling each other we loved each other and stuff, and then it turned into, erm, he would force me to send pictures to him, like...It was over the internet, but I felt like it was forced. If I didn't, he would, like, have a go at me. Erm, he would ring me at 3am, like, in the morning, and I was in Year 7 at the time, so obviously, like, I needed my sleep. If I went to sleep and didn't stay up and wait for him, he would have a go at me the next day, so I used to stay up until 3am just to wait for his call and things like that...So, the whole time I was with him, I was so nervous that I was going to get in trouble. My grades went really low and my attendance was really low and, like, I started losing a lot of weight.”

Childline counselling session with a girl aged 17

[> Find out more about the impact of child sexual abuse](#)

Speaking out

A child or young person may be reluctant to speak out about the abuse they've experienced online.

They may:

- not understand that they are being abused
- feel dirty and ashamed
- be too embarrassed to share the sexual details of what's happening to them
- be afraid because of threats of violence from the abuser
- have been told by the abuser that they won't be taken seriously
- have established an emotional attachment with the abuser and don't want to get them into trouble

(NSPCC and O2, 2016).

They may also blame themselves for the abuse and not expect to get any support. This might especially be the case if they have experienced unsupportive approaches from school, peers and family (Hamilton-Giachritsis et al, 2017).

Their abuser may also have threatened to share sexual images of them if they tell anyone about the abuse. This means they might be frightened to speak out.

Recognising online abuse

It can be easier for perpetrators to initiate, maintain and escalate abuse through digital technology because it gives them:

- easier access to children and young people through social media and digital messaging
- anonymity – it's relatively easy to create anonymous profiles on online platforms or pretend to be another child
- children may have a false sense of safety online which means they're more likely to talk to strangers than in the offline world

(Hamilton-Giachritsis et al, 2017).

Children can be at risk of online abuse from people they know as well as from strangers. Online abuse may be part of abuse that's taking place in the real world such as bullying or an abusive relationship. Or the abuse may happen online only.

[> Find out more about bullying and cyberbullying](#)

A child who is experiencing abuse online may:

- spend much more or much less time than usual online, texting, gaming or using social media
- be withdrawn, upset or outraged 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 e-mail addresses on their mobile phone, laptop or tablet.

Risks

EU Kids online has developed a framework of risks called the 3Cs. This outlines the risks a child may experience when they are online.

Content

Age-inappropriate content that a child may come across online could be:

- commercial – such as adverts, spam or sponsorship
- aggressive – such as violent and hateful content
- sexual – inappropriate or unwelcome sexual content
- content that promotes negative values – for example biased, racist or misleading information.

Contact

If a child is actively engaged in the online world, they may become involved in interactions that could be harmful to them. This could be:

- commercial – such as tracking the sites a child has looked at or harvesting their personal information
- aggressive – for example being bullied, harassed or stalked
- sexual – receiving sexualised requests from others or being groomed
- contacts who promote negative values – for example making 'friends' who persuade a child to carry out harmful activities.

Conduct

Without meaning to, a child may behave in a way that puts them and/or others at risk. For example they may become involved in:

- inappropriate commercial activity - illegal downloading, hacking, using the dark web or getting involved in financial scams
- aggressive behaviour – bullying or harassing someone else
- sexualised behaviour – creating or uploading indecent images
- creating content that promotes negative values – providing misleading information to others

(Hasebrink et al, 2009).

Vulnerability factors

There's no clear set of factors that make children and young people more likely to be affected by online abuse. Different circumstances in a child's life may combine to make them more at risk. But some factors can make children and young people more vulnerable to abuse.

Age

Pre- and early teens are an especially vulnerable age for children online. From 11-12, children start to explore and take risks online, but they haven't yet developed the skills needed to recognise danger or build resilience against things that might upset them (Munro, 2011; Livingstone and Palmer, 2012).

Children aged 9-16 are particularly vulnerable to:

- seeing sexual images online
- seeing online content that promotes potentially harmful behaviour, such as pro-anorexia or self-harm sites
- being bullied online (Mascheroni and Cuman, 2014).

At this age, young people may be starting to explore their sexuality too. They might find adult pornography online or start online relationships with people they don't know (Munro, 2011; Livingstone and Palmer, 2012).

Teenagers may be more vulnerable to cyberbullying than younger children (NSPCC, 2015).

[> For information about adolescents' experiences of abuse see our How safe are our children? report for 2020](#)

Gender

Boys and girls may differ in the types of risks they take online and the risks they are exposed to.

EUKids Online research (Livingstone et al, 2009) found that boys are more likely to:

- look for offensive or violent pornography online, or be sent links to pornographic websites
- meet someone offline who they have talked to online
- give out personal information.

The research also found that girls are more likely to:

- be upset by violent or offensive online pornographic content
- chat online with people they don't know
- receive unwanted sexual comments
- be asked for personal information (Livingstone et al, 2009).

Research also suggests that girls are more likely to experience ongoing cyberbullying than boys (Cross et al, 2009).

Vulnerability to online grooming

Loneliness, social isolation and family problems may make young people more vulnerable to being groomed online (NSPCC and O2, 2016). Groomers may initially be attentive and sympathetic, which means a young person who is experiencing difficulties may quickly see them as a trusted source of support, especially if they are pretending to be another child.

[> Find out more about grooming](#)

Special educational needs or disability

Children with special educational needs (SEN) or disabilities are particularly vulnerable to online abuse (Livingstone and Palmer, 2012). A child with SEN or a disability may:

- have low self-confidence, seeing themselves as an 'outsider'
- lack strong peer networks and be less likely to tell a friend when they experience upsetting things online
- have more unsupervised time online, with fewer structures and boundaries (Livingstone and Palmer, 2012).

Responding to online abuse

All organisations that work with children should have a child protection policy and procedures that set out what action staff and volunteers should take if they have concerns about a child's safety online.

Everyone who works or volunteers for the organisation should read and understand these documents.

[> Look at our example online safety policy statement](#)

Reporting

If you think a child is in immediate danger, contact the police on **999**. If you're worried about a child but they are not in immediate danger, you should share your concerns.

- **Follow your organisational child protection procedures.** Organisations that work with children and families must have [safeguarding policies and procedures](#) in place.
- **Contact the NSPCC Helpline** on [0808 800 5000](tel:0808 800 5000) or by emailing help@nspcc.org.uk. Our trained professionals will talk through your concerns with you and give you expert advice.
- **Contact your local child protection services.** Their contact details can be found on the website for the local authority the child lives in.
- Contact the police.
- If your concern is about online sexual abuse, you can make a report to the [Child Exploitation and Online Protection \(CEOP\)](#) command.

The police and NSPCC will assess the situation and take action to protect the child as appropriate. This may include making a referral to the local authority.

Services will risk assess the situation and take action to protect the child as appropriate either through statutory involvement or other support. This may include making a referral to the local authority.

[> See our information about recognising and responding to abuse](#)

[> Find out how to report concerns about online images on our sexting pages](#)

Reporting online child abuse images

It's against the law to produce or share images of child abuse, even if the image was self-created. This includes sharing images and videos over social media.

If you see a video or image that shows a child being abused:

- Don't comment, like or share the video or image, as this will distribute it further.
- Report it to the website you've seen it on.
- Report it to the police.
- Contact the NSPCC helpline on **0808 800 5000** and we'll report it to the police for you.

Understanding sexualised behaviour in children

Children and young people typically display a range of sexualised behaviours as they grow up. However some may display problematic or abusive sexualised behaviour. This is harmful to the children who display it as well as the people it's directed towards.

Everyone who works or volunteers with children should be able to distinguish developmentally typical sexual behaviour from sexual behaviours that are problematic or harmful. This will help you respond appropriately and provide children and young people with the right protection and support.

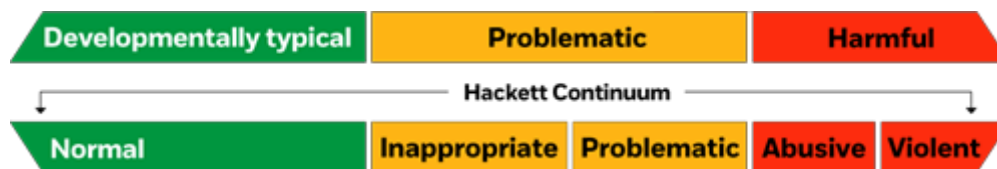
We've put together four steps to help you decide what kind of sexualised behaviour a child or young person is displaying so you can respond in the right way.

How to prevent harmful sexual behaviour in children and young people

Find out more about how organisations can take action to prevent problematic or harmful sexual behaviour from happening.

Step one: understanding Hackett's sexualised behaviour continuum

Hackett's continuum presents sexualised behaviour as a range from 'normal' to 'inappropriate', 'problematic', 'abusive' and 'violent' (Hackett, 2010¹).



Developmentally typical (green) behaviours

At the NSPCC, we use the term 'developmentally typical' to describe behaviours that are green on the continuum – but you might also hear green behaviours called 'healthy', 'normal' or 'developmentally expected'.

Green sexual behaviour:

- is developmentally expected and socially acceptable
- is consensual, mutual and reciprocal
- involves shared decision making.

[> Find out more about developmentally typical sexual behaviour for different age ranges](#)

Problematic (amber) behaviours

At the NSPCC, we use 'problematic sexual behaviour' (PSB) as an umbrella term for all amber behaviours. On the Hackett continuum, amber behaviours are described as 'inappropriate' or 'problematic'.

Inappropriate behaviour

- Single instances of developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour.

- Behaviour that is socially acceptable within a peer group but would be considered inappropriate outside that group.
- Generally consensual and reciprocal.
- May involve an inappropriate context for behaviour that would otherwise be considered normal.

Problematic behaviour

- Developmentally unusual and socially unexpected behaviour.
- May be compulsive.
- Consent may be unclear and the behaviour may not be reciprocal.
- May involve an imbalance of power.
- Doesn't have an overt element of victimisation.

Harmful (red) behaviours

Red sexualised behaviours are harmful to the child who displays them, as well as the people the behaviour is displayed towards. At the NSPCC, we refer to all red sexual behaviours as 'harmful sexual behaviour' (HSB). Hackett divides these into 'abusive' and 'violent' behaviours.

Abusive behaviour

- Intrusive behaviour.
- May involve a misuse of power.
- May have an element of victimisation.
- May use coercion and force.
- May include elements of expressive violence.
- Informed consent has not been given (or the victim was not able to consent freely).

Violent behaviour

- Physically violent sexual abuse.
- Highly intrusive.
- May involve instrumental violence which is physiologically and/or sexually arousing to the perpetrator.

- May involve sadism.

If you have a concern about a child and you work in an education setting, you can call our [Report Abuse in Education Helpline](#) at [0800 136 663](tel:0800136663) or email help@nspcc.org.uk.

Work in a different sector? Contact the NSPCC helpline on [0808 800 5000](tel:08088005000) or email help@nspcc.org.uk.

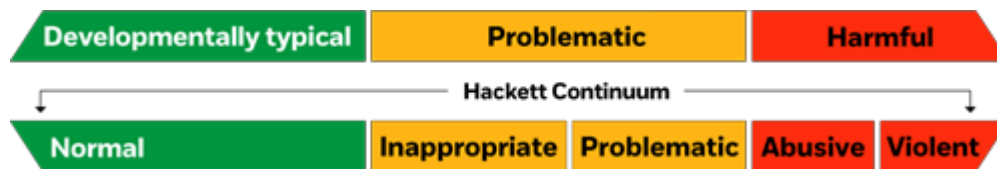
Printable continuum guide

In partnership with Hackett, Durham University and NHS Health Education England, we've created a quick printable guide to help you remember how to recognise sexualised behaviour.

[> Download the quick guide \(PDF\)](#)

Step two: identifying sexualised behaviour

In order to respond appropriately to a child displaying problematic or harmful sexual behaviour, you need to decide where a child's behaviour sits on the continuum.



A child's behaviour can change depending on the circumstances they are in and sexual behaviour can move in either direction along the continuum. So you should look at each situation individually, as well as considering any patterns of behaviour.

Indicators that behaviour is problematic or harmful

Children naturally explore and experiment with their sexuality as they grow up. If the behaviour seems to go beyond curiosity, for example if it is obsessive or compulsive, this might indicate it is problematic or harmful.

[> Find out more about what is considered developmentally typical sexual behaviour](#)

What to consider

The age of the child or young person who has displayed the sexual behaviour.

As children grow up they develop sexually. What is developmentally typical sexual

behaviour for a 15-year-old may be problematic or harmful for an eight-year-old. Consider the child's developmental ability as well as their chronological age.

The age of the other children or young people involved.

If the children involved are the same age or developmental ability the behaviour may be considered developmentally typical. But if the children are of different ages or developmental abilities, the behaviour might be problematic or harmful.

Is the behaviour unusual for that particular child or young person?

If a child's behaviour is out of character, it's important to take time to consider why the child is behaving unusually.

Have all the children or young people involved freely given consent?

If the behaviour involves coercion, intimidation or forcing others to take part, it should be considered harmful.

Are the other children or young people distressed?

If the behaviour is upsetting others, this could indicate it is problematic or harmful.

Is there an imbalance of power?

If the child displaying the behaviour is in a more powerful position than the other children involved, this indicates it is problematic or harmful. This might happen if there are significant differences in age, size, power or developmental ability.

Is the behaviour excessive, degrading or threatening?

Excessive behaviour means behaviour that is obsessive, persistent, compulsive or has been going on for a long time. Any behaviour that involves force, coercion, bribery or threats is harmful.

Is the behaviour occurring in a public or private space?

Some behaviours, for example masturbation, might be considered developmentally typical if they are being carried out in private. But if they are being displayed in public, they would be considered problematic or harmful.

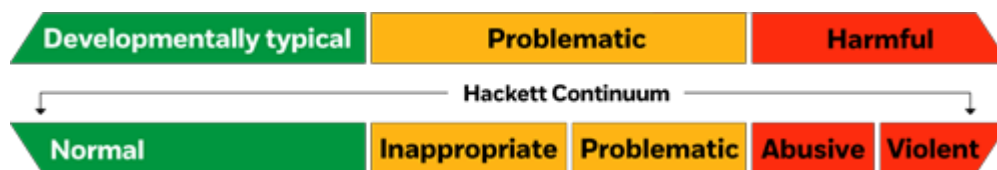
Other behaviours might give cause for concern if they are particularly secretive or are being carried out in private after intervention from adults.

Step three: taking appropriate action

Your response to a child displaying sexualised behaviours should vary depending on:

- the child's age
- their stage of development
- where their behaviours sits on Hackett's sexualised behaviour continuum.

Your approach should focus on the needs of the children involved at all times.



Developmentally typical (green) behaviours

It's normal for children to be curious about their own and other people's bodies. The process of experimentation and exploration mean that children and young people might get it wrong from time to time but this doesn't necessarily indicate a serious concern.

> [Learn more about developmentally typical sexual behaviours](#)

How to respond

- Listen to what children and young people have to say and respond calmly and non-judgementally.
- Talk to children about sexual development and healthy relationships. This might include having discussions with older children and young people about behaving responsibly and safely (for example, two 15-year-olds having consensual sex might benefit from a conversation about contraception and consent).
- Talk to parents and carers about developmentally typical sexualised behaviours and explain how they can have discussions about appropriate sexual behaviour with their children.
- Let children and young people know they can always talk to you if they are ever worried about anything.
- Remind children and young people they can contact Childline if they need confidential help and advice. Calls to [0800 1111](tel:08001111) are free and children can also contact Childline online or get information and advice on the [Childline website](#).

You can download or order Childline posters and wallet cards to keep on display and give to children and young people.

- Talk to your nominated [child protection lead](#) if you're unsure or have any concerns. Sharing information can help to identify any patterns or escalation of behaviour. If you are a lone worker or have concerns you can always call the NSPCC helpline for advice and support on [0808 800 5000](tel:08088005000) or by emailing help@nspcc.org.uk

> [Use our tips and resources to ensure children always feel listened to](#)

> [Browse our resources on promoting healthy relationships](#)

> [Find out more about preparing for and having difficult conversations with children](#)

> [Share resources with parents to help them talk to their child about sex and relationships \(NSPCC website\)](#)

Problematic (amber) sexual behaviours

Problematic sexual behaviour (PSB) should not be ignored. The child or young person will need support to help them change their behaviour and stop the behaviour escalating.

Problematic sexual behaviours might also indicate that a child has experienced trauma or abuse, so it's important to respond appropriately to keep the child safe.

How to respond

- Follow your organisation's procedures for responding to incidents of PSB.
- Talk calmly and non-judgementally to the child who has displayed PSB, and take appropriate measures to support them.
- Make sure children who have experienced the PSB are safe and supported.

> [Get information on how to respond to incidents of problematic sexual behaviour](#)

Harmful (red) sexual behaviours

If a child or young person is displaying harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) you should take **immediate** intervention and action to keep everyone involved safe.

Your [nominated child protection lead](#) needs to know what's happened as soon as possible. They should consider whether the child or young person displaying the

behaviour is at risk and take the necessary action to protect them. They also need to take action to mitigate the risk the harmful sexual behaviour may pose to others.

How to respond

- Follow your organisation's procedures for reporting and responding to incidents of HSB.
- Talk calmly and non-judgementally to the child who has displayed HSB, and take appropriate measures to support them.
- Make sure children who have experienced peer-on-peer sexual abuse are safe and supported.

[> Learn more about responding to and managing incidents of harmful sexual behaviour](#)

Protecting children from physical abuse

Physical abuse is defined as deliberately hurting a child and causing physical harm (Department of Health, 2017; Department for Education, 2018; Scottish Government, 2021; Wales Safeguarding Procedures Project Board, 2020). It includes injuries such as:

- bruises
- broken bones
- burns
- cuts.

It may involve:

- hitting
- kicking
- shaking
- throwing
- poisoning
- burning
- scalding
- drowning

- any other method of causing non-accidental harm to a child.

Physical abuse may also happen when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child. This is known as Fabricated or Induced Illness (FII) (Department for Education, 2018; Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety, 2017; Scottish Government, 2021; Wales Safeguarding Procedures Project Board, 2020).

Breast ironing or breast flattening, a practice of using hard or heated objects to suppress or reverse the growth of breasts, is a recognised form of child abuse (Crown Prosecution Service, 2019).

Impact of physical abuse

Effects on infants

Shaking or hitting babies and very young children can cause:

- fractures
- broken bones
- internal injuries.

Non-accidental head injuries (NAHI) can cause brain injury which can lead to:

- learning problems
- behaviour problems
- seizures
- hearing and speech impairment
- visual impairment or blindness
- changes in personality
- severe brain damage
- long-term disability
- death.

Effects on older children

"My parents fight with each other, and they end up taking it out on me. Every day they argue and shout at me, when they get really angry they hit me and kick me too. They tell me that everything's my fault and they don't want me to be their child. I feel responsible for everything that's going wrong with my family. I'm so scared to be at

home, I'm terrified that my parents will hit me again. Usually I leave the house and walk around until my parents find me. The only way I can calm down is to self-harm, I feel so upset and on edge all of the time, I just don't know what to do."

Childline counselling session with a girl aged 16

Children who have been physically abused may experience effects including:

- behavioural or conduct problems
- mental health problems such as depressive disorders, anxiety disorders, and eating disorders
- drug and alcohol problems
- suicidal thoughts and feelings (Norman et al, 2012).

The psychological impact can last long after their injuries have healed.

Brain development

Physical abuse, as an adverse childhood experience, can have a negative effect on the development of children's brains, potentially impacting their mental and physical capacities in later life.

The effect of physical abuse on a child's developing brain can lead to an overactive stress response, impaired cognitive development and weakened executive function skills.

(Shonkoff et al, 2008; Shonkoff et al, 2014).

[> Find out more about how trauma and abuse effects children's brain development](#)

Recognising physical abuse

Bumps and bruises don't necessarily mean a child is being physically abused – all children have accidents, trips and falls. These injuries tend to affect bony areas of the body such as elbows, knees and shins and aren't usually a cause for concern. However, some injuries are more likely to indicate physical abuse.

Signs and indicators

Bruises:

- commonly on the head but also on the ear, neck or soft areas (abdomen, back and buttocks).
- defensive wounds commonly on the forearm, upper arm, back of the leg, hands or feet.
- clusters of bruises on the upper arm, outside of the thigh or on the body.
- bruises with dots of blood under the skin.
- a bruised scalp and swollen eyes from hair being pulled violently.
- bruises in the shape of a hand or object
- bruises on non-mobile babies (babies who cannot crawl, cruise, bottom shuffle or roll over).

> [See the Bruises on children: core info leaflet](#)

Burns or scalds:

- can be from hot liquids, hot objects, flames, chemicals or electricity.
- these may be on the hands, back, shoulders or buttocks. Scalds in particular may be on lower limbs, both arms and/or both legs.
- a clear edge to the burn or scald
- sometimes in the shape of an implement – for example, a circular cigarette burn
- multiple burns or scalds.

> [See the Thermal injuries on children: core info leaflet](#)

Bite marks:

- usually oval or circular in shape
- visible wounds, indentations or bruising from individual teeth.

Fractures or broken bones:

- fractures to the ribs or the leg bones in babies
- multiple fractures or breaks at different stages of healing.

> [See the Fractures in children: core info leaflet](#)

Signs of head injury in an infant:

- visible signs such as swelling, bruising or fractures
- unusual behaviour – being irritable, lethargic, unresponsive or not wanting to feed
- seizures
- vomiting
- respiratory problems
- being comatose.

Not all head injuries are caused by abuse. There are also other medical reasons a baby may have these symptoms.

[> See the Head and spinal injuries in children: core info leaflet](#)

Behavioural changes

- fear of specific individuals
- flinching when approached or touched
- reluctance to get changed in front of others or wearing long sleeves or trousers in hot weather
- depression or withdrawn behaviour.

Risks and vulnerability factors

Physical abuse can happen in any family. But babies and children who have a disability are at a higher risk of suffering physical abuse (Jones et al, 2012).

[> Find out more about safeguarding d/Deaf and disabled children](#)

[> Read our How safe? 2020 report for more information about adolescents' experiences of physical abuse](#)

Some parents may also struggle to provide their children with safe and loving care if they are facing difficulties such as:

- poverty
- poor housing
- substance misuse

- relationship problems
- domestic abuse
- the effects of childhood abuse or neglect.

If parents are isolated and don't get enough support, things can become even more challenging. The more of these problems a family is facing, the harder it can be to cope – and the greater the risk of harm to children.

Challenges parents or carers may face

Adults who physically abuse children may have:

- emotional or behavioural problems – such as difficulty controlling their anger
- health issues which make it difficult for them to cope
- family or relationship problems
- experienced abuse as a child (Miller-Perrin and Perrin, 2013).

Responding to physical abuse

Recording concerns

Physical abuse may form a long-term pattern of behaviour. Adults who are concerned a child is being physically abused should record individual incidents to build up an overview of the child's lived experience. This should then be shared with other agencies as appropriate and used to decide what support a child and their family need.

If a child is frequently injured, and if the bruises or injuries are unexplained or the explanation doesn't match the injury, this should be investigated. A delay in seeking medical help for a child when it is needed should also be reported.

Reporting

If you think a child is in immediate danger, contact the police on **999**. If you're worried about a child but they are not in immediate danger, you should share your concerns.

- **Follow your organisational child protection procedures.** Organisations that work with children and families must have [safeguarding policies and procedures](#) in place.

- **Contact the NSPCC Helpline** on [0808 800 5000](tel:08088005000) or by emailing help@nspcc.org.uk. Our trained professionals will talk through your concerns with you and give you expert advice.
- **Contact your local child protection services.** Their contact details can be found on the website for the local authority the child lives in.
- Contact the police.

Services will risk assess the situation and take action to protect the child as appropriate either through statutory involvement or other support. This may include making a referral to the local authority.

[> See our information about recognising and responding to abuse](#)

Assessment

When you are assessing whether a child's physical injuries were the result of abuse:

- consider the injuries in the context of the child's medical and social history
- think about whether the explanation for the injury is consistent with the child's stage of development and the environment where it was said to have occurred
- check whether the severity of the injury fits with the description of the cause.

In cases of bruising in non-mobile babies, the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel (CSPRP) for England recommends that injuries should first be reviewed by a health professional who has the appropriate expertise. This should be followed by a multi-agency discussion about any other information or known risks, which should involve the same health professional (CSPRP, 2022).

See our Core Info leaflets for more detailed information on assessing each type of physical abuse:

- [Bruises on children: core info leaflet](#)
- [Fractures in children: core info leaflet](#)
- [Head and spinal injuries in children: core info leaflet](#)
- [Thermal injuries on children: core info leaflet](#)

Preventing physical abuse

Empowering children and parents

Children of all ages need support to identify abuse and to speak out if something is wrong. It's also important that parents and carers know how to keep their children safe.

Parenting advice

Research shows there's a risk of physical punishment escalating into more severe forms of abuse (Heilmann, Kelly, and Watt, 2015). So it's important that parents are made aware of the harmful effects of physical punishment and given alternative strategies to use when reacting to challenging behaviour.

Share our parenting leaflets with parents and carers:

- [Positive parenting](#) - techniques to encourage better behaviour
- [Handle with care](#) - safe ways to hold and care for babies and ways to cope when the crying doesn't stop

Supporting parents and carers

Adults who physically abuse children may never have been taught how best to respond to a child. They may have unrealistic expectations of the way children should behave or lack understanding of a child's needs.

Early intervention services can help by teaching parents how to respond to a child who is displaying challenging behaviour, for example a crying baby.

Protecting children from female genital mutilation (FGM)

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia for non-medical reasons. It's also known as female circumcision or cutting.

FGM is often performed by someone with no medical training who uses instruments such as a knife, scalpel, scissors, glass or razor blade. Children are rarely given anaesthetic or antiseptic treatment and are often forcibly restrained.

The age at which FGM is carried out varies. It may take place:

- when a female baby is newborn

- during childhood or adolescence
- just before marriage
- during pregnancy.

There are four main types of FGM:

- Type 1 (clitoridectomy) – removing part or all of the clitoris.
- Type 2 (excision) – removing part or all of the clitoris and cutting the inner and/or outer labia.
- Type 3 (infibulation) – narrowing the vaginal opening.
- Type 4 – other harmful procedures to the female genitals including pricking, piercing, cutting, scraping or burning (NHS Choices, 2021).

Labia elongation (also referred to as labia stretching or labia pulling) involves stretching the labia minora, sometimes using sticks, harnesses or weights (AFRUCA, 2016).

FGM is child abuse and is illegal in the UK. It can be extremely dangerous and can cause:

- severe pain
- shock
- bleeding
- infection such as tetanus, HIV and hepatitis B and C
- organ damage
- blood loss and infections
- death in some cases.

Sometimes religious, social and cultural reasons are given to justify FGM, however it's a dangerous practice and can cause long-lasting health problems that continue throughout a child's life, including:

- **incontinence or difficulties urinating**
- frequent or chronic vaginal, pelvic or urinary infections
- menstrual problems
- kidney damage and possible kidney failure

- cysts and abscesses
- pain during sex
- infertility
- complications during pregnancy and childbirth
- emotional and mental health problems (NHS Choices, 2021).

Recognising FGM

Risks and vulnerability factors

FGM can happen in the UK or abroad. Instances of FGM have been recorded in some African countries, areas of the Middle East, some Asian countries, the Americas, Europe and Australia (Department for Education (DfE), Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and Home Office, 2020).

The DfE, DHSC and Home Office have identified higher rates of FGM in certain countries, which may put children from these communities at higher risk. A list of these countries is provided in the [multi-agency statutory guidance on female genital mutilation](#) (DfE, DHSC and Home Office, 2020).

Children are also considered to be at higher risk if FGM has already been carried out on their mother, sister or a member of their extended family (DfE, DHSC and Home Office, 2020).

Signs and indicators

A child at immediate risk of FGM may ask you directly for help. But even if they don't know what's going to happen, there may be other signs. You may become aware of:

- a relative or 'cutter' visiting from abroad
- a special occasion or ceremony to 'become a woman' or prepare for marriage
- a female relative being cut – a sister, cousin, or an older female relative such as a mother or aunt
- a family arranging a long holiday or visit to family overseas during the summer holidays
- unexpected, repeated or prolonged absence from school
- a girl struggling to keep up in school and the quality of her academic work declining

- a child running away from or planning to leave home.

A child or woman who's had female genital mutilation (FGM) may:

- have difficulty walking, standing or sitting
- spend longer in the bathroom or toilet
- appear withdrawn, anxious or depressed
- display unusual behaviour after an absence from school or college
- be particularly reluctant to have routine medical examinations
- ask for help, but may not be explicit about the problem due to embarrassment or fear.

Assessing risk

The National FGM Centre has produced an assessment tool to help social workers dealing with situations where there are concerns about FGM to decide on the most appropriate action to take (National FGM Centre, 2021).

The Department of Health also provides guidance to help health professionals identify and assess the risk of female genital mutilation (FGM) for patients in their care and talk to patients and family members about FGM (Department of Health, 2017).

Responding to FGM Providing

support

If a child has already undergone FGM, they should be offered medical help and counselling. You should also take action to protect any other children in the family and to investigate possible risk to others in the community.

[> Find out how to support children who are experiencing continence issues as a result of FGM](#)

Reporting

If you think that a child may be at risk of FGM or if you suspect that FGM has already occurred, you must seek help and advice – even if the FGM didn't happen recently.

If you think a child is in immediate danger, contact the police on **999**. If you're worried about a child but they are not in immediate danger, you should share your concerns.

- **Follow your organisational child protection procedures.** Organisations that work with children and families must have [safeguarding policies and procedures](#) in place.
- **Contact the FGM helpline** on [0800 028 3550](tel:0800 028 3550) or by emailing fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk.
- **Apply for an FGM protection order.** Anyone can [apply on Gov.uk](#) if they are concerned that someone is at risk of FGM.
- **Contact your local child protection services.** Their contact details can be found on the website for the local authority the child lives in.
- Contact the police.

Regulated health and social care professionals and teachers in England and Wales must report 'known' cases of FGM in those under age 18 to the police (Home Office, 2016).

Under [Section 5](#) of the Criminal Law (Northern Ireland) Act 1967 it is an offence to fail to report a 'relevant offence' to the police. This includes:

- knowing or believing that an offence has been committed
- having information which could lead to the apprehension, prosecution or conviction of an offender.

This legislation covers offences against children and adults and includes offences related to FGM.

[> See our information about recognising and responding to abuse](#)

Preventing FGM

People who work with children can help prevent FGM by:

- challenging beliefs about FGM
- educating communities about FGM
- reporting any concerns.

You should give families information that is sensitive to their cultural or religious beliefs but also makes it clear that FGM is an illegal and dangerous practice.

It's important for organisations to:

- have written procedures that outline what to do in the event of a concern about FGM. This should be read and understood by all members of staff (whether paid or unpaid) and reviewed and updated annually
- make sure all staff, whether paid or unpaid, understand what FGM is, know why it is dangerous and how to recognise the signs and indicators that a child is either at risk or has already undergone FGM
- talk to children and families about FGM, to raise awareness and make sure children have the opportunity to speak out if they need to.

FGM protection orders

In England and Wales, the FGM protection order (FGMPO) is a way to protect actual or potential victims from FGM under civil law. Anyone can apply for an FGMPO (Gov.uk, 2016).

FGM protection orders are unique to each case and contain legally binding conditions, prohibitions and restrictions to protect a person at risk of FGM.

These may include:

- confiscating passports or travel documents of the child at risk, family members and/or other named individuals to prevent girls from being taken abroad
- ordering family members or other named individuals not to help another person to commit or attempt to commit an FGM offence, for example prohibiting them from bringing a "cutter" to the UK.

In an emergency, the court can make an order so that protection is in place immediately.

Breach of an FGM protection order is a criminal offence, carrying a sentence of up to five years in prison.

In Northern Ireland, Emergency Protection Orders (EPO) help protect children at risk of FGM (Department of Health, 2014). Anyone can apply for an EPO but in practice it is usually made by Health and Social Care (HSC) Children's Services.

An EPO authorises the applicant to remove the child and take her to safe accommodation.

- EPOs will only be granted to safeguard a child's welfare.

- EPOs last for up to eight days but may be extended on one occasion for up to seven days.

Legislation, policy and guidance

It is illegal to carry out FGM in the UK. It is also a criminal offence for UK nationals or permanent UK residents to perform FGM overseas or take their child abroad to have FGM carried out. The maximum penalty for FGM is 14 years' imprisonment.

Protecting children from county lines

What is county lines?

County lines is a form of criminal exploitation where urban gangs persuade, coerce or force children and young people to store drugs and money and/or transport them to suburban areas, market towns and coastal towns (Home Office, 2018). It can happen in any part of the UK and is against the law and a form of child abuse.

Children and young people may be criminally exploited in multiple ways. Other forms of criminal exploitation include child sexual exploitation, trafficking, gang and knife crime.

County lines gangs are highly organised criminal networks that use sophisticated, frequently evolving techniques to groom young people and evade capture by the police.

Perpetrators use children and young people to maximise profits and distance themselves from the criminal act of physically dealing drugs (National Crime agency, 2019). Young people do the majority of the work and take the most risk.

Dedicated mobile phone lines or "deal lines" are used to help facilitate county lines drug deals. Phones are usually cheap, disposable and old fashioned, because they are changed frequently to avoid detection by the police.

Gangs use the phones to receive orders and contact young people to instruct them where to deliver drugs. This may be to a local dealer or drug user, or a dealer or drug user in another county.

Phrases that young people may use to refer to county lines include:

- 'running a line',

- 'going OT/out there'
- 'going country'
- 'going cunch'.

These all refer to going out of town to deliver drugs or money (Thurrock Council, 2020).

We've put together some information to help anyone who works or volunteers with children and young people to recognise the signs that a child might be being exploited by a county lines gang and understand what action to take to help keep children safe.

This includes:

- the risks associated with county lines
- recognising and responding to concerns about county lines
- how professionals can work to prevent county lines
- a summary of the relevant legislation and guidance.

Risks

County lines is a cross-cutting issue that often overlaps with other forms of abuse and criminal exploitation. It can lead to serious physical and emotional harm to young people (Home Office, 2020a).

Criminalisation

If adults who work with children don't understand that county lines is a form of abuse, they may see children involved in county lines activity as criminals rather than as victims of criminal exploitation (Children's Society, 2019).

This can lead to children not getting the safeguarding support and protection they need.

Drugs

Perpetrators may use drugs and alcohol to entice young people into the gang lifestyle.

In some cases gangs trick young people into incurring drug debts that they then have to pay off through county lines activity. This is often referred to as 'debt bondage'.

Physical violence

There is a strong link between county lines activity and:

- serious violence such as knife and gun crime
- the use of substances such as acid as a weapon
- homicide

(Home Office, 2018).

Conflict between rival gangs that are in dispute over who controls an area can lead to serious injury or death for young people who get caught in the wrong place.

The fear of serious physical violence as revenge for disrespecting, 'snitching' or 'grassing' is one of the things that prevents young people from leaving gangs or seeking help from the police and other agencies.

Sexual abuse and exploitation

As well as being used to transport drugs, county lines gangs may sexually abuse and exploit children of any gender (National Crime Agency, 2019).

This can happen through:

- young people being forced into sexual activity with gang members or for the gang's financial gain
- vulnerable children being made to work off drug debts through sexual exploitation as 'payment' (this might happen after the child has been coerced into becoming dependent on drugs by the gang)
- children being groomed into what they believe is a romantic relationship with a gang member which then leads to exploitation

(National Crime Agency, 2019).

Some children are forced to transport drugs in ways that are invasive and harmful to their bodies. Young people may be forced to swallow bags of drugs to transport them, which could potentially be life threatening.

The practice of 'plugging' is also common, whereby drugs are inserted into a child's rectum or vagina. This is a form of sexual abuse and in some cases it can cause a child's death (Ofsted et al, 2018).

Trafficking and missing children

Young people can be trafficked to locations far away from where they live for long periods of time by a county lines gang. They may end up staying in unsuitable accommodation in an area that is unknown to them. This might include short term holiday lets or budget hotels.

Cuckooing

Cuckooing happens when a county lines gang takes over the home of a vulnerable adult by coercion or force, and use it as a base to deal drugs from. The vulnerable adult may have issues with substance misuse or mental health problems, be elderly or disabled or be in debt to the gang. These factors can make it easier for the gang to exploit and control them.

Children can be forced or coerced to stay at cuckooed addresses for long periods of time to deal drugs.

A cuckooed address is sometimes referred to as a 'bando' or a 'spot' by county lines gangs (Thurrock Council, 2020).

Financial exploitation and abuse

Gangs are known to launder money from drug sales through children's bank accounts, either by using an existing account or forcing or persuading the child to open a new one (Children's Society, 2019).

[> Find out more about protecting children from trafficking and modern slavery](#)

Recognising

Grooming

The grooming process involves the gang:

- seeking out a child to exploit
- observing the child for vulnerabilities
- finding out what the child's needs and wants are

- manipulating the child into believing that being in the gang can fulfil these needs.

Once they have identified a child, the gang will make some form of contact and the grooming process will begin. This could be in person or via mobile phone. Social media profiles may also be used to glamourise gang life and entice young people.

Some children are groomed through family members, for instance if they have a sibling or relative who is already involved with a county lines gang.

County lines gangs offer money and status to attract young people. Children may also be attracted to joining a gang by the prospect of belonging to a 'family' that will protect them if their own family feels unstable or unsafe.

The following have been identified as key places where county lines gangs target and approach vulnerable young people:

- schools and further and higher educational institutions
- special educational needs schools
- places for alternative provision outside of mainstream education
- foster homes
- homeless shelters.

Once a child is part of a county lines gang their loyalty and commitment will be tested. The gang will begin to trap the child by making them feel powerless to leave. This might include threats of violence if they leave, making the child feel like they are betraying their new 'family', or telling the child they will get in trouble if they seek help because they have committed a criminal offence (Children's Society, 2019).

[> Find out more about grooming](#)

Who is vulnerable to county lines exploitation?

Any child could potentially be at risk of criminal exploitation by a county lines gang.

Factors that make a county lines gang more likely to target, groom and exploit a child include:

- the child having experienced neglect, physical and/or sexual abuse in the past
- social isolation or social difficulties

- poverty
- homelessness or insecure accommodation status
- connections with other people involved in gangs
- having a learning disability
- having mental health problems
- having substance misuse issues
- being in care or having a history of being in care
- being excluded from mainstream education

(Home Office, 2020a).

Permanent exclusion from mainstream education has been identified as a critical event that can lead to young people becoming vulnerable to criminal exploitation (Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel, 2020).

County lines gangs can take advantage of the lack of structure, loss of a sense of belonging and feeling of rejection that exclusion can elicit in a young person.

The average age of young people who are exploited through county lines activity is 15-16 years old, but children as young as 12 have also been reported to have been involved (Home Office, 2020a).

Signs that a young person may be involved in criminal exploitation

The following signs may indicate that a child is being exploited by a county lines gang:

- frequently going missing from school, home or care
- travelling to locations, or being found in areas they have no obvious connections with, including seaside or market towns
- unwillingness to explain their whereabouts
- acquiring money, clothes, accessories or mobile phones which they seem unable to account for
- receiving excessive texts or phone calls at all hours of the day
- having multiple mobile phone handsets or sim cards

- withdrawing or having sudden changes in personality, behaviour or the language they use
- having relationships with controlling or older individuals and groups
- unexplained injuries
- carrying weapons
- significant decline in school results or performance
- being isolated from peers or social networks
- associating with or being interested in gang culture
- self-harming or having significant changes in mental health

(Ministry of Justice, 2019).

Responding to concerns about county lines exploitation

If you're worried that a child or young person might be or is at risk of being exploited by a county lines gang, you must share your concerns.

Reporting

If you think a child is in immediate danger, contact the police on **999**. If you're worried about a child but they are not in immediate danger, you should share your concerns.

- **Follow your organisational child protection procedures.** Organisations that work with children and families must have [safeguarding policies and procedures](#) in place.
- **Contact the NSPCC Helpline** on [0808 800 5000](tel:08088005000) or by emailing help@nspcc.org.uk. Our trained professionals will talk through your concerns with you and give you expert advice.
- **Contact the local child protection services.** Their contact details can be found on the website for the relevant local authority. The local authority the child comes from is responsible for the child's welfare. But it is also good practice to contact the local authority in the area the child is found, as they may need to be a part of the multi-agency response and there may be other children or vulnerable adults at risk.
- Contact the police.

National referral mechanism (NRM)

As part of county lines, young people are trafficked to different locations.

You should refer children who have been trafficked to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). Evidence of a referral can be used in a young person's defence in criminal and legal proceedings (Youth Justice Legal Centre, 2018).

[> Find out more about what action to take if a child has been exploited through trafficking and modern slavery](#)

Multi-agency working

A multi-agency response is needed to tackle county lines and protect any children involved from further exploitation. This should include participation from local authority children's social care, the local authority community safety team, schools, police and youth offending teams.

The local authority the child comes from (if known) is responsible for the child's welfare (Ministry of Justice, 2019). They may need to liaise with child protection agencies in the area the child was found, in order to keep the child safe.

Collaborative working and information sharing is essential in protecting the welfare of the child.

Across the UK, Independent Child Trafficking Guardians (ICTGs) can act as sources of advice for children without a figure of parental responsibility in the UK who have been victims of trafficking and modern slavery (Home Office, 2020b).

ICTG regional practice co-ordinators take on a more strategic role supporting children who do have a figure of parental responsibility, working with professionals to encourage them to take a co-ordinated and multi-agency approach to child trafficking, modern slavery and county lines (Home Office, 2020b).

[> Find out more about multi-agency working in child protection and safeguarding](#)

Supporting the young person who has been exploited

Adults who work or volunteer with children and young people are in a good position to build trusting relationships with them. This will help young people feel able to discuss issues that are affecting their lives and speak out if they need support about any issue, including county lines (Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel, 2020).

Those who work with children need to be clear that county lines is not a lifestyle choice and that the young person is not to blame for being exploited by a gang.

Young people who are involved with a county lines gang may push back when help is offered. They may not see themselves as being exploited or they may be scared of recriminations if they 'snitch' or 'grass' on gang leaders.

Gangs convince young people that there is no way out for them, in order to trap and control them. This means it's important for adults to reassure young people that there is a way out of gang life and that help is available when they are ready to leave.

Young people may finally reach out for help in the event of a major incident or emergency. This might include a serious injury or the threat of serious injury to themselves or someone they know, or if someone they know was killed. If professionals do not act quickly and effectively to intervene at this point, the child may be 're-groomed' or pressured back into the gang (Canterbury Community Safety Partnership, 2020).

Childline

If a child or young person needs confidential help and advice about gangs or anything else that's worrying them, you can always direct them to [Childline](#). Calls to 0800 1111 are free and children can also contact Childline online.

[Childline](#) provides information and advice for young people affected by [gang activity](#), [drugs](#) or any other form of abuse.

You can also download or order [Childline posters and wallet cards](#).

Training

To help identify and support children who have experienced county lines, professionals need training which covers:

- signs and indicators of county lines exploitation
- the legislative framework around criminal exploitation
- the NRM referral process
- understanding the trauma experienced by young people

(Children's Society, 2019).

Prevention

Schools and education

Schools and colleges can help raise awareness of county lines. This can be done through whole-school assemblies, class discussions or smaller group work.

As well as discussing what county lines is and how children might be targeted by gangs, schools should ensure children know who they can talk to if they have any concerns.

Schools are also well-placed to identify any children who may be at risk of county lines and form part of the multi-agency response.

[> Find out more about having difficult conversations with children](#)

[> Find out more about promoting healthy relationships](#)

Protecting children from domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is any type of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between people who are, or who have been in a relationship, regardless of gender or sexuality. It can also happen between adults who are related to one another and can include physical, sexual, psychological, emotional or financial abuse.

Each UK nation has its own definition of domestic abuse for professionals who are working to prevent domestic abuse and protect those who have experienced it (Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, 2016; Home Office, 2013; Police Scotland and the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, 2019; Welsh Government, 2019).

Domestic abuse can include:

- sexual abuse and rape (including within a relationship)
- punching, kicking, cutting, hitting with an object
- withholding money or preventing someone from earning money

- taking control over aspects of someone's everyday life, which can include where they go and what they wear
- not letting someone leave the house
- reading emails, text messages or letters
- threatening to kill or harm them, a partner, another family member or pet.

Domestic abuse can happen to anyone at any time. However, certain events and times of year are associated with an increased risk of abuse. For example, data shows that reports of domestic abuse increase during major football tournaments (NSPCC, 2022; Ivandic, 2022; Kirby, 2013; Brimicombe, 2012).

Witnessing and experiencing domestic abuse

Domestic abuse always has an impact on children. Being exposed to domestic abuse in childhood is child abuse.

Children may experience domestic abuse directly, but they can also experience it indirectly by:

- hearing the abuse from another room
- seeing someone they care about being injured and/or distressed
- finding damage to their home environment like broken furniture
- being hurt from being caught up in or trying to stop the abuse
- not getting the care and support they need from their parents or carers as a result of the abuse (Holt, Buckley and Whelan, 2008).

Impact of domestic abuse

Domestic abuse undermines a child's basic need for safety and security. It can have a serious effect on their behaviour, brain development, education outcomes and overall wellbeing (Holt, Buckley and Whelan, 2008; Stanley, 2011; Szilassy et al, 2017).

Psychological effects

Psychological effects of experiencing domestic abuse can include:

- aggression and challenging behaviour
- depression
- anxiety - including worrying about a parent's or carer's safety

- changes in mood
- difficulty interacting with others
- withdrawal
- fearfulness, including fear of conflict
- suicidal thoughts or feelings

(Diez, et al 2018).

Domestic abuse can cause confusing relationships with parents and carers. Children might experience conflicting feelings, including:

- not having a strong bond with their parents or carers
- hoping an abused parent will leave for safety reasons
- worrying about what might happen if their parents or carers separate
- being afraid of their parents or carers.

Some teenagers worry that being raised in abusive environment will affect their own future relationships.

One young person who contacted our Childline service explained:

"I have seen my parents physically hurting each other for years. I used to cry every day and self-harm. I feel like I'm really affected by what I've seen. I have a boyfriend now and I feel like he's acting just like my dad. I feel like I can never be in a stable relationship."

Childline counselling session with a young person aged 18

Developmental effects

Traumatic childhood experiences such as domestic abuse can affect a child's brain development. This may impact:

- executive functioning skills
- brain architecture
- and lead to overactive stress responses

(Shonkoff et al, 2008; Shonkoff et al, 2014).

[> Find out more about the effects of trauma and abuse on child brain development](#)

[> Take our face-to-face training course on trauma and child brain development](#)

Recognising domestic abuse

Domestic abuse can happen in any relationship. It can continue even after the relationship has ended, for example during contact visits, over the phone or on social media.

People of all genders can be abused or be abusers.

Teenagers can also experience abuse in their own relationships (Barter et al, 2009).

Risk and vulnerability factors Times of transition or adversity

All families have their ups and downs. While many parents or carers experiencing challenging circumstances are able to provide safe and loving care for their family, it can be difficult to cope if problems mount up.

Times of transition, such as pregnancy, having a baby, job loss or separation, can increase levels of stress and conflict in a relationship.

When parents or carers are already experiencing challenges such as mental health problems or substance misuse it can be more difficult for them to maintain healthy relationships.

In some cases, these factors can contribute to or exacerbate domestic abuse.

Links to other forms of abuse

If a child lives in a home where domestic abuse is happening, they're more at risk of other types of abuse (Stanley, 2011).

Signs and indicators

It can be difficult to tell if domestic abuse is happening, because perpetrators can act very differently when other people are around.

You might notice changes in a child's patterns of behaviour, for example if they aren't doing as well in school as they used to. Or they might display behaviour that the adults around them perceive to be challenging.

Protecting children from trafficking and modern slavery

Child trafficking is child abuse. It's defined as recruiting, moving, receiving and harbouring children for the purpose of exploitation (HM Department for Education (DfE) and Home Office, 2011; Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and Police Service of Northern Ireland, 2011; Scottish Government, 2013; Wales Safeguarding Procedures Project Board, 2020).

Child trafficking is a form of modern slavery (HM Government, 2014).

Many children are trafficked into the UK from overseas, but children can also be trafficked from one part of the UK to another.

Children are trafficked for:

- [child sexual exploitation](#)
- criminal activity, including:
 - cannabis cultivation
 - street crime - such as pickpocketing, begging and bag theft
 - moving drugs
 - benefit fraud
 - immigration fraud
 - selling pirated goods, such as DVDs
- forced marriage
- domestic servitude, including:
 - cleaning
 - childcare
 - cooking
- forced labour, including working in:
 - restaurants

- nail bars
- factories
- agriculture
- illegal adoption
- unreported private fostering arrangements (for any exploitative purpose).

This list is not exhaustive and children who are trafficked are often exploited in more than one way.

How child trafficking happens

Traffickers may use grooming techniques to gain the trust of a child, family or community. They may trick, force or persuade children to leave their homes.

Child trafficking can involve a network of organised criminals who recruit, transport and exploit children and young people within or across borders. Some people in the network might not be directly involved in trafficking a child but play a part in other ways – such as falsifying documents, bribery, owning or renting premises, or money laundering (Europol, 2011).

Child trafficking can also be organised by individuals and children's own families.

Impact of child trafficking

Effects on children

Being trafficked is abuse in itself. But trafficked children may experience other forms of abuse and neglect that impact on their physical and mental health and social and emotional development. These include:

- sexual abuse and exploitation
- physical abuse
- emotional abuse

- neglect.

Impacts of child trafficking and exploitation include:

- poor health and illness, which may be left untreated
- limited or no access to education
- physical and mental exhaustion.

Children may also experience emotional challenges, such as missing family, friends, communities and cultures. This can lead to:

- feeling isolated and lonely
- disturbed sleep patterns
- depression and/or anxiety
- headaches
- panic attacks
- eating difficulties
- self-harm and suicidal thoughts
- drug and alcohol use as a means to escape from problems
- post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

(Jamieson, 2018; Pearce, Hynes and Bovarnick, 2009).

Recognising child trafficking Signs

and indicators

Children who are trafficked are intentionally hidden and isolated from the services and communities who can identify and protect them. While identification may be difficult, there will be signs that you can watch for.

Children who have **been trafficked or are at risk of being trafficked** may:

- have to do excessive housework chores
- rarely leave the house and have limited freedom of movement
- not have any documents (or have falsified documents)
- give a prepared story which is very similar to stories given by other children

- be unable or reluctant to give details of accommodation or personal details
- not be registered with a school or a GP practice
- have a history with missing links and unexplained moves
- be cared for by adults who are not their parents or carers
- not have a good quality relationship with their adult carers
- be one among a number of unrelated children found at one address
- receive unexplained or unidentified phone calls whilst in a care placement or temporary accommodation

(Department for Education and Home Office, 2011).

Signs an **adult may be trafficking a child** include:

- making multiple visa applications for different children
- acting as a guarantor for multiple visa applications for children
- having previously acted as the guarantor on visa applications for visitors who have not left the UK when the visa expired

(Department for Education and Home Office, 2011).

Risks and vulnerability factors

Boys and girls of all ages can be victims of trafficking. Children who have been trafficked may be from the UK or another country.

Children are particularly vulnerable to trafficking if they come from an area where:

- there is poverty
- there is or has recently been a war
- education levels are low
- there is discrimination or persecution
- there is political conflict and economic uncertainty

(Department for Education and Home Office, 2011; Europol, 2011).

Generally, human trafficking happens because of:

- demand for cheap or free labour

- inequalities between countries – such as different education or employment opportunities
- a lack of equal opportunities, discrimination or abuse

(Europol, 2011).

Responding to child trafficking

Child trafficking is child abuse. It requires a child protection, multi-agency response in line with current legislation.

Reporting

If you think a child is in immediate danger, contact the police on **999**. If you're worried about a child but they are not in immediate danger, you should share your concerns.

- **Follow your organisational child protection procedures.** Organisations that work with children and families must have [safeguarding policies and procedures](#) in place.
- **Contact the NSPCC Helpline** on [0808 800 5000](tel:08088005000) or by emailing help@nspcc.org.uk. Our trained professionals will talk through your concerns with you and give you expert advice.
- **Contact your local child protection services.** Their contact details can be found on the website for the local authority the child lives in.
- Contact the police.

Services will risk assess the situation and take action to protect the child as appropriate either through statutory involvement or other support. This may include making a referral to the local authority.

[> See our information about recognising and responding to abuse](#)

Assessment

When speaking to a child who has been trafficked:

- offer reassurance, explain that you can help them and that it's safe for them to talk to you
- explain to the child that they've done nothing wrong
- remember that accompanying adults may not be parents or have the authority to care for the child

- speak with the child directly, without the accompanying adult present (this could put the child at further risk)
- if an interpreter is required, it's good practice to avoid using an interpreter from the same area in the country of origin as the victim. This reduces any perceived link the child may make between the interpreter and known people in their country of origin.

Understanding child trafficking as abuse

Children who have been trafficked may not see themselves as victims. They may find it hard to understand that what's happening is abuse - especially if they've been groomed.

Children may think they played a part in their abuse or that they're guilty of breaking the law.

Talking about their experiences

Children who have been trafficked may find it difficult to tell anyone what's happened to them. They may also tell their stories with obvious errors, inconsistencies or a lack of reality. Some traffickers compose stories for victims to learn in case they are approached by the authorities.

Children may feel guilty or ashamed about the abuse they've suffered. They may also be too scared to speak out, frightened of:

- all adults and authorities
- what will happen to themselves, their friends and their family
- judgement from their community and families
- being prosecuted for a crime
- being returned to their home country, where their situation may be even worse
- the effects of Juju or witchcraft rituals that were performed during their experiences.

If a child is suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), they may have difficulty recalling details or have blanks in their memory.

National referral mechanism (NRM)

The National referral mechanism (NRM) is a framework for identifying victims of human trafficking and ensuring they receive appropriate support. Guidance and forms for the NRM are available for each UK nation from the Home Office (Home Office, 2021a).

Initial referrals to the NRM must be handled by an authorised agency. These "first responders" include police forces; the National Crime Agency; UK Border Force; UK

Protecting children from emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is the ongoing emotional maltreatment of a child, which can have a severe and persistent negative effect on the child's emotional health and development (Department for Education (DfE), 2020¹; Department of Health, 2017²; Scottish Government, 2021³; Wales Safeguarding Procedures Project Board, 2020⁴). It's also known as psychological abuse.

Exposing a child to aggression, cruelty or abuse between others is also a form of emotional abuse (Doyle and Timms, 2014).⁵

Most forms of abuse include an emotional element, but emotional abuse can also happen on its own.

Children can be emotionally abused by anyone:

- parents or carers
- family members
- other adults
- other children.

We've put together some principles of best practice to help you recognise and respond to emotional abuse. It includes information on:

- the impact emotional abuse can have on a child
- what emotional abuse looks like and how to respond to it
- how you can support children and families at risk of emotional abuse
- relevant legislation and guidance across the UK.

Types of emotional abuse

There are several categories of emotional abuse. These include:

Emotional neglect

- ignoring the child
- not showing affection
- not responding to a child's emotional needs.

Rejection

- telling a child they aren't good enough
- physical abandonment
- excluding the child from activities
- not listening to a child or letting them express their views
- belittling a child
- not communicating with the child.

Isolating

- putting unreasonable limitations on a child's freedom
- restricting or preventing social interaction.

Manipulation

Coercing or persuading a child to take part in activities that:

- they aren't comfortable with
- aren't appropriate for their age or stage of development
- are unsafe.

Gaslighting is also a form of manipulation. This is where perpetrators make someone doubt their own perception, judgment and/or memory.

Terrorising

- threatening violence
- deliberately frightening a child

- deliberately putting a child in a dangerous situation.

Bullying

- verbal humiliation
- name-calling
- undermining or mocking a child.

Physical bullying can also have emotional effects.

[> Find out more about bullying and cyberbullying](#)

Impact of emotional abuse

Emotional abuse can have serious short- and long-term effects on a child's health and development.

“I can't cope at home anymore; my mum is making my life hell. I know it's hard for her as a single parent, but she uses every opportunity to have a go at me. She's told me I'm a freak and a shame to the family and how I always let her down. She controls everything in my life and I hate being at home.”

(Childline counselling session with boy, aged 16) Emotional

development

Emotional abuse can affect a child's ability to feel and express a full range of emotions appropriately (Doyle and Timms, 2014⁶). They might:

- have trouble understanding the emotions they are feeling
- not understand why they are feeling certain emotions
- find it challenging to keep their moods and emotions under control

(Shonkoff, 2014⁷; Shonkoff, 2011⁸).

Children who grow up in environments where they are regularly criticised and belittled may experience low self-confidence and self-esteem (Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH, 2015⁹).

Children who have experienced emotional abuse might try to hide their emotions if they think showing their feelings will lead to further abuse (Doyle and Timms, 2014¹⁰).

> View statistics on emotional abuse

Behaviour perceived to be challenging

A child who has been emotionally abused may feel that nobody cares what happens to them. This may lead them to display behaviour that others perceive to be challenging. Examples of this include:

- not participating in activities
- antisocial behaviour
- not engaging with support workers
- stealing
- bullying
- going missing

(Department for Education, 2017¹¹; Al Odhayani, 2013¹²).

Some research has shown a link between emotional abuse and attention deficit disorders (Milletich et al, 2010¹³).

Some children who aren't getting the care they need from their family might try to get support and companionship elsewhere. Perpetrators can take advantage of this to groom them for sexual abuse and/or exploitation (Oberlander et al, 2011¹⁴).

Healthy relationships

Children who have been emotionally abused or neglected might develop attachment issues. This can have an impact on the way they form relationships (Lamb et al, 1985¹⁵).

> Find out more about attachment and child development

Emotionally abused children might have difficulty making friends or building friendships that are reciprocal (Bolger et al, 1998¹⁶).

They might have a strong desire to please others (Kinard, EM, 1999¹⁷). This could lead to them putting their own needs aside in order to do what they think others want.

Some children may not realise that their parent or carer's behaviour is abusive. If they haven't been taught what makes a relationship healthy and unhealthy, it can be difficult for them to develop and maintain healthy relationships in life.

For this reason, young people who have been emotionally abused might be more vulnerable to being abused or exploited by a partner as they get older (Wekerle et al, 2009¹⁸).

> Find out how to recognise the signs of healthy and unhealthy relationships

Mental health issues

Emotional abuse can increase the risk of a child developing mental health issues during childhood and later in life (Gavin, 2011¹⁹).

Emotionally maltreated adolescents might experience problems including:

- depression
- post-traumatic symptoms
- anxiety
- suicidal thoughts

(Naughton et al,

2017²⁰).

Adults who were emotionally abused as children have higher levels of depression and health problems compared to those who have experienced other forms of child abuse (Gavin, 2011²¹).

Brain development

Emotional abuse can negatively affect children's brain development. It can impact children's:

- cognitive and emotional development
- executive function skills (how they manage emotions and prioritise tasks)
- stress responses

(Shonkoff et al, 2008²²; Shonkoff et al, 2014²³).

Some children who have experienced emotional abuse might have had to learn to look after themselves or be independent from a young age. They might not have been taught certain skills. This means that they might not be able to play, might develop language late or use language you may not expect of a child their age.

> [Find out more about the effects of trauma and emotional abuse on child brain development](#)

Recognising emotional abuse Indicators

It can be difficult to recognise emotional abuse and children may not always realise they are experiencing it.

But there may be indicators in the way a child behaves and reacts to certain situations. Children who have been emotionally abused may:

- lack confidence and have low self-esteem
- be withdrawn and very quiet
- experience mental health issues
- have a language delay
- struggle to focus and concentrate on tasks
- struggle to make or maintain relationships
- display behaviour perceived to be aggressive or hostile
- seem isolated from their parents, carers and peers
- lack social skills or have few, if any, friends.

Risk and vulnerability factors

Children from any background can be at risk of emotional abuse. But some might be more vulnerable than others.

When a family is going through a tough time, parents and carers might need support to provide a safe and loving environment for their children. Challenges families might experience include:

- relationship problems and/or marital break-ups
- family arguments and disputes

- financial problems and/or unemployment
- mental health problems
- poverty
- drug or alcohol use
- domestic abuse
- social isolation.

[> Find out more about parental mental health problems](#)

[> Find out more about parental substance misuse](#)

Parents or carers who experienced emotional abuse may not realise what happened to them was wrong. This could mean they don't understand that they are being emotionally abusive towards their own children (Royse, 2016²⁴).

Children who are emotionally abused might be experiencing other types of abuse or neglect at the same time – but this isn't always the case.

Responding to emotional abuse

It can be very difficult to identify emotional abuse.

Some children are naturally quiet and there are lots of reasons why a child might display behaviour you find challenging. All parents tell their children off from time to time, and sometimes the relationship between them might seem strained.

Sometimes it can take a long time for the signs of emotional abuse to show.

But if you notice patterns of behaviour which worry you, you must share your concerns.

Reporting

If you think a child is in immediate danger, contact the police on **999**. If you're worried about a child but they are not in immediate danger, you should share your concerns.

- **Follow your organisational child protection procedures.** Organisations that work with children and families must have [safeguarding policies and procedures](#) in place.

- **Contact the NSPCC Helpline** on [0808 800 5000](tel:08088005000) or by emailing help@nspcc.org.uk. Our trained professionals will talk through your concerns with you and give you expert advice.
- **Contact your local child protection services.** Their contact details can be found on the website for the local authority the child lives in.
- Contact the police.

The police and NSPCC will assess the situation and take action to protect the child as appropriate. This may include making a referral to the local authority.

Supporting children

Children who have experienced emotional abuse might have complex needs. They might need support to understand what's happened to them and cope with the impact of the effects.

Play therapy has been shown to have a positive effect on children who experienced emotional abuse (Doyle, 2001²⁵; Landreth, 2002²⁶).

Talking to children who have experienced emotional abuse

Some children who are being emotionally abused don't realise that it's wrong, and they might blame themselves for not being 'good enough' (Royse, 2016²⁷).

So if a child does talk to you about emotional abuse it's really important to:

- show children you care and help them open up
- take your time and slow down
- show you understand and reflect back what they're saying.

[> Read our tips on how to let children know you're listening](#)

[> See our information about recognising and responding to abuse for more details](#)

Childline

If a child or young person needs confidential help and advice about what they're going through, you can direct them to Childline. Calls to [0800 1111](tel:08001111) are free and children can also [contact Childline online](#).

There is also age-appropriate information about [emotional abuse](#) on the Childline website.

Preventing emotional abuse

Early help

It's important to support families where there is a risk of emotional abuse to:

- overcome any challenges they are facing
- understand the child's needs
- improve the bond between parents or carers and their children.

Effective support should take each family's context, situation and environment into account. Practitioners should focus on parent or carers and each child individually, as well as working with the whole family together (Royse, 2016).²⁸

Giving children a voice

It's vital to build safe and trusting relationships with children so they can speak out about any problems they are experiencing. This involves teaching children what emotional abuse is and how they can get help.

Our Speak out Stay safe service for schools teaches children how to recognise abuse and neglect in all its forms, and empowers them to speak out if they are worried about anything.

[> Find out more about Speak out Stay safe](#)

Legislation and guidance

Statutory guidance across the UK highlights the responsibility of those in the education, community and care sectors to safeguard children from all forms of abuse and neglect.

[Child protection in England](#)

[Child protection in Northern Ireland](#)

[Child protection in Scotland](#)

[Child protection in Wales](#)

[> See also Key safeguarding legislation for schools in the UK](#)

Cruelty and ill-treatment

Across the UK, someone over 16 could be prosecuted for child cruelty if they ill-treat a child or cause a child unnecessary suffering.

In **England** and **Wales** the [Children and Young Persons Act 1933](#) specifies when someone can be prosecuted for child cruelty or neglect.

In **Northern Ireland** this is covered by the [Children and Young Persons Act \(Northern Ireland\) 1968](#).

In **Scotland** it is [Part II of the Children and Young Persons \(Scotland\) Act 1937](#).

Prosecution guidance

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has produced guidance on [prosecuting non-sexual child abuse offences](#) in **England** and **Wales** (CPS, 2020²⁹). This states that child abuse includes physical, emotional and sexual criminal offences, as well as neglect.

Keep up-to-date with new legislation and guidance by [signing up to CASPAR](#), our current awareness service for policy, practice and research

Practical Workshops, Rehearsals and Performances - Contact and Safeguarding Processes

Introduction

Chickenshed deliver professional performing arts and performing arts education projects and programmes with many of these activities and services requiring physical contact and physical interaction together with verbal communication between individuals in order to be able to achieve accreditation or inclusive theatre achievements and products for audiences and stakeholders. This is a standard requirement for performing arts and theatre based courses in all venues and settings in the UK and indeed around the world.

Chickenshed will always put the following measures in place to ensure the personal Safeguarding of individuals and groups both at the Theatre and on Outreach.

1. Individuals will always be able to express their questions and queries about physical contact and if they are uncomfortable with any particular contact process then Chickenshed staff will find another way to achieve an effect that can be accredited and/or which enables an audience to appreciate the dance, physical theatre, musical theatre or acting - drama effects of the production or product
2. Chickenshed will always provide teams of staff and mentors to team teach, team support and team accredit the practical work of individuals so that there will be a number of inclusive performing arts trained staff and support to pick up on any feelings of discomfort or uncertainty about physical contact. These staff can help to adjust any activity to support anyone to feel more comfortable and at ease.
3. Chickenshed will provide mentor teams of individuals trained in Inclusive performing arts to consult with individuals about any adaptations or adjustments they may want to make to physical contact work with a remit also to enable individuals to work initially with other individuals they know and feel comfortable with. This to build a foundation of confidence in physical movement and contact with potential contact being only what is appropriate to an artistic or educational project or piece.
4. Where individuals are initially less comfortable working with individuals who have a different gender or sexual identity then Chickenshed will accommodate and adapt work wherever possible and appropriate whilst also advising on progression as a performing arts practitioner and what professional work may require in the future in relation to mixed gender/gender identity working.
5. Where the subject matter of an artistic piece is controversial or may require extra mental health or mentoring support in order to begin to understand the physical contact requirements of a project or programme then Chickenshed will support through mentoring and / or in house counselling wherever possible and appropriate.
6. Where individuals have been or are in friendships or relationships in their student or membership group then Chickenshed will make sure they are working in separate groups for practical workshops including those that require physical contact for their own Safeguarding and for that of others.

7. Where an individual has an Education Health Care Plan and identified needs which make it difficult to understand or interpret Safeguarding issues and needs either in general, or in relation to physical contact in practical workshops in particular - Chickenshed inclusive support and mentor teams will advise, train and guide in situ and outside the practical space in other communication or consultation. Individuals will learn physical contact processes in small stages with support at each stage.

Safeguarding and Outreach Links and Synergies as part of the Outreach Process

1. Chickenshed will work with Outreach organisations to link enhanced DBS processes when working in an organisation's venue

2. Chickenshed provide ample and indeed larger than needed Outreach teams for external projects and events to enable Safeguarding oversight from Chickenshed teams to both complement and also supplement the Safeguarding provision of the external organisation

There are important ways in which Chickenshed develop and implement Safeguarding practice with professional Outreach organisations as a matter of policy. These are some of those considerations.

3. Where there are external issues out of the control of Chickenshed and external organisations such as cost of living crises, outbreak issues, issues affecting education, venue complications- Chickenshed will work with the organisation to enable support to beneficiaries to be sustained and remain stable and also to maintain continuity of practice and mental health support provision

4. Chickenshed will always liaise with external organisations in relation to specific Safeguarding adaptations, support provision to meet the needs and lived experience of individuals whose Safeguarding needs warrant this support. Creative material will be adjusted to promote positive development for individuals in specific circumstances AND to avoid negative repercussions and triggers.

5. Chickenshed will ensure that any Safeguarding developments either it makes or that are made by the external organisations - are shared to mutual benefit where appropriate and needed.

Chickenshed Statement on Safeguarding the Mental Health of Young People and Adults at Risk/Vulnerable Adults

The Mental health and pressures on a young person's Mental Health are one of the most important and challenging areas of Safeguarding for Chickenshed with the ongoing external conditions and crises that have taken place over the last few years exacerbating the barriers to a positive mental health profile exponentially.

Chickenshed seeks to provide an open communication environment where the potential stigma of mental health problems is negated and extensive support for these problems is provided, reviewed and developed regularly to keep pace with the external pressures which can overwhelm individuals.

Support Measures and Interventions Chickenshed provide include the following;

1. High levels and positive ratios of Inclusive Mentor support team provided for students to pick up on need at its earliest stages and initiate support discussions.
2. Mental Health needs, barriers and positive ways forward feature regularly in the curriculum and are embedded in lived experience learning and teaching programmes both artistic and academic. This is both student and staff initiated
3. Team teaching approaches mainstreamed for all curriculum and enhancement projects and programmes to enable positive monitoring of need and provision of support at both tutoring and inclusive mentor team levels.
4. Flexible, adaptable approach to practice as research and curriculum delivery to ensure that any gaps in attendance or related areas can be supported with appropriate and equivalent interventions reducing anxiety and enabling self esteem recovery.
5. Inclusive support/mentor provision enabled in different discipline areas to pick up on mental health need and anxiety in specific areas of the performing arts spectrum as anxiety can become very discipline specific.
6. Professional counsellor provision provided and extended to two counsellors to enable a turnaround of mainly one week and maximum two weeks - wherever possible to counter the increasing waiting times for referral and treatment in external professional environment.

Chickenshed professional counsellors will liaise with external agencies to enable no double levels of contrasting counselling adding to the anxiety of the individual.
7. Chickenshed will empower individuals to, where appropriate, learn mental health awareness skills and pick up mental health awareness training and possible accreditation - including self mentoring and peer mentoring processes. This to enable individuals to understand barriers and strategies which will support both their own mental health and that of other less experienced peers and individuals.

Safeguarding and Risk Assessment - Production Issue and Mitigation Plan

1. Issue - Intensity and Length of Rehearsal Process causing Safeguarding risk in terms of illness and fatigue and related anxiety

Mitigation

Flexibility and adaptation of schedule. Pinpointing areas of anxiety in rehearsal and getting support Mentor and Tutor intervention. Liaison with home/care venue to help adapt the processes.

Monitoring of illness and anxiety triggers to avoid them and act on need to adapt

2. Issue - Content of production themes and issues triggering Safeguarding concern and actions that need safeguarding oversight for individuals or groups eg Mental Health, Prejudice, Hate Crime, Youth Exploitation

Mitigation

Extra inclusive mentor support organised with individual either subject discipline specific or general or Issue specific.

Potential counselling support from in house Counsellor to discuss proactive resilience measures such as helping to research Issue, helping on Outreach projects related to the issue, supporting workshops which inform others about the issue.

Extra counselling support arranged.

3. Rehearsal Schedules on long days which are intermittent for individual students. Gaps between involvement which are too long for students/beneficiaries who may lose patience with each other and /or forget personal boundaries which may then lead to behaviour that is not acceptable.

Mitigation

Extra inclusive mentor presence on these days and events with fluent communication, discussion and oversight both with students and beneficiaries and also parents, carers and support agencies where confidentiality allows and /or when safeguarding warrants this extra oversight.

4. Late finishes for rehearsals and performances to train in professional theatre represent schedules. This causing extra Safeguarding need both at the Theatre and for safe theatre/home transport and oversight.

Mitigation

Chickenshed will provide a cab network of provision through the hardship fund to enable students from underrepresented groups with Safeguarding oversight need to both reach Chickenshed and return home at night. Chickenshed will fundraise for this provision and liaise with student and home (with consent) to reassure students that Safeguarding travel arrangements are being organised and extended in production times - funding permitting.

5. Students/beneficiaries experiencing disadvantage in personal funding for food and other subsistence and this putting their welfare at risk and making them take risks to provide for themselves- particularly for care experienced young people or situations where students are made unexpectedly homeless with "sofa surfing" consequences. Also where families are restricting adequate funds.

Mitigation

Chickenshed fundraises regularly for Hardship Funding with mentors and staff being alert to sudden need for subsistence, particularly at busy production schedules times. Students provided with Chickenshed venue food subsistence with extra given if home situation requires it.

6. Students/beneficiaries on a professional production in late afternoon and evening performance timetable putting themselves at safeguarding risk with negative activity or isolation risk during the days which are now freer than they were during a usual educational timetable.

Mitigation

Chickenshed will extend staff and mentor resources, wherever this is possible, to provide meaningful daytime project intervention provision so that students with existing Safeguarding risk and students for whom the daytime gap might create short term risk - can be provided for to mitigate risk.

7. Short Term Timetable Change exacerbating existing domestic tensions for students.

Students/beneficiaries may need extra Safeguarding support due to home issues and domestic safeguarding risk with young people at home for different time periods.

Mitigation

Extra mentoring and staff support liaising with Counsellor, where confidentiality allows, to identify risk situations and provide both support and seek external intervention wherever necessary and appropriate

8. Students Experiencing Mental Health Crises at times when Productions are taking up staff time more or where mentor and in house counsellor provision can only partially meet the need

Mitigation

Students/ beneficiaries supported to liase with external agencies with Chickenshed staff and mentors advocating for them if needed and clearly identifying and articulating the Safeguarding need to external agencies.

CHICKENSHED

THEATRE CHANGING LIVES

Chickenshed

Online

Safety

Policy

Statement

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Chickenshed Online Safety Policy Statement

Online safeguarding is at the heart of Chickenshed Safeguarding and Prevent processes for children (Adults at risk/vulnerable adults)

This statement reflects the safeguarding needs of the children, young people and adults Chickenshed works with and aligns with other key safeguarding and organisational policies, procedures and standard for children and adults at risk/vulnerable adults.

This policy should be read alongside Chickenshed's Safeguarding/Prevent policies and procedures.

Chickenshed uses best NSPCC guidance and practice and uses NSPCC guidance updates to regularly review our Safeguarding Policies. Chickenshed is also a member of the Safeguarding Network.

[Visit the NSPCC website for more safeguarding and child protection information](#)

The Purpose of this policy statement

Chickenshed works with children and families adults at risk/vulnerable adults) as part of its activities as outlined in Safeguarding/Prevent policies and statements.

The purpose of this policy statement is to summarise Chickenshed's approaches to the following:

- Ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children, young people (adults at risk/vulnerable adults) is understood when adults, young people or children are using the internet, social media or mobile devices
- Providing staff and volunteers with the overarching principles that guide Chickenshed's approach to online safety
- Ensures that, as an organisation, Chickenshed operate in line with our values and within the law in terms of how we use online devices.
- Following Government online safety bill guidance and other current and future legislation

The policy statement applies to all staff, volunteers, children and young people and anyone involved in Chickenshed's activities in Education, Young Company, Artistic Production, Outreach and all areas where Chickenshed has beneficiaries and stakeholders.

Legal Framework

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of legislation, policy and guidance that seeks to protect children in the UK from online exploitation, abuse and harm – this including the Online Safety Bill 2023/24

We believe that:

- Children and young people (adults at risk/vulnerable adults) should never experience abuse of any kind
- Children and young people (adults at risk/vulnerable adults) should be able to use the internet for education and personal development, but safeguards need to be in place to ensure they are kept safe at all times.

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We recognise that:

- The online world provides everyone with many opportunities; however it can also present risks and challenges
- We have a duty to ensure that all children, young people (adults at risk/vulnerable adults) involved in our organisation are protected from potential harm online
- We have a responsibility to help keep children and young people (adults at risk/vulnerable adults) safe online, whether or not they are using Chickenshed's network and devices
- Working in partnership with children, young people, (adults at risk/vulnerable adults), their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare and in helping young people to be responsible in their approach to online safety
- All children and young people at risk regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse.

We will seek to keep children and young people safe by:

- Developing a Safeguarding/Prevent team to oversee online safety as part of safeguarding practice.
- Supporting and encouraging the young people (adults at risk/vulnerable adults) using our service to use the internet, social media and mobile phones in a way that keeps them safe and shows respect for others
- Supporting and encouraging parents and carers (external agencies) to do what they can to keep their children safe online where advice is needed.
- Developing an online safety agreement for use with young people (adults at risk/vulnerable adults) and their parents or carers
- Developing clear and robust procedures to enable us to respond appropriately to any incidents of inappropriate online behaviour, whether by an adult or a child or young person
- Reviewing and updating the security of our information systems regularly
- Ensuring that user names, logins, email accounts and passwords are used effectively
- Ensuring personal information about the adults and children who are involved in our organisation is held securely and shared only as appropriate and is subject to GDPR requirements.
- Ensuring that images of children, young people (adults at risk/vulnerable adults) and families are used only after their written permission has been obtained, and only for the purpose for which consent has been given
- Providing supervision, support and training for staff and volunteers about online safety
- Examining and risk assessing any social media platforms and new technologies before they are used within the organisation.

If online abuse occurs, we will respond to it by:

- Referring to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and Safeguarding Team from the areas most involved.
- Having clear and robust safeguarding procedures in place for responding to abuse
- Making sure our response takes the needs of the person experiencing abuse, any bystanders and our organisation as a whole into account
- Reviewing safeguarding procedures including Prevent to address online abuse at regular intervals, in order to ensure that any problems have been resolved in the long term.

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Chickenshed Online Safety Policy Agreement

Safety agreement for use with young people

Chickenshed understands the importance of students/young people being able to use the internet for education and personal development. This includes social media platforms, games and apps. We aim to support students and young people in making use of these in our work. However, we also recognise that safeguards need to be in place to ensure children are kept safe at all times.

This agreement is part of our overarching code of behaviour for children and young people and staff and volunteers. It also fits with overall Safeguarding/Prevent Policies which also have guidance on online safeguarding issues.

More information about online safety is available from [learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding - child - protection/online-safety-for-organisations-and-groups](http://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/online-safety-for-organisations-and-groups). Chickenshed is grateful to the NSPCC for their publication of ongoing guidance and advice on Safeguarding issues.

Student and Young person's agreement

I will be responsible for my behaviour when using the internet, including social media platforms, games and apps. This includes the resources I access and the language I use.

I will not deliberately browse, download or upload material that could be considered offensive or illegal. If I accidentally come across any such material I will report it immediately to a tutor or member of the Safeguarding Team.

I will not send anyone material that could be considered threatening, bullying, offensive or illegal or likely to cause any individual shame, anxiety and or harm. Chickenshed tutors and safeguarding team can advise.

I will avoid arranging a face-to-face meeting with someone I meet online wherever possible and will be aware that people often lie or misrepresent their age, status and intentions online – including financial intentions and intentions about requests for information.

If I am concerned or upset about anything I see on the internet or any messages that I receive, I know I can talk to tutors, mentors and the Safeguarding/Prevent team for advice.

Signatures:

We have discussed this online safety agreement and [child's name] agrees to follow the rules set out above.

Young person's signature.....Date

50th Anniversary walk

The safety of our participants is paramount, and this policy illustrates the actions to be taken if a child goes missing. Although children under 16 will not be allowed to sign up without a responsible adult also in attendance, and the vast majority of children taking part will be known to Chickenshed we recognise that a busy event, with a number of children, many of whom will be young will naturally include some risk.

At the point of registering to participate for the walk parents/cares will be required to provide emergency contacts for their children and declaration of any medical conditions. This information will be confidentially cascaded to lead staff and stewards.

At the event village

- There will be a designated space for lost children which will be clearly marked with a poster so people know on the day where to go. This location will be mentioned in the pre-event communications participants receive.
- All Chickenshed staff and volunteers will be fully briefed on the location.

A parent/carer says they've lost their child:

- The staff member or volunteer will take a full description of the child, including name, what they look like, and what they are wearing
- The staff member or volunteer will contact the Event Manager who will send out a WhatsApp message to Chickenshed staff and volunteers with the relevant details
- Chickenshed staff and volunteers will undertake a search in the local area for 10 minutes, and an announcement will be made over the PA for people to look for the missing child. A designated Chickenshed member of staff will stay with the parents while they look and to keep them updated on any developments
- If the child is found then they will be reunited with the parents/carers
- If the child is not found within 30 minutes the police will be called, the search will continue and the event will be paused until the child is found. If the child is not found with 60 minutes (TBC) the event will be cancelled.

A lost child is found:

- The Chickenshed staff member or volunteer will speak to them to get some details and get another responsible adult to support them so they are not alone with the child. Together they will then take the child to the designated lost child location
- An announcement will be made of the PA that a lost child has been found, but no details of the child will be given.
- The staff member or volunteer will contact the Event Manager who will send out a WhatsApp message to Chickenshed staff and volunteers with the relevant details
- If a parent/carer identifies themselves then a Chickenshed member of staff will ask them to describe the child, name, age, physical body, clothes they're wearing and take them to the designated space for reuniting
- If there is a period when the parent or carer doesn't identify themselves then the child

will be kept in the designated area with two staff members who will keep them calm, try to find out as much information as possible until the parent/carer comes forward

- If the parent/carer doesn't identify themselves within 30/60 mins (tbc) then the police will be called off and the emergency communication plan will be put into action.

Out on the walk

A parent/carer says they've lost their child:

- The staff member or volunteer steward will take a full description of the child, including name, what they look like, and what they are wearing, and what time and where they were last seen
- The staff member or volunteer will contact the Event Manager who will send out a WhatsApp message to Chickenshed staff and volunteers with the relevant details
- Two Chickenshed staff, and any floating volunteers will head to that area and help search for the child
- If the child is located a Chickenshed staff member will ring the steward in that area who can tell the parents and help reunite them.
- If the child is not located within 30 minutes the police will be called and the event will be called off.

A lost child is found:

- The Chickenshed staff member or volunteer will speak to them to get some details and ring the Event Manager who will get another adult to the location so they're not alone with them.
- The Event Manager who will send out a WhatsApp message to Chickenshed staff and volunteers with the relevant details in case a parent identifies themselves
- If a parent/carer identifies themselves then a Chickenshed member of staff will ask them to describe the child, name, age, physical body, clothes they're wearing and contact the event manager
- The Event Manager will then confirm that the parents have been correctly identified and tell them where their child is so they can be reunited
- If there is a period when the parent or carer doesn't identify themselves then the child will be kept where they were found with two adults who will keep them calm, try to find out as much information as possible until the parent/carer comes forward
- If the parent/carer doesn't identify themselves within 30/60 mins (tbc) then the police will be called off and the emergency communication plan will be put into action.

At Chickenshed

A parent/carer says they've lost their child:

- The staff member or volunteer steward will take a full description of the child, including name, what they look like, and what they are wearing, and what time and where they were last seen.
- A member of Chickenshed staff will make an announcement on the in house PA system asking people to look for the missing child and let a member of Chickenshed staff know if they find them.
- Chickenshed staff and volunteers will look for the child within the building and immediate vicinity.
- If the child is located and positively identified a Chickenshed staff member reunite them
- If the child is not located within 30 minutes the police will be called and the event will be called off.

A lost child is found:

- The staff member or volunteer steward will take a full description of the child, including name, what they look like, and what they are wearing, and what time and where they were last seen.
- The Chickenshed ring the Event Manager who will get another adult to the location so they're not along with them.
- The Event Manager who will send out a WhatsApp message to Chickenshed staff and volunteers with the relevant details in case a parent identifies themselves
- If a parent/carer identifies themselves then a Chickenshed member of staff will ask them to describe the child, name, age, physical body, clothes they're wearing and contact the event manager.
- The Event Manager will then confirm that the parents have been correctly identified and tell them where their child is so they can be reunited.
- If there is a period when the parent or carer doesn't identify themselves then the child will be kept where they were found with two adults who will keep them calm, try to find out as much information as possible until the parent/carer comes forward
- If the parent/carer doesn't identify themselves within 30/60 mins (tbc) then the police will be called off and the emergency communication plan will be put into action.

Target Groups Requiring Extra Safeguarding Oversight and Care

Chickenshed is constantly needing to respond and adapt to the shifting needs and priorities of individuals and groups whose Safeguarding needs may increase and whose oversight needs by Safeguarding Teams, staff, tutors, mentors and counselling teams are accelerating. This acceleration may come as a result of Government intervention and highlighting and/or as a result of Chickenshed identification and highlighting/signposting. Chickenshed must be alert to and respond to the extra Safeguarding need of the following target groups particularly in its revised assessment of safeguarding teams, safeguarding leadership and safeguarding training.

1. Home Education

Children who are Home Educated and young adults(18 to 25+) not in any form of training, adult care provision or receiving social care provision in the Community. For those who are Home Educated Formal Case Reviews have highlighted gaps in Safeguarding oversight.

2. Young Carers and Young Adult Chief Carers

Children who are identified or who have yet to be identified but should be identified as Young Carers (up to 18years) and young adults who are chief carers for dependents. Increasing numbers of these carers result from any and every revision and redefinition of Personal Independence Payments and related Disability Benefit processes.

3. Mental Health and Co - Occurring Conditions

3a.Children and young people who have identified or "should be identified" mental health issues and vulnerability and who also have co - occurring vulnerabilities which either are serving to cause and worsen the mental health deterioration or are being themselves caused by the mental health issue.

3b. Children and Young People with Identified Mental Health Needs whose condition is being linked to and worsened by increased social media use and addiction.

3C. Young People refusing any form of intervention for severe and deteriorating mental health issues. This can be due to mistrust of care and intervention, length of time support is taking to be offered, historical personal failure of past interventions and services.

4. Migrant, Refugee Asylum Seeker Groups Not Receiving Support

Individuals who are from migrant, refugee or asylum seekers groups are in need of Safeguarding support alongside other support but provision is very locality/borough dependent with this being one of the most appropriate target groups to be termed "dependent on a lottery of provision".

5. Children who are the third+ sibling in a Family and who lose out with the "Two Child Benefit Rule".

Families are not allowed to receive child benefits for the third and more child in the family with the sudden increase in need met by a sudden decrease in income leading to some children and families falling into the poverty trap. It has been identified that safeguarding needs in any cost of living crisis/lived experience barrier situation can be exacerbated.

6. Children and Young People Exploited by Incel and other misogynist doctrines.

Incel culture and related misogynist movements and doctrines are being defined and redefined as radicalising boys and young men - some with other vulnerabilities - and posing a Safeguarding/Prevent risk to women and girls and also young people from the LGBTQ communities around the country. They are also posing clear Safeguarding and Prevent risk to themselves as involvement leads to exploitation and radicalisation in turn potentially leading to criminal activity.

This strand of exploitation is also sometimes linking itself to white supremacist exploitation putting migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in Safeguarding risk together with individuals from Black and Global Majority lived experience.

This strand of Prevent Safeguarding risk is growing and has already impacted on communities in riot and crowd violence form with specific groups being targeted.

Responding to Changing and Developing Safeguarding/ Prevent Legislation

Chickenshed needs to be proactive when predicting and responding to developments and absolute changes to Safeguarding and Prevent legislation. Potential changes and developments are signposted and highlighted to Education Boards, Management Boards and Trustee Boards via the Trustee Education Committee wherever possible well before they become law. This is so that potential additions and adaptations to mentoring team, Safeguarding resource teams and Pastoral Tutor teams can be predicted and managed before they are signalled as legal requirements and/or advisory requirements.

Current recent legislation issues discussed and planned for prior to implementation include the following;

1. Online Safety Bill legal requirements and advisory requirements. (2024/2025)
2. Children and Families Welfare Bill (2025)
3. Protect (Martyns Law) 2024/2025 - Safeguarding related to security planning within venues
4. Keeping Children Safe in Education/ Working Together to Protect Children (2025 Revision and Guidance Document for Children and Young People)

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Chickenshed Statement of Intent on issues of Sexual Harassment

Chickenshed is outlining a link to this Office for students Guidance in its Safeguarding/ Prevent Policy as part of the single central record (SCP) required by OfS for Harassment and Sexual Misconduct processes. <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-students/student-rights/harassment-and-sexual-misconduct-a-guide-for-students/>

Section 1 – Introduction

Chickenshed is committed to a zero tolerance approach to sexual harassment and the behaviour that can potentially lead to harassment. This zero tolerance approach applies equally to any examples and incidents of sexual harassment behaviour for all gender/gender neutral/equality group situations as defined by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and also the government Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) report recommendations and revisions.

Chickenshed proactively supports the "remember it can happen here" approach which has been advised by Ofsted and the Office for Students - which dictates that education organisations should proactively assume that sexual harassment may be prevalent amongst individuals for whom they take responsibility for - rather than assume that their organisations are safe and sexual harassment in some way "cannot" occur or be occurring or is "highly unlikely" to occur or be occurring. This approach promotes the necessary proactive vigilance that is needed to anticipate and negate obvious, less obvious and also hidden, latent harassment behaviour together with the conditions and attitudes which may lead it.

Chickenshed is working with the Office for Students terms and definitions from their expectations in relation to harassment including sexual harassment and those definitions and explanations are outlined below.

2. Staffing Resources

2.1 Chickenshed believes that sexual harassment both thrives and also goes under the radar in situations where staff support and oversight is diluted due to it being underresourced. Chickenshed is committed to maintaining staff support resources for students to 1 to 5/6 beneficiaries to ensure that, in a relatively small venue there are always staff and Mentors close to hear, understand and anticipate concerns whilst monitoring and affecting the early potential stages of pre - sexual harassment behaviour preferably before it becomes an issue.

2.2 Chickenshed will ensure there is structured awareness amongst staff and students of the potential of less seen/hidden coercive relationship behaviour which may lead to sexual harassment or may already satisfy the conditions of sexual harassment. Safeguarding and mentoring/support resources will be targeted at these situations to ensure individuals are supported.

2.3 Chickenshed will ensure there is a named member(s) of the Support/Mentor team who reports to the wider Delegated Safeguarding Team regarding the welfare of students in relation to potential or actual sexual harassment issues.

2.4 Chickenshed will maintain a wide Delegated Safeguarding Team of 6 working across its beneficiary operations to generate and sustain awareness of sexual harassment issues and potential issues. This allows a ratio of one Safeguarding team Officer to 25 - 30 students or approximately one per cohort. This ratio will be monitored and added to when needed.

2.5 Chickenshed will maintain and extend, wherever needed, counselling resources to respond to the potential sexual harassment impact of external student home community situations and relationships. Extra counselling support systems will be provided as required.

Section 3 Awareness and Training

3.1 Chickenshed will maintain and extend, wherever needed, the positive levels of Safeguarding awareness and training activity to reflect the growing impact of sexual harassment issues with Safeguarding an agenda item for Management, Education and Support Management and also whole staff meetings.

3.2 Chickenshed will provide, wherever possible, opportunities for students to reflect on

issues of sexual harassment and related bullying, manipulation and coercive behaviour issues in curriculum creative material exploration with a parallel understanding that this can be an important vehicle for understanding, empathy and support in inclusive environments and indeed all environments. Issues of gender and LGBTQ rights and identity will be explored in impactful settings with curriculum links serving to reinforce the fact that these are not issues separate to the main educational experience but central to an understanding of inclusion and inclusive working.

3.3 Chickenshed will ensure that potential issues of sexual harassment, bullying, coercive relationship control and their impact can apply to situations across the gender, heterosexual and LGBTQ spectrum. Chickenshed is always actively seeking representation from all these groups across its beneficiary spectrum to develop its inclusivity response and provision. Therefore it is vital that awareness of sexual harassment issues and harassment issues in general recognise these aspects of lived experience.

3.3 In terms of training and awareness Chickenshed recognises that for some individuals amongst beneficiary groups past education and social experiences may have been more limited or restricted with their own exposure to routine social communication situations being potentially also limited and restricted. This can occasionally lead to a mismatch between communication/relationship expectation and appropriate behaviour when in wider, inclusive settings Chickenshed's wide mentor/ safeguarding team provision will work hard to ensure sensitive and measured awareness for all young people of the sexual harassment "it could happen here" approach is also balanced with an awareness of appropriate communication behaviour and appropriate boundaries.

Section 4 - Acting on Sexual Harassment Issues and Reporting

4.1 - Chickenshed will use its commitment to extend safeguarding and mentoring/inclusive support resources to make communication and reporting re sexual harassment concerns as accessible and sensitive as possible. Individuals need to feel reassured to communicate with staff members they themselves feel comfortable to discuss issues with. They also need to feel comfortable in the event of feeling the need for others to communicate on their behalf if they are unsure of the best approach to suit their needs. This may be a member of staff but also may be another student.

Student Policy on Harassment, and Sexual Misconduct

Introduction

Chickenshed does not tolerate any form of harassment or victimisation or sexual misconduct and expects all members of the Chickenshed community, its staff, students, volunteers, visitors and contractors to treat each other with respect, courtesy and consideration.

Chickenshed has always been committed to fostering an inclusive culture which promotes equality of opportunity, values diversity and maintains a working, learning and social environment in which the rights and dignity of all members of the Chickenshed community are respected. Chickenshed actively promotes this ethos of inclusive zero tolerance of harassment in a number of ways including before, during and after a project start or a year start through Induction with this ethos also being reinforced for any extra engagement or enhancement activity. Whilst a student can expect to be challenged by staff, by each other, and by the concepts and materials that form the teaching within Chickenshed, this will be undertaken in a “safe” and respectful environment with harassment due to equality group status or opinion needing direct intervention.

Aims

The aims of this policy are to:

- a) Promote a positive open environment in which people are treated fairly and inclusively with respect;
- b) Make it clear that harassment is unacceptable and that all members of Chickenshed have a role to play in creating an environment free from harassment – and creating awareness of how to understand and challenge harassment when it arises.
- c) Provide a framework of support for students who feel they have been subject to harassment.
- d) Inform students where to report and/or make a complaint – when they or others feel they have been subject of harassing behaviour, including sexual harassment.

Definitions

A person subjects another to **harassment** where they engage in unwanted and unwarranted conduct which has the purpose or effect of:

- violating another person's dignity, or
- creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for another person

The victim does not need to have explicitly stated that the behaviour was unwanted but behaviour can be seen or recognised by others including students, staff and family/carers.

Bullying is a form of harassment and which can be characterised as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient. Chickenshed staff and students need to be aware that bullying in all its forms can also occur as a result of sexual harassment and as a result of an action by a victim to counter sexual harassment. However bullying can also occur as a prelude to sexual harassment to intimidate or attempt to normalize inappropriate behaviour.

Victimisation is when one individual treats another badly or subjects him/her to an intimidating form of treatment because of a complaint about sexual harassment discrimination, harassment or bullying. It can also occur when an individual has or have participated in an investigation, or because they have helped someone who has been a victim of discrimination, harassment or bullying.

Chickenshed regards all forms of **Bullying** or **Victimisation** as misconduct needing to be highlighted and prevented. Chickenshed recognises that sexual harassment and exploration of this form of harassment needs to be treated with extra sensitivity and awareness due to attempts being often made by perpetrators to "normalize" the behaviour or see it as something which can be "tolerated" as part of routine communication – with differing attitudes and levels of awareness.

Behaviours

Harassment including sexual harassment may involve repeated forms of unwanted and unwarranted behaviour, but a one-off incident can also amount to harassment.

Every member of staff and every student should ensure that they understand harassment and have an awareness and the potential that harassment can occur. The perception of the complainant and the extent, to which that perception needs to be treated as reasonable and needing action.

Being under the influence of alcohol, drugs or otherwise intoxicated is not an excuse for harassment including sexual harassment in all its forms

Sexual Harassment and general harassment can take a variety of forms:

- Through individual behaviour
 - face to face, either verbally or physically
 - through other forms of communication, including but not limited to, written communications and communications via any form of electronic media or mobile communications device:
 - directly to the person concerned, or to a third party
- Through a prevailing study environment which creates a culture which tolerates harassment or bullying, for example the telling of homophobic sexist, misogynist or racist jokes.

Examples of behaviour which may amount to sexual harassment and general awareness harassment under this Policy include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Offensive gestures, language, gossip or jokes.
- Insulting or abusive behaviour or comments.
- Physical contact, ranging from an invasion of personal space and/or inappropriate touching, to serious assault.
- Display of sexually aggressive, pornographic, racist or otherwise offensive pictures or other material, or the transmitting of any such messages or images via electronic mail.
- Intentional isolation or exclusion.
- Humiliating or demeaning behaviour and/or persistent negative criticism

Stalking is also a form of sexual harassment and harassment in general and may be characterised by any of the following repeated and unwanted behaviours:

- Following a person;
- Contacting, or attempting to contact, a person by any means;
- Publishing any statement or other material –
 - Relating or purporting to relate to a person, or
 - Purporting to originate from a person;
- Monitoring the use by a person of the internet, email or any other form of electronic communication;
- Interfering with any property in the possession of a person;
- Watching or spying on a person including through the use of CCTV or electronic surveillance.

Sexual misconduct includes but is not limited to:

- Attempting to engage, or engaging in, sexual intercourse or other sexual act without consent
- Sharing the private sexual material of another person without consent
- Kissing without consent
- Touching inappropriately through clothes without consent
- Inappropriately showing sexual organs to another person directly or indirectly (e.g. through digital means)
- Making unwanted remarks of a sexual nature
- Taking uninvited photographs of another student, including up skirting.

Application of the Policy

Chickenshed considers that vigorous debate is proper and acceptable in the academic context, and staff and students have freedom within the law to voice a wide range of views and opinions on social, economic, political, cultural and religious issues, and to put forward new controversial or unpopular opinions. However, such freedoms do not give immunity from the law nor from personal liability. Academic debate will not amount to harassment when it is conducted respectfully and does not violate the dignity of others or create an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.

Sexual harassment/general harassment and/or bullying or sexual misconduct are a serious offence. Any student who feels s/he has been subject to harassment or bullying, or believe they have been the victim of sexual misconduct by another student or staff member, should make a complaint to Chickenshed using the student complaints policy and procedures and using the student support and mentoring processes and provision to help with any aspects of the reporting and/or complaints process.

This is the case where the complaint is against a fellow student

- To the relevant Head of Department (or Director) where their complaint is against a member of staff or an external contractor.

For advice, a student can speak in confidence to a member of the Student support/Mentor team or the member of the Chickenshed Safeguarding Team.

Where a complaint of harassment, bullying or sexual misconduct may constitute a criminal offence, the complainant will be encouraged to report the matter to the police. Victims can also report behaviour which may constitute criminal conduct direct to the police if they feel that direct route is needed – and support will also be given for this process where needed.

If a complainant is deemed to have known or to have reasonably been expected to know that a complaint was unfounded, the allegation of harassment or bullying may be judged to be vexatious or malicious, and disciplinary action may be taken against them. No action will be taken if a complaint which proves to be unfounded is judged to have been made in good faith.

All parties involved in a complaint (including any witnesses who may be interviewed as part of any investigation) should maintain the confidentiality of the process. Those involved in advising complainants should, where possible, seek the consent of the individual for the onward disclosure of relevant information to those with a clear need to know. Where such consent is not forthcoming, the person entrusted with the information should make it clear that, in exceptional circumstances, it may be necessary to disclose the information, taking account of the duty of care which may be owed to the individual and/or others and the need to action Safeguarding of young people and/or vulnerable adults/adults at risk processes.