

Child Protection Guidance Booklet



 **Safe In Your Hands**
Safeguarding training and consultancy

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This document has been devised to give safeguarding and child protection information to people who are working or volunteering with children and young people. The booklet will cover what safeguarding and child protection means, what signs to look out for, what risk factors might cause vulnerability, what impact trauma has on children, young people and their families, what your responsibilities are in keeping children and young people safe and what to do if you have a concern.

It should be read alongside your local authority safeguarding policies and procedures.

What is safeguarding and child protection?

Safeguarding children is defined in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 as:

- Protecting children from maltreatment.
- Preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development.
- Ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best possible outcomes.

Child Protection is what we do to protect children who, we believe, are at risk of abuse, neglect or exploitation or have otherwise been harmed. It is the response we take when we suspect that the child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm.

The Children Act 1989 introduced the concept of Significant Harm as the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of children.

There are no absolute criteria on which to rely when judging what constitutes Significant Harm but consideration should be given to the following:

- The severity of ill-treatment which may include the degree and extent of physical harm including, for example, impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another;
- The duration and frequency of abuse and neglect;
- The extent of premeditation.

What is child abuse and neglect?

It is 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. Harm can include ill treatment that is not physical as well as the impact of witnessing ill treatment of others. This can be particularly relevant, for example, in relation to the impact on children of all forms of domestic abuse. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

There are 4 categories of abuse, these are:

- Physical
- Sexual
- Emotional
- Neglect

It is important that professionals also consider that abuse might not fit in to one of these categories and we also need to consider:

- Honour Based Abuse
- Sexual Exploitation

- Criminal Exploitation
- Modern Day Slavery
- Female Genital Mutilation
- Radicalisation
- Online harm
- Domestic Violence

People must be observant and look beyond any single incident and build up a picture of what is happening to that child. We must be professionally curious and record all our concerns and report them appropriately. We must hear the voice of the child as much as we possibly can and try and understand what their lived experiences are.

Factors that may increase vulnerability:

There are many things that can cause vulnerability in a person and an abuser will try and find these vulnerabilities and take advantage of these. This list is not exhaustive, but it gives you a good understanding of some of the things that could be targeted.

- Domestic abuse, parental substance misuse, parental mental ill health;
- Parental learning difficulties;
- The child/young person having a disability
- Being a child in care;
- Cultural beliefs and practices;
- Those missing from education;
- Those who are privately fostered;
- Parents own history of being parented;
- Social inequality;
- Young carer;
- Social media;
- LGBTQ+

Any child or young person can be vulnerable and just because someone may be in one of these categories, doesn't mean that they will be abused, it just means they have vulnerability. Everyone working around that person, needs to understand this vulnerability and take it in to consideration.

It is important to note that children with additional needs carry an increase risk of abuse and neglect, as they:

- Less likely to receive sex education or information about their own bodies;
- Use different communication systems and may not have the language skills to disclose
- May be unable to distinguish between types of touch;
- Have less choice in everyday life and don't believe they can control things;
- Don't believe their wishes will be listened to;
- More isolated physically and socially from mainstream services;
- Have more dependency on parents and carers for practical assistance in daily care including intimate personal care, increasing risk of exposure;
- Be exposed to more carers, professionals and volunteers (including in residential and short break settings);
- Have an impaired capacity to resist or avoid abuse (e.g. restricted mobility or a communication barrier);
- Are subjected to an increased inequality of power;
- Need to be assisted with movement;
- Lack of support and training for parents and carers in managing difficult behaviour;



- An assumption that behaviour is an integral part of the child's condition rather than a response to pain, abusive treatment and/ or a negative reaction to medication;
- Many disabled children and young adults are at an increased likelihood of being socially isolated with fewer outside contacts than non-disabled people;
- Especially vulnerable to bullying, intimidation hate and mate crime

Digital Safeguarding:

The internet is a wonderful educational tool but the use of technology has become a significant part in some safeguarding issues, such as child exploitation and radicalisation. There are 4 areas of risk:

- Content – exposed to illegal, inappropriate and harmful material
- Contact – subjected to harmful online behaviour
- Conduct – personal online behaviours
- Commerce – trade or business, and can mean simply the buying and selling of goods and services

If you use technology in your setting think about appropriate filtering or monitoring and how you use social media to promote your setting or communicate to/with your groups

Extra-Familial Harm:

Extra-familial harm is when the harm comes from outside the family home. Traditionally we have seen safeguarding risks coming from the family home and from the parents and carers, but this is not always the case. We are seeing significant safeguarding risks from outside the family home. From drug related crimes, gang association and youth violence.

It is thought that adolescents are more vulnerable to extra-familial harm as they are allowed more freedom and have more independence. Peers have much more influence over them and family influence declines. When we look at these factors and the fact that adolescents are going through massive changes in their bodies, from the physical, emotional and cognitive changes, it is no wonder they are more open to risky behaviours.

Sometimes parents might be unaware that their child is at risk, or they may be really struggling with trying to keep their child safe. It is the factors that are being offered to the child that is tempting towards the risk. We call these **pull factors**.

Sometimes, though, it can be parental neglect or lack of supervision that can cause exposure to extra-familial harm. We know that children who have instability or unrest at home are less likely to want to be there, and more likely to spend time away from the home. We call these **push factors**.

The impact of trauma on children, young people and their families:

A trauma is an event that a child has been involved in or witnessed, that makes them feel intensely threatened. There is a range of traumatic events or trauma types to which children and adolescents can be exposed. The Institute of Recovery from Childhood Trauma 2015 defines it as "Trauma is an event or series of events such as abuse, maltreatment, neglect or tragedy that causes a profound experience of helplessness leading to terror".

When anyone suffers trauma they produce cortisol, or adrenaline. This means their bodies go into survival mode and their brains, which are usually filing memories shut down and they go in to fight, flight, freeze, flop and friend mode. This 'threat response' is an automatic response which we don't think about. This reaction is meant to help us, but when someone has been repeatedly scared or emotionally overwhelmed when they are little, they don't get their



survival brain soothed. This means that their brain begins to become wired on hyper alert because the world is scary.

Children may be overly sensitive to the moods of others, always watching to figure out what the adults around them are feeling and how they will behave. They may withhold their own emotions from others, never letting them see when they are afraid, sad, or angry. When relationships are unstable or unpredictable, children learn that they cannot rely on others to help them. When primary caregivers exploit and abuse a child, the child learns that he or she is bad and the world is a terrible place.

Dissociation is often seen in children with histories of complex trauma. When children encounter an overwhelming and terrifying experience, they may dissociate, or mentally separate themselves from the experience. If a child dissociates often, they may seem "spacey", detached, distant, or out of touch with reality.

A child with a complex trauma history may be easily triggered or "set off" and is more likely to react very intensely. The child may struggle with self-regulation and may lack impulse control or the ability to think through consequences before acting.

It is really important to remember that children and young people can recover from trauma but will need help and support doing so. We need to be responsive to their trauma needs and make ourselves informed about what trauma is. We need to build up their resilience. We can do this by allowing the child to build a secure attachment to someone they trust.

Dealing with an allegation:

It is really important that you deal with someone telling you about abuse, in the right way, as it can hugely impact the person. They may stop telling you as they feel they have upset you, or they may feel that you don't believe them.

Do:

- Listen carefully
- Stay calm
- Be sympathetic and reassure they have done the right thing, that they are being taken seriously and that you will have to inform someone else
- Record down everything that is said to you, in their words
- Log down the date, time and those present at the disclosure
- Note down where you were when the person disclosed
- Note down and describe the circumstances that the disclosure came out
- Use black pen so your notes can be photocopied later if needs be
- Pass on the information to the manager or safeguarding officer – they will then notify the correct people

Do not:

- Promise to keep this to yourself
- Press for more information
- Ask leading questions
- Put words into their mouths
- Stop someone whilst they are disclosing to you
- Make any promises you can't keep
- Contact the abuser
- Share this with anyone else apart from the appropriate people
- Deal with this by yourself



Your responsibility in keeping children safe:

Everyone has a role to play, in keeping children safe and protected in every organisation that they work or volunteer at. To do this successfully you need to:

- Make sure you know your organisations safeguarding policy and procedures
- Follow what is set out in these policies and procedures
- Be approachable
- Have professional curiosity
- Listen to and hear the voice of the child
- Make sure your setting and activities are fit for purpose
- Use your own professional knowledge and understanding of what abuse is and act on this
- Keep records of all your concerns that are accurate and factual
- Share and refer your concerns to the appropriate people - it is the responsibility of the designated lead to decide whether or not to refer on to Children's Social Care

The right help, In the right way at the right time:

This is a guide for practitioners and managers in South Gloucestershire from all organisations. It aims to help ensure the needs of children are being met in the best way from those who need low level help to those at risk of significant harm.

Universal Provision The majority of children and young people in South Gloucestershire enjoy happy, healthy and secure childhoods. They and their families are able to access the opportunities, information, advice or help they need from universal settings and services such as maternity services, health visitors, GPs, early years settings, schools, colleges, youth services and others.

Universal Plus refers to the additional support that may be provided to some children in universal settings such as additional help and support in school, parenting programs and advice, locally developed opportunities to meet identified needs. Early Help isn't a 'service' to refer into, rather a principle to be applied by all those who work and volunteer with children where it is identified that some additional support might be helpful for a child or a family. The **Compass team** is the 'engine room' for Early Help – it has been established to help families, agencies and settings navigate to the right information and help, at the right time and in the right way. Compass also provides advice, help, guidance and training in relation to the Early Help Assessment and Plan/ Team Around the Family processes.

Preventative services are **targeted services** providing help and support for families with children from pre-birth to 18 who need help to overcome significant difficulties that could lead to their children not thriving or, potentially, experiencing harm. The teams are skilled and experienced in working with children, young people and families and include:

- Families Plus 0-5
- Families Plus 5-19
- Young Peoples Support (YPS)
- Youth Justice Service (YJS)

MASH

The South Gloucestershire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is a multi-agency group of professionals whose aim is provide an effective and rapid response to new safeguarding children concerns. To make an informed decision the team will gather and share information



from partner agencies, children, young people and their families to decide who is best placed to respond to the concerns.

Information sharing:

Information sharing in a safeguarding context means the appropriate and secure exchange of personal information, between practitioners and other individuals with a responsibility for children, in order to keep them safe from harm.

You must share information even if the child or adult tells you they want to keep it secret. You do need to consider GDPR and data protection and Mental Capacity as you need to decide if someone has the mental capacity to understand what you are asking them and if they can consent to do this.

Sharing the right information, at the right time, with the right people is fundamental to good practice in safeguarding.

Remember that getting consent from the person is best practice and having a conversation about this is really important. If it is too dangerous to do this, or having this conversation would put the young person in more danger you do not need to get consent.

7 golden rules of information sharing:

1. All children have a right to be protected from abuse and neglect. Protecting a child from such harm takes priority over protecting their privacy, or the privacy rights of the person(s) failing to protect them. The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) provide a framework¹ to support information sharing where practitioners have reason to believe failure to share information may result in the child being at risk of harm.
2. When you have a safeguarding concern, wherever it is practicable and safe to do so, engage with the child² and/or their carer(s), and explain who you intend to share information with, what information you will be sharing and why. You are not required to inform them, if you have reason to believe that doing so may put the child at increased risk of harm (e.g., because their carer(s) may harm the child, or react violently to anyone seeking to intervene, or because the child might withhold information or withdraw from services).
3. You do not need consent to share personal information about a child and/or members of their family if a child is at risk or there is a perceived risk of harm. You need a lawful basis³ to share information under data protection law, but when you intend to share information as part of action to safeguard a child at possible risk of harm⁴, consent may not be an appropriate basis for sharing. It is good practice to ensure transparency about your decisions and seek to work cooperatively with a child and their carer(s) wherever possible. This means you should consider any objection the child or their carers may have to proposed information sharing, but you should consider overriding their objections if you believe sharing the information is necessary to protect the child from harm.
4. Seek advice promptly whenever you are uncertain or do not fully understand how the legal framework supports information sharing in a particular case. Do not leave a child at risk of harm because you have concerns you might be criticised for sharing information. Instead, find out who in your organisation/agency can provide advice about what information to share and with whom. This may be your manager/supervisor, the designated safeguarding children professional, the data protection/information governance lead (e.g., Data Protection Officer⁵), Caldicott



Guardian, or relevant policy or legal team. If you work for a small charity or voluntary organisation, follow the NSPCC's safeguarding guidance.

5. When sharing information, ensure you and the person or agency/organisation that receives the information take steps to protect the identities of any individuals (e.g., the child, a carer, a neighbour, or a colleague) who might suffer harm if their details became known to an abuser or one of their associates
6. Only share relevant and accurate information with individuals or agencies/organisations that have a role in safeguarding the child and/or providing their family with support, and only share the information they need to support the provision of their services. Sharing information with a third party rarely requires you to share an entire record or case-file – you must only share information that is necessary, proportionate for the intended purpose, relevant, adequate and accurate.
7. Record the reasons for your information sharing decision, irrespective of whether or not you decide to share information. When another practitioner or organisation requests information from you, and you decide not to share it, be prepared to explain why you chose not to do so. Be willing to reconsider your decision if the requestor shares new information that might cause you to regard information you hold in a new light. When recording any decision, clearly set out the rationale and be prepared to explain your reasons if you are asked.

Whistleblowing:

'Position of trust' is a legal term that refers to certain roles and settings where an adult has regular and direct contact with children.

As stated in Working Together to Safeguarding Children 2023, Organisations and agencies working with children and families should have clear policies for dealing with allegations against people who work with children. Such policies should make a clear distinction between an allegation, a concern about the quality of care or practice, or a complaint. An allegation may relate to a person who works with children who has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child
- possibly committed a criminal offence against a child
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she may pose a risk of harm to children
- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children

The matter must be discussed with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). They will decide what action needs to be taken and potentially contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

Low level concerns:

If your concern does not meet the above thresholds, you might think that you don't have a voice to share the information but small concerns often act as puzzle pieces that lead to a bigger picture of the events occurring within your organisation. Therefore, it is critical that all concerns are recorded to prevent the future harm and exploitation of the students within your care. Dealing with these concerns effectively also protects those working in your organisation from potential false allegations or misunderstandings.

Recording and dealing with this appropriately will lead to an open culture where concerning and problematic behaviour is identified early, minimising the risk of abuse.



REMEMBER:

A 'Request for Help' form can be completed by a family or, with the family's consent, by a professional or by a close friend or family member on the parent's behalf. This form will need to be submitted to AccessandResponse@southglos.gov.uk , and the Access team will make a decision within a working day.

If you are in any doubt about the level of need and whether a referral needs to be made to children's social care, it is advisable to telephone the Access Team on 01454 866000 during office hours for advice.

If you think the family's needs may be below the high threshold for children's social care, contact the Compass Team.

Useful contacts to remember:

Access and Response Team (ART) – 01454 866000 or AccessandResponse@southglos.gov.uk

Out of hours and weekends/Emergency Duty Team (EDT) – 01454 615165

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) Jon Goddard – 01454 868508 or LADO@southglos.gov.uk

Early Help – compass compass@southglos.gov.uk

If you disagree with a decision that is made, then please professionally challenge. You can go to South West procedures online and find the conflict resolution policy.

<https://swcpp-southglos.trixonline.co.uk/chapter/conflict-resolution-policy>

