

# CHILD PROTECTION POLICY



## **Virtual School**

Virtual School  
County Hall  
Northallerton  
North Yorkshire  
DL7 8AE

## **POLICY STATEMENT ON SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN**

This policy is in line with

- North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership ( NYSCP) Child Protection Procedures and Practice Guidance
- Working Together to Safeguard Children HM Government 2018
- Keeping Children Safe in Education ( KCSIE) Dfe 2018
- School's duty under the Children Act 2004, to cooperate with other organisations and agencies

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families and carers has a role to play. All professionals should make sure their approach is child centred and consider at all times what is in the best interests of the child.

Safeguarding includes the establishment and implementation of procedures to protect children from deliberate harm, however safeguarding also encompasses all aspects of the child's health and safety and well-being.

This organisation recognises that all children have a right to protection from abuse. The Virtual School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all of children and young people.

The Virtual School will always act in line with North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Board policies and procedures and practice guidance. The Virtual School will, in most cases, endeavour to discuss all concerns with parents/carers and the child's social worker. However there may be exceptional circumstances when the school will discuss concerns with the child's social worker and/or police without parental knowledge. The Virtual School's safeguarding policy is available publicly on the NYCC website.

We will:-

- Respond swiftly and appropriately to all suspicions or allegations of abuse, and provide parents, carers and children with the opportunity to voice their concerns
- Have a system for dealing with concerns about possible abuse
- Maintain good links with statutory child care authorities

## **Identifying children and young people who are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm**

### **Definitions**

A child is anyone who has not yet reached their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday (Children Act 1989 and 2004)

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by others (eg via the internet). They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children

It commonly occurs within a relationship of trust or responsibility and is an abuse of power or a breach of trust. Abuse can happen to a child regardless of their age, gender, race or ability. Abusers can be adults (male or female) and other young people, and are usually known to and trusted by the child and family.

### **Physical abuse**

Physical abuse 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.

### **Sexual abuse**

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 (e.g. rape, buggery 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 or 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.

### **Emotional abuse**

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person. This may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or making fun of what they say and how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the 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 cyber bullying), 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, though it may occur alone.

### **Neglect**

Neglect is 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 ACCESS to appropriate medical care or treatment
- Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers)

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

### **Abuse of children and young people with a disability**

Some children and young people with a disability are mentally or physically more vulnerable than others, which could make it easier for abusers to exploit them. They may also find it more difficult to recognise and report abuse, and to be believed. For example, if their disability means that they:

- Have limited life experiences and so have not developed the social skills needed to work out what the behaviour and attitudes of others means. This could make them less able to understand what is appropriate and inappropriate behaviour
- Have been encouraged to comply with other people's wishes and not to question authority figures
- Are afraid to challenge potentially abusive situations because of fear of the consequences. It is often easier to be compliant and pleasing rather than risk angering an authority figure and getting into trouble.
- May not be able to report abuse either because there is no-one they can report it to or because they do not have the appropriate language to use
- May not be able to recognise that abuse has taken place.
- Fell powerless because they have to depend on others for personal support.
- May not be able to physically remove themselves from abusive situations.
- Are not believed because their authority figures cannot accept that anyone would abuse a disabled child.
- May feel guilt or shame about the abuse which prevents them from reporting it.
- May not have a sense of ownership of their own bodies because they are so used to being examined physically by others as part of their medical and physical care.
- Have low self-esteem and a poor self image.
- May not have anybody they can trust and confide in.

## **Racism**

Children from black and minority ethnic groups (and their parents) are likely to have experienced harassment, racial discrimination and institutional racism. Although racism causes significant harm it is not, in itself, a category of abuse. All organisations working with children, including those operating where black and minority ethnic communities are numerically small, should address institutional racism, defined in the MacPherson Inquiry Report on Stephen Lawrence as *'the collective failure by an organisation to provide appropriate*

*and professional service to people on account of their race, culture and/or religion”*

It is important that workers are sensitive to differing family patterns and lifestyles and to child-rearing patterns that vary across different racial, ethnic and cultural groups. **At the same time they must be clear that child abuse cannot be condoned for religious or cultural reasons.**

Workers should also be aware of the broader social factors that serve to discriminate against black and minority ethnic people. Working in a multi-racial and multicultural society requires professionals and organisations to be committed to equality in meeting the needs of all children and families, and to understand the effects of racial harassment, racial discrimination and institutional racism as well as cultural misunderstanding or misinterpretation.

Workers should guard against myths and stereotypes – both positive and negative – of black and minority ethnic families. Anxiety about being accused of racist practise should not prevent the necessary action being taken to safeguard and promote a child’s welfare.

All children, whatever their religious or cultural background, must receive the same care and safeguards with regard to abuse and neglect.

## **Bullying**

Bullying, racism and other types of discrimination are forms of child abuse, even though those responsible are often young people. It is important to recognise the impact and extent of bullying and discrimination in the lives of young people. Organisations have a duty of care to safeguard children from harm, including disabled children and others who may be particularly vulnerable.

## **What is bullying?**

Bullying can be psychological, verbal or physical in nature. It involves an imbalance of power in which the powerful attack the powerless, and occurs over time rather than being a single act. Examples of bullying behaviour include:

- Being called names, insulted or verbally abused.
- Being deliberately embarrassed and humiliated by other children.
- Being made to feel different or like an outsider.
- Being lied about.
- Being physically assaulted or threatened with violence.
- Being ignored.

- ‘Cyberbullying’; these involve covert, or indirect bullying using electronic media, such as mobile phones and the internet – see appendix 2.
- See Appendix1 for anti- bullying policy

### **Taking action to ensure that children are safe at school and at home**

All staff will follow the NYSCB Child Protection Procedures and Practice Guidance which are consistent with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2018, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 and What to do if you are worried a child is being abused 2015

### **Contextual safeguarding**

The Virtual School recognises that safeguarding incidents and/or behaviours can be associated with factors outside the school or college. All staff will consider the context within which such incidents or behaviours occur. This is known as contextual safeguarding, which simply mean assessments of children should consider whether wider environmental factors are present in a child’s life that are a threat to their safety and/or welfare. The school will share as much information as possible with the child’s social worker.

### **Children with SEN and disabilities**

Staff should recognise that children with SEN and disabilities can face additional safeguarding challenges. They must not assume that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to a child’s disability without further exploration. They must remain alert to the fact that children with SEN and disabilities can be more prone to peer group isolation and disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying without outwardly showing any signs and may have communication barriers.

It is not the responsibility of Virtual School staff to investigate or determine the truth of any disclosure or allegation of abuse or neglect. This includes allegations of peer abuse. All staff, however, have a duty to recognise concerns and maintain an open mind. Accordingly all concerns indicating possible abuse or neglect will be recorded and discussed with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or in their absence the person who deputies) prior to any discussion with parents/carers or child’s social worker

a) Staff must immediately report:

- Any suspicion that a child is injured, marked, or bruised in a way which is not readily attributable to the normal knocks or scrapes received in play
- Any explanation given which appears inconsistent or suspicious

- Any behaviours which give rise to suspicions that a child may have suffered harm (eg significant changes in behaviour, worrying drawings or play)
- Any concerns that a child may be suffering from inadequate care, ill treatment or emotional maltreatment
- Any concerns that a child is presenting signs and symptoms of abuse or neglect
- Any significant changes in a child's presentation, including non-attendance
- Any hint or disclosure of abuse or neglect received from the child, or from any other person, including disclosures of abuse or neglect perpetrated by adults outside of the family or by other children or young people
- Any concerns regarding person(s) who may pose a risk to children including inappropriate behaviour eg inappropriate sexual comments: excessive on to one attention beyond the requirements of their usual role and responsibilities: or inappropriate sharing of images
- Any concerns relating to peer abuse
- Any concerns relating to youth produced sexual imagery( sexting)
- Any concerns relating to a child's engagement with extremist groups or ideologies

## B) Responding to disclosure

Disclosures or information may be received from pupils, parents/carers or other members of the public. The school recognises that those who disclose such information may do so with difficulty, having chosen carefully to whom they will speak. Accordingly all staff will handle disclosures with sensitivity. Such information cannot remain confidential and staff will immediately communicate what they have been told to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and make a contemporaneous record on a Virtual School Safeguarding concern form.

## C) Principles

Staff will not investigate but will, wherever possible, elicit enough information to pass on to the Designated Safeguarding Lead in order that he/she can make an informed decision about what to do next.

Staff will

- Listen and take seriously any disclosure or information that a child may be at risk of harm
- Try to ensure that the person disclosing does not have to speak to another member of school staff
- Clarify the information
- Try to keep questions to a minimum and of an open nature eg Can you tell me what happened? Rather than Did x hit you?
- Not asking leading questions
- Try not to show signs of shock, horror or surprise

- Not express feelings or judgements regarding any person alleged to have harmed the child
- Explain sensitively to the person that they have a responsibility to refer the information to the senior designated person
- Reassure and support the person as far as possible
- Explain that only those who need to know will be told
- Explain what will happen next and that the person will be involved as appropriate and be informed of what action is being taken

D) Action by the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or Deputy DSL in their absence)

The following actions will be taken where there are concerns about significant harm to any child, including where there is already an open case to Children's Social Care (eg Looked After child)

Following any information raising concern, the DSL will consider

- If they believe there is immediate risk of significant harm to the child and therefore should contact North Yorkshire police on 999
- If they should report a crime that does not need an emergency response by calling 101
- If there is an urgent safeguarding concern and they should call the Customer Resolution Centre on 01609 780780
- Any urgent medical needs of the child
- Whether to make an enquiry to the Customer Resolution Centre to establish if the child has been subject of a Child Protection Plan
- Discussing the matter with other agencies involved with the family
- Consulting with appropriate persons eg Early Help service, Childrens Social Care
- The child's wishes and feelings and any fears or concerns they may have

Then decide

- Wherever possible, to talk to parents/carers, unless to do so may place a child at risk of significant harm
- Whether to make a referral to Children and Families service because a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm and if this needs to be undertaken immediately

Or

- Not to make a referral at this stage
- If further monitoring is necessary
- It would be appropriate to make an assessment and /or make a referral for other services

## **Consent**

It is good practice that agencies work in partnership with parents and carers and they are informed of your concerns with consent obtained for referrals



Consent is not required should you believe informing the parents or carers would place the child at risk of significant harm

Where consent has not been obtained, and professionals feel that a referral is still warranted, they should submit a referral detailing their actions and inform parents and carers of their actions. In cases of suspected Child sexual abuse in the family and Fabricated or Induced Illness it is best practice not to inform the family of the referral

All information and actions taken, including the reasons for any decisions made, will be fully documented

#### E) Action following a child protection referral

It is the responsibility of all staff to safeguard children. It is the role of the DSL (or deputy DSL) to attend multi-agency meetings and provide reports for these. Other staff may be asked to contribute.

The DSL will

- Make regular contact with Children's Social Care
- Contribute to the Strategy Discussion
- Provide a report for, attend and contribute to any subsequent Child Protection Conference
- If a child has a child protection plan, contribute to the plan and attend core group meetings and Review Child Protection Conferences
- Where possible share all reports with parents/carers prior to meetings
- Where in disagreement with a decision made, follow the NYSCB procedures
- Where there is significant information in respect of a child subject of a Child Protection Plan, immediately inform the keyworker or their manager in Children's Social Care eg any significant changes or concerns, departures from CP plan, child moves/goes missing/ is removed from school or fails to attend school.

#### F) Recording and Monitoring

The Virtual School will record

- Information about the child: name, dob, those with parental responsibility, primary carers, emergency contacts
- Key contacts in other agencies
- Any disclosure/accounts from child or others, including parents (and keep original notes)
- Significant contacts with carers/other agencies/professionals
- All concerns, discussions, decisions, actions taken and the reasons for these (dated, times, signed, to include the name and agency/title of the person responsible/spoken to) the plan to protect the child and arrangements for monitoring /review

All records should be objective and include

- Statements, facts and observable things (what was seen/heard)
- Diagrams indicating position, size and colour of any injuries (not photograph)
- Words child uses (not translated into "proper" words)

- Non-verbal behaviours

The school notes that Keeping Children Safe in Education(2018) para 75” the data Protection Act2018 and GDPR do not prevent, or limit, the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe. Fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of the need to promote the welfare and protect the safety of children” This includes allowing practitioners to share information without consent. Para 77.

## **Safeguarding Appendices**

### **Allegations regarding person(s) who work with children**

Where an allegation is made against any person working in or on behalf of the Virtual School, or any other person who works with children, that they have

- a) Behaved in a way that has harmed a child or may have harmed a child
- b) Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child or
- c) Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children

The Virtual School will apply the same principles as in the rest of this document.

School will immediately contact the Duty Local Authority Designated Officer ( LADO) on 01609 532477 and then , where appropriate, submit a LADO referral form within one working day

Where a child may have suffered significant harm the school will also submit a referral to Children’s social care.

Detailed and accurate records will be made to include decisions, actions taken, and reasons for these. All records will be retained securely by the Virtual School

### **Initial action**

- The person who has received the allegation or witnessed an event must immediately inform the Virtual School Head( the case manager) and make a record.
- In the event that an allegation is made against the Virtual School Head the matter will be reported to the alternative case manager ( Designated Safeguarding Lead)
- The case manager will take steps, where necessary, to secure the immediate safety of children and any urgent medical needs.
- The member of staff will not be approached at this stage unless it is necessary to address the immediate safety of children.
- The case manager may need to clarify any information regarding the allegation, however, no person will be formally interviewed or asked to write a formal statement at this stage.
- The case manager will consult the Duty LADO (01609 532477) in order to determine if it is appropriate for the allegation to be dealt with by school or if there needs to be a referral to social care and /or the police for investigation.

- Consideration will be given throughout to the support and information needs of pupils, parents and staff.

## **Confidentiality**

The Virtual School has regard to DFE guidance on information sharing

Fears about sharing information cannot be allowed to stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children at risk of abuse or neglect

The Virtual School ensures the child's wishes and feelings are taken into account when determining what action to take and what services to provide to protect individual children through ensuring there are systems in place for children to express their views and give feedback. School ensures that staff members do not promise confidentiality to the child and always act in the interests of the child.

## **Contacts**

### **Advice and referral**

Virtual School

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)- David Snell Youth Mentor Lead  
01609 535629 or 07929360660

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead- Julie Bunn Virtual School Head  
01609 532169 or 07974176030

Children and Families Service

Customer Resolution Centre- 01609 780780

For advice please ask to speak to the social worker in the MAST  
[Children&families@northyorks.gov.uk](mailto:Children&families@northyorks.gov.uk)

Emergency Duty Team- 01609 780780

North Yorkshire Police - 101 or 999 in an emergency  
(ask for the serious crime team in your area)

Safeguarding Unit

Designated Officers for Managing Allegations( LADOs)

Duty LADO ( consultations, new referrals, and urgent matters) 01609  
532477

|                |              |             |
|----------------|--------------|-------------|
| Susan Crawford | 01609 532152 | 07813005161 |
| Karen Lewis    | 01609 534200 | 07715540711 |
| Dave Peat      | 01609 535646 | 07814533363 |
| Julie Kaye     | 01609 532508 | 07973792398 |
| Andy Kenyon    | 01609 534215 | 07973792398 |

Manager  
Heather Pearson 01609 532301 07715540741

Business Support including CME Coordinator ( children missing education)

[Safeguardingunit@northyorks.gov.uk](mailto:Safeguardingunit@northyorks.gov.uk) 01609 532477

NYCC Human Resources  
[schoolsadvisory@northyorks.gov.uk](mailto:schoolsadvisory@northyorks.gov.uk) 01609 798343

### **Partnership with Parents and Carers**

The school shares a purpose with parents and carers to keep children safe from harm and to have their welfare promoted.

We are committed to working with parents and carers positively, openly and honestly. We ensure all parents and carers are treated with respect, dignity and courtesy. We respect parents and carers right to privacy and confidentiality and will not share sensitive information unless we have permission or it is necessary to do so in order to protect a child.

School will share with parents and carers any concerns we have about their child unless to do so may place a child at risk of harm.

We encourage parents to share any concerns they may have with the Virtual School staff.

The Virtual School child protection policy is available publicly via the NYCC website, see Virtual School.

### **Partnerships with other agencies**

The school recognises that it is essential to establish positive and effective working relationships with other agencies.

### **Peer abuse including sexual violence and harassment**

The school recognises that children are capable of abusing their peers, that this can manifest itself in many ways and may reflect gender issues.

Where there are concerns or allegations of peer abuse, the procedures and guidance in this policy will be followed, in the same way as if the matter was in respect of abuse by an adult.

Sexual violence and sexual harassment involving children is a form of peer on peer abuse. Sexual violence involves the criminal sexual offences defined in the Sexual Offences Act 2003. Sexual harassment is defined as unwanted conduct of a sexual nature and can include online behaviour. A multi-agency approach will be undertaken when responding to all such complaints. However the school will always take immediate action to protect children despite the actions of any other agency. These actions may include an immediate risk assessment in respect of the needs of the child victim and will address any risks identified in respect of an alleged perpetrator of sexual violence or sexual harassment to ensure children are protected from harm.

Concerns or allegations of all forms of peer abuse must be reported to the DSL, who will have regard to the NYSCB child protection guidance and procedures and make referrals in respect of both the alleged victim and the alleged perpetrator, where appropriate.

Where there are concerns or allegations of youth generated sexual imagery (often referred to as sexting) these must always be reported to the DSL

### **Prevent**

In order to fulfil the Prevent duty it is essential that staff will be able to identify children who may be vulnerable to radicalisation. Any concerns will be discussed with DSL and a safeguarding referral will be considered under the normal safeguarding procedures

Staff will undertake appropriate Prevent training for their role.

### **Child criminal exploitation: County lines**

The Virtual School recognises that criminal exploitation of children is a geographically widespread form of harm that is a typical feature of county lines criminal activity: drug networks or gangs groom and exploit children and young people to carry drugs and money from urban areas to suburban and rural areas, market and seaside towns. Key to identifying potential involvement in county lines are missing episodes, when the victim may have been trafficked for the purpose of transporting drugs. School will consider whether a referral to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) should be undertaken in order to safeguard that child or other children. In the first instance, a referral is made to Children and Families, once a risk of exploitation has been identified. The case is reviewed by the MAST (Multi-agency screening team) and may be added to the VEMT (Vulnerable, Exploited, Missing and Trafficked) agenda. Virtual School staff will attend VEMT meetings to share information about a child where appropriate. MAST will identify if there is a need to submit to the NRM.

### **Related school safeguarding policies**

#### **Safer Recruitment and Selection**

The Virtual School pays full regard to the DFE guidance Keeping Children Safe in education 2018 and NYCC procedures and guidance on Safer recruitment

Safer recruitment practice includes scrutinising applicants, verifying identity and academic or vocational qualifications, obtaining professional and character references, checking previous employment history and ensuring that a candidate has a health and physical capacity for the job.

An enhanced DBS check is obtained for all new paid appointments.

All new appointments of staff who have lived outside the UK are subject to additional checks as appropriate.

#### **Induction of staff**

All staff will be provided with the Virtual School child protection policy as part of their induction

Staff will be expected to undergo safeguarding and child protection training when they are new to role and to regularly update their training on an annual basis.

Staff will receive regular safeguarding and child protection updates as required and at least annually.

The DSL and Deputy DSL will undergo training to provide them with the knowledge and skills to carry out the role. This should be updated at regular intervals and at least annually.

### **Supervision, Support and advice for staff**

All staff are given sufficient time, supervision and support to fulfil their child welfare and safeguarding responsibilities effectively.

Supervision provides opportunities for staff to

- a) Discuss any issues- particularly concerning children's development and wellbeing
- b) Identify solutions to address issues as they arise
- c) Reflect on personal responses to situations which arise

### **Alternative Provision**

The Virtual School is committed to safeguarding children when they are placed in alternative provision for a period of time within the school week. We will seek written assurances that any Alternative Provision provider has acceptable safeguarding practice in place including; their response to concerns about a child: safer recruitment processes: child missing procedures and appropriate information sharing procedures. The school will obtain a written statement from the provider that they have completed all the vetting and barring checks that are necessary on their staff.

Child Protection policy updated April 2019, review April 2020

