



# Whole School Child Protection Policy

## 2017-18

Ratified by Management Committee January 2016

(Amended October 2016)

(Reviewed January 2017)

<b>Date:</b>	January 2017
<b>Date approved by Management Committee:</b>	
<b>Signature of Chair of Management Committee:</b>	
<b>To be reviewed:</b>	Annually

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## **1. Introduction**

The Link School whole-school Child Protection Policy aims to provide clear direction to staff and others about expected codes of behaviour in dealing with Child welfare concerns.

This policy has been developed in accordance with the principles established by the Children Acts 1989 and 2004; the Education Act 2002, and in line with government publications: 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' 2015, Revised Safeguarding Statutory Guidance 2 'Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families' 2000, 'What to do if You are Worried a Child is Being Abused' 2003. The guidance reflects, 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' September 2016.

The policy aims to make explicit the School's commitment to the development of good practice and sound procedures. The purpose of the policy is, therefore, to ensure that Safeguarding concerns and referrals are handled sensitively, professionally and in ways that support the needs of the student's wellbeing.

Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families has a role to play in safeguarding children. School staff are particularly important as they are in a position to identify concerns early and provide help for children, to prevent concerns from escalating. The School and its staff form part of the wider safeguarding system for children. This system is described in statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015. Schools and colleges should work with MASH Team, the police, health services and other services to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm; taking the right steps to ensure that their safety is maintained. We expect all of our pupil's parents/carers and visitors to share this commitment and understanding.

The Management Committee takes seriously its responsibility under section 175 of the Education Act 2002 to safeguard and promote the welfare of children; and to work together with other agencies to ensure adequate arrangements within our school to identify, assess, and support those children who are suffering harm.

It is our statutory obligation to follow procedures.

These procedures are set down in this document.

## **2. Safeguarding in context**

Our Child Protection and all the safeguarding procedures which are in place should be read in conjunction with other related policies on issues such as Anti-bullying, Confidentiality, Whistle blowing and Sex and Relationship Education.

Our school fully recognises the contribution it can make to safeguard and support the children and young people in its care. There are four main elements to the School's Child Protection policy:

1. Prevention (positive atmosphere, careful and vigilant working, support to children and young people, providing good adult role models, the identification of early and additional support/services to children and families and recognising and reducing risks to children

including Harassment, bullying, victimisation, exploitation, radicalisation and issues such as Honour Based Violence, Female Genital Mutilation and Forced Marriage).

2. Protection (following agreed procedures, ensuring all staff respond appropriately and sensitively to child protection concerns and that every member of staff has regular training and updates at least annually and are supported to refer their concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (Ron Cruikshanks or Wendy Ellison) or the MASH(Children's Safeguarding through CSN 0191 5205560) IF NECESSARY. In certain specific cases such as Female Genital Mutilation (Mandatory reporting of FGM from October 2015), Radicalisation or Forced Marriage there are SPOCS/named teams and individuals within the police who can be contacted).
3. Reconsideration (following and challenging the progress of new referrals and existing cases to ensure that individual cases are reconsidered if there remains no improvement to a child's circumstances)
4. Support (to children and young people and staff and to children who may have been abused)

All Staff have a responsibility to recognise child abuse, neglect and peer on peer abuse in its many forms including:

Child Exploitation

Bullying

Domestic Violence

Drugs

Fabricated Illness

Faith Abuse

Forced Marriage

Gangs

Gender Based Violence

Radicalisation and Extremism

Sexting

In the event of any of these issues being recognised, information should be shared directly with the Designated Safeguarding Leads which may result in the situation being monitored and supported in school or the pupil/s being referred to specific services.

Parents/carers are made aware that the Link School will take any reasonable action to ensure the safety of its students.

In cases where the School has reason to be concerned that a child may be 'at risk of significant harm', we have no alternative but to follow MASH (Sunderland Multi-Agency Safeguarding Board) Safeguarding Procedures as directed in this document.

The link School has in place clear guidelines and procedures which enable all staff to act promptly and sensitively in situations where concerns arise.

**THIS POLICY APPLIES TO THE LINK SCHOOL'S WHOLE WORKFORCE**

### **3. Understanding the Legal Perspective**

The Link School is committed to respond in accordance with Sunderland Safeguarding Children Board and partner agencies in all cases where there is a concern about significant harm.

Significant Harm is defined in The Children's Act 1989 as the ill-treatment (including sexual abuse and physical abuse) or the Impairment of health (physical or mental) or development (physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural) as compared to a similar child.

**Note:** harm now includes the impairment of a child's health or development as a result of witnessing the ill treatment of another person

*(Adoption and Children Act 2002)*

Local Authorities have a duty to investigate (under S47 of the Children Act 1989). Where a Local Authority is informed that there is a child who is living, or is found, in their area and they have reasonable cause to suspect that child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm they must make such enquiries as necessary to promote or safeguard the child's welfare. The MASH Children's Safeguarding undertakes this responsibility on behalf of the Local Authority once a referral has been made.

Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2016 contains information on what schools and colleges **should** do and sets out the legal duties with which schools and colleges **must** comply. It should be read alongside Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015 which applies to all the schools, including maintained nursery schools. The Children Act 1989 sets out the Legal Framework.

#### **4. Observing Best Practice**

Schools that observe best practice

- a. Have an ethos in which students feel secure; their viewpoints are valued, and they are encouraged to talk and are listened to;
- b. Provide suitable support and guidance so that students have a range of appropriate adults to whom they can turn if they are worried or in difficulties;
- c. Work with parents to build an understanding of the School's responsibility to ensure the welfare of all students and a recognition that this may occasionally require students to be referred to appropriate agencies as a constructive and helpful measure;
- d. Take particular care that students who may be especially vulnerable to abuse, are supported effectively with particular attention paid to ensuring that those with communication difficulties are enabled to express themselves to a member of staff who has appropriate communicative skills;
- e. Have a clear policy about the handling of allegations of abuse by members of staff, ensuring that all staff are fully aware of the procedures and that they are followed correctly at all times;
- f. Have a written whole school policy, produced, owned and regularly reviewed by school staff and which clearly outlines the school's position and positive action in respect of the aforementioned standards;
- g. Provide targeted support to staff who are involved in cases of Child Protection or allegations against staff.

#### **5. Safe School, Safe Staff**

We will ensure that:

All members of the Management Committee understand and fulfil their responsibilities, namely to ensure that:

- there is a Child Protection/Safeguarding policy together with a staff behaviour (code of conduct) policy
- The School operates safer recruitment procedures by ensuring that there is at least one person on every recruitment panel that has completed Safer Recruitment training.
- The School has procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse against staff and volunteers and to make a referral to the DBS if a person in regulated activity has been dismissed or removed due to safeguarding concerns, or would have had they not resigned.
- A senior leader has Lead Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) responsibility
- On appointment, the DSLs undertake interagency training and also undertake DSL 'new to role' and an 'update' course every 2 years
- All other staff have Safeguarding training updated as appropriate
- Any weaknesses in Child Safeguarding are remedied immediately
- A member of the Management Committee, usually the Chair, is nominated to liaise with the LA on Child Safeguarding issues and in the event of an allegation of abuse made against the Head teacher
- Child Safeguarding/Protection policies and procedures are reviewed annually and that the Safeguarding policy is available on the School website.
- The Management Committee considers how children may be taught about safeguarding. This may be part of a broad and balanced curriculum covering relevant issues through personal social health and economic education (PSHE).
- The DSL's who are involved in recruitment and at least one member of the management Committee will also complete safer recruitment training (currently on-line on the DfE website) to be renewed every 5 years.
- All members of staff and volunteers are provided with child safeguarding awareness information at induction, including in their arrival pack the latest DfE and City of Sunderland guidance on working with children and that they are signposted to this Policy
- Ensure that staff understand through online safety training the additional risks for pupils online and continue to promote the School's Online Safety Policy in the protection of all pupils.
- **All staff are aware that they may raise concerns directly with MASH Team.**
- All staff have child protection awareness training, updated by the DSL as appropriate, to maintain their understanding of the signs and indicators of abuse.
- All members of staff, volunteers, and governors know how to respond to a pupil who discloses abuse.

- All parents/carers are made aware of the responsibilities of staff members with regard to child protection procedures through publication of the Schools Child Protection Policy on the School Website.
- Our lettings policy will seek to ensure the suitability of adults working with children on school sites at any time.
- we will ensure that child protection concerns or allegations against adults working in the school are referred to the Designated Officer (DO) for advice and that any member of staff found not suitable to work with children will be notified to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) for consideration for barring- following resignation, dismissal, or when we cease to use their service as a result of a substantiated allegation, in the case of a volunteer.
- That safeguarding concerns about adults in school are made directly to the DSL or Head teacher.
- Our procedures will be regularly reviewed and up-dated
- The name of the designated members of staff for Child Protection will be clearly advertised in the School with a statement explaining the School's role in referring and monitoring cases of suspected abuse.
- Safeguarding information and updates will be shared with all staff via briefings and the staff area of the website.
- All new members of staff will be signposted to our Child Protection policy, with the DSLs' names clearly displayed, as part of their induction into the school.
- The policy will be available publicly on the School website.
- The stress of this kind of work is considerable. All staff who have handled suspicions/disclosures, or who have attended Child Protection Conferences or Court, should be supported within the school. Additionally, support from outside should be sought where appropriate.
- The School recognises that children/young people in distress as a result of experiences outside the classroom may be less able to achieve their potential. While it is clear that children need firm boundaries, staff may need take into account their distress in managing their behaviour.

## **6. Designated Safeguarding Leads: Roles and Responsibilities**

The Designated Safeguarding Leads in school are: Ron Cruikshanks and Wendy Ellison

In the event they cannot be contacted please seek advice from the Head Teacher

If there is an IMMEDIATE safeguarding concern and the Designated Safeguarding Leads are unavailable please seek immediate support via the MASH, Children's Safeguarding (0191 520 5560)

The designated DSLs are responsible for:

- Refer cases of suspected abuse to the MASH, Children's Safeguarding.

- Refer cases to the Disclosure and Barring Service (cases where a person is dismissed or left due to risk/harm to a child) acting as a focal point for staff to discuss concerns. Referrals should be made following the MASH team guidelines
- Refer to Police cases where a crime may have been committed (including Sexual exploitation (MSET lead), Radicalisation (through the single point of contact for the channel panel) Female genital mutilation and forced marriage.
- Support staff who make referrals to the MASH, Children's Safeguarding, Channel Panel or Police as appropriate.
- Maintaining written/electronic records of concerns about a child even if there is no need to make an immediate referral.
- Ensuring that all such records are kept confidentially and securely and are separate from pupil records, until the child's 25th birthday, and are copied on to the child's next school or college.
- Liaising with other agencies and professionals.
- Ensuring that either they attend case conferences, core groups, or other multi-agency planning meetings, contribute to assessments, and provide a report which has been shared with the parents.
- Ensuring that any pupil currently with a child protection plan who is absent in the educational setting without explanation for two days is referred to their key worker or the MASH Team.
- Organising child protection induction, and update training every 3 years, for all School staff.
- As required liaise with the case manager (Head teacher, Director of Safeguarding or where the Head teacher or Director of Safeguarding is the subject of the allegations the Chair of Management Committee) and the DO at the Local Authority for child protection concerns (all cases which concern a staff member)
- Providing the Head teacher and Management Committee with regular Safeguarding updates, detailing any changes to the policy and procedures; training undertaken by the DSL and by all staff. The number and type of incidents/cases and number of children who are looked after and CP.
- To ensure that all staff report any concerns about young people or suspicion of child abuse or risk of significant harm to the DSL.
- To co-ordinate consultation and action within the School.
- To monitor the transfer of students who are subject to a child protection plan. (It is considered good practice to share all Child Protection information with the appropriate Designated Safeguarding Lead in a new school.)
- To attend appropriate and regular training as provided by the relevant authorities, and to keep up to date with all developments relating to issues of Safeguarding.
- To provide appropriate training to staff.

- To ensure that all staff have a knowledge and understanding of procedures laid down by Sunderland Children Services by supporting and providing appropriate training
- To ensure that all staff are aware of procedures and have access to the most recent Policy and Procedures Document.
- To be aware of all School excursions/residential and to clarify with party leaders their role and responsibility in connection with Safeguarding Procedures when students are away from school.
- Our Health & Safety policy, set out in a separate document, reflects the consideration we give to the protection of our children both physically within the school environment, and for example in relation to internet use, and when away from the school and when undertaking school trips and visits.
- During term time the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) should always be available (during school or college hours) for staff in the school or college to discuss any safeguarding concerns.
- Whilst generally speaking the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) would be expected to be available in person, it is a matter for individual schools and colleges, working with the designated safeguarding lead, to consider whether in exceptional circumstances availability via phone and or Skype or other such mediums is acceptable.
- The designated safeguarding lead and school should arrange adequate and appropriate cover arrangements for any out of hours/out of term activities.

## **7. Following Procedures and Supporting Children**

The Teacher Standards 2012 state that teachers, including head teachers, should safeguard children's wellbeing and maintain public trust in the teaching profession as part of their professional duties. All school staff have a responsibility to provide a safe environment in which children can learn.

From 1<sup>st</sup> July 2015 the school has a duty under the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 to have 'Due regard' to 'Prevent' and to assess the risk of children and young people being drawn into extremism (based upon potential risks in local area and that clear protocols in place for all visitors so that views are appropriate and not an opportunity to influence others).

From October 2015 the school have a mandatory duty to report to the Police in all cases where teachers discover that an act of female genital mutilation appears to have been carried out

School staff also have a responsibility to identify children who may be in need of extra help or who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm. All staff then have a responsibility to take appropriate action, working with other services as needed.

The Link School promotes positive relationships with each individual student. Our regular, day-to-day contact with our students during school terms enables all staff, teaching and support, to observe outward signs of abuse, changes in behaviour or failure to develop.

Consequently staff are committed to respond in accordance with the Child Protection procedures in all cases where there is concern about significant harm.

The School recognise that a child who is abused or who witnesses violence may feel helpless and humiliated, may blame themselves and find it difficult to develop and maintain a sense of self-worth. We recognise that the School may provide the only stability in the lives of children who have been abused or who are at risk of harm. We accept that research shows that the behaviour of a child in these circumstances may range from that which is perceived to be normal to aggressive or withdrawn.

The Link School also recognises that children are capable of abusing their peers. Peer on peer abuse can take many forms and any concerns raised will be investigated and dealt with appropriately. No peer on peer abuse should be tolerated or minimised as part of growing up and all those involved will be provided with an appropriate level of support. It is understood that those pupils who have experienced abuse in their own lives may in turn abuse others. This requires a considered and sensitive approach in order that the child can receive appropriate help and support. See Peer on Peer abuse policy for detailed information.

Our School will support all children by encouraging self-esteem and self-assertiveness, through the curriculum as well as our relationships, whilst not condoning aggression or bullying.

We will do this by promoting a caring, safe and positive environment within the school and by liaising and working together with all other support services and those agencies involved in the safeguarding of children. The School provide continuing support to a child about whom there have been concerns who leaves the school by ensuring that appropriate information is copied under confidential cover to the child's new setting and ensuring the school records are forwarded as a matter of priority.

## **8. Procedure and Referral**

All members of staff need to be fully aware of the Schools procedures which comply with statutory guidelines.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined for the purposes of this policy as: protecting ALL children from all forms of maltreatment and abuse (including in addition to the four categories of harm, issues such as child sexual exploitation (CSE), Honour Based Violence (HBV) inclusive of Female Genital Mutilation and forced marriage, radicalisation and extremism, harassment, bullying and victimization) preventing impairment of children's health or development; ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes. This includes everyone under the age of 18.

Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families has a role to play in safeguarding children. Due to the regular contact with children all staff at The Link School have, we hold a particularly important role in safeguarding as we are in a position to identify concerns early, provide help for children and to prevent concerns from escalating. Children can make disclosures or show signs of abuse at any time and to any individual and safeguarding incidents can occur within schools.

It is quite possible that a student could make a disclosure to any teacher or other trusted member of support staff. It can be in quite unexpected circumstances. Disclosures take

different forms. For example, a student may wish to show you something such as a bruise, cuts or contact marks. He or she may share details of an incident or conversation which they may consider inconsequential or innocent. They could be distressed and wish to tell you about something that has happened to them. Concerns should always lead to help for the child at some point.

When a child is distressed, or seems distressed or in any form of discomfort, it is natural to want to ask them questions in an effort to support and make them feel better. In cases of Child Protection Procedures, it is important that we remain circumspect and resist the temptation to engage in inappropriate discussion with the child. All members of staff are strongly discouraged from using an 'investigative' or 'interrogative' approach. Where a child discloses information which triggers immediate concern, that information must be transmitted directly to the DSL as quickly as possible. Other information should be recorded on CPOMS ASAP. Information must never be shared or discussed publicly or outside the scope of the Child Protection Procedures.

The child must never be asked to repeat to anyone else the information they have initially shared. They should only have to do that once. It is important to remember that it may be very painful for the child to make the disclosure, and we may be re-enforcing that pain by asking the child to repeat the story.

Procedure Flow Chart;

See Appendix One for the procedure flow chart

### **Confidentiality**

We recognise that all matters relating to child protection are confidential. The Head teacher or DSLs will disclose any information about a child to other members of staff on a need to know basis only. All staff must be aware that they have a professional responsibility to share information with other agencies in order to safeguard children. They must also be aware that they cannot promise a child to keep secrets which might compromise the child's safety or wellbeing. The school will always undertake to share our intention to refer a child to the MASH Team with their parents /carers unless to do so could put the child at greater risk of harm, or impede a criminal investigation. If in doubt, we will consult with the MASH Team on this point.

### **Allegations against Staff**

All School staff should take care not to place themselves in a vulnerable position with a child. It is always advisable for interviews or work with individual children or parents to be conducted in view of other adults. All Staff should be aware of the City of Sunderland guidance on working with Children and the School's own Behaviour Management policy. Guidance about conduct and safe practice, including safe use of mobile phones by staff and volunteers will be given at induction

The School understand that a pupil may make an allegation against a member of staff.

If such an allegation is made, or information is received which suggests that a person may be unsuitable to work with children, the member of staff receiving the allegation or aware of the information, will immediately inform the Head teacher. The Head teacher on all such occasions will discuss the content of the allegation with the Designated Officer. (DO)

If the allegation made to a member of staff concerns the Head teacher, the person receiving the allegation will immediately inform the Chair of the Management Committee who will consult as outlined above without notifying the Head teacher first.

The school will follow the SSCB procedures for managing allegations against staff. Under no circumstances will we send a child home pending such an investigation, unless this advice is given exceptionally as a result of a consultation with the DO.

Suspension of the member of staff against whom an allegation has been made needs careful consideration. The Head teacher will seek the advice of the DO and Personnel Consultant in making this decision.

In the event of an allegation against the Head teacher, the decision to suspend will be made by the Chair of the Management Committee with advice as outlined above.

( Refer to “Guidance for Safe Working Practice for the Protection of Children and Staff in Education Settings” available on the DfE website or Keeping Children safe in Education September 2016 or Chair of the management committee in the event of an allegation against the Head teacher)

### **Whistle Blowing**

The school recognise that children cannot be expected to raise concerns in an environment where staff fail to do so. All staff should be aware of their duty to raise concerns, where they exist, about the management of child protection, which may include the attitude or actions of colleagues. If it becomes necessary to consult outside the school, they should speak in the first instance to the Area Education Officer/DO following the council Whistleblowing Policy.

Whistle-blowing re the Head teacher should be made to the Chair of the management committee whose contact details are readily available to staff.

### **Record Keeping**

Well-kept records are essential to good safeguarding practice. The Link School is clear about the need to record any concerns, discussions held, decisions made and reasons for those decisions about a child or children within its care. All staff will follow the schools information sharing and recording policies to ensure recording keeping is compliant.

The safeguarding recording within the Link school is held electronically through the secure management system of CPOMS. All staff have received training in the recording expectations and retention. Following a child leaving our school we follow the appropriate transfer procedures and retention guidelines.

### **Anti-Bullying**

Our School policy on anti-bullying is set out in a separate document and acknowledges that to allow or condone bullying may lead to consideration under child protection procedures. This includes all forms e .g. Cyber, racist, homophobic and gender related bullying. We keep a record of known bullying incidents. All staff are aware that children with differences/perceived differences are more susceptible to being bullied / victims of child abuse.

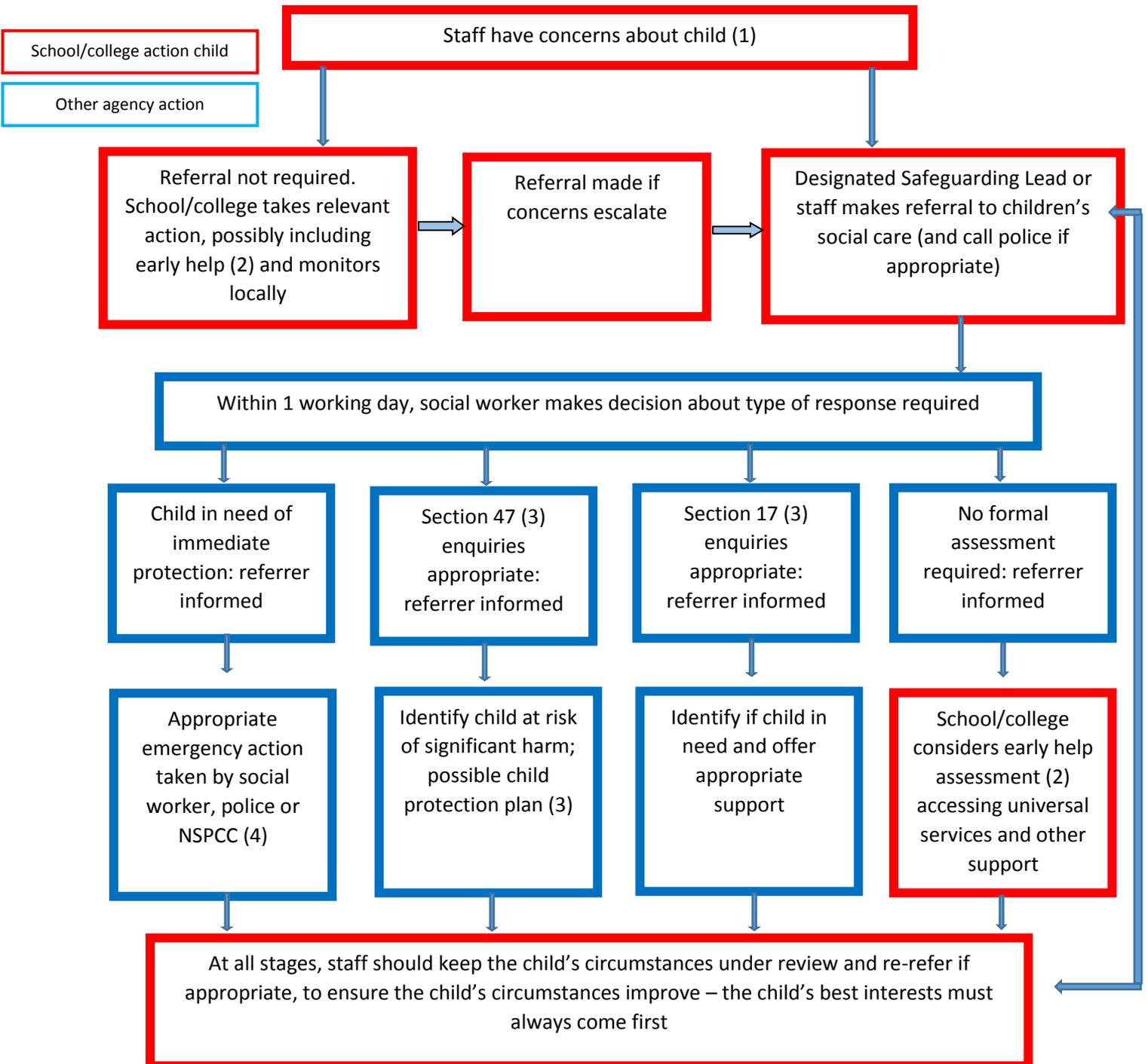
Within this ethos of protection the School recognise that we play a significant part in the prevention of harm to our children by providing them with good lines of communication with trusted adults and supportive friends.

The School community will therefore:

- Work to establish and maintain an ethos where children feel secure and are encouraged to talk and are always listened to.
- Include regular consultation with children e.g. through safety questionnaires, participation in anti-bullying week, asking children to report whether they have had happy/sad lunchtimes/playtimes – Student Voice.
- Ensure that all children know there is an adult in the school whom they can approach if they are worried or in difficulty.
- Include safeguarding across the curriculum, including PSHE, opportunities which equip children with the skills they need to stay safe from harm and to know to whom they should turn for help. In particular this will include anti-bullying work and e-safety.
- Ensure all staff are aware of school guidance for their use of mobile technology and have discussed safeguarding issues around the use of mobile technologies and their associated risks.

## Appendix One – Procedure Flow Chart

### Actions where there are concerns about a child



1. In cases which also involve an allegation of abuse against a staff member, see Part Four of this guidance
2. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges at any point in a child's life. Where a child would benefit from co-ordinated early help, and early help inter-agency assessment should be arranged. Chapter One of [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#) provides details guidance on the early help process
3. Under the Children Act 1989, local authorities are required to provide services for children in need for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting their welfare. This can include s17 assessments of children in need and s47 assessments of children at risk of significant harm. Full details are in Chapter One of [Working Together to Safeguarding Children](#)
4. This could include applying for an Emergency Protection Order (EPO)

## **APPENDIX TWO - How to Respond to a Disclosure**

What do you do if student appears visibly distressed or injured or Makes a disclosure to you?

Response;

Listen to what the child is saying and take it seriously. Assure the child that it is not their fault. Stay calm and don't involve anyone else at this stage. Don't make judgements or make any comment about the alleged abuser and don't ask any questions or press for information. Don't promise confidentiality!

Let the student know that you will have to share this with someone and tell them who that person will be (DSL) and assure them that it will be ok. Make sure that the student is safe and supported and Contact the Designated Person immediately, any delay could, depending on the circumstances, place the student further at risk.

Remember don't use interrogative and precise questioning such as, 'What did he/she do to you' 'Take your shirt off and show me the marks' .Instead, ask an open question which invites the child to make the disclosure without feeling intimidated, such as, 'Do you want to tell me what happened? Is there anything you would like to show me? What would you like me to do with this information? What can we do about this? I/We may have to share this information with.....

You may be taken by surprise, or may be shocked by what you hear/see. Be calm and professional – try not to show any emotion. Be aware that the child may not regard the subject of the disclosure as anything unusual, abnormal, painful or bad. The child may not express guilt or anger so be ready to have a reaction which may be different from that of the child. You may have been disturbed by the experience, so make sure that you take the opportunity to talk to someone at a later date.

**REFER THE DISCLOSURE TO THE DSL AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE**

It is often a distressing experience for you and the sooner you can share the responsibility with the Designated Person the better. You will be kept informed appropriately, so you will have 'closure'.

**IMPORTANT: YOU MUST ALWAYS REFER A DISCLOSURE, EVEN IF IT IS LATER RETRACTED, OR IS UNSUBSTANTIATED BY FACT. NEVER DESTROY ANY EVIDENCE, E.G. MOBILE PHONE IMAGES, DOCUMENTS, PRINT OUTS, ETC AS THEY MAY BE USED IF A CASE SUBSEQUENTLY COMES TO COURT**

And finally.....

**DON'T WORRY!**

Your primary concern is the welfare and safety of the child in your care. You are doing your job!

## **APPENDIX Three - Recognising signs of child abuse**

Categories of Abuse:

- Physical Abuse
- Emotional Abuse (including Domestic Abuse)
- Sexual Abuse
- Neglect

Signs of Abuse in Children:

The following non-specific signs may indicate something is wrong:

- Significant change in behaviour
- Extreme anger or sadness
- Aggressive and attention-seeking behaviour
- Suspicious bruises with unsatisfactory explanations
- Lack of self-esteem
- Self-injury
- Depression
- Age inappropriate sexual behaviour

Risk Indicators

The factors described in this section are frequently found in cases of child abuse. Their presence is not proof that abuse has occurred, but:

- Must be regarded as indicators of the possibility of significant harm
- Justifies the need for careful assessment and discussion with designated / named / lead person, manager, (or in the absence of all those individuals, an experienced colleague)
- May require consultation with and / or referral to MASH/SSCB
- The absence of such indicators does not mean that abuse or neglect has not occurred.

In an abusive relationship the child may:

- Appear frightened of the parent/s
- Act in a way that is inappropriate to her/his age and development (though full account needs to be taken of different patterns of development and different ethnic groups)

The parent or carer may:

- Persistently avoid child health promotion services and treatment of the child's episodic illnesses
- Have unrealistic expectations of the child

- Frequently complain about/to the child and may fail to provide attention or praise (high criticism/low warmth environment)
- Be absent or misusing substances
- Persistently refuse to allow access on home visits
- Be involved in domestic abuse Staff should be aware of the potential risk to children when individuals, previously known or suspected to have abused children, move into the household.

### Recognising Physical Abuse

The following are often regarded as indicators of concern:

- An explanation which is inconsistent with an injury
- Several different explanations provided for an injury
- Unexplained delay in seeking treatment
- The parents/carers are uninterested or undisturbed by an accident or injury
- Parents are absent without good reason when their child is presented for treatment
- Repeated presentation of minor injuries (which may represent a “cry for help” and if ignored could lead to a more serious injury)
- Family use of different doctors and A&E departments
- Reluctance to give information or mention previous injuries

### Bruising

Children can have accidental bruising, but the following must be considered as non-accidental unless there is evidence or an adequate explanation provided:

- Any bruising to a pre-crawling or pre-walking baby
- Bruising in or around the mouth, particularly in small babies which may indicate force feeding
- Two simultaneous bruised eyes, without bruising to the forehead, (rarely accidental, though a single bruised eye can be accidental or abusive)
- Repeated or multiple bruising on the head or on sites unlikely to be injured accidentally
- Variation in colour possibly indicating injuries caused at different times
- The outline of an object used e.g. belt marks, hand prints or a hair brush
- Bruising or tears around, or behind, the earlobe/s indicating injury by pulling or twisting
- Bruising around the face
- Grasp marks on small children
- Bruising on the arms, buttocks and thighs may be an indicator of sexual abuse

- Bite Marks

Bite marks can leave clear impressions of the teeth. Human bite marks are oval or crescent shaped. Those over 3 cm in diameter are more likely to have been caused by an adult or older child.

A medical opinion should be sought where there is any doubt over the origin of the bite.

### Burns and Scalds

It can be difficult to distinguish between accidental and non-accidental burns and scalds, and will always require experienced medical opinion. Any burn with a clear outline may be suspicious e.g.:

- Circular burns from cigarettes (but may be friction burns if along the bony protuberance of the spine)
- Linear burns from hot metal rods or electrical fire elements
- Burns of uniform depth over a large area
- Scalds that have a line indicating immersion or poured liquid (a child getting into hot water is his/her own accord will struggle to get out and cause splash marks)
- Old scars indicating previous burns/scalds which did not have appropriate treatment or adequate explanation Scalds to the buttocks of a small child, particularly in the absence of burns to the feet, are indicative of dipping into a hot liquid or bath.

### Fractures

Fractures may cause pain, swelling and discolouration over a bone or joint. Non-mobile children rarely sustain fractures.

There are grounds for concern if:

- The history provided is vague, non-existent or inconsistent with the fracture type
- There are associated old fractures
- Medical attention is sought after a period of delay when the fracture has caused symptoms such as swelling, pain or loss of movement
- There is an unexplained fracture in the first year of life

### Scars

A large number of scars or scars of different sizes or ages, or on different parts of the body, may suggest abuse.

### Recognising Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse may be difficult to recognise, as the signs are usually behavioural rather than physical. The manifestations of emotional abuse might also indicate the presence of other kinds of abuse.

The indicators of emotional abuse are often also associated with other forms of abuse.

The following may be indicators of emotional abuse:

- Developmental delay
- Abnormal attachment between a child and parent/carer e.g. anxious, indiscriminate or not attachment
- Indiscriminate attachment or failure to attach
- Aggressive behaviour towards others
- Scape-goated within the family
- Frozen watchfulness, particularly in pre-school children
- Low self-esteem and lack of confidence
- Withdrawn or seen as a “loner” – difficulty relating to others

#### Recognising Signs of Sexual Abuse

Boys and girls of all ages may be sexually abused and are frequently scared to say anything due to guilt and/or fear. This is particularly difficult for a child to talk about and full account should be taken of the cultural sensitivities of any individual child/family.

Recognition can be difficult, unless the child discloses and is believed. There may be no physical signs and indications are likely to be emotional/behavioural.

Some behavioural indicators associated with this form of abuse are:

- Inappropriate sexualised conduct
- Sexually explicit behaviour, play or conversation, inappropriate to the child’s age
- Continual and inappropriate or excessive masturbation
- Self-harm (including eating disorder), self-mutilation and suicide attempts
- Involvement in prostitution or indiscriminate choice of sexual partners
- An anxious unwillingness to remove clothes e.g. for sports events (but this may be related to cultural norms or physical difficulties)

Some physical indicators associated with this form of abuse are:

- Pain or itching of genital area
- Blood on underclothes
- Pregnancy in a younger girl where the identity of the father is not disclosed
- Physical symptoms such as injuries to the genital or anal area, bruising to buttocks, abdomen and thighs, sexually transmitted disease, presence of semen on vagina, anus, external genitalia or clothing

## Sexual Abuse by Young People

The boundary between what is abusive and what is part of normal childhood or youthful experimentation can be blurred. The determination of whether behaviour is developmental, inappropriate or abusive will hinge around the related concepts of true consent, power imbalance and exploitation. This may include children and young people who exhibit a range of sexually problematic behaviour such as indecent exposure, obscene telephone calls, fetishism, bestiality and sexual abuse against adults, peers or children.

Developmental Sexual Activity encompasses those actions that are to be expected from children and young people as they move from infancy through to an adult understanding of their physical, emotional and behavioural relationships with each other. Such sexual activity is essentially information gathering and experience testing. It is characterised by mutuality and of the seeking of consent.

Inappropriate Sexual Behaviour can be inappropriate socially, inappropriate to development, or both. In considering whether behaviour fits into this category, it is important to consider what negative effects it has on any of the parties involved and what concerns it raises about a child or young person. It should be recognised that some actions may be motivated by information seeking, but still cause significant upset, confusion, worry, physical damage, etc. It may also be that the behaviour is “acting out” which may derive from other sexual situations to which the child or young person has been exposed.

If an act appears to have been inappropriate, there may still be a need for some form of behaviour management or intervention. For some children, educative inputs may be enough to address the behaviour.

Abusive sexual activity includes any behaviour involving coercion, threats, aggression together with secrecy, or where one participant relies on an unequal power base.

### Assessment

In order to more fully determine the nature of the incident the following factors should be given consideration. The presence of exploitation in terms of:

- Equality – consider differentials of physical, cognitive and emotional development, power and control and authority, passive and assertive tendencies
- Consent – agreement including all the following: Understanding that is proposed based on age, maturity, development level, functioning and experience Knowledge of society’s standards for what is being proposed Awareness of potential consequences and alternatives Assumption that agreements or disagreements will be respected equally Voluntary decision

### Mental competence

- Coercion – the young perpetrator who abuses may use techniques like bribing, manipulation and emotional threats of secondary gains and losses that is loss of love, friendship, etc. Some may use physical force, brutality or the threat of these regardless of victim resistance. In evaluating sexual behaviour of children and young people, the above information should be used only as a guide.

## Recognising Neglect

Evidence of neglect is built up over a period of time and can cover different aspects of parenting. Indicators include:

- Failure by parents or carers to meet the basic essential needs e.g. adequate food/appropriate amount, clothes, warmth, hygiene and medical care
- A child seen to be listless, apathetic and unresponsive with no apparent medical cause
- Failure of child to grow within normal expected pattern, with accompanying weight loss/gain
- Child thrives away from home environment
- Child frequently absent from school
- Child left with adults who are intoxicated or violent
- Child abandoned or left alone for excessive periods

## Forced Marriage (FM)

This is an entirely separate issue from arranged marriage. It is a human rights abuse and falls within the Crown Prosecution Service definition of domestic violence. Young men and women can be at risk in affected ethnic groups. Whistle-blowing may come from younger siblings. Other indicators may be detected by changes in adolescent behaviours. Never attempt to intervene directly as a school or through a third party.

## **APPENDIX Four - Making Sense of the Definition**

### Significant Harm

1) Harm is defined in the 1989 Children Act s.31 (9) as:

1. Ill treatment (including sexual and physical abuse). 2. Impairment of health (physical or mental) or development (physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural) as compared to a similar child.

Significant is hard to determine since it is a question of degree and seriousness and that can only be determined by the court. A court would have to establish which standard of health and development would be reasonable to expect for a child with similar attributes, and then assess the shortfall against that standard before deciding whether the difference amounts to significant harm.

The Adoption and Children Act 2002 has since extended the definition of harm to include the impairment of a child's health or development as a result of witnessing the ill treatment of another person.

(Children Act Guidance and Regulations, Vol 1)

What does the definition of Significant Harm mean for those working with children?

Anyone working with children has a duty to promote their welfare and take steps to ensure their safety

How is significant harm determined?

This is very difficult for us to do. Establishing the severity of ill-treatment may include any of these factors:

1. The degree and the extent of physical harm
2. The duration and frequency of abuse and neglect
3. The extent of premeditation
4. The presence or degree of threat, coercion, sadism and bizarre or unusual elements

What constitutes significant harm?

One, single traumatic event, such as a violent assault, suffocation or poisoning or a compilation of significant events over a period of time, and which may be acute in their impact.

Types of abuse and neglect

1. Abuse: a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. They may be abused by an adult or adults or another child or children.
2. Physical abuse: a form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

3. Emotional abuse: the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone.

4. Sexual abuse: involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

5. Neglect: the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to: provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment); protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Specific Safeguarding issues:

Expert and professional organisations are best placed to provide up-to-date guidance and practical support on specific safeguarding issues. For example NSPCC offers information for schools and colleges on the TES website and also on its own website [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk). Schools and colleges can also access broad government guidance on the issues listed below via the GOV.UK website:

1. Child sexual exploitation (CSE) – see also below
2. Bullying including cyberbullying
3. Domestic violence
4. Drugs
5. Fabricated or induced illness
6. Faith abuse
7. Female genital mutilation (FGM) – see also below

8. Forced marriage
9. Gangs and youth violence
10. gender-based violence/violence against women and girls (VAWG)
11. Mental health
12. Private fostering
13. Radicalisation
14. Sexting
15. Teenage relationship abuse
16. Trafficking
17. Peer on Peer abuse (See appendix 8)

## **APPENDIX Five - Child Sexual Exploitation**

The following list of indicators is not exhaustive or definitive but it does highlight common signs which can assist professionals in identifying children or young people who may be victims of sexual exploitation. Signs include:

- underage sexual activity
- Inappropriate sexual or sexualised behaviour
- Sexually risky behaviour, 'swapping' sex
- Repeat sexually transmitted infections
- In girls, repeat pregnancy, abortions, miscarriage
- Receiving unexplained gifts or gifts from unknown sources
- Having multiple mobile phones and worrying about losing contact via mobile
- Having unaffordable new things (clothes, mobile) or expensive habits (alcohol, drugs)
- Changes in the way they dress
- Going to hotels or other unusual locations to meet friends
- Seen at known places of concern
- Moving around the country, appearing in new towns or cities, not knowing where they are
- Getting in/out of different cars driven by unknown adults
- Having older boyfriends or girlfriends
- Contact with known perpetrators
- Involved in abusive relationships, intimidated and fearful of certain people or situations
- Hanging out with groups of older people, or anti-social groups, or with other vulnerable peers
- Associating with other young people involved in sexual exploitation
- Recruiting other young people to exploitative situations
- Truancy, exclusion, disengagement with school, opting out of education altogether
- Unexplained changes in behaviour or personality (chaotic, aggressive, sexual)
- Mood swings, volatile behaviour, emotional distress
- Self-harming, suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts, overdosing, eating disorders, Drug or alcohol misuse
- Getting involved in crime

- Police involvement, police records
- Involved in gangs, gang fights, gang membership
- Injuries from physical assault, physical restraint, and sexual assault.

Evidence of these factors can manifest themselves in children who are not involved in Sexual exploitation, however multiple concerns from the list would give a strong indication that the child may be at risk of Sexual exploitation.

## **APPENDIX Six - Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**

It is essential that staff are aware of FGM practices and the need to look for signs, symptoms and other indicators of FGM. There is a mandatory duty to report FGM.

What is FGM?

It involves procedures that intentionally alter/injure the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.

4 types of procedure:

Type 1 Clitoridectomy – partial/total removal of clitoris

Type 2 Excision – partial/total removal of clitoris and labia minora

Type 3 Infibulation entrance to vagina is narrowed by repositioning the inner/outer labia

Type 4 all other procedures that may include: pricking, piercing, incising, cauterising and scraping the genital area.

Why is it carried out?

Belief that:

- FGM brings status/respect to the girl – social acceptance for marriage
- Preserves a girl's virginity
- Part of being a woman / rite of passage
- Upholds family honour
- Cleanses and purifies the girl
- Gives a sense of belonging to the community
- Fulfils a religious requirement
- Perpetuates a custom/tradition
- Helps girls be clean / hygienic
- Is cosmetically desirable
- Mistakenly believed to make childbirth easier

Is FGM legal?

FGM is internationally recognised as a violation of human rights of girls and women. It is illegal in most countries including the UK.

Circumstances and occurrences that may point to FGM happening

- Child talking about getting ready for a special ceremony
- Family taking a long trip abroad

- Child's family being from one of the 'at risk' communities for FGM (Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, Sierra Leon, Egypt, Nigeria, Eritrea as well as non-African communities including Yemeni, Afghani, Kurdistan, Indonesia and Pakistan)
- Knowledge that the child's sibling has undergone FGM
- Child talks about going abroad to be 'cut' or to prepare for marriage

Signs that may indicate a child has undergone FGM:

- Prolonged absence from school and other activities
- Behaviour change on return from a holiday abroad, such as being withdrawn and appearing subdued
- Bladder or menstrual problems
- Finding it difficult to sit still and looking uncomfortable
- Complaining about pain between the legs
- Mentioning something somebody did to them that they are not allowed to talk about
- Secretive behaviour, including isolating themselves from the group
- Reluctance to take part in physical activity
- Repeated urinary tract infection
- Disclosure

The 'One Chance' rule

As with Forced Marriage there is the 'One Chance' rule. It is essential that the school takes action without delay.

## **APPENDIX Seven - Safer recruitment**

For most appointments, an enhanced DBS check with barred list information will be appropriate as the majority of staff will be engaging in regulated activity. A person will be considered to be in 'regulated activity' if as a result of their work they:

- will be responsible, on a regular basis, in any setting for the care or supervision of children; or
- will regularly work in a school or college at times when children are on school or college premises (where the person's work requires interaction with children, whether or not the work is paid (unless they are a supervised volunteer), or whether the person is directly employed or employed by a contractor); or
- Will regularly come into contact with children under 18 years of age.

Regulated activity includes:

- A) Teaching, training, instructing, caring for or supervising children if the person is unsupervised, or providing advice or guidance on well-being, or driving a vehicle only for children,
- B) Work for a limited range of establishments (known as 'specified places', which include schools and colleges), with the opportunity for contact with children, but not including work done by supervised volunteers;

Work under (a) or (b) is regulated activity only if done regularly. Some activities are always regulated activities, regardless of their frequency or whether they are supervised or not. This includes:

- Relevant personal care, or health care provided by or provided under the supervision of a health care professional:
- Personal care includes helping a child, for reasons of age, illness or disability, with eating or drinking, or in connection with toileting, washing, bathing and dressing;
- Health care means care for children provided by, or under the direction or supervision of, a regulated health care professional.

In a school or Academy a supervised volunteer who regularly teaches or looks after children is not in regulated activity.

### Types of Check

**Standard:** a check of the Police National Computer (PNC) records of convictions, cautions, reprimands and warnings;

**Enhanced:** a check of the PNC records as above, plus other information held by the police that is considered relevant by the police and enhanced with barred list information, for people working in regulated activity with children. This adds checks of the DBS Children's Barred List to the enhanced check.

## Pre-appointment checks

### All new appointments to regulated activity

When appointing new staff, the school will:

- Verify a candidate's identity, preferably from current photographic ID and proof of address except where, for exceptional reasons, none is available;
- Obtain a certificate for an enhanced DBS check with a barred list information where the person will be engaging in regulated activity;
- Obtain a separate barred list check if an individual will start work in regulated activity before the DBS certificate is available;
- check that a candidate to be employed as a teacher is not subject to a prohibition order issued by the Secretary of State, using the Employer Access Online service;
- Verify the candidate's mental and physical fitness to carry out their work responsibilities. A job applicant can be asked relevant questions about disability and health in order to establish whether they have the physical and mental capacity for the specific role
- Verify the person's right to work in the UK. If there is uncertainty about whether an individual needs permission to work in the UK, then prospective employers, or volunteer managers, should follow advice on the GOV.UK website;
- If the person has lived or worked outside the UK, make any further checks the school or college consider appropriate (see relevant sections below); and
- Verify professional qualifications, as appropriate.
- Obtain at least two satisfactory references (one must be from last employer or education provider)

A DBS certificate must be obtained from the candidate before or as soon as practicable after appointment. Alternatively, if the applicant has subscribed to it and gives permission, the school may undertake an online update check through the DBS Update Service.

#### NOTE:

There is no requirement to obtain an enhanced DBS check if, in the three months prior to beginning work in their new appointment, the applicant has worked:

- In a school in England in a post which brought them into regular contact with children or in any post in a school since 12 May 2006; or
- In a college in England in a position which involved the provision of education and regularly caring for, training, supervising or being in sole charge of children or young people under the age of 18.

But a school or college may request an enhanced DBS check with barred list information should there be concerns and bearing in mind the duty schools and colleges are under not to allow a barred person to work in

For further information please consult with the Safeguarding manager.

## Single central record

Schools and colleges must keep a single central record, referred to in the regulations as the register. The single central record must cover the following people:

- all staff (including supply staff) who work at the school: in colleges, this means those providing education to children;
- all others who work in regular contact with children in the school or college, including volunteers; and
- For independent schools, including academies and free schools, all members of the proprietor body.

Generally, the information to be recorded on these individuals is whether or not the following checks have been carried out or certificates obtained, and the date on which the checks were completed:

- an identity check;
- a barred list check;
- an enhanced DBS check;
- a prohibition from teaching check;
- further checks on people living or working outside the UK;
- a check of professional qualifications; and
- A check to establish the person's right to work in the United Kingdom.

## Agency and third-party staff

Schools and colleges must obtain written notification from any agency, or third-party organisation, they use that the organisation has carried out the checks on an individual who will be working at the school or college that the school or college would otherwise perform. This must include, as necessary, a barred list check, prior to appointing that individual. They must also check that the person presenting themselves for work is the same person on whom the checks have been made.

## Trainee/student teachers

Where applicants for initial teacher training are salaried by the school or college, the school or college must ensure that all necessary checks are carried out. As trainee teachers can undertake regulated activity, sometimes unsupervised, an enhanced DBS certificate and barred list check must be obtained. Where trainee teachers are fee-funded it is the responsibility of the initial teacher training provider to carry out the necessary

NOTE:

Schools and colleges have a legal duty to refer to the DBS anyone who has harmed, or poses a risk of harm, to a child, or if there is reason to believe the member of staff has committed one of a number of listed offences, and who has been removed from working (paid or unpaid) in regulated activity, or would have been removed had they not left.

#### Volunteers

Under no circumstances should a volunteer in respect of whom no checks have been obtained be left unsupervised or allowed to work in regulated activity.

For new volunteers in regulated activity who will regularly teach or look after children on an unsupervised basis or provide personal care on a one-off basis schools and colleges must obtain an enhanced DBS certificate with barred list check.

For new volunteers not in regulated activity schools and colleges should obtain an enhanced DBS certificate.

For existing volunteers who provide personal care, the school or college should consider obtaining an enhanced DBS certificate with barred list check.

For other existing volunteers who are unsupervised and continuing with their current duties, unless there is cause for concern the school or college should not request a DBS check with barred list check because the volunteer should already have been checked.

For existing volunteers not in regulated activity there is no requirement to request an enhanced DBS check. However the school or college may choose to request one as they judge necessary but may not request a check of the barred list.

If a volunteer is not engaging in regulated activity, the school or college should undertake a risk assessment and use their professional judgement and experience when deciding whether to seek an enhanced DBS check. They should consider:

- the nature of the work with children;
- what the establishment knows about the volunteer, including formal or informal information offered by staff, parents and other volunteers;
- whether the volunteer has other employment or undertakes voluntary activities where referees can advise on suitability; and
- Whether the role is eligible for an enhanced DBS check.

#### School and college governors

School and college governors who are volunteers should be treated on the same basis as other volunteers, that is, an enhanced DBS check with barred list check should only be requested if the governor will be engaged in regulated activity. Governing bodies and proprietors can request an enhanced DBS check without a barred list check on an individual as part of the appointment process for governors.

## APPENDIX Eight – Peer on Peer Abuse

### Peer on Peer Abuse Guidance.

#### Introduction

Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2016 states that '*Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure their child protection policy includes procedures to minimise the risk of peer on peer abuse and sets out how allegations of peer on peer abuse will be investigated and dealt with*' (page 19), also states it is most important to ensure opportunities of seeking the voice of the child are heard, '*Governing bodies, proprietors and school or college leaders should ensure the child's wishes and feelings are taken into account when determining what action to take and what services to provide. Systems should be in place for children to express their views and give feedback. Ultimately, any system and processes should operate with the **best** interests of the child at their heart.*

At The Link School we continue to ensure that any form of abuse or harmful behaviour is dealt with immediately and consistently to reduce the extent of harm to the young person, with full consideration to impact on that individual child's emotional and mental health and well-being.

#### Purpose and Aim

Children and young people may be harmful to one another in a number of ways which would be classified as peer on peer abuse. The purpose of this guidance is to explore the many forms of peer on peer abuse and include a planned and supportive response to the issues.

The following policies should be read in conjunction with this guidance:

Anti-Bullying Policy

Online Safety Policy

#### Introduction to abuse and harmful behaviour

Abusive behaviour can happen to pupils in schools and settings and it is necessary to consider what abuse is and looks like, how it can be managed and what appropriate support and intervention can be put in place to meet the needs of the individual and what preventative strategies may be put in place to reduce further risk of harm.

Abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed off as 'banter' or 'part of growing up'. Equally, abuse issues can sometimes be gender specific e.g. girls being sexually touched/assaulted and boys being subject to initiation/hazing type violence (KCSIE, 2016). It is important to consider the forms abuse may take and the subsequent actions required.

#### Types of abuse

There are many forms of abuse that may occur between peers and this list is not exhaustive. Each form of abuse or prejudiced behaviour is described in detail followed by advice and support on actions to be taken.

Physical abuse e.g. (biting, hitting, kicking, hair pulling etc.)

Physical abuse may include, hitting, kicking, nipping, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm to another person. There may be many reasons why a child harms another and it is important to understand why a young person has engaged in such behaviour, including accidentally before considering the action or punishment to be undertaken.

Sexually harmful behaviour/sexual abuse e.g. (inappropriate sexual language, touching, sexual assault etc.)

Sexually harmful behaviour from young people is not always contrived or with the intent to harm others. There may be many reasons why a young person engages in sexually harmful behaviour and it may be just as distressing to the young person who instigates it as well as the young person it is intended towards. Sexually harmful behaviour may range from inappropriate sexual language, inappropriate role play, to sexually touching another or sexual assault/abuse.

Bullying (physical, name calling, homophobic etc.)

(See the Anti Bullying Policy for the distinction between rude/mean behaviour and bullying)

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behaviour among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Both young people who are bullied and who bully others may have serious, lasting problems.

In order to be considered bullying, the behaviour must be aggressive and include:

- An Imbalance of Power: Young people who bully use their power—such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity—to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.
- Repetition: Bullying behaviours happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once.

Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumours, attacking someone physically or verbally or for a particular reason e.g. size, hair colour, gender, sexual orientation, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.

Cyber bullying

Cyberbullying is the use of phones, instant messaging, e-mail, chat rooms or social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter to harass threaten or intimidate someone for the same reasons as stated above.

It is important to state that cyber bullying can very easily fall into criminal behaviour under the Malicious Communications Act 1988 under section 1 which states that electronic communications which are indecent or grossly offensive, convey a threat or false information or demonstrate that there is an intention to cause distress or anxiety to the victim would be deemed to be criminal. This is also supported by the Communications Act 2003, Section 127 which states that electronic communications which are grossly offensive or indecent, obscene or menacing, or false, used again for the purpose of causing annoyance, inconvenience or needless anxiety to another could also be deemed to be criminal behaviour.

If the behaviour involves the use of taking or distributing indecent images of young people under the age of 18 then this is also a criminal offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003. Outside of the immediate support young people may require in these instances, the school will have no choice but to involve the police to investigate these situations.

### Sexting

Sexting is when someone sends or receives a sexually explicit text, image or video. This includes sending 'nude pics', 'rude pics' or 'nude selfies'. Pressuring someone into sending a nude picture can happen in any relationship and to anyone, whatever their age, gender or sexual preference.

However, once the image is taken and sent, the sender has lost control of the image and these images could end up anywhere. By having in their possession, or distributing, indecent images of a person under 18 on to someone else, young people are not even aware that they could be breaking the law as stated as these are offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

### Initiation/Hazing

Hazing is a form of initiation ceremony which is used to induct newcomers into an organisation such as a private school, sports team etc. There are a number of different forms, from relatively mild rituals to severe and sometimes violent ceremonies.

The idea behind this practice is that it welcomes newcomers by subjecting them to a series of trials which promote a bond between them. After the hazing is over, the newcomers also have something in common with older members of the organisation, because they all experienced it as part of a rite of passage. Many rituals involve humiliation, embarrassment, abuse, and harassment.

### Prejudiced Behaviour

The term prejudice-related bullying refers to a range of hurtful behaviour, physical or emotional or both, which causes someone to feel powerless, worthless, excluded or marginalised, and which is connected with prejudices around belonging, identity and equality in wider society – in particular, prejudices to do with disabilities and special educational needs, ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds, gender, home life, (for example in relation to issues of care, parental occupation, poverty and social class) and sexual identity (homosexual, bisexual, transsexual).

## Teenage relationship abuse

Teenage relationship abuse is defined as a pattern of actual or threatened acts of physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse, perpetrated by an adolescent (between the ages of 13 and 18) against a current or former partner. Abuse may include insults, coercion, social sabotage, sexual harassment, threats and/or acts of physical or sexual abuse. The abusive teen uses this pattern of violent and coercive behaviour, in a heterosexual or same gender relationship, in order to gain power and maintain control over the partner.

### **Expected action taken from all staff**

Although the type of abuse may have a varying effect on the victim and initiator of the harm, these simple steps can help clarify the situation and establish the facts before deciding the consequences for those involved in perpetrating harm.

It is important to deal with a situation of peer abuse immediately and sensitively. It is necessary to gather the information as soon as possible to get the true facts around what has occurred as soon after the child(ren) may have forgotten. It is equally important to deal with it sensitively and think about the language used and the impact of that language on both the children and the parents when they become involved. For example; do not use the word perpetrator, this can quickly create a 'blame' culture and leave a child labelled.

In all cases of peer on peer abuse it is necessary that all staff are proactive in dealing with such incidents, talking to young people and instigating immediate support in a calm and consistent manner. Staff should not be prejudiced, judgemental, dismissive or irresponsible in dealing with such sensitive matters. Report any concerns immediately to the Safeguarding leads at school.

### **Actions by the Safeguarding Team**

The Designated lead should speak to all the young people involved separately, gain a statement of facts from them and use **consistent language** and **open questions** for each account. The easiest way to do this is not to have a line of questioning but to ask the young people to tell you what happened. Only interrupt the young person from this to gain clarity with open questions, 'where, when, why, who'. (What happened? Who observed the incident? What was seen? What was heard? Did anyone intervene?)

### **Consider the Intent (begin to Risk Assess)**

Has this been a deliberate or contrived situation for a young person to be able to harm another?

### **Decide on your next course of action**

If from the information gathered it is believed any young person to be at risk of significant harm a safeguarding referral to social care should be made immediately (where a crime has been committed the police should be involved also).

If social care and the police intend to pursue this further they may ask to interview the young people in school or they may ask for parents to come to school to be spoken to also. It is important to be prepared for every situation and the potential time it may take.

It may also be that social care feel that it does not meet their criteria in which case school can challenge that decision, with that individual or their line manager.

## **Informing parents**

If, once appropriate advice has been sought from police/social care school have agreement to inform parents or have been allocated that role from the other services involved then school need to inform the parents as soon as possible. If services are not going to be involved then equally, this information may need to be shared with parents. If a young person is deemed to be 'Gillick Competent' following the 'Fraser' guidelines and does not wish school to share the information with parents, then the school must consider this especially for example if the young person is pregnant and this is why they are being bullied (unless this has occurred through significant harm in which case a criminal/social care case is likely or the young person is under the age of 13).

In circumstances where the risk of harm to the child is evident then the school should encourage the young person to share the information with their parent or even with them (they may be scared to tell parents that they are being harmed in any way). Where school can evidence they are acting in the best interests of the young person they would not be criticised, however this would be the case if they actively breached the rights and choices of the young person.

The best way to inform parents is face to face. Although this may be time consuming, the nature of the incident and the type of harm/abuse a young person may be suffering can cause fear and anxiety to parents whether their child is the child who was harmed or who harmed another.

### **Points to consider:**

#### **What is the age of the children involved?**

How old are the young people involved in the incident and is there any age difference between those involved? (In relation to sexual exploration, children under the age of 5, in particular 1-4 year olds who are learning toileting skills may show a particular interest in exploration at around this stage. This, however should not be overlooked if other issues arise (see following)

#### **Where did the incident or incidents take place?**

Was the incident in an open, visible place to others? If so was it observed? If not, is more supervision required within this particular area?

#### **What was the explanation by all children involved of what occurred?**

Can each of the young people give the same explanation of the incident and also what is the effect on the young people involved? Is the incident seen to be bullying for example, in which case regular and repetitive? Is the version of one young person different from another and why?

#### **What is each of the children's own understanding of what occurred?**

Do the young people know/understand what they are doing? E.g. do they have knowledge of body parts, of privacy and that it is inappropriate to touch? Is the young person's explanation in relation to something they may have heard or been learning about that has prompted the behaviour? Is the behaviour deliberate and contrived? Does the young person have understanding of the impact of their behaviour on the other person?

In dealing with an incident of this nature the answers are not always clear cut. If you are concerned or unsure as to whether or not there is any risk involved, please seek advice from Children's Services Social Care.

### **Repetition**

Has the behaviour been repeated to an individual on more than one occasion? In the same way it must be considered has the behaviour persisted to an individual after the issue has already been discussed or dealt with and appropriately resolved?

### **Next Steps**

Once the outcome of the incident(s) has been established it is necessary to ensure future incidents of abuse do not occur again and consider the support and intervention required for those involved.

### **For the young person who has been harmed**

What support they require depends on the individual young person. It may be that they wish to seek counselling or one to one support via a mentor. It may also be that they feel able to deal with the incident(s) on their own or with support of family and friends. In which case it is necessary that this young person continues to be monitored and offered support should they require it in the future. If the incidents are of a bullying nature, the young person may need support in improving peer groups/relationships with other young people or some restorative justice work with all those involved may be required.

Other interventions that could be considered may target a whole class or year group for example a speaker on cyber bullying, relationship abuse etc. It may be that through the continued curriculum of PHSE and SMSC that certain issues can be discussed and debated more frequently.

If the young person feels particularly vulnerable it may be that a risk assessment can be put in place for them whilst in school so that they have someone named that they can talk to, support strategies for managing future issues and identified services to offer additional support.

### **For the young person who has displayed harmful behaviour**

In this circumstance it is important to find out why the young person has behaved in such a way. It may be that the young person is experiencing their own difficulties and may even have been harmed themselves in a similar way. In such cases support such as one to one mentoring or counselling may also be necessary. Particular support from identified services may be necessary through a CAF/strengthening families/early help referral and the young person may require additional support from family members.

Once the support required to meet the individual needs of the young person has been met, it is important that young person receives a consequence for their behaviour. This may be in the form of restorative justice e.g. making amends with the young person they have targeted if this has been some form of bullying. In the cases of sexually harmful behaviour it may be a requirement for the young person to engage in one to one work with a particular service or agency (if a crime has been committed this may be through the police or youth offending service). If there is any form of criminal investigation ongoing it may be that this young

person cannot be educated on site until the investigation has concluded. In which case, the young person will need to be provided with appropriate support and education whilst off site.

Even following the conclusion of any investigation the behaviour that the young person has displayed may continue to pose a risk to others in which case an individual risk assessment may be required. This should be completed via a multi-agency response to ensure that the needs of the young person and the risks towards others are measured by all of those agencies involved including the young person and their parents. This may mean additional supervision of the young person or protective strategies if the young person feels at risk of engaging in further inappropriate or harmful behaviour.

The school may also choose a punishment as a consequence such as exclusion or internal exclusion/inclusion/seclusion for a period of time to allow the young person to reflect on their behaviour.

### **After care**

It is important that following the incident the young people involved continue to feel supported and receive help even if they have stated that they are managing the incident. Sometimes the feelings of remorse, regret or unhappiness may occur at a much later stage than the incident. It is important to ensure that the young people do not engage in any further harmful behaviour either towards someone else or to themselves as a way of coping (e.g. self-harm). In which case, regular reviews with the young people following the incident(s) are imperative.