

St Mary's Secret Garden
50 Pearson Street, London E2 8EL

Our policy and procedure for safeguarding children from possible risk of abuse

This policy applies to all staff, including the board of trustees, paid staff, volunteers and sessional workers, sessional staff, and anyone working on behalf of St Mary's Secret Garden Limited.

The purpose of this policy:

- to protect children and young people who receive St Mary's Secret Garden's services; this includes the children of adults who use our services;
- to provide staff and volunteers with the overarching principles that guide our approach to child protection.

St Mary's Secret Garden believes that a child or young person should never experience abuse of any kind. We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people and to keep them safe. We are committed to practice in a way that protects them.

St Mary's Secret Garden uses the NSPCC's guide to identifying different types and signs of abuse and exploitation that children and young people may experience – please see appendix 1 for these descriptors.

Legal framework

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of law and guidance that seeks to protect children, namely:

- Children Act 1989
- United Convention of the Rights of the Child 1991
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Sexual offences Act 2003
- Children Act 2004
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Children and families Act 2014
- Special educational needs and disability (SEND) code of practice: 0 to 25 years – Statutory guidance for organisations which work with and support children and young people who have special educational needs or disabilities; HM Government 2014

We recognise that:

- the welfare of the child is paramount, as enshrined in the Children Act 1989;

- all children, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse;
- some children are additionally at risk because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues;
- working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.

We will seek to keep children and young people safe by:

- valuing them, listening to and respecting them;
- appointing a Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) for children and young people, and a lead board member, who will also act as deputy DSO.
- adopting child protection practices through procedures and a code of conduct for staff and volunteers;
- developing and implementing an effective e-safety policy and related procedures, as appropriate;
- providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training and quality assurance measures;
- recruiting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made – these checks include x2 independent references, enhanced Disclosure and Barring checks for working with children and adults at risk and a 3 month probationary period. Please see our additional safer recruitment policy.
- recording and storing information professionally and securely, and sharing information about safeguarding and good practice with children, parents, staff and volunteers;
- using our safeguarding procedures to share concerns and relevant information with agencies who need to know, and involving parents and children appropriately;
- maintaining an anti-bullying environment and ensuring that we have a policy and procedure to help us deal effectively with any bullying that does arise;
- ensuring that we have effective complaints and whistleblowing measures in place; please also view our whistleblowing policy and complaints / grievance procedure.
- ensuring that we provide a safe physical environment for children, young people, staff and volunteers, by applying health and safety measures in accordance with the law and regulatory guidance.

Contacts

Designated Safeguarding Officers (DSO)	Paula Yassine: 07540 719 277 paula@stmarysgarden.org.uk Siobhan MacMahon siobhan@stmarysgarden.org.uk 02077392965
Lead Board Member / Deputy DSO	TBC
Hackney MASH Hackney (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) Children's and Families Service	E-mail: MASH@hackney.gov.uk Telephone: 020 8356 5500 Fax: 0208 356 5516/5517 Out of hours: 0208 356 2710 Website: https://hackney.gov.uk/child-protection
NSPCC Helpline	0808 800 5000 for adults seeking advice 0800 1111 Childline Minicom textphone: 0800 056 0566 Email: help@nspcc.org.uk
CEOP www.ceop.police.uk	

We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually.

This policy was last reviewed on 22nd May 2023

Signed [safeguarding lead]:



Appendix 1

Form for reporting concerns about a child**Details of child and parents/carers**

Name of child		
Gender	Age	Date of birth
Ethnicity	Language	Additional needs
Name(s) of parent(s)/carer(s)		
Child's home address and address(es) of parents (if different from child's)		

Your details

Your name	Your position	Date and time of incident (if applicable)
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Report

<p>Are you reporting your own concerns or responding to concerns raised by someone else? (delete as appropriate)</p> <p>Reporting own concerns</p> <p>Responding to concerns raised by someone else</p>
<p>If you are responding to concerns raised by someone else, please provide their name and position within the organisation</p>
<p>Please provide details of the incident or concerns you have, including times, dates, description of any injuries, whether information is first hand or the account of others, including any other relevant details</p>
<p>The child's account/perspective</p>
<p>Please provide details of anyone alleged to have caused the incident or to be the source of any concerns</p>
<p>Please provide details of anyone who has witnessed the incident or who shares the concerns</p>
<p>Please note: concerns should be discussed with the family unless</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The view is that a family member might be responsible for abusing the child • Someone may be put in danger by the parents being informed • Informing the family might interfere with a criminal investigation <p>If any of these circumstances apply, consult with the local authority children's social care department to decide whether or not discussions with the family should take place.</p>

Have you spoken to the child's parent/carers? If so, please provide details of what was said. If not, please state the reason for this.

Are you aware of any previous incidents or concerns relating to this child and of any current risk management/support plan? If so, please provide details.

Summary of discussion with supervisor/manager

Appendix 2

Our Photography Policy

We will avoid using children's names (first name or surname). If a child is named we will not use his or her photograph.

We will use a parental permission form to obtain consent for a child to be photographed/videoed (see overleaf).

We will obtain the child's permission to use their image.

We will only use images of children in suitable dress to reduce the risk of inappropriate use.

We will address the use of any images of children on our website (i.e. they will not be accompanied obtain any personal information).

We will have written expectations of professional photographers or the press who are invited to an event, making clear our expectations of them in relation to child protection.

We will not allow photographers unsupervised access to children.

We will not approve any photography sessions outside the relevant event or at a child's home.

Consent form for the use of photographs and video

St Mary's Secret Garden recognises the need to ensure the welfare and safety of all children.

In accordance with our child protection policy we will not permit photographs, video or other images of children to be taken without the consent of the parents/carers and children.

We will take all steps to ensure these images are used solely for the purposes they are intended. If you become aware that these images are being used inappropriately you should inform St Mary's Secret Garden immediately.

I [parent/carer] consent to St Mary's Secret Garden photographing or videoing [name of child]

Date

.....
.....

I [name of child] consent to St Mary's Secret Garden photographing or videoing my involvement in [name of event]

Date

.....
.....

St Mary's Secret Garden Safer Recruitment Checklist

Safer recruitment Checklist:	Checked	Any Issues Arising	Issues resolved
Clear job description in place This states: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The main duties of the post; • The extent of contact/responsibility for children and young people; • The individual's responsibility for promoting and safeguarding the welfare of the children/young people. 			
Personal specification in place This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The essential and desirable qualifications and experience; • Other requirements needed to perform the role in relation to working with children, young people and adults at risk; • The competencies and qualities that the successful candidate should be able to demonstrate. 			
Post advertised as widely as possible			
Advert states: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to safeguarding children and adults as needed; • The need for the successful applicant to undertake an enhanced criminal record check; • That proof of identity will be required. 			
Final date stated for applications and interview date if known			
Advert states that referees will be contacted prior to interview			
Standard application form used obtain a common set of core data It seeks to obtain:			

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying details of the applicant including current and former names, current address and National Insurance Number; • To comply with the Equality Act 2010, the date of birth should not be included on the main application form, but added to a diversity monitoring form, which will be retained by and not made available to those involved in the short-listing process; • A statement of any academic and/ or vocational qualifications with details of awarding body and date of award; • A full history in chronological order since leaving secondary education, including periods of any post-secondary education/training and part-time and voluntary work as well as full time employment, with start dates, explanations for periods not in employment or education/training and reasons for leaving employment; • Details of referees. One referee should be the applicant's current or most recent employer/line manager, not a colleague. Normally two referees should be sufficient; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Where an applicant is not currently working with children or adults at risk, but has done so in the past, it is important that a reference is also obtained from the employer by whom the person was most recently employed in work with children or adults at risk in addition to the current or most recent employer; ➤ References are not accepted from relatives or friends. • A statement of the skills and abilities, and competencies/experience that the applicant believes are relevant to his/her/their suitability for the post and how s/he/they meets the person specification; • There is an explanation that the post is exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974; 			
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information is requested about any previous - including spent - convictions, cautions, reprimands, warnings or bind-overs. 			
<p>Information pack sent to applicants</p> <p>The pack includes a copy of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The application form, and explanatory notes about completing the form; The job description and person specification; Relevant information about the organisation and the recruitment process; The organisation's Safeguarding and Child and adults at risk Protection Policy (as appropriate); A statement of the terms and conditions relating to the post. 			
Permission sought to obtain references prior to interview			
Shortlisting is undertaken by a minimum of two people			
At least one member of the panel has undertaken safe recruitment and selection training			
The same selection panel both short list and interview the candidate			
Applications are reviewed against essential and desirable criteria			
Information is checked for consistency and discrepancies			
Gaps in employment/training or a history of repeated changes of employment are identified and noted so that they are taken up as part of the consideration of whether to short list the applicant, or to ask the applicant for further explanation at interview			
Incomplete applications are not accepted			
Referees contacted for all shortlisted candidates before interview			
Consideration given to what assessment methods as well as interviews may be used			

Interview panel established of a minimum of two people			
All interviews are face to face meetings			
Candidates asked at interview about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • any anomalies, discrepancies identified on their application form; • any gaps in their employment history; • criminal convictions and/or concerns/allegations/investigations; • their motivation for working with children or adults at risk (as appropriate); • their understanding of the roles safeguarding responsibilities; • any issues arising from their references. 			
List of questions prepared that assess the merits of each candidate against the job description and person specification			
Clear notes are recorded of the candidates' responses at interview and stored securely			
The interview stresses that the identity of the successful candidate will be checked thoroughly and, that where a Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check is appropriate, prior to appointment there will be a requirement to complete an application for a Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service disclosure			
All candidates bring with them documentary evidence of their right to work in the UK and their identity. Evidence should be as prescribed by UK Visas and Immigration and the Disclosure and Barring Service, and can include a current driving licence or passport including a photograph, or a full birth certificate, and a document such as a utility bill or financial statement that shows the candidate's current name and address (please note that these latter two are time-limited and must be no more than 3 months old), and where appropriate change of name documentation. Some form of photographic ID is seen			
Candidates bring documents confirming any educational and professional qualification(s). If			

this is not possible, written confirmation is obtained from the awarding body			
A copy of the documents used to verify the successful candidate's identity and qualifications are kept for the personnel file			
Candidates are informed that any offers of employment are conditional and dependant on checks			
Professional references for the preferred candidate taken up if not already done prior to interview. Once received it is scrutinised and any concerns resolved satisfactorily before the person's appointment is confirmed			
A copy of the job description and person specification is included with all reference requests			
References include one from the candidate's current employer from their line manager or HR department			
References obtained from a previous employer involving children or adults at risk if the candidate is not currently working in children or adults at risk to confirm details of their employment and reason(s) for leaving			
Character references (from friends or relatives) are not accepted			
'Open-ended'/'To whom it may concern' references are not accepted			
References are sought on all short listed candidates, including internal ones			
Checks are made that any written references are from the named referee			
Reference proforma in place to obtain objective verifiable information			
Requests for references ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The referee's relationship with the candidate, e.g. did they have a working relationship and how long has the referee known the candidate; How they have demonstrated that they meet the person specification; 			

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether the referee is satisfied that the person has the ability and is suitable to undertake the job; • Whether the applicant has been the subject of any disciplinary sanctions and whether the application has had any allegations made against them or concerns raised, which relate either to the safety and welfare of, or the applicants behaviour towards, children, young people or adults at risk. Details about the outcome of any such concern is sought; • Whether the referee is satisfied that the candidate is suitable to work with children/young people/Adults at Risk. If not, for details of the referee's concerns and the reason why the person might be unsuitable; • Confirmation of details of the applicant's current post, salary and sickness record; • Specific verifiable comments about the applicant's performance history and conduct. <p>Requests remind the referee that they have a responsibility to ensure that the reference is accurate and that relevant factual content of the reference may be discussed with the applicant.</p>			
<p>On receipt of references:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are checked to ensure all questions have been answered satisfactorily; • Prior to the confirmation of an appointment, referees are telephoned to confirm their views on the candidate and to ensure information provided by the candidate is accurate; • Any information about past disciplinary action or allegations is considered in the circumstances of the individual case. Cases in which an issue was satisfactorily resolved some time ago or an allegation determined to be unfounded or did not require formal disciplinary sanctions, and in which no further issues have been raised, are less likely to cause concern than more serious or recent concerns, 			

<p>or issues that were not resolved satisfactorily. A history of repeated concerns or allegations over time should give cause for concern.</p>			
<p>An offer of appointment to the successful candidate is conditional upon:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receipt of at least two satisfactory written references, where possible confirmed by telephone; • Verification of the candidate's identity; • A satisfactory Disclosure and Barring Service Disclosure at the appropriate level (unless the Disclosure and Barring Service Update Service applies); • Evidence of permission to work for those who are not nationals of a European Economic Area (EEA) country; • Verification of the candidate's medical fitness; • Verification of qualifications; • Verification of successful completion of statutory induction / probationary period where appropriate. 			
<p>All checks are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmed in writing; • Documented and retained on the personnel file (subject to restrictions on the retention of information imposed by Disclosure and Barring Service regulations); • Followed up where they are unsatisfactory or where there are discrepancies in the information provided; • Recorded on the DBS log detailing the date when the disclosure was obtained, by whom, level of disclosure and unique reference number. 			
<p>Risk assessment procedures in place to determine whether or not the individual is suitable to</p>			

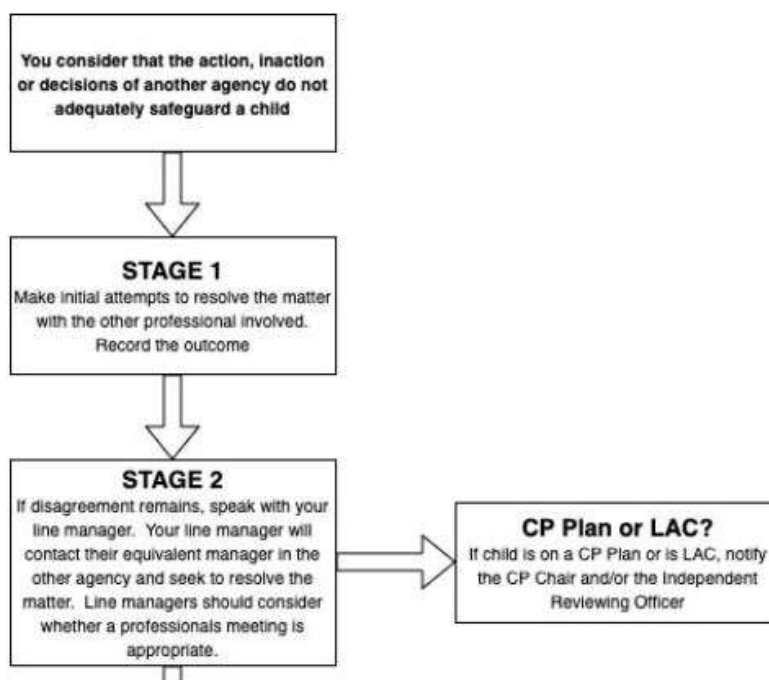
<p>undertake the role where a DBS disclosure trace is returned giving consideration to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The nature of the appointment; • The nature of the offence; • The age at which the offence took place; • The frequency of the offence. <p>Where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The candidate is found to be on the Barred Lists, or the Disclosure and Barring Service Disclosure shows they have been disqualified from working with children by a Court; • The applicant has provided false information in, or in support of, their application; • There are serious concerns about an applicant's suitability to work with children. <p>These facts are reported to the police and/or Disclosure and Barring Service (if they are not already aware). Anyone who is barred from work with children is committing an offence if they apply for, offer to do, accept or do any work which constitutes Regulated Activity. It is also an offence for an employer knowingly to offer work in a regulated position, or to procure work in a regulated position for an individual who is disqualified from working with children, or fail to remove such an individual from such work.</p>			
<p>In relation to each member of staff appointed a record is kept to show:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written references obtained and confirmed by telephone; • Gaps in employment history checked; • A satisfactory Disclosure and Barring Service /Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service certificate obtained, with unique reference number and date; • Reasons/decision to appoint despite criminal convictions (i.e. a Risk Assessment); 			

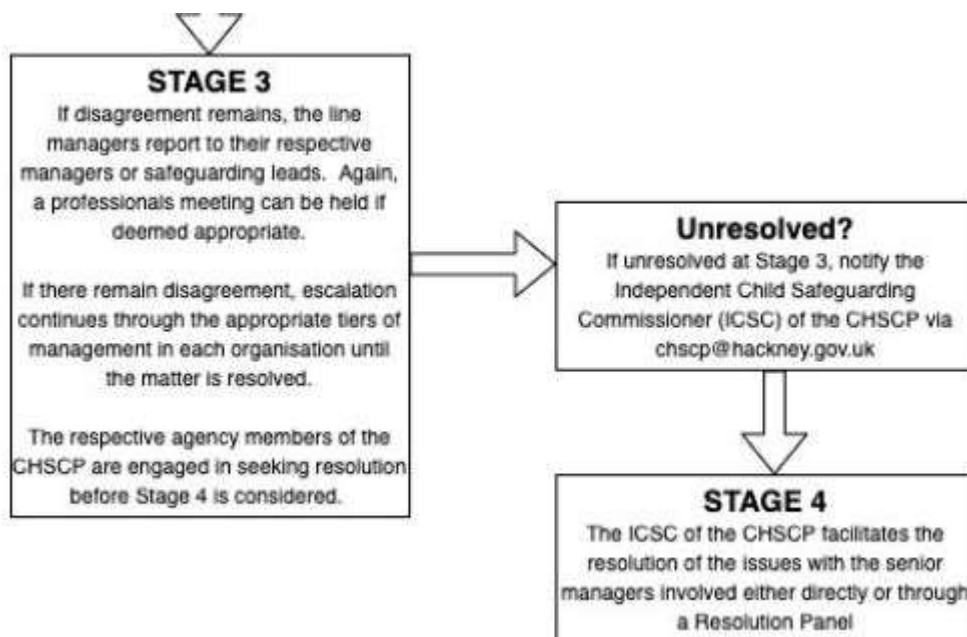
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of proof of identity (this will have been provided for the Disclosure and Barring Service check); • Evidence of qualifications; • Details of registration with appropriate professional body; • Confirmation of right to work in UK; • Record of interview questions and answers. <p>Records are signed and dated by appointing manager/chair of the interview panel</p>			
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Escalation procedure

Ensuring the safeguarding of our children and at risk adults is paramount and the best way that this is achieved is through partnership working between all staff and organisations involved in the support of these at risk groups.

St Mary's Secret Garden works within the framework of the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership (<https://www.chscp.org.uk/child-protection-procedures>) and use their and the Pan London protocols of ensuring Children's safety. Therefore, our escalation policy is aligned with theirs. Below is the simple flowchart procedure we also follow.





Appendix 1

NSPCC Definitions and signs of child abuse

Guidance for professionals who work with children on how to recognise the signs of child abuse

July 2020

What is child abuse?

Child abuse happens when a person harms a child. It can be physical, sexual or emotional, but can also involve neglect.

Children may be abused by:

- family members
- friends
- people working or volunteering in organisational or community settings • people they know

- strangers.

General signs of abuse

Children experiencing abuse often experience more than one type of abuse over a period of time.

Children who experience abuse may be afraid to tell anybody about the abuse. They may struggle with feelings of guilt, shame or confusion – particularly if the abuser is a parent, caregiver or other close family member or friend.

Many of the signs that a child is being abused are the same regardless of the type of abuse. Anyone working with children or young people needs to be able to recognise the signs. These include a child:

- being afraid of particular places or making excuses to avoid particular people
- knowing about or being involved in 'adult issues' which are inappropriate for their age or stage of development, for example alcohol, drugs and/or sexual behaviour
- having angry outbursts or behaving aggressively towards others
- becoming withdrawn or appearing anxious, clingy or depressed
- self-harming or having thoughts about suicide
- showing changes in eating habits or developing eating disorders
- regularly experiencing nightmares or sleep problems
- regularly wetting the bed or soiling their clothes
- running away or regularly going missing from home or care
- not receiving adequate medical attention after injuries.

These signs do not necessarily mean that a child is being abused. There may well be other reasons for changes in a child's behaviour such as a bereavement or relationship problems between parents or carers. If you have any concerns about a child's wellbeing, you should report them following your organisation's safeguarding and child protection procedures.

➤ [Find out more about recognising and responding to abuse](#)

Physical abuse

What is physical abuse?

Physical abuse happens when a child is deliberately hurt, causing physical harm. It can involve hitting, kicking, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or suffocating.

It's also physical abuse if a parent or carer makes up or causes the symptoms of illness in children. For example, they may give them medicine they don't need, making them unwell. This is known as fabricated or induced illness (FII).

Spotting the signs of physical abuse

All children have trips, falls and accidents which may cause cuts, bumps and bruises. These injuries tend to affect bony areas of their body such as elbows, knees and shins and are not usually a cause for concern.

Injuries that are more likely to indicate physical abuse include:

Bruising

- bruises on babies who are not yet crawling or walking
- bruises on the cheeks, ears, palms, arms and feet
- bruises on the back, buttocks, tummy, hips and backs of legs
- multiple bruises in clusters, usually on the upper arms or outer thighs
- bruising which looks like it has been caused by fingers, a hand or an object, like a belt or shoe
- large oval-shaped bite marks.

Burns or scalds

- any burns which have a clear shape of an object, for example cigarette burns
- burns to the backs of hands, feet, legs, genitals or buttocks.

Other signs of physical abuse include multiple injuries (such as bruising, fractures) inflicted at different times.

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. It's also concerning if there is a delay in seeking medical help for a child who has been injured.

➤ [Find out more about physical abuse](#)

Neglect

What is neglect?

Neglect is not meeting a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs. This can result in serious damage to their health and development. Neglect may involve a parent or carer not:

- providing adequate food, clothing or shelter
- supervising a child or keeping them safe from harm or danger (including leaving them with unsuitable carers)
- making sure the child receives appropriate health and/or dental care
- making sure the child receives a suitable education
- meeting the child's basic emotional needs – this is known as emotional neglect.

Neglect is the most common type of child abuse. It often happens at the same time as other types of abuse.

Spotting the signs of neglect

Neglect can be difficult to identify. Isolated signs may not mean that a child is suffering neglect, but multiple and persistent signs over time could indicate a serious problem.

Some of these signs include:

- children who appear hungry - they may not have lunch money or even try to steal food
- children who appear dirty or smelly
- children whose clothes are inadequate for the weather conditions
- children who are left alone or unsupervised for long periods or at a young age
- children who have untreated injuries, health or dental problems
- children with poor language, communication or social skills for their stage of development
- children who live in an unsuitable home environment.

➤ [Find out more about neglect](#)

Sexual abuse

What is sexual abuse?

Sexual abuse is forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities. It doesn't necessarily involve violence and the child may not be aware that what is happening is abuse.

Child sexual abuse can involve contact abuse and non-contact abuse.

Contact abuse happens when the abuser makes physical contact with the child. It includes:

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

Non-contact abuse involves non-touching activities. It can happen online or in person and includes:

- encouraging or forcing a child to watch or hear sexual acts
- making a child masturbate while others watch

- not taking proper measures to prevent a child being exposed to sexual activities by others
- 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 online sexual grooming with the intent of abusing them.

Online sexual abuse includes:

- persuading or forcing a child to send or post sexually explicit images of themselves, this is sometimes referred to as sexting
- persuading or forcing a child to take part in sexual activities via a webcam or smartphone
- having sexual conversations with a child by text or online.

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

Abusers will often try to build an emotional connection with a child in order to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual abuse. This is known as grooming.

Spotting the signs of sexual abuse

There may be physical signs that a child has suffered sexual abuse.

These include:

- anal or vaginal soreness or itching
- bruising or bleeding near the genital area
- discomfort when walking or sitting down
- an unusual discharge
- sexually transmitted infections (STI)
- pregnancy.

Changes in the child's mood or behaviour may also cause concern. They may want to avoid spending time with specific people. In particular, the child may show sexual behaviour that is inappropriate for their age.

For example:

- they could use sexual language or know things about sex that you wouldn't expect them to
- they might become sexually active or pregnant at a young age.

Child sexual exploitation

What is child sexual exploitation?

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a type of sexual abuse. Young people may be coerced or groomed into exploitative situations and relationships. They may be given things such as gifts, money, drugs, alcohol, status or affection in exchange for taking part in sexual activities.

Young people may be tricked into believing they're in a loving, consensual relationship. They often trust their abuser and don't understand that they're being abused. They may depend on their abuser or be too scared to tell anyone what's happening. They might be invited to parties and given drugs and alcohol before being sexually exploited. They can also be groomed and exploited online.

Some children and young people are trafficked into or within the UK for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Sexual exploitation can also happen to young people in gangs (Berelowitz et al, 2013).

Child sexual exploitation can involve violent, humiliating and degrading sexual assaults and involve multiple perpetrators.

➤ Find out more about grooming

Spotting the signs of child sexual exploitation

Sexual exploitation can be very difficult to identify. Young people who are being sexually exploited may:

- go missing from home, care or education
- be involved in abusive relationships
- hang out with groups of older people
- be involved in gangs or anti-social groups
- have older boyfriends or girlfriends
- spend time at places of concern, such as hotels or known brothels
- be involved in petty crime such as shoplifting
- have access to drugs and alcohol
- have new things such as clothes and mobile phones, which they aren't able to easily explain
- have unexplained physical injuries.

Harmful sexual behaviour

What is harmful sexual behaviour?

Harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) is developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour which is displayed by children and young people and which may be harmful or abusive. It may also be referred to as sexually harmful behaviour or sexualised behaviour.

HSB encompasses a range of behaviour, which can be displayed towards younger children, peers, older children or adults. It is harmful to the children and young people who display it, as well as the people it is directed towards.

HSB can include:

- using sexually explicit words and phrases
- inappropriate touching
- using sexual violence or threats
- sexual activity with other children or adults.

Sexual behaviour between children is considered harmful if one of the children is much older – particularly if there is more than two years' difference in age or if one of the children is pre-pubescent and the other isn't (Davies, 2012). However, a younger child can abuse an older child, particularly if they have power over them – for example, if the older child is disabled (Rich, 2011).

Spotting the signs of harmful sexual behaviour

It's normal for children to show signs of sexual behaviour at each stage in their development. Children also develop at different rates and some may be slightly more or less advanced than other children in their age group. Behaviours which might be concerning depend on the child's age and the situation.

➤ [Find out more about harmful sexual behaviour](#)

Emotional abuse

What is emotional abuse?

Emotional abuse involves:

- humiliating, putting down or regularly criticising a child
- shouting at or threatening a child or calling them names
- mocking a child or making them perform degrading acts
- constantly blaming or scapegoating a child for things which are not their fault

- trying to control a child's life and not recognising their individuality
- not allowing a child to have friends or develop socially
- pushing a child too hard or not recognising their limitations
- manipulating a child
- exposing a child to distressing events or interactions
- persistently ignoring a child
- being cold and emotionally unavailable during interactions with a child
- not being positive or encouraging to a child or praising their achievements and successes.

Spotting the signs of emotional abuse

There aren't usually any obvious physical signs of emotional abuse but you may spot changes in a child's actions or emotions.

Some children are naturally quiet and self-contained whilst others are more open and affectionate. Mood swings and challenging behaviour are also a normal part of growing up for teenagers and children going through puberty. Be alert to behaviours which appear to be out of character for the individual child or are particularly unusual for their stage of development.

Babies and pre-school children who are being emotionally abused may:

- be overly-affectionate towards strangers or people they haven't known for very long
- not appear to have a close relationship with their parent, for example when being taken to or collected from nursery
- lack confidence or become wary or anxious
- be unable to play
- be aggressive or nasty towards other children and animals.

Older children may:

- use language, act in a way or know about things that you wouldn't expect for their age
- struggle to control strong emotions or have extreme outbursts
- seem isolated from their parents
- lack social skills or have few, if any, friends
- fear making mistakes
- fear their parent being approached regarding their behaviour
- self-harm.

Domestic abuse

What is 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 include physical, sexual, psychological, emotional or financial abuse.

Exposure to domestic abuse is child abuse. Children can be directly involved in incidents of domestic abuse or they may be harmed by seeing or hearing abuse happening. Children in homes where there is domestic abuse are also at risk of other types of abuse or neglect.

Spotting the signs of domestic abuse

It can be difficult to tell if domestic abuse is happening, because abusers can act very differently when other people are around.

Children who witness domestic abuse may:

- become aggressive
- display anti-social behaviour
- suffer from depression or anxiety
- not do as well at school - due to difficulties at home or disruption of moving to and from refuges.

➤ **Find out more about domestic abuse**

Bullying and cyberbullying

What are bullying and cyberbullying?

Bullying is when individuals or groups seek to harm, intimidate or coerce someone who is perceived to be vulnerable.

Bullying includes:

- verbal abuse, such as name calling
- non-verbal abuse, such as hand signs or glaring
- emotional abuse, such as threatening, intimidating or humiliating someone
- exclusion, such as ignoring or isolating someone
- undermining, by constant criticism or spreading rumours
- controlling or manipulating someone
- racial, sexual or homophobic bullying
- physical assaults, such as hitting and pushing
- making silent, hoax or abusive calls.

Bullying can happen anywhere – at school, at home or online. When bullying happens online it can involve social networks, games and mobile devices. Online bullying can also be known as cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying includes:

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

Spotting the signs of bullying and cyberbullying

It can be hard to know whether or not a child is being bullied. They might not tell anyone because they're scared the bullying will get worse. They might also think that the bullying is their fault.

No one sign indicates for certain that a child's being bullied, but you should look out for:

- belongings getting 'lost' or damaged
- physical injuries such as unexplained bruises
- being afraid to go to school, being mysteriously 'ill' each morning, or skipping school
- not doing as well at school
- asking for, or stealing, money (to give to a bully)
- being nervous, losing confidence or becoming distressed and withdrawn
- problems with eating or sleeping
- bullying others.

➤ [Find out more about bullying](#)

Child trafficking

What is child trafficking?

Child trafficking is child abuse. It involves recruiting and moving children who are then exploited. Many children are trafficked into the UK from overseas, but children can also be trafficked from one part of the UK to another.

Children may be trafficked for:

- child sexual exploitation
- benefit fraud

- forced marriage
- domestic servitude such as cleaning, childcare, cooking
- forced labour in factories or agriculture
- criminal exploitation such as cannabis cultivation, pickpocketing, begging, transporting, drugs, selling pirated DVDs and bag theft.

Children who are trafficked experience many forms of abuse and neglect. Physical, sexual and emotional abuse is often used to control them and they're also likely to suffer physical and emotional neglect.

Child trafficking can require a network of organised criminals who recruit, transport and exploit children and young people. 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 the children's own families.

Traffickers trick, force or persuade children to leave their homes. They use grooming techniques to gain the trust of a child, family or community. Although these are methods used by traffickers, coercion, violence or threats don't need to be proven in cases of child trafficking - a child cannot legally consent to their exploitation so child trafficking only requires evidence of movement and exploitation.

Modern slavery is another term which may be used in relation to child trafficking. Modern slavery encompasses slavery, servitude, forced and compulsory labour and human trafficking (HM Government, 2014). The **Modern Slavery Act** passed in 2015 in England and Wales categorises offences of slavery, servitude, forced or compulsory labour and human trafficking.

Spotting the signs of child trafficking

Signs that a child has been trafficked may not be obvious but you might notice unusual behaviour or events.

Children who have been 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.

There are also signs that an adult is involved in child trafficking, such as:

- 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.

Female genital mutilation

What is female genital mutilation?

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is the partial or total removal of external female genitalia for non-medical reasons. It's also known as female circumcision or cutting.

The age at which FGM is carried out varies. It may be carried out when a child is new-born, during childhood or adolescence, just before marriage or during pregnancy (Home Office et al, 2016).

FGM is child abuse. There are no medical reasons to carry out FGM. It's dangerous and a criminal offence.

Spotting the signs of female genital mutilation

A child at risk of FGM may not know what's going to happen. But they might talk about or you may become aware of:

- a long holiday abroad or going 'home' to visit family
- relative or cutter visiting from abroad
- a special occasion or ceremony to 'become a woman' or get ready for marriage
- a female relative being cut – a sister, cousin or an older female relative such as a mother or aunt
- missing school repeatedly or running away from home.

A child who has had FGM may:

- have difficulty walking, standing or sitting
- spend longer in the bathroom or toilet
- appear withdrawn, anxious or depressed
- have unusual behaviour after an absence from school or college
- be particularly reluctant to undergo normal medical examinations
- ask for help, but may not be explicit about the problem due to embarrassment or fear.

Reporting requirements

Regulated health and social care professionals and teachers in England and Wales must report 'known' cases of FGM in under-18s to the police (Home Office, 2016).

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