Review schedule

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# Introduction

The Senedd Commission (“the Commission”) is committed in its duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children with whom it comes into contact. We strive to embed a culture that places transparency and sound safeguarding practice at the centre of all our activities – from the services delivered, to partnership work with stakeholders.

This policy has been written in line with all relevant legislation, and in light of the Wales Safeguarding Procedures 2019.

The policy applies for all children **up to 18 years**.

The Commission also works with adults who may be at risk, and though there are some similarities with respect to our duty of care for children and adults, there are some notable differences due to capacity and consent considerations that will **not** apply to a child.

Therefore, the Commission has developed this **Safeguarding Children Policy** and a separate **Safeguarding** **Adults at Risk policy,** for those aged 18 years and over. All employees have a duty to familiarise themselves with and to understand **both** policies, regardless of whether they come into direct contact with the public through their roles because:

# Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility.

Our safeguarding responsibility is not limited to direct contact with the public and includes any concerns that materialise or are shared about the welfare of children in any circumstances, such as information shared that raises concern for the welfare of children of staff, friends, or the wider public.

It is the expectation that all Commission staff are aware of the requirements within this policy so that if incidents of abuse are raised or suspected they have the necessary knowledge, information and managerial support to enable them to respond to issues appropriately. Members of the Senedd will have their own safeguarding policy in place. However, whilst they conduct business on the Senedd estate are expected to adhere to the principles and procedure set out in this policy.

Child abuse happens when a person, an adult or another child, harms a child. It can be physical, sexual or emotional, but can also involve a lack of love, care and attention. Children who suffer abuse may struggle to find the words to speak out, so it’s vital that anyone working with children or young people remains vigilant for the signs of abuse.

This policy will help you identify possible signs and indicators of child abuse and contains a set of procedures to help you know how to respond should you have any concerns for a child’s wellbeing or receive a *disclosure* of abuse. You are not expected to decide whether a child is being or is at risk of abuse, but you must report concerns and disclosure in line with this policy.

# Relevant Policies and Guidance

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following which can be found on the Commission Policy Hub:

* Adult at Risk Safeguarding Policy
* Vulnerable Witness Protocol
* Whistleblowing
* Discipline Policy and Procedure
* Staff Code of Conduct
* ICT Rules and Policy
* Dignity and Respect Policy

**It is the responsibility of Commission staff to ensure that they familiarise themselves with the above documents, which can be found on the** [Policy Hub](https://cynulliad.sharepoint.com/sites/cmn-policy-hub-dev/SitePages/Diogelu-gwybodaeth.aspx) **section of the Intranet.**

# Our Principles:

* Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility, and the Commission will address / act on any concerns we have for a child’s wellbeing.
* All children, regardless of any protected characteristic, have the right to be protected from abuse and poor practice and to participate in an enjoyable and safe environment.
* We recognise the additional vulnerability of children with a disability, communication needs, dependency or because of the impact of their previous care or life experiences.
* We promote a culture of openness to enable any issues or concerns to be raised and discussed.
* We ensure that a sense of accountability exists between staff so that poor practice or potentially abusive behaviour does not go unchallenged
* The rights, dignity and worth of all children and young people will always be respected.
* The child’s welfare is the paramount consideration and should be central to all decision-making.
* All allegations will be taken seriously and responded to as quickly as possible.
* We will ensure that staff understand their role in safeguarding and protecting children.
* We recognise the role and responsibilities of the statutory agencies in safeguarding children and are committed to comply with local safeguarding procedures.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

## All staff:

* All staff must work to a high standard of professional conduct and act with integrity at all times, to minimise the risk of abuse from within the Commission.

# If a disclosure is made to any staff member which results in a safeguarding concern, the procedure set out in the policy and summarised in Appendix 2: [Safeguarding Escalation Process must be followed](#_Appendix_2:_Safeguarding)

* Before any new work/project with children and young people begins, it is advisable that HR Employee Services is notified and consulted, so that appropriate safeguarding input and considerations can be offered from the outset.
* If you are working directly with children and young people within your role, please refer to [Appendix 1: Conduct of Behaviour when working with Children and Young People,](#_Appendix_1:_Conduct) which provides expectations of staff.
* Staff must create a work environment where the risk of abuse is minimised, and all children and young people feel comfortable and safe.
* It is important that the children and young people we work with are made aware of our safeguarding responsibilities, in accordance with their age and understanding. They should be helped to understand the process and should be involved in any safeguarding referral that is made and concerns them, unless to do so would seriously jeopardise their safety.

Likewise, those with Parental Responsibility of a child must be made aware of any concerns that the Commission has, and their consent must be sought should a referral to Children Services be necessary. There are exceptions to this, outlined within this policy, and of which will be decided and documented by the Designated Safeguarding Advisor.

## Human Resources:

* HR is responsible for producing and disseminating safeguarding guidance and resources to support the policy and procedures.
* HR is responsible for ensuring that the Designated Safeguarding Officers receive regular safeguarding training to enable them to keep abreast of legislative changes and make sound safeguarding decisions.
* Safeguarding will be included within the induction of new staff, and the Commission is committed to ongoing learning opportunities.
* Basic level safeguarding training will be core learning for all Senedd Employees as part of the ‘Safeguarding is Everyone’s Responsibility’ under the Wales Safeguarding Procedures (2019), regardless of whether staff work directly with children
* An enhanced level of safeguarding training will be provided for teams who work directly with children.

## Managers:

* Managers must ensure that the staff they line-manage are aware of and understand this policy.
* Managers must ensure that staff and associates involved in projects with children and young people are adequately trained and supported.
* Managers must ensure that appropriate Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks have been carried out **where necessary** (particularly in relation to a ‘regulated activity, where the Senedd has a statutory duty to request an enhanced check due to the nature of work with a child). You can find more information about the DBS requirements on the [policy hub](https://cynulliad.sharepoint.com/sites/cmn-policy-hub-dev/SitePages/Diogelu-gwybodaeth.aspx). Further advice can be sought from Recruitment or HR.
* Where an enhanced DBS disclosure is not deemed as necessary, other safeguarding considerations will be given such as staff to child ratio. Employee Services can offer guidance in relation to this on a case-by-case basis.
* In the event of the Commission working with partner agencies, a written agreement must be created specifying the arrangements for safeguarding children and the process to be followed in the event of concerns about any child protection matters.
* Allegations of abuse or poor practice against members of staff will be managed in line with both the Disciplinary Policy and Safeguarding Process.

## Risk Committee:

* The Risk Committee has responsibility for monitoring any safeguarding risks on the corporate risk register.

# The Role of the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO)

Whilst safeguarding is the responsibility of everybody who works in the Commission, **the Designated Safeguarding Officers (DSOs) are the lead personnel for Safeguarding** and have both a strategic and operational role. They receive enhanced safeguarding training and on how to manage disclosure and child protection concerns. DSOs:

- are responsible for managing safeguarding concerns within the Commission- all safeguarding concerns must be reported to them via a verbal discussion and then by completing a [Safeguarding Incident Form](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=KVHcOAw0FEWKBE6O8ncVZPfHgg1x8RlPkAMiiTtDnJlUMElXSVVLNjQ0UjY2NFlFVDlYR0dOMzBGSyQlQCN0PWcu&wdLOR=cCC627CDA-DEB2-4D2F-BE4F-472D5A7DE0DA)

- are the central point for reporting and dealing with safeguarding concerns and allegations.

- handle referral and liaison with external agencies and the Police; and

- provide advice and guidance to staff on Safeguarding matters and concerns.

A DSO may wish to liaise with another DSO before making a decision as to how to progress with a safeguarding concern which has been raised. However, if a referral to social services is deemed necessary this must be made within two working days from the point of concern.

Although the DSO may make a decision that information needs to be shared externally, they do not necessarily need to make the referral and may ask the referrer to do this so that information being provided is first hand. The DSO will discuss the most appropriate steps with the referrer on a case by case basis.

The names and contact details of the DSOs are:

Laurian Hubbard- Lead DSO, 03002006529, laurian.hubbard@senedd.wales

Lowri Williams – Deputy DSO, 03002006461, lowri.williams2@cynulliad.cymru

Julian Luke – Deputy DSO, 03002006411, julian.luke@assembly.wales

Where possible you should contact the Lead DSO in the first instance. If you have a concern that a DSO is implicated in abuse of a child, you should consider who would be the most appropriate DSO to contact or make a report to the NSPCC or Police.

If no DSO is available/ out of hours or if the matter is urgent

**If the matter is urgent and there are concerns for the immediate safety of anyone, especially if there is a life-threatening situation, contact the emergency services on 999 straight away. If the concern is taking place on the Senedd Estate, then you should make contact with the Police on site.**

In such situations you must still contact the DSO but given the urgent nature of the situation this may be afterwards to update them on the course of action. The information will still need to be recorded safely via a Safeguarding Incident Form.

**No one should ever delay emergency action to protect a child because of the unavailability of a certain person. If you believe a child or young person is in immediate danger, call the Police.**

**Where you suspect that a crime is being committed, you must also involve the police.**

If you are unable to make contact A DSO and the matter is **non-urgent** you can also contact:

NSPCC

 0808 800 5000 for further advice

# Confidentiality and Consent

There are occasions where a child can be offered signposting to relevant support as opposed to any safeguarding referrals being necessary.

However, if you have a *child protection concern*, in all cases where a child has been abused or is at risk of abuse or harm, relevant information must be shared amongst relevant professionals and agencies. In all such situations, the protection of the child **must** take precedence over all other considerations.

If a child is mature enough you should give them the opportunity to decide whether they agree to their confidential information being shared. If a child does not have the capacity to make their own decisions, you should ask their parent or carer (unless this would put the child at risk).

It is important not to promise a child complete confidentiality in the hope of encouraging that child to make a disclosure of abuse. Such a pledge cannot be kept, as there is a professional responsibility to decide what information must be passed on in order to protect children.

There may be occasions where it is not appropriate or safe to inform a child or their parents that you need to escalate safeguarding concerns. Reasons for not seeking parental consent in the first instance could include:

* The possibility that the child would be placed at further risk.
* The possibility that the child would be threatened or otherwise coerced into silence.
* A strong likelihood that important evidence would be lost/ destroyed.
* The parent/carer identified is the alleged abuser.
* The child in questions is competent to make a decision that they do not wish their parent to be informed.
* It is in the public’s best interest

You should discuss whether it is appropriate to seek consent from the child and parents with the Designated Safeguarding Officer. Reasons **for withholding information from a family should always be clear and recorded.** Where there is a child protection concern, information can be referred to statutory bodies regardless of consent and the DSO will evidence their decision making accordingly.

If a member of the public passes on reported suspicions that a child is being abused, they may ask for an assurance that their identity will not be revealed. It should be explained that though this will be respected where possible, it cannot be guaranteed in situations where a crime is suspected as they may be required to have their identity revealed within a Court context. There is also the possibility that action taken to protect a child may indirectly lead a parent or carer to suspect who, in fact, has alerted the authorities.

A referrer should always be assured that alerting the professionals to a family in crisis is of prime importance when it is necessary to protect a child.

# Record Keeping

All concerns and any discussions about a child's welfare should be recorded in writing whether or not further action is taken. This should be recorded within this [MS Safeguarding Incident Form](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=KVHcOAw0FEWKBE6O8ncVZPfHgg1x8RlPkAMiiTtDnJlUMElXSVVLNjQ0UjY2NFlFVDlYR0dOMzBGSyQlQCN0PWcu&wdLOR=cCC627CDA-DEB2-4D2F-BE4F-472D5A7DE0DA). The incident form is a user-friendly referral form that will allow you to document your concerns, and help the DSO make a decision as to next steps.

Teams that work directly with children will also be expected to keep their own safeguarding records, for example the Welsh Youth Parliament Team should have a generic case file for each Welsh Youth Parliament Member and a separate file per Welsh Youth Parliament Member for any safeguarding concerns or observations. This will allow an accurate chronology of concerns, observations and events to be documented and can help provide additional context for future decision making that may be required for a DSO or a Local Authority. This does not substitute a safeguarding incident form, which must be completed if the concern is of a ***child protection nature***. There is a specific section relating to [the Welsh Youth Parliament](#_The_Role_of) in respect of safeguarding.

Records should contain the date, time and people present. The record should be as detailed and precise as possible, giving an exact account of what was said (verbatim if possible), especially where it is a child who is disclosing abuse or making an allegation. It should report the details as disclosed or alleged and record all subsequent action taken. The record should be signed and dated by the author.

Physical appearance or behaviour of a child should be recorded as factually and accurately as possible.

Include observations of parents and carers and details of family circumstances where possible.

The record should clearly state whether the information recorded is hearsay, third-party information, a professional’s opinion, or fact.

All discussions should end with clear and explicit recorded agreement about who will be taking what action by when, or that no further action is needed. The DSO has ultimate responsibility for ensuring that all decision making is evidenced.

Records will be kept securely with restricted access

Any need to transfer information, verbally, in hard copy or electronically will be done in such a way that confidentiality is maintained.

# Signs and Indicators of Abuse and Harm

Children may be vulnerable to neglect and abuse or exploitation from within their family and from individuals they come across in their daily lives. Abuse can be perpetrated against a child from an adult or another child and can take a variety of different forms, including:

* physical abuse
* emotional abuse
* sexual abuse
* neglect
* bullying
* witnessing or experiencing domestic abuse can have severe and damaging consequences for a child
* exploitation by criminal gangs and organised crime groups
* trafficking and modern slavery
* online abuse
* sexual exploitation
* influences of extremism leading to radicalisation
* domestic abuse within relationships
* discriminatory abuse
* organisational abuse
* self-harm
* self- neglect
* suicidal thoughts
* suicidal attempts
* use of substances or alcohol

You may also have significant concerns for **an unborn child** due to lifestyle choices or risks that are being posed to someone’s pregnancy.

Please refer to the [Glossary](#_Appendix_4:_Glossary) to read the full definition of each category and examples of what they involve. The definitions and indicators are not definitive, but here as a guide to assist you. The glossary also defines other contextual safeguarding concerns such as forced marriage, female genital mutilation, and child sexual exploitation. It is important to be aware of these in our changing and increasingly digital society, so please take the time to go through this.

Recognising child abuse is not easy. Remember that it is not your responsibility to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place or if a child is at significant risk of harm from someone. You do, however, have a responsibility to act in order that the appropriate agencies can investigate and take any necessary action to protect a child.

This may feel uncomfortable if you have concern for a child of a colleague or senior member of staff or person in a position of power, for example, you are aware there is extreme domestic violence in the home and a child is constantly witnessing this or they have been physically injured. Remember that the child’s welfare is of paramount importance and that you should discuss any concerns you have with the DSO who will listen, take you seriously and manage the next steps appropriately.

It is also important to remember that many children may exhibit some indicators at some time in their lives, and that the presence of one or more should not be taken as proof that abuse is occurring. There may well be other reasons for changes in behaviour such as a death or the arrival of a new baby in the family or relationship problems between parents/carers. In assessing whether indicators are related to abuse or not, the authorities will always want to understand them in relation to the child’s development and context.

# What to do if a child makes a disclosure to you

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

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

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

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

If a child or young person discloses abuse it is important to practise the following:

* Discuss the issues in a calm, caring and supportive manner. The child needs to know that you are listening and taking the information seriously, and that you will respond positively to ensure their protection.
* Understand that the child is never to blame in situations of abuse, and they should be reassured they have done nothing wrong, either in relation to the abuse itself or in reporting it.
* The child should be listened to but not interrogated nor asked to repeat their account. Remember that it is not your role to investigate. If anything needs to be clarified in order to understand the safeguarding risk, ask clear, open questions and be careful not to lead a child or put words into their mouths.
* Let the child guide the pace and remember their ability to recount an allegation will depend on age, culture, language and communication skills, and disability.
* Care should be taken not to make assumptions about what the child is saying or to make interpretations.
* Do not show shock at what is being said. This may discourage the child from talking, as they may feel you are unable to cope with what they are saying, or perhaps that you are thinking badly of them.
* Do not ask ‘why’ questions as this can suggest the child is responsible for the abuse in some way
* You can ask a child ‘do you want to tell me anything else?’ but do not force the issue.
* Never promise to keep a secret or confidentiality. The Commission must report safeguarding concerns to the wider statutory systems to effectively support and care for children and young people. It is important that we are transparent about this during our conversation with a child. You could say something like “I’m really concerned about what you have told me, and I have a responsibility to ensure that you are safe”.
* Make a note of your concerns or observations which have led you to become concerned for a child’s welfare, or what the child has said (using their own words) as soon as practicable
* This information should then be referred to your line manager and the Designated Safeguarding (DSO) verbally, and with a subsequent [safeguarding incident form](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=KVHcOAw0FEWKBE6O8ncVZPfHgg1x8RlPkAMiiTtDnJlUMElXSVVLNjQ0UjY2NFlFVDlYR0dOMzBGSyQlQCN0PWcu&wdLOR=cCC627CDA-DEB2-4D2F-BE4F-472D5A7DE0DA) you can send electronically. You should raise the matter with the DSO within one working day if it is non-urgent, and immediately in all other cases.
* For immediate threat to life cases, you must avoid any delay and contact the emergency services immediately on 999 and inform the DSO of the course of action following this via conversation and a completed MS Safeguarding Form.

# The Role of the Welsh Youth Parliament and Safeguarding

The Welsh Youth Parliament (WYP) will be expected to follow the guidance set out in this policy and within the Adult at Risk Policy where a Welsh Youth Parliament Member is 18 years and above. However, it is acknowledged that the WYP will also work closely with partner agencies who support some of our Welsh Youth Parliament Members (WYPM) and that this may have a bearing on how safeguarding matters are sensitively managed

Where it is the partner agency that is in receipt of a disclosure or safeguarding concern, they must utilise their own safeguarding procedures, which should be compatible with current legislation, and ensure that relevant information, including action taken, is passed to the WYP. There may be occasions whereby the Senedd’s DSO follows up the action to ensure appropriate steps were taken, and they may wish to challenge a decision where deemed necessary.

The WYP will ensure that a positive safeguarding culture is promoted within the team, and that it is transparent with the WYPM from the outset about our safeguarding responsibilities should information of concern be shared or observed.

The WYP is committed to a positive relationship with the Senedd’s lead DSO and is aware of their obligations to report concerns of a child protection nature, in line with the procedures outline in this policy.

However, there will be occasions where some WYPM may display or share concerns that do not necessarily meet a child protection criteria. The WYP will use their discretion on these occasions as to whether it is more appropriate to manage and monitor this via an ongoing safeguarding log, and to offer the WYPM practical and emotional support/ signposting.

It may also be considered more appropriate for the partner agency to take the lead on any welfare or safeguarding concerns due to the nature of their involvement and relationship with the WYPM and their family. Again, the WYP will use their judgment in respect of this and consult with the partner agency as to the next steps forward.

Such discussions and agreed actions will be accurately recorded. In any case where an external referral is deemed necessary, the Senedd DSO will be alerted as is outlined in the policy, regardless of whether this will be actioned by the partner agency.

# If you have a concern about the behaviour or actions of a member of Commission staff or another adult

If the behaviour of any Commission staff or any other adult (including a Member of the Senedd or their support staff, a contractor, a relative of a Commission staff member, or an adult within the public who is not at all associated with the workplace) towards children or young people causes you concern:

* Do not allow the seniority or position of power that the adult holds to prevent you in sharing your concerns.
* Do not dismiss your concerns
* Do not confront the person about whom you have concerns
* If you have concerns or you are told about possible or alleged abuse, poor practice, or wider welfare issues you must report this to the DSO.
* If you feel uncomfortable doing this, or you are not satisfied with the response that you get, contact the Chief Executive, or seek advice from the NSPCC helpline for professionals.
* You should never delay passing on your concerns to somebody who is in position to take them forward and ensure that a proper investigation takes place. You will always be taken seriously.
* Do not worry that you may be mistaken. It is better to have discussed it with somebody with the experience and responsibility to make an appropriate assessment and take the matter forward.

Appendix 2 provides a [safeguarding escalation flowchart](#_Appendix_2:_Safeguarding) for your ease.

# Appendix 1: Conduct of behaviour when working with children and young people:

Some of the below may sound obvious, and indeed covered under the law, but it is important that staff take time to read this so that they are fully aware of the expectations on them.

Staff should never:

* Physically abuse children and young people
* Develop physical/sexual relationships with children and young people (please refer to abuse of trust section below)
* Develop relationships with children which could in any way be deemed exploitative or abusive
* Engage in actions that may be abusive or may place a child at risk of abuse
* Condone, or participate in, behaviour with children and young people, which is illegal, unsafe, or abusive
* Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle, or degrade children, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse. This means that it is unacceptable, for example, to treat a child in any of the following ways:
* to cause distress by shouting or calling them derogatory names
* to hold them in such a way that it causes pain, or to shake them
* to physically restrain them except to protect them from harming themselves or others
* to take part in horseplay or rough games
* to allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any kind
* to do things of a personal nature for the child that they can do for themselves (this includes changing clothing, or going to the toilet with them unless another adult is present)
* to allow or engage in sexually suggestion behaviour within a child’s sight or hearing, or make suggestive remarks to or within earshot
* to give or show anything which could be construed as pornographic
* to seek or agree to meet them anywhere outside of the normal workplace **without the full prior knowledge and agreement of the parent, guardian, or carer.** It is acknowledged that some teams will work directly with children, and as such that outreach work will often be a key feature and/or expectation of their role. In these circumstances, parental consent should still be sought or arranged directly with the external party, i.e., a school or support service. Please contact HR Employee Services if you require support or guidance regarding this, as each situation is likely to be individual.
* Do not forget that our safeguarding extends to our interactions with children. We may unintentionally trigger a child in what we say and need to be mindful when discussing sensitive subjects such as bereavement, emotional wellbeing, abuse, self-harm etc. We must consider this and where we are discussing sensitive issues, for example during a consultation exercise, we should ensure we notify children of their right to leave at any time. Emotional signposting support should be offered after the session and there may be times where it is advisable to have an external support service in attendance to offer support in a separate breakout room and at the end of a meeting.
* not treat online interactions any differently to a face-to-face meeting. Virtual meetings must be facilitated with full safeguarding considerations- [Please refer to Appendix 3 re online safety and code of conduct](#_Appendix_3:_Online)

# Abuse of Trust

The Commission must ensure that children who interact with the Senedd are safeguarded from individuals who may pose a risk to them. A relationship of trust exists where a member of staff is in a position of power or influence over a child by virtue of the work or nature of the activity being undertaken.

It is a criminal offence to engage in a sexual relationship with a child under 16, but there are also other circumstances where it will be necessary for the Commission to take action. For example, where it is alleged that a staff member who works with children has:

* Behaved in a way that has harmed or may have harmed a child, or put a child at risk of harm;
* Committed a criminal offence against a child or that has a direct impact on a child;
* Behaved towards a child in a way that indicates they are unsuitable to work with children;
* Failed to understand or comply with the need for clear personal and professional boundaries in the work place;
* Behaved in a way that undermines the trust placed in them by virtue of their position.

Allegations will be dealt with under the Wales Safeguarding Procedures and, where appropriate, the matter immediately referred to the local authority Children’s Social Services. Conduct and disciplinary procedures will be implemented in respect of the member of staff.

# Appendix 2: Safeguarding Escalation Process Flowchart

At all times:

**IF IN DOUBT, CHECK IT OUT!**

Safeguarding often has grey areas, that may not neatly fit this flowchart.

Contact a Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) or the Safeguarding Advisor who can advise further.

(

No

Yes

No

Are there concerns that a member of Commission staff has harmed a child?

 Yes

Is there an **immediate** threat to life, i.e., a child who is threatening to imminently end their life, is in immediate danger or is in need of immediate medical attention?

Do not approach the staff member. Speak with your line manager and the DSO, who will manage this with the Director of HR. If it is the line manager or DSO who is implicated, you should speak to another of the DSOs or the Safeguarding Advisor. A decision will be made regarding the need for disciplinary action and/or a referral to social care.

Call 999 to contact the relevant emergency service- this should only be done in extremely concerning situations where there is immediate threat to life and that any delay would be too risky.

Then alert DSO and complete safeguarding incident form within 24 hours.

No

Yes

Calmly reassure the child and gently establish facts.

Allow the child to tell you what happened in their words and avoid any leading questions.

Never promise confidentiality- you have a duty to share information that suggests risk of harm to a child.

Please refer to page 9 of this document for further guidance on how to manage a disclosure.

Has the child made a direct disclosure of abuse or risk of harm?

Complete a [Safeguarding Incident Form](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=KVHcOAw0FEWKBE6O8ncVZPfHgg1x8RlPkAMiiTtDnJlUMElXSVVLNjQ0UjY2NFlFVDlYR0dOMzBGSyQlQCN0PWcu&wdLOR=cCC627CDA-DEB2-4D2F-BE4F-472D5A7DE0DA) to outline concern and contact a DSO to advise within 1 working day (if non urgent)

Advise DSO if consent has been provided by family or a third party to share info with external agencies, and why this would be too risky in cases where this is a concern.

Await further guidance from DSO, who will decide if the concern meets threshold to make a referral to support services or social care or requires no further action.

# Appendix 3: Online and E-Safety

The internet and social media can be extremely positive in allowing the public to learn about and engage in political debate. However, this is not without risk.

The world's technology is changing day by day, and it can be difficult to cover this in an e-safety code of behaviour. However, the below provides some guidance when engaging online with the public.

**If you require any further assistance, please contact Employee Services who can advise and support:**

* When communicating online, employees are expected to behave just as they would if they were speaking with the individual in person, i.e., being professional, polite, respectful, non-judgemental etc. Use your work email and phone only
* Remember that written words, icons, emojis, once published are out there and so always ensure that this reflects the Commission’s high reputation - nothing should be used that could be perceived as discriminatory, bullying or as a sexual innuendo - ask yourself before posting if the information could be misinterpreted in any way.
* Never disclose personal information about the children or adults at risk that you may be working with.
* Work with complete transparency, so that any messages to children/young people/ adults at risk is available for others to see, i.e., try to avoid private messages to someone's social media account and instead opt for email and routinely copy in a colleague or project mailbox.
* Avoid sending individual text messages to a child, but there may on occasion be a circumstance where this is unavoidable, such as contact between the Welsh Youth Parliament Team and a Welsh Youth Parliament Member, in which case the message should be kept short and to the point, and should not engage in general conversation.
* It is advised that texts are backed up on a safe device
* Do not share the contact details of a child or adult at risk without their consent.

**Practical guidance for virtual meetings with children and young people:**

* Staff must ensure they are using their work email address
* Ensure you have sought parental consent and made the purpose of the virtual meeting clear to the child and parent/carer
* Advise children prior to the meeting to avoid sharing any personal or identifiable belongings in the background. This extends to school uniform unless there is a specific reason and agreement.
* Advise children not to share personal information such as their school or address
* Do not allow attendees to join before the host Set up a ‘waiting room’
* Ensure that **at least 2 staff** are present in the room before any young people are admitted. Treat the virtual room like you are meeting in a physical room
* Mute attendees on joining
* Turn screen sharing off and only grant this to individual participants in the meeting when required for the purpose of the meeting, i.e. sharing a presentation.
* Lock your meeting room after you have started
* Don’t publicise your meeting’s link on social media
* Don’t share the screenshot of everyone, especially when it shows the meeting ID
* Try to have someone whose job it is to ‘manage the room’ and focus just on doing that.
* Tell people what the Plan B is (i.e., if you do have to abort the meeting where will the meeting move to and how can people re-join)
* Additionally, avoid sharing personal information and turn off your video and microphone, unless it’s needed.
* Be mindful about children who feel uncomfortable in having their video camera on and allow them the choice to switch this off if they wish
* Be mindful that some topics discussed during the meeting may unintentionally trigger an individual. We do not know what everyone’s experiences are and should consider a de-brief opportunity following sessions, signposting to support agencies and in some specific circumstances, such as discussing extremely sensitive topics, should consider having external support services available to offer a debrief and support straight after the meeting and possibly during it in a ‘break-out area’
* Agree before the meeting who will keep a particular alertness for identifying safeguarding issues. Following the meeting there is a responsibility for you as a team to discuss this together and decide if there were any concerns raised or observed that need to be escalated to the DSO.

# Appendix 4: Glossary

A child **-** is an individual under 18 years. If you have any concerns for an individual over 18, please refer to the Adults at Risk Policy.

Abuse - is a violation of an individual’s human and civil rights by another person or persons.

Bullying - deliberately hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time. It can take many forms, but the three main types are physical (e.g., hitting, kicking, theft), verbal (e.g., racist, or homophobic remarks, threats, name calling) and emotional (e.g., isolating an individual from the activities and social acceptance of their peer group). The damage inflicted by bullying can frequently be underestimated. It can cause considerable distress to children to the extent that it affects their health and development.

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) - A form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity. This may be in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

Child protection – Whereas the term ‘safeguarding’ refers to all children, Child Protection refers distinctly to children at serious risk of harm.

Complex and organised abuse **-**Abuse involving one or more abusers and a number of abused children. It may take place in any setting. The adults involved may be acting in groups, in isolation, or may be using an institutional framework or position of authority (such as a teacher, coach, faith group leader, or in a celebrity position) to access and recruit children for abuse. Organised abuse may also occur online or via phones, games consoles and computers. Although in most cases of complex and organised abuse, the abuser(s) is an adult, it is also possible for children and young people to be the perpetrators of such harm, with or without adult abusers.

Contextual Safeguarding - Recognises that as young people grow and develop they are influenced by a whole range of environments and people outside of their family, for example in school or college, in the local community, in their peer groups or online.

Criminal exploitation **-** When an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate, or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into any criminal activity. This may be in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator through violence or threats of violence. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual.

Cyber Bullying**-** cyber bullying occurs when someone repeatedly makes fun of another person online or repeatedly picks on another person through emails or text messages, or uses online forums with the intention of harming, damaging, humiliating, or isolating another person. It can be used to carry out many different types of bullying (such as racist bullying, homophobic bullying, or bullying related to special educational needs and disabilities).

Disclosure- the process by which an individual will share their experiences of abuse with others.

Discrimination– discrimination is abuse which centres on a difference or perceived difference particularly with respect to race, gender, or disability or any of the protected characteristics of the Equality Act.

Domestic abuse **-**Any incident, or pattern of incidents, of controlling, coercive, or threatening behaviour, violence, and abuse. Domestic abuse can occur within intimate relationships or the family setting. This can encompass, but is not limited to – psychological, physical, sexual, financial, and emotional abuse. In some cases, young people can domestically abuse their parents and/or siblings, or adults at risk. Domestic abuse often features controlling behaviour, which is defined by a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent, by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance, and escape, and regulating their everyday behaviour. It can also involve coercive behaviour, which is an act – or a pattern of acts – of assault, threats, humiliation, and intimidation, or other abuse, that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.

Emotional Abuse - Emotional abuse can be difficult to measure, as there are often no outward physical signs though there may be a developmental delay due to a failure to thrive and grow. It is important to be mindful that even children who appear well-cared-for may nevertheless be emotionally abused by being taunted, put down or belittled. They may receive little or no love, affection, or the attention they need for their age and development, which could cause their emotional wellbeing to be affected. from their developmental delay in terms of emotional progress. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. 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 causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children.

Female Genital Mutilation - comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.

Forced Marriage – forced marriage is a term used to describe a marriage in which one or both of the parties are married without their consent or against their will. A forced marriage differs from an arranged marriage, in which both parties consent to the assistance of a third party in identifying a spouse. The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 makes it a criminal offence to force someone to marry.

Harm – The ill treatment or the impairment of health or development including physical harm, sexual abuse and forms of ill treatment which are not physical.

Hate Crime - is any incident which constitutes a criminal offence perceived by the victim or any other person as being motivated by prejudice, discrimination or hate towards a person’s actual or perceived race, religious belief, sexual orientation, disability, political opinion, or gender identity.

Human trafficking **-** the recruiting, harbouring, receiving, or transporting people into a situation of exploitation through the use of violence, deception, coercion and/or force. Trafficking of children or adults is abuse. People are trafficked for many purposes, including sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, labour, benefit fraud and involvement in criminal activity such as drug distribution and cultivation, credit card fraud and theft. Trafficking may involve movement across national borders (international human trafficking) or within the UK, whether across county lines or within a local area (internal trafficking).

Missing person **-**Anyone whose whereabouts is unknown, whatever the circumstances or length of their disappearance. The person may, for example, have missed an agreed appointment, or they may have not been seen or heard from in the service for a few days.

Modern slavery **-**The recruitment, movement, harbouring or receiving of children, women, or men through the use of force, coercion, abuse of vulnerability, deception, or other means for the purpose of exploitation, forced labour and domestic servitude. Slave masters use whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive, and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude, and inhumane treatment

Neglect - Neglect can be a difficult form of abuse to recognise yet have some of the most lasting and damaging effects on children. The physical signs of neglect may include constant hunger, sometimes stealing food from other children, constantly dirty or ‘smelly’, loss of weight, or being constantly underweight, inappropriate clothing for the conditions. Changes in behaviour which can also indicate neglect may include complaining of being tired all the time, not requesting medical assistance and/or failing to attend appointments, having few friends, or mentioning being left alone or unsupervised. It may also include neglect of, unresponsiveness to, a child’s basic emotional needs.

Physical abuse - Most children will collect cuts and bruises as part of the rough-and-tumble of daily life. Injuries should always be interpreted in light of the child’s medical and social history, developmental stage and the explanation given. Most accidental bruises are seen over bony parts of the body, e.g., elbows, knees, shins, and are often on the front of the body. Some children, however, will have bruising that is more than likely inflicted rather than accidental. Important indicators of physical abuse are bruises or injuries that are either unexplained or inconsistent with the explanation given, or visible on the ‘soft’ parts of the body where accidental injuries are unlikely, e g, cheeks, abdomen, back and buttocks. A delay in seeking medical treatment when it is obviously necessary is also a cause for concern. Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, suffocation, drowning, scalding or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. It can also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates or induces illness in a child.

Protected characteristic**-** includes a person’s [age](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/equality-act/protected-characteristics#age)**,** [disability](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/equality-act/protected-characteristics#disability)**,** [gender reassignment](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/equality-act/protected-characteristics#reassignment)**,** [marriage and civil partnership](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/equality-act/protected-characteristics#marriage)**,** [pregnancy and maternity](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/equality-act/protected-characteristics#pregmat)**,** [race](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/equality-act/protected-characteristics#race)**,** [religion or belief](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/equality-act/protected-characteristics#rob)**,** [sex](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/equality-act/protected-characteristics#sex)**,** [sexual orientation](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/equality-act/protected-characteristics#lgb)

Self-harm - The reasons children and young people self-harm are often complicated and will be different for every child or young person. Sometimes a child or young person may not know the reasons they self-harm. For many, self-harm can feel like a way to cope with difficult feelings or to release tension. The physical pain of hurting themselves can feel like a distraction from the emotional pain they are struggling with. Some difficult experiences or emotions can make self-harm more likely in children, such as experiencing depression, anxiety or eating problems, having low self-esteem, or feeling like they’re not good enough, being bullied or feeling alone, experiencing emotional, physical or sexual abuse, or neglect, grieving, problems with family relationships, feeling angry, numb or like they don't have control over their lives.

Self-neglect – this covers a wide range of behaviour: neglecting to care for one’s personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding. The reasons are often complex and may be due to difficult experiences and emotions as described above in self-harm.

Sexual Abuse **-** Adults who use children to meet their own sexual needs abuse both girls and boys of all ages, including infants and toddlers. Usually, in cases of sexual abuse it is the child’s behaviour that may cause you to become concerned, although physical signs can also be present. In all cases, children who tell about sexual abuse do so because they want it to stop. It is important, therefore, that they are listened to and taken seriously. The physical signs of sexual abuse may include pain or itching in the genital area, bruising or bleeding near genital area, sexually transmitted disease, stomach pains, discomfort when walking or sitting down and pregnancy. Sexual abuse can also include noncontact activities such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of pornographic materials or in watching sexual activities or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. Children who are sexually abused may exhibit sexualised behaviour or become very withdrawn and hyper vigilant.