# DUNDONALD PRIMARY
# & NURSERY SCHOOL

Inspire. Believe. Achieve

# CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Our school is a UNICEF Rights Respecting School and Articles 3 & 29 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child underpins our school vision:

"The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all things that affect children"

"Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures, and the environment"

**September 2026**

Within the Pastoral Care policy of Dundonald PS are 3 underlying principles:-

a. in all matters relating to child protection procedures and policies, the best interests of the child are of paramount consideration (UN Convention, Article 3, Children (NI) Order 1995).

b. as a school we have a pastoral responsibility towards the pupils in our care and are taking all reasonable steps to ensure that their welfare is safeguarded and their safety is preserved (UN Convention Article 19)

c. each child has the right to be heard, listened to and taken seriously and to be consulted depending on his/her age and understanding about the proposed action (UN Convention Article 12)

## CONTENTS

**Our School's Mission Statement**

**Related Policies**

**The School Safeguarding Team**

**Definitions of Harm**

**Responding to a Safeguarding Concern**

**Consent, Confidentiality, Information Sharing and Record Keeping**

**Safe Recruitment Procedures**

**Code of Conduct**

**The Preventative Curriculum**

**Monitoring and Evaluation**

**Appendices**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Appendix 1** | **Specific Types of Abuse** |
| **Appendix 2** | **Children with Increased Vulnerabilities** |
| **Appendix 3** | **How a Parent Can Make a Complaint** |
| **Appendix 4** | **Procedure Where the School Has Concerns about Possible Abuse** |
| **Appendix 5** | **Dealing with Allegations of Abuse against a Member of Staff** |
| **Appendix 6** | **Note of Concern** |
| **Appendix 7** | **Signs and symptoms of abuse** |
| **Appendix 8** | **Role of Social Services and other agencies** |
| **Appendix 9** | **What happens after a referral is made** |
| **Appendix 10** | **Key Terms** |

**Our Schools Mission Statement**
We in Dundonald Primary School have a responsibility for the safeguarding and child protection of the children in our care and we will carry out this duty by providing a caring, supportive and safe environment, where each child is valued for his or her unique talents and abilities, and in which all our young people can learn and develop to their full potential. All staff, teaching and non-teaching should be alert to the signs of possible abuse and should know the procedures to be followed. This policy sets out guidance on the action, which is required where abuse or harm to a child is suspected and outlines referral procedures within our school. The welfare of the child is paramount and they are at the heart of all our decision making.

**School Vision Statement**
'Through nurture we **Inspire** a love of learning, **Believe** in our abilities and empower each other to **Achieve** our personal best within a supportive school community.'

**Key Principles of Safeguarding and Child Protection**
The general principles, which underpin our work, are those set out in the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child** and are enshrined in the **Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995**, "**Co-operating to safeguard children and young people in Northern Ireland**" (DHSSPSNI, 2017 and 2024), the Department of Education (Northern Ireland) guidance "**Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools**" Circular 2017/04 (amended September 2019; updated June 2020, updated June 2022 and subsequent amendments) and the **SBNI** Core Child Protection Policy and Procedures (2017). Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

The following principles form the basis of our Child Protection Policy:

- The child or young person's welfare is paramount;
- The voice of the child or young person should be heard;
- Parents are supported to exercise parental responsibility and families helped stay together;
- Partnership;
- Prevention;
- Responses should be proportionate to the circumstances;
- Protection; and
- Evidence based and informed decision making.

**Child Protection**
Child protection is a core element of safeguarding and relates to the specific activities undertaken to protect individual children who are suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm.

**Safeguarding**
Safeguarding is the overarching responsibility to protect children, young people and those over 18 who could be 'at risk' from harm, prevent impairment of their health and development and ensure their circumstances reflect safe and effective care. It reflects everything we do in school to safeguard our pupils and school community.

**Other Related Policies**
As a school we have a duty to ensure that safeguarding permeates all activities and functions. The child protection policy therefore complements and supports a range of other school policies including:

- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Pastoral Care Policy
- Complaints policy
- Safe Handling Policy
- Educational Visits
- Online Safety Policy
- First Aid and Administration of Medicines
- Health and Safety Policy
- Intimate Care
- Relationships and Sexuality Education
- Special Educational Needs
- Whistleblowing
- Staff Code of Conduct

**These policies are available to parents on request with key policies available on the school website at https://www.dundonaldprimaryschool.net/ Translated copies can be made available if required.**

**Safeguarding Team**
As best practice, in the best interests of the children, and as a support for the Designated Teachers (DT/DDT), the school has an established Safeguarding Team. This team includes the Chair of the BoG (Mr G Ennis), the Designated Governor for Child Protection (Mrs P Neill), the Principal (Mr D Massey), the DT (Mrs S Burns) and the DDT (Mrs M Savage and Mrs K McConaghy).

The team may co-opt other members as required to help address specific issues, for example the SENCO, ICT Co-ordinator, etc. Where schools have employed an individual with social work qualifications/ experience, the postholder may be included in the school safeguarding team. However, only teachers in schools can assume the safeguarding role and responsibilities of the Designated Teacher.

This Safeguarding Team is a vehicle for ensuring effective co-ordination and co-operation between the key individuals responsible for safeguarding throughout the school.

The EA CPSS provides child protection training in relation to the specific responsibilities of each member of the team.

As a Safeguarding team, it is our responsibility to provide leadership, oversight, coordination, support and assurance that our children and young people are safe, heard and protected.

The responsibilities of the team should include:

- The monitoring and periodic review of Safeguarding and Child Protection arrangements in the school.
- Support for the DT in the exercise of their child protection responsibilities, including recognition of the administrative and emotional demands of the post.
- Ensuring attendance of Governors and staff at relevant training - including refresher training - in keeping with legislative and best practice requirements.

| | |
|---|---|
| Mr D Massey | Principal |
| Mrs S Burns | Vice Principal, Designated Teacher |
| Mrs M Savage | Learning Support Coordinator (SENCO), Deputy Designated Teacher |
| Mrs K McConaghy | Nursery Teacher, Deputy Designated Teacher |
| Mr G Ennis | Chair, Board of Governors |
| Mrs P Neill | Board of Governor |

**Roles and Responsibilities**

**Board of Governors must ensure that:**

- A Designated Governor for Child Protection is appointed
- A Designated and Deputy Designated Teacher are appointed in their schools
- They have a full understanding of the roles of the Designated and Deputy Designated Teachers for Child Protection
- Safeguarding and child protection training is given to all staff and governors including refresher training
- Relevant safeguarding information and guidance is disseminated to all staff and governors with the opportunity to discuss requirements and impact on roles and responsibilities
- The school has a Child Protection Policy which is reviewed annually and parents and pupils receive a copy of the child protection policy and complaints procedure every two years
- The school has an Anti-Bullying Policy which is reviewed at intervals of no more than four years and maintains a record of all incidents of bullying or alleged bullying. See the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (NI) 2016
- The school ensures that other safeguarding policies are reviewed at least every 3 years or as specified in relevant guidance
- There is a code of conduct for all adults working in the school
- All school staff and volunteers are recruited and vetted, in line with DE Circulars
- They receive a full annual report on all child protection matters (It is best practice that they receive a termly report of child protection activities). As a school,

safeguarding remains as a standing item on the Board of Governors agenda. This annual report should include details of the preventative curriculum and any initiatives or awareness raising undertaken within the school, including training for staff

- The school maintains the following child protection records in line with DE Circulars 2015/13 Dealing with Allegations of Abuse Against a Member of Staff and 2020/07 Child Protection: Record Keeping in Schools: Safeguarding and child protection concerns; disclosures of abuse; allegations against staff and actions taken to investigate and deal with outcomes; staff induction and training

**Chair of Board of Governors**
The Chairperson of the BoG plays a pivotal role in creating and maintaining the safeguarding ethos within the school environment.

In the event of a safeguarding or child protection complaint being made against the Principal, it is the Chairperson who must assume lead responsibility for managing the complaint/allegation in keeping with guidance issued by the Department, employing authorities, and the school's own policies and procedures.

The Chairperson is responsible for ensuring child protection records are kept and for signing and dating annually the Record of Child Abuse Complaints against staff members even if there have been no entries.

**Mr Gary Ennis is our Chair of the Board of Governors.**

**Designated Governor for Child Protection**
The BoG delegates a specific member of the governing body to take the lead in safeguarding/child protection issues in order to advise the governors on:

- The role of the designated teachers;
- The content of child protection policies;
- The content of a code of conduct for adults within the school;
- The content of the termly updates and full Annual Designated Teachers Report;
- Recruitment, selection, vetting and induction of staff.

**Mrs Pamela Neill is our Designated Governor for Child Protection.**

**Designated Teacher for Child Protection**
Every school is required to have a DT and DDT with responsibility for child protection. These are highly skilled roles developed and supported through a structured training programme, requiring knowledge and professional judgement on complex and emotive issues. The responsibilities involve:

- The induction and training of all school staff including support staff
- Delivering safeguarding training to Board of Governors and update to reflect changing circumstances, guidance or changing school trends

- Being available to discuss safeguarding or child protection concerns of any member of staff and be the first point of contact for safeguarding concerns
- Advise and support staff
- Having responsibility for record keeping of all child protection concerns
- Ensuring staff are aware that Notes of Concern should be completed using the template provided in DE circular 2020/07
- Maintaining a current awareness of early intervention supports and other local services e.g. Family Support Hubs
- Maintain secure and accurate safeguarding records
- Making referrals to Social Services or PSNI where appropriate
- Liaison with the EA Designated Officers for Child Protection
- Keeping the school Principal informed
- Represent school in multi agency processes including Case Conferences
- Lead responsibility for the development of the school's child protection policy
- Promotion of a safeguarding and child protection ethos in the school
- Compiling written reports to the BoG regarding child protection

**Our Designated Teacher for Child Protection is Mrs Sarah Burns (VP).**

**Deputy Designated Teacher for Child Protection**
The role of the DDT is to work co-operatively with the DT in fulfilling his/her responsibilities.

It is important that the DDT works in partnership with the DT so that he/she develops sufficient knowledge and experience to undertake the duties of the DT when required. DDTs are also provided with the same specialist training by CPSS to help them in their role.

As a large primary school we have 2 DDTs, one of which is in our nursery:

**Mrs Michelle Savage and Mrs Karen McConaghy.**

**The School Principal**
The Principal, Mr Massey, as the Secretary to the BoG, will assist the BoG to fulfil its safeguarding and child protection duties, keeping them informed of any changes to guidance, procedure or legislation relating to safeguarding and child protection, ensuring any circulars and guidance from DE are shared promptly, and termly inclusion of child protection activities on the BoG meeting agenda. In addition, the Principal takes the lead in managing child protection concerns relating to staff.

The Principal has delegated responsibility for establishing and managing the safeguarding and child protection systems within the school. This includes the appointment and management of suitable staff to the key roles of DT and DDT Designated Teacher posts and ensuring that new staff and volunteers have safeguarding and child protection awareness sessions as part of an induction programme.

It is essential that there is protected time and support to allow the DTs to carry out this important role effectively and that DTs are selected based on knowledge and skills required to fulfil the role.

The Principal must ensure that parents and pupils receive a copy, or summary, of the Child Protection Policy at intake and, at a minimum, every two years.

**Other Members of School Staff**

- Members of staff **must** refer concerns or disclosures promptly, initially to the Designated Teacher for Child Protection or to the Deputy Designated Teacher if she is not available.
- Class teachers should complete the Note of Concern if there are safeguarding concerns such as: poor attendance and punctuality, poor presentation, changed or unusual behaviour including self-harm and suicidal thoughts, deterioration in educational progress, discussions with parents about concerns relating to their child, concerns about pupil abuse or serious bullying and concerns about home circumstances including disclosures of domestic abuse.
- **Staff should not** give children a guarantee of total confidentiality regarding their disclosures, should not investigate nor should they ask leading questions. The information will always be shared with the Designated Teacher at the time of disclosure.
- Staff must be aware of signs and indicators of abuse, neglect and exploitation.
- Maintain professional boundaries
- Participate in training and safeguarding activities

**Support Staff**

- If any member of the support staff has concerns about a child or staff member they should report these concerns to the Designated Teacher or Deputy Designated Teacher if she is not available. A detailed written record of the concerns will be made and any further necessary action will be taken, as detailed above.

**Parents**

**The primary responsibility for safeguarding and protection of children rests with parents who should feel confident about raising any concerns they have in relation to their child.**

Parents can play their part in safeguarding by informing the school:

- If their child has a medical condition or educational need
- If there are any Court Orders relating to the safety or wellbeing of a parent or child
- If there is any change in a child's circumstances for example - change of address, change of contact details, change of name, change of parental responsibility
- If there are any changes to arrangements about who brings their child to and from school
- If their child is absent and should send in a note on the child's return to school. This assures the school that the parent/carer knows about the absence. More information on parental responsibility can be found on the EA website at: www.eani.org.uk/schools/safeguarding-and-child-protection

**Role of the Child**

Our pupils are supported to:

- Express their views
- Feel valued and listened to
- Have their views taken seriously
- Feel that they views are appropriately considered in safeguarding decisions

**We request all parents/carers ensure their contact information is up to date as it is essential that we have this.**

**Code of Conduct for All Staff - Paid or Unpaid**

All actions concerning children and young people must uphold the best interests of the young person as a primary consideration. Staff must always be mindful of the fact that they hold a position of trust and that their behaviour towards the child and young people in their charge must be above reproach. All members of staff are expected to comply with the school's Code of Conduct for Employees and Volunteers which has been approved by the Board of Governors.

**Child Protection Definitions**

**Definition of Harm**

(*Co-operating to Safeguard Children and young People in Northern Ireland August 2017*)

**Harm can be suffered by a child or young person by acts of abuse perpetrated upon them by others. Abuse can happen in any family, but children may be more at risk if their parents have problems with drugs, alcohol and mental health, or if they live in a home where domestic abuse happens. Abuse can also occur outside of the family environment. Evidence shows that babies and children with disabilities can be more vulnerable to suffering abuse.**

**Although the harm from the abuse might take a long time to be recognisable in the child or young person, professionals may be in a position to observe its indicators earlier, for example, in the way that a parent interacts with their child. Effective and ongoing information sharing is key between professionals.**

**Harm from abuse is not always straightforward to identify and a child or young person may experience more than one type of harm**.

Harm can be caused by:
**Sexual abuse**
**Emotional abuse**
**Physical abuse**
**Neglect**
**Exploitation**

**Sexual Abuse** occurs when others use and exploit children sexually for their own gratification or gain or the gratification of others. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape, or oral sex) or non-penetrative

acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside clothing. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via technology). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Includes Domestic Abuse which can have significant adverse impacts upon children (see appendix 1). Staff should always be mindful that this can continue after a relationship has ended.

**Emotional Abuse** is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child. It is also sometimes called psychological abuse and it can have severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's emotional development.

Emotional abuse may involve deliberately telling a child that they are worthless, or unloved and inadequate. It may include not giving a child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them, or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. Emotional abuse may involve bullying – including online bullying through social networks, online games or mobile phones – by a child's peers.

**Physical Abuse** is deliberately physically hurting a child. It might take a variety of different forms, including hitting, biting, pinching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating a child.

**Neglect** is the failure to provide for a child's basic needs, whether it be adequate food, clothing, hygiene, supervision or shelter that is likely to result in the serious impairment of a child's health or development. Children who are neglected often also suffer from other types of abuse.

**Exploitation** is the intentional ill-treatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over a child or young person; to take selfish or unfair advantage of a child or young person or situation, for personal gain. It may manifest itself in many forms such as child labour, slavery, servitude, and engagement in criminal activity, begging, benefit or other financial fraud or child trafficking. It extends to the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation can be sexual in nature (Child Sexual Exploitation).

Although 'exploitation' is not included in the categories of registration for the Child Protection Register, professionals should recognise that the abuse resulting from or caused by the exploitation of children and young people can be categorised within the existing CPR categories as children who have been exploited will have suffered from physical abuse, neglect, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or a combination of these forms of abuse.

Child Sexual and Criminal Exploitation, if suspected, a NRM (National Referral Mechanism) referral will be made by a first responder e.g. PSNI.

**Harmful Sexual Behaviour**
This refers to inappropriate sexual behaviour by a child or young person which causes harm of the potential to cause harm. If a disclosure has been made the immediate priority is the child who has experienced the behaviour. Consultation will be made with Social Services in the first instance and steps will be followed as appropriate and in line with guidance (Circular 2022/02 Children who display harmful sexual behaviour). The child displaying the behaviour will also be supported. As a school we will manage the risk and provide appropriate support to all children involved.

**Children with Increased Vulnerabilities**
Some children have increased risk of abuse due to specific vulnerabilities such as disability, lack of fluency in English and sexual orientation. We have included information about children with increased vulnerabilities in our policy. Please see these in **Appendix 2.**

**Mental Health and Suicide Concerns**
As a school we play an important role in early identification and support but we will always ensure that the appropriate clinical support is accessed. In urgent situations, emergency services will be contacted.

**Signs and Symptoms of Abuse**
The definition of signs and symptoms of abuse are taken from Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in NI (October 2024)**.**
**(See appendix 7)**

**Specific Types of Abuse**
In addition to the types of abuse described above there are also some specific types of abuse that as a school we are aware of and therefore included them in our policy in **Appendix 1.**

**Adult Safeguarding (if and when relevant to Primary School)**
An '**Adult at risk of harm'** is a person aged 18 or over, whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their:
a) Personal characteristics and/or
b) Life circumstances
Personal characteristics may include, but are not limited to, age, disability, special educational needs, illness, mental or physical frailty or impairment of, or disturbance in, the functioning of the mind or brain.

Life circumstances may include, but are not limited to, isolation, socio-economic factors and environmental living conditions.

An **'Adult in need of protection'** is a person aged 18 or over, whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their:
a) Personal characteristics and/or
b) Life circumstances and
c) Who is unable to protect their own well-being, property, assets, rights or other interests; and

d) Where the action or inaction of another person or persons is causing, or is likely to cause, him/her to be harmed.

Adult safeguarding is based on fundamental human rights and on respecting the rights of adults as individuals, treating all adults with dignity and respecting their right to choose. It involves empowering and enabling all adults, including those at risk of harm, to manage their own health and well-being and to keep themselves safe. It extends to intervening to protect where harm has occurred or is likely to occur and promoting access to justice. All adults at risk should be central to any actions and decisions affecting their lives.

We are committed to:

- Ensuring that the welfare of vulnerable adults is paramount.
- Maximising the student's choice, control and inclusion, and protecting their human rights.
- Working in partnership with others in order to safeguard vulnerable adults.

If adult safeguarding concerns arise the DT will contact EA CPSS for advice and record in line with policy and procedures.

**Bullying**

As a school we recognise the harm that bullying behaviour can cause significant distress to all involved and as a staff we are vigilant to the possibility of bullying occurring and will take steps to address it. This will include support for the pupil who is experiencing bullying behaviour and the pupil alleged to be displaying bullying type behaviour to address the behaviour displayed. Any complaint by parent that their child is, or may be, being bullied will be fully investigated by the staff.

**Child on Child Abuse**

Our school has a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of abuse, harassment, harmful behaviour and sexual violence. We are clear that abuse is never acceptable and will not be tolerated, minimised or dismissed as "banter", "just having a laugh", "boys being boys" or "girls being girls". All concerns will be taken seriously and responded to appropriately, with the safety, wellbeing and protection of pupils at the centre of our response.

Abuse between children can take many forms and may occur face-to-face or online. This can include bullying; abuse within intimate or personal relationships between children; physical abuse, threats or harm; sexual harassment; harmful sexual behaviour; forcing or pressuring another person to engage in sexual activity; and the consensual or non-consensual sharing of nude or semi-nude images or videos. It may also include behaviours such as upskirting or downblousing.

We recognise that children may not always understand that what they have experienced, witnessed or participated in constitutes abuse or harmful behaviour. Pupils are encouraged to speak to a trusted adult about anything that makes them feel uncomfortable, unsafe or worried. A child will never be made to feel that they are responsible for the abuse or harm they have experienced.

Our nurturing and trauma-informed approach does not mean that harmful behaviour is excused or overlooked. We seek to understand what may lie behind a child's behaviour while maintaining clear boundaries about what is safe, appropriate and acceptable. Where harmful behaviour occurs, we will act to protect those affected, follow appropriate safeguarding procedures (including recording and reporting procedures), seek advice from EA CPSS and provide support to all children involved, while helping pupils to understand boundaries, consent, healthy relationships and the impact of their behaviour.

**The Preventative Curriculum**

The statutory personal development curriculum requires schools to give specific attention to pupils' emotional wellbeing, health and safety, relationships, and the development of a moral thinking and value system. The curriculum also offers a medium to explore sensitive issues with children and young people in an age-appropriate way which helps them to develop appropriate protective behaviours. (DE guidance "Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools" Circular 2017/04 and subsequent amendments).

Our school seeks to promote pupils' awareness and understanding of safeguarding issues, including those related to child protection through its curriculum. Through our Nurturing approaches (Nurture in 5 and Connect and Nurture) and ethos we create a sense of safety for our pupils. The safeguarding of children is an important focus in the school's personal development programme and is also addressed where it arises within the context of subjects. Through the preventative curriculum we aim to build the confidence, self-esteem and personal resilience of children so that they can develop coping strategies and can make more positive choices in a range of situations.

Throughout the school year child protection issues are addressed through e.g. circle time sessions using our PATHS programme, class assemblies, visitors e.g. PSNI, NSPCC programmes, Extern, Charity based mental health and well being programmes e.g. PawsB (AwareNI) and EA specific programmes e.g. REACH Bear programme exploring emotions and emotional regulation as well as specific events e.g. Mental Health Week, Online Safety Week.

The faces and names of our Safeguarding team are displayed around the school building as well as specific child protection boards with different safety messages. Other initiatives which address child protection and safety issue include school visitors e.g. fire fighters, PSNI etc. health visitor parent programmes, school nurse visit etc.

The Safer Schools App is shared with all parents at the beginning of the school year and the DT oversees the information shared via the app and disseminates important information to staff. Staff also have access to the Safer Schools App as do parents and P6/7 pupils.

We have a school counsellor available to support pupils as well as a range of in school intervention programmes including Drawing and Talking Therapy, Theraplay and Lego Based Therapy. Our school also delivers the Roots of Empathy programme as well as Nurture in 5 and Connect and Nurture.

We have access to family support programmes through the Family support hub and Family Connections. We facilitate and offer a range of parent training sessions and programmes including Theraplay (parent and child) as well as through Family Connections – Developing Resilience.

Key staff have fully completed training linked to Children Looked After which links closely to our trauma informed approach (TAP training). All staff have received training in Nurture and Trauma.

**Operation Encompass**

We are an Operation Encompass school. Operation Encompass is an early intervention partnership between local Police and our school, aimed at supporting children who are victims of domestic violence and abuse. As a school, we recognise that children's exposure to domestic violence is a traumatic event for them.

Children experiencing domestic abuse are negatively impacted by this exposure. Domestic abuse has been identified as an Adverse Childhood Experience (ACEs) and can lead to emotional, physical and psychological harm. Operation Encompass aims to mitigate this harm by enabling the provision of immediate support. This rapid provision of support within the school environment means children are better safeguarded against the short, medium and long term effects of domestic abuse.

As an Operation Encompass school, when the police have attended a domestic incident and one of our pupils is present, they will make contact with the school at the start of the next working day (or as close to the date as possible) to share this information with a member of the school safeguarding team. This will allow the school safeguarding team to provide immediate emotional support to this child as well as giving the designated teacher greater insight into any wider safeguarding concerns.

This information will be treated in strict confidence, like any other category of child protection information. It will be processed as per DE Circular 2020/07 'Child Protection Record Keeping in Schools' and a note will be made in the child's child protection file. The information received on an Operation Encompass call from the Police will only be shared outside of the safeguarding team on a proportionate and need to know basis. All members of the safeguarding team will complete online Operation Encompass training, so they are able to take these calls. Any staff responsible for answering the phone at school will be made aware of Operation Encompass and the need to pass these calls on with urgency to a member of the safeguarding team.

Further information see The Domestic Abuse Information Sharing with Schools etc. Regulations (Norther Ireland) 2022.

**Digital Safety and Online Harm (Appendix 1)**

As a school we educate our pupils on how to stay safe online and how to reduce risks when using digital devices/platforms. Any safeguarding concerns linked to online safety are managed in the same way as all safeguarding concerns, in line with current policies and procedures. PSNI may become involved depending on the nature of the concern.

**Confidentiality and Information Sharing**
Relationships within our school are built on trust and often on confidentiality which forms the basis for creating a secure and caring environment which fosters learning and personal development.

Information given to members of staff about possible child abuse cannot be held "in confidence" and must be shared with the DT who will share it with the relevant authrories. If shared outside of school hours staff can contact the relevant Gateway services. In the interests of the child, staff have a responsibility to share relevant information about the protection of children with other professionals particularly the investigative agencies. In keeping with the principle of confidentiality, the sharing of information with school staff will be on a 'need to know' basis.

Where there have been, or are current, child protection concerns about a pupil who transfers to another school we will consider what information should be shared with the Designated Teacher in the receiving school. Advice may be sought from Social Services/EA CPSS and should follow DE Guidance.

Where it is necessary to safeguard children information will be shared with other statutory agencies in accordance with the requirements of this policy, the school data protection policy and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

**Record Keeping**
In accordance with DE guidance (Circular 2020/07), we have developed clear guidelines for the recording, storage, retention and destruction of both manual and electronic records where they relate to child protection concerns.

To meet these requirements all child protection records, information and confidential notes concerning pupils in our school are stored securely and only the Designated Teacher/Deputy Designated Teachers and Principal have access to them. In accordance with DE guidance on the disposal of child protection records these records will be stored from child's date of birth plus 30 years. Records of allegations against staff are retained indefinitely (unless exonerated following investigation).

If information is held electronically, whether on a PC, a laptop or on a portable memory device, all must be encrypted and appropriately password protected.

These notes or records should be factual, objective and include what was seen, said, heard or reported. They should include details of the place and time and who was present and should be given to the Designated/Deputy Designated Teacher. The person who reports the incident must treat the matter in confidence. Records are completed as soon as possible and no later than 24 hours after a concern has been identified.

The records may contain:

- Time, date, circumstances
- Who gave the information

- Nature of the information
- If appropriate a description of signs or symptoms of possible abuse (if shared)

They will have a clear chronology of concerns, actions taken and decisions made (include rationale for decisions).

Low level, emerging and cumulative concerns are also recorded.

The Principal or DT/DDT will supplement this record with:

- Details of advice sought - from whom and when
- Decision reached i.e. based on advice given
- If referred to Social Services - how, when and by whom (Unocini)
- If not referred - reasons why i.e. based on advice given e.g. Family Support Hub
- When, by whom and how the person who made the complaint or gave the information is told of the decision*

These will be signed by the person recording as well as the Designated Teacher.

*We will follow the advice provided in terms of what we are permitted to share and with whom.

**In an incident, the child's welfare must be always be paramount; this overrides all other considerations.**

**Consultation**

The Designated Teacher may seek clarification or advice and consult with the Education Authority Designated Officer (CPSS) or social services before a formal referral is made. Provided that no child is identified by name, the case and its circumstances may be discussed with complete confidentiality and with the full understanding that Social Services cannot be further involved until a formal referral is made. However, if either services requests for the name of the child to be shared for safeguarding reasons then the school will share requested details. Any advice given will be recorded and followed by the Safeguarding Team.

Staff feedback on Safeguarding curriculum and procedures as well as the pupil/parent/carer voice informs future review of Safeguarding Policy.

**Responding to Child Protection and Safeguarding Concerns**

Safeguarding is more than child protection. Safeguarding begins with promotion and preventative activity which enables children and young people to grow up safely and securely in circumstances where their development and wellbeing is not adversely affected. It includes support to families and early intervention to meet the needs of children and continues through to child protection. Child protection refers specifically to the activity that is undertaken to protect individual children or young people who are suffering, or are likely to suffer significant harm (Co-Operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland).

https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/co-operating-safeguard-children-and-young-people-northern-ireland).

All staff and Governors are trained in how to respond to a disclosure or a concern and visitors know who to contact if a disclosure is made. The 5 Rs are key:
**Receive** the information
**Reassure** the child (never promise confidentiality as need to share with DT)
**Respond** i.e. Report to the DT
**Record**
**Respect** (pupil and their family)

In addition, staff are also aware of the importance of being vigilant to potential signs and symptoms of abuse and **Recognise** these in those that are in our care as well as the potential for an onward need to **Refer** to external services (services depend on individual case).

Staff support will be provided following disclosures to ensure staff well being.

**If a parent has a potential child protection concern within the school**
We aim to work closely with parents/guardians in supporting all aspects of their child's development and well-being. Any concerns a parent may have will be taken seriously and dealt with in a professional manner.

If a parent has a concern they can talk to the class teacher or directly to the **Designated (Mrs Burns)** or Deputy Designated Teacher **(Mrs Savage/Mrs McConaghy)** for child protection or in their absence, the Principal **(Mr Massey).**

If they are still concerned they may talk to the Chair of the Board of Governors, **Mr Gary Ennis**.

At any time a parent may talk to a social worker in the local Gateway team **(028 9050 7000)** or to the PSNI Central Referral Unit **(see Appendix 3).**

**Where School Has Concerns or Has Been Given Information about Possible Abuse by Someone Other Than a Member of Staff**
If a child makes a disclosure to a teacher or other member of staff which gives rise to concerns about possible abuse, or if a member of staff has concerns about a child, the member of staff will complete a Note of Concern (see **Appendix 6**) and act promptly. **They will not investigate** - this is a matter for Social Services - but will discuss these concerns with the Designated Teacher or with the Deputy Designated Teacher if she is not available.

The Designated Teacher will consult with the Principal or other relevant staff always taking care to avoid due delay. Where required, advice may be sought from the Education Authority Designated Officer for Child Protection (CPSS). The Designated Teacher may also seek clarification from the child or young person, their parent/carer as long as contact with the parent does not put the child at risk (dependent on the nature of the concern) and on the advice of the EA CPSS/Gateway.

If a child protection referral is not required the school may consider other options including monitoring, signposting or referring to other support agencies e.g. Family Support Hub with parental consent and, where appropriate, with the child/young person's consent.

If a child protection referral is required the Designated Teacher will seek consent from the parent/carer and/or the child {if they are competent to give this} unless this would place the child at risk of significant harm. **In this instance advice will be taken from the EA CPSS service and/or social services.**

The Designated Teacher will phone the Gateway team and/or the PSNI and will submit a completed UNOCINI referral form.

Where appropriate the source of the concern will be informed of the action taken.

**Where a Complaint Has Been Made about Possible Abuse by a Member of the School's Staff or a Volunteer**

When a complaint about possible child abuse is made against a member of staff, the Principal (or the Designated Teacher if the Principal is not available) must be informed immediately. If the complaint is against the Principal then the Designated Teacher should be informed and she will inform the Chairperson of the Board of Governors who will consider what action is required in consultation with the employing authority (EA CPSS). All incidents will be managed in line with safeguarding procedures. The procedure as outlined in **Appendix 5** will be followed.

**Consent**

Prior to making a referral to Social Services the consent of the parent/carers and/or the young person (if they are competent to give this) will normally be sought. The exception to this is where to seek such consent would put that child, young person or others at increased risk of significant harm or an adult at risk of serious harm, or it would undermine the prevention, detection or prosecution of a serious crime including where seeking consent might lead to interference with any potential investigation. **Advice will be taken from CPSS or from Social Services prior to any contact being made with the parents. Parents/Carers will not be contacted if decided by the CPSS or Social Services that this is the best course of action to safeguard the child.**

In circumstances where the consent of the parent/carer and/or the young person has been sought and is withheld we will consider, and where possible, respect their wishes. However, our primary consideration must be the safety and welfare of the child and we will make a referral in cases where consent is withheld if we believe on the basis of the information available that it is in the best interests of the child/young person to do so. This will be noted on the UNOCINI referral form.

Consent from pupils will be age dependent and needs appropriate but as a safeguarding team we will always ensure the pupil is aware of the steps we are taking in an age appropriate manner.

**Adult referral**

There is a difficult balance between gaining consent for a referral into Adult Protection Gateway services and also ensuring a vulnerable adult is protected from harm. Consent will always be sought from the person for a referral to statutory agencies.

If consent is withheld, then a referral will not be made into the Adult Protection Gateway unless there is reasonable doubt regarding the capacity of the adult to give/withhold consent. In this case contact will be made with the local Adult Protection Gateway team to seek further advice.

In situations where there is reasonable doubt regarding an individual's capacity, they will be informed of the referral, unless to do so would put them at any further risk.

The principle of consent may be overridden if there is an overriding public interest, for example in the following circumstances:

- the person causing the harm is a member of staff, a volunteer or someone who only has contact with the adult at risk because they both use the service or
- consent has been provided under undue influence, coercion or duress
- other people are at risk from the person causing harm
- or a crime is alleged or suspected

**Procedures for Reporting a Complaint**

**Complaint against a member of Board of Governors**

- The school will follow the procedure as outlined in (appendix 4)
  The Principal will inform the Chairperson. If he/she is the subject of the complaint the Principal will inform the Vice Chairperson.

**Complaint against a volunteer working in the school**

- The school will follow the procedure as outlined in (appendix 4)

**Complaints against School Staff**

- The school will follow the procedure as outlined in (appendix 5)

If the reported behaviour is being pursued as a disciplinary matter, all details and correspondence will be kept on staff file and on the child's file.

A short summary of the record will be kept by the Principal on a "Record of Child Abuse Complaints." These "Records of Child Abuse Complaints" are available annually for the Board of Governors.

"Record of Child Abuse Complaints" will contain:

1. Date and brief details of nature of complaint
2. By whom and against whom it was made
3. If referred - to whom and date

4. If dealt with under School's disciplinary procedures - a brief note of the outcome.

**Safe Recruitment Procedures**
Vetting checks are a key preventative measure in preventing unsuitable individuals' access to children and vulnerable adults through the education system and schools must ensure that all persons on school property are vetted, inducted and supervised as appropriate, if they are engaged in regulated activity. All staff paid or unpaid who are appointed to positions in Dundonald Primary School are vetted/supervised in accordance with relevant legislation and Departmental guidance. (DE Circualr 2025/06). All staff will be made aware of their roles and safeguarding responsibilities.

Any parents assisting in trips / PTA events will not be left unattended with pupils unless the appropriate Access NI checks have been completed.

Visitors to school will not be left unattended with pupils, a member of staff will always be present. Regular visitors to school e.g. Reading Together staff will undergo EA AcessNI arrangements.

**Appointments, Induction of new Staff, Work experience, Students and Staff training**

**Board of Governors** – at least one school governor serving on an interview panel or committee established for the purpose of recruiting or selecting staff for appointment to Dundonald Primary school is trained in "Child Protection & Recruitment and Selection."

On appointment, all staff should be made aware of Child Protection Procedures.

**Staff Vetting** – All staff, paid or unpaid in our school will have been subject to a criminal background check (Access NI) to ensure suitability to have access to our children. References will be obtained following appointment to post.

**Substitute Teachers** – Dundonald PS will only employ as substitute teachers, those who are on the Northern Ireland Substitute Teachers Register.

**Students –** all students will receive a copy of our policy and have CP/SG training on entry from the DT/DDT. Access NI checks are carried out through their Universities/Colleges Those on work experience from schools will also receive training in CP/SG from their own school as well as Dundonald PS.

**Volunteers** – in line with DENI Circular 2012/19, enhanced checks (Access NI) are needed where the volunteer will work in a role providing services to, or having close and regular supervision of children or vulnerable adults i.e. engage in 'regulated activity' with children or vulnerable adults.

**Staff Code of Conduct**
The Staff Code of Conduct forms part of our Safeguarding training. Copies are made available to staff.

**After School Providers** – all providers will be given a copy of our safeguarding policy and procedures and key contact information. They are asked to share relevant AccessNI certificates for club coaches/facilitators and follow their safeguarding procedures if a disclosure is made. This disclosure should be shared with the DT/DDT or School Principal at the time of disclosure and action taken accordingly.

Regulated activity is defined as work (whether in a paid or voluntary capacity which involves contact with children or vulnerable adults and is: of a specified nature; in a specified role; in a specified place and meets the frequency (once a week or more) and intensiveness (4 days or more in a single 30 day period) test.

The Education Authority (SE Region) will offer appropriate In-service Training on child abuse issues for the Principal, Designated & Deputy Designated Teacher.

Through SDS, the Education Authority will assist the school in developing appropriate programmes of personal and social development which will contribute to the prevention of child abuse.

As a school we are following the new guidance from the DENI circular 2025/06 regarding regulated activity and the need for enhanced disclosure checks for those affected by the recent changes.

**Liability for Teachers and Non Teaching Staff**
Any teacher or other member of staff who complies with the procedures as set out by the EA and embodied in this policy in relation to making a report of suspected child abuse is acting within the course of his/her employment and in such circumstances where he/she has acted in good faith, will receive the full support of the EA, the Board of Governors and the Principal and will not be legally or financially liable.

**Monitoring and Evaluation**
This policy will be reviewed annually by the Safeguarding Team and approved by the Board of Governors for dissemination to parents, pupils and staff. It will be implemented through the school's staff induction and training programme and as part of day to day practice.

Compliance with the policy will be monitored on an on-going basis by the Designated Teacher for Child Protection and periodically by the Schools Safeguarding Team. The Board of Governors will also monitor child protection activity and the implementation of the Safeguarding and Child Protection policy on a regular basis through the provision of reports from the Designated Teacher.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Date Policy Reviewed:** | **September 2026** |
| **Signed:** | **Designated Teacher** |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Signed:** | **Principal** |
| **Shared with Chair of Board of Governors** | **October 2026** |
| **Shared with Designated Governor** | **October 2026** |
| **Shared with all Governors** | **October 2026** |

# APPENDICES

**Appendix 1**

**Specific Types of Abuse**

**Grooming** of a child or young person is always abusive and/or exploitative. It often involves perpetrator(s) gaining the trust of the child or young person or, in some cases, the trust of the family, friends or community, and/or making an emotional connection with the victim to facilitate abuse before the abuse begins. This may involve providing money, gifts, drugs

and/or alcohol or more basic needs such as food, accommodation or clothing to develop the child's/young person's loyalty to and dependence upon the person(s) doing the grooming. The person(s) carrying out the abuse may differ from those involved in grooming which led to it, although this is not always the case. Grooming is often associated with Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) but can be a precursor to other forms of abuse. Grooming may occur face to face, online and/or through social media, the latter making it more difficult to detect and identify.

Adults may misuse online settings e.g. chat rooms, social and gaming environments and other forms of digital communications, to try and establish contact with children and young people or to share information with other perpetrators, which creates a particular problem because this can occur in real time and there is no permanent record of the interaction or discussion held, or information shared. Those working or volunteering with children or young people should be alert to signs that may indicate grooming and take early action in line with their child protection and safeguarding policies and procedures to enable preventative action to be taken, if possible, before harm occurs. Practitioners should be aware that those involved in grooming may themselves be children or young people and may be acting under the coercion or influence of adults. Such young people must be considered victims of those holding power over them. Careful consideration should always be given to any punitive approach or 'criminalising' young people who may, themselves, still be victims and/or acting under duress, control, threat, the fear of, or actual violence. In consultation with the PSNI and where necessary the PPS, HSC professionals must consider whether children used to groom others should be considered a child in need or requiring protection from significant harm

If the staff in Dundonald Primary School become aware of signs that may indicate grooming, they will take early action and follow the school's child protection policies and procedures. The HSCT and PSNI should be involved as early as possible to ensure any evidence that may assist prosecution is not lost and to enable a disruption plan to reduce the victim's contact with the perpetrator(s) and reduce the perpetrator(s) control over the victim to be put in place without delay.

**Child Sexual Exploitation** (CSE) is 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 (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/ or (b) 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.

Any child under the age of eighteen, male or female, can be a victim of CSE. Although younger children can experience CSE, the average age at which concerns are first identified is 12-15 years of age. Sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds, although legally able to consent to sexual activity can also be sexually exploited.

CSE can be perpetrated by adults or by young people's peers, on an individual or group basis, or a combination of both, and can be perpetrated by females as well as males. While

children in care are known to experience disproportionate risk of CSE, **the majority of CSE victims are living at home**.

**Statutory Responsibilities**

CSE is a form of child abuse and, as such, any member of staff suspecting that CSE is occurring will follow the school's child protection policy and procedures, including reporting to the appropriate agencies.

**Domestic and Sexual Abuse**
The NI Domestic and Sexual Abuse strategy 2024 - 2031 defines domestic and sexual violence and abuse as follows: -

**Domestic Abuse is:**
Threatening, controlling, coercive behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, virtual, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability) by a current or former intimate partner or family member.

**Sexual Abuse is:**
Any behaviour (physical, psychological, verbal, virtual/online) perceived to be of a sexual nature which is controlling, coercive, exploitative, harmful, or unwanted that is inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability).

If it comes to the attention of school staff that domestic and /or sexual violence and abuse, is or may be, affecting a child this will be passed on to the Designated/Deputy Designated Teacher who has an obligation to share the information with the Social Services Gateway Team.

**Operation Encompass**
We are an Operation Encompass school. Operation Encompass is an early intervention partnership between local Police and our school, aimed at supporting children who are victims of domestic violence and abuse. As a school, we recognise that children's exposure to domestic violence is a traumatic event for them.

Children experiencing domestic abuse are negatively impacted by this exposure. Domestic abuse has been identified as an Adverse Childhood Experience and can lead to emotional, physical and psychological harm. Operation Encompass aims to mitigate this harm by enabling the provision of immediate support. This rapid provision of support within the school environment means children are better safeguarded against the short, medium and long-term effects of domestic abuse.

As an Operation Encompass school, when the police have attended a domestic incident and one of our pupils is present, they will contact the school at the start of the next working day to share this information with a member of the school safeguarding team. This will allow the

school safeguarding team to provide immediate emotional support to this child as well as giving the designated teacher greater insight into any wider safeguarding concerns.

This information will be treated in strict confidence, like any other category of child protection information. It will be processed as per DE Circular 2020/07 'Child Protection Record Keeping in Schools' and a note will be made in the child's child protection file. The information received on an Operation Encompass call from the Police will only be shared outside of the safeguarding team on a proportionate and need to know basis. All members of the safeguarding team will complete online Operation Encompass training, so they are able to take these calls. Any staff responsible for answering the phone at school will be made aware of Operation Encompass and the need to pass these calls on with urgency to a member of the Safeguarding team.

Further information about Domestic Abuse Information Sharing with Schools etc. Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 can be found by following the link to: https://www.legislation.gov.uk

**Female Genital Mutilation** (FGM) is a form of child abuse and violence against women and girls. FGM 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. The procedure is also referred to as 'cutting', 'female circumcision' and 'initiation'. The practice is medically unnecessary, extremely painful and has serious health consequences, both at the time when the mutilation is carried out and in later life. FGM is a form of child abuse and, as such, teachers have a statutory duty to report cases, including suspicion, to the appropriate agencies, through agreed established procedures set out in our school policy. Where there is a concern that a child or young person may be at immediate risk of FGM this should be reported to the PSNI without delay. Contact can be made directly to the Sexual Referral Unit (based within the Public Protection Unit) at 028 9025 9299. Where there is a concern that a child or young person may be at risk of FGM, referral should be made to the relevant HSCT Gateway Team.

**Forced Marriage** is a marriage conducted without the valid consent of one or both parties and where duress is a factor. Duress can include physical, psychological, financial, sexual and emotional pressure. Forced marriage is a criminal offence in Northern Ireland and if in Dundonald Primary School we have knowledge or suspicion of a forced marriage in relation to a child or young person we will contact the PSNI immediately.

### Honour Based Violence

Honour-based abuse (HBA) refers to abuse or violence committed to protect or defend the perceived 'honour' of a family or community. It can include physical, emotional, sexual or financial abuse, coercive control, forced marriage, threats, intimidation and restrictions on an individual's freedom. It may be carried out by one or more family or community members.

### Children Who Display Harmful Sexual Behaviour

Learning about sex and sexual behaviour is a normal part of a child's development. It will help them as they grow up, and as they start to make decisions about relationships. As a

school we support children and young people, through the Personal Development element of the curriculum, to develop their understanding of relationships and sexuality and the responsibilities of healthy relationships. Teachers are often therefore in a good position to consider if behaviour is within the normal continuum or otherwise.

It must also be borne in mind that sexually harmful behaviour is primarily a child protection concern. There may remain issues to be addressed through the school's positive behaviour policy, but it is important to always apply principles that remain child centred.

It is important to distinguish between different sexual behaviours - these can be defined as normal, inappropriate, problematic, abusive or violent. Healthy sexual behaviour will generally have no need for intervention; however, consideration may be required as to appropriateness within a school setting.

Problematic sexual behaviour requires some level of intervention, depending on the activity and level of concern. If the behaviour is considered to be more serious advice from the EA CPSS should be sought

Harmful sexual behaviour is an umbrella term for sexual behaviours which are of concern and have or are likely to cause harm to the individual themselves or to others. It is important to distinguish between different sexual behaviours - these can be defined as normal, inappropriate, problematic, abusive or violent.

**Normal** sexual behaviour will generally have no need for intervention; however, consideration may be required as to appropriateness within a school setting.

**Inappropriate** sexual behaviour requires some level of intervention, depending on the activity and level of concern. For example, a one-off incident may simply require liaising with parents on setting clear direction that the behaviour is unacceptable, explaining boundaries and providing information and education. However, if the behaviour is considered to be more serious, perhaps because there are a number of aspects of concern, advice from the EA Child Protection Support Service (CPSS) may be required. The CPSS will advise if contact with PSNI or Social Services is required.

**Problematic, abusive and violent** sexual behaviours are of significant concern and guidance on the management of the pupils within the school and referral to other agencies such as the PSNI or Social Services will be sought from CPSS.

We will also take guidance from DE Circular 2022/02 to address concerns about harmful sexualised behaviour displayed by children and young people.

## Online safety

Online safety means acting and staying safe when engaging in the online world. It is wider than simply internet technology and includes electronic communication via text messages, making comments on social media posts, social environments and apps, and using games

consoles through any digital device. In all cases, in schools and elsewhere, it is a paramount concern.

The overall strategic direction for child safety online is the **Keeping Children and Young People Safe: An Online Safety Strategy,** published in February 2021. It sets out the Northern Ireland Executive's ambition that all children and young people enjoy the educational, social and economic benefits of the online world, and that they are empowered to do this safely, knowledgably and without fear.

The Strategy recognises that the ever-changing and fast-growing online environment presents both extensive educational benefits as well challenges in terms of keeping children and young people safe from the dangers of inappropriate communication and content.

For further information see: Online Safety Hub - Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (safeguardingni.org)

We in Dundonald Primary School have a responsibility to ensure that there is a reduced risk of pupils accessing harmful and inappropriate digital content and will be energetic in teaching pupils how to act responsibly and keep themselves safe. As a result, pupils should have a clear understanding of online safety issues and, individually, be able to demonstrate what a positive digital footprint might look like.

The school's actions and governance of online safety are reflected clearly in our safeguarding arrangements. Safeguarding and promoting pupils' welfare around digital technology is the responsibility of everyone who comes into contact with the pupils in the school or on school-organised activities.

### Sharing Nudes and Semi-Nudes

Sharing nudes and semi-nudes is a term used to describe the sending or posting of naked or partially naked images, videos or livestreams online by young people under the age of 18. This could be via text, email, social media and gaming platforms, chat apps or forums. Sharing nudes is sometimes called 'sexting', however this term is often used by young people to talk about sharing sexual messages and not imagery.

#### Sharing nudes and semi-nudes between individuals in a relationship

As adults we can question the wisdom of this, but the reality is that children consider this to be normal and often the result of a child's natural curiosity about sex and their exploration of relationships. As a consequence, engaging in the taking or sharing of nudes and semi-nudes may not always be in a 'harmful' context. Nonetheless, staff must be aware that an image can be shared non-consensually, or a child can be groomed, tricked or coerced into sending nude and semi-nude images. Clearly pupils need to be aware that it is illegal, under the Sexual Offences (NI) Order 2008, to take, possess or share 'indecent images' of anyone under 18 even if they are the person in the picture (or even if they are aged 16+ and in a consensual Specific Types of Abuse Specific Types of Abuse 50 51 relationship) and in these cases you should contact local PSNI on 101 for advice and guidance. Please be aware that, while offences may technically have been committed by the child/children involved, the matter will be dealt with sensitively and considering all the circumstances and it is not

necessarily the case that they will end up with a criminal record. It is important that particular care is taken in dealing with any such cases. Adopting scare tactics may discourage a child from seeking help if they feel entrapped by the misuse of sexual images. Advice should be sought from CPSS

### Sharing an Inappropriate Image with an Intent to Cause Distress

If a child has been affected by inappropriate images or links on the internet it is important that you do not forward it to anyone else. Please remember that schools are not required to investigate incidents. It is an offence under the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 (Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015) to share an inappropriate image of another person without the individual's consent - see Articles 33-35 of the Act for more detail. By contacting the PSNI you could help prevent further distribution of the image and further such incidents contain the damage it can cause. If a child has shared an inappropriate image of themselves that is now being shared further whether or not it is intended to cause distress, the child protection procedures should be followed. For further information see: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/2/section/33/enacted

If a young person has shared an inappropriate image of themselves that is now being shared further whether or not it is intended to cause distress, the child protection procedures of the school will be followed.

### Adult Safeguarding

For further information see: https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/adult-safeguarding-prevention-and-protection-partnership-key-document

The decision as to whether the definition of an 'adult in need of protection' is met will demand the careful exercise of professional judgement applied on a case by case basis. This will take into account all the available evidence, concerns, the impact of harm, degree of risk and other matters relating to the individual and his or her circumstances. The seriousness and the degree of risk of harm are key to determining the most appropriate response and establishing whether the threshold for protective intervention has been met.

### The main forms of abuse are:

### Physical abuse

Physical abuse is the use of physical force or mistreatment of one person by another which may or may not result in actual physical injury. This may include hitting, pushing, rough handling, exposure to heat or cold, force feeding, improper administration of medication, denial of treatment, misuse or illegal use of restraint and deprivation of liberty.

### Sexual Violence and Abuse

Sexual abuse is any behaviour perceived to be of a sexual nature which is unwanted or takes place without consent or understanding6. Sexual violence and abuse can take many forms and may include non-contact sexual activities, such as indecent exposure, stalking, grooming, being made to look at or be involved in the production of sexually abusive material, or being made to watch sexual activities. It may involve physical contact, including but not limited to non-consensual penetrative sexual activities or non-penetrative sexual

activities, such as intentional touching (known as groping). Sexual violence can be found across all sections of society, irrelevant of gender, age, ability, religion, race, ethnicity, personal circumstances, financial background or sexual orientation.

### Psychological/Emotional Abuse

Psychological/emotional abuse is behaviour that is psychologically harmful or inflicts mental distress by threat, humiliation or other verbal/non-verbal conduct. This may include threats, humiliation or ridicule, provoking fear of violence, shouting, yelling and swearing, blaming, Controlling, Intimidation and Coercion.

### Financial Abuse

Financial abuse is actual or attempted theft, fraud or burglary. It is the misappropriation or misuse of money, property, benefits, material goods or other asset transactions which the person did not or could not consent to, or which were invalidated by intimidation, coercion or deception. This may include exploitation, embezzlement, withholding pension or benefits or pressure exerted around wills, property or inheritance.

### Institutional Abuse

Institutional abuse is the mistreatment or neglect of an adult by a regime or individuals in settings which adults who may be at risk reside in or use. This can occur in any organisation, within and outside the HSC sector. Institutional abuse may occur when the routines, systems and regimes result in poor standards of care, poor practice and behaviours, inflexible regimes and rigid routines which violate the dignity and human rights of the adults and place them at risk of harm. Institutional abuse may occur within a culture that denies, restricts or curtails privacy, dignity, choice and independence. It involves the collective failure of a service provider or an organisation to provide safe and appropriate services, and includes a failure to ensure that the necessary preventative and/or protective measures are in place.

**Neglect** occurs when a person deliberately withholds, or fails to provide, appropriate and adequate care and support which is required by another adult. It may be through a lack of knowledge or awareness, or through a failure to take reasonable action given the information and facts available to them at the time. It may include physical neglect to the extent that health or well-being is impaired, administering too much or too little medication, failure to provide access to appropriate health or social care, withholding the necessities of life, such as adequate nutrition, heating or clothing, or failure to intervene in situations that are dangerous to the person concerned or to others particularly when the person lacks the capacity to assess risk.

**Appendix 2**

**Children with Increased Vulnerabilities**

- **Children With a Disability**

Children and young people with disabilities (i.e. any child or young person who has a physical, sensory or learning impairment or a significant health condition) may be more vulnerable to abuse and those working with children with disabilities should be aware of any vulnerability factors associated with risk of harm, and any emerging child protection issues.

Staff must be aware that communication difficulties can be hidden or overlooked making disclosure particularly difficult. Staff and volunteers working with children with disabilities will receive training to enable them to identify and refer concerns early in order to allow preventative action to be taken.

- **Children With Limited Fluency in English**

Children whose first language is not English/Newcomer pupils should be given the opportunity to express themselves to a member of staff or other professional with appropriate language/communication skills, especially where there are concerns that abuse may have occurred. DTs and other relevant school staff should seek advice and support from the EA's Intercultural Education Service if necessary. All schools should create an atmosphere in which pupils with special educational needs which involve communication difficulties, or pupils for whom English is not their first language, feel confident to discuss these issues or other matters that may be worrying them.

- **Pre-School Provision**

Many of the issues in the preceding paragraphs will be relevant to our young children who may have limited communication skills. In addition to the above, staff will follow our Intimate Care policy and procedures in consultation with the child's parent[s]/carer[s]. Teachers, nursery assistants and other adults will come into contact with children while helping them with toileting, washing and changing their clothing. Staff in pre-school settings should consider whether the Code of Conduct meets the needs of their particular responsibilities and should make clear the boundaries of appropriate physical contact, and their Code to staff and parents.

- **Gender Identity Issues and Sexual Orientation**

Schools should strive to provide a happy environment where all young people feel safe and secure. All pupils have the right to learn in a safe and secure environment, to be treated with respect and dignity, and not to be treated any less favourably due to their actual or perceived sexual orientation. DE requires all grant-aided schools to develop their own policy on how they will address Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) within the curriculum. It is via this policy that schools are expected to cover issues relating to relationships and sexuality, including those affecting LGB&T children and young people

As a staff working with young people from the LGBTQ+ community we will support them to appropriately access information and support on healthy relationships and to report any concerns or risks of abuse or exploitation in partnership with parents/carers/wider professional services.

- **Boarding Schools and Residential Settings**

Children in the above settings are particularly vulnerable to abuse. We will ensure that staff are appropriately vetted and trained in accordance with DE guidance.

- **Work Experience, School Trips and Educational Visits**

Our duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people also includes periods when they are in our care outside of the school setting. We will follow DE guidance on educational visits, school trips and work experience to ensure our current safeguarding policies are adhered to and that appropriate staffing levels are in place.

**Appendix 3**



If a Parent Has a Potential Child Protection Concern Within the School

↓

I have a concern about my/a child's safety

Inspire Believe Achieve

If I am still concerned, I can talk to:

- The Designated Teacher Mrs Burns
- The Deputy Designated Teacher Mrs Savage
- The Deputy Designated Teacher, Mrs McConaghy (Nursery)

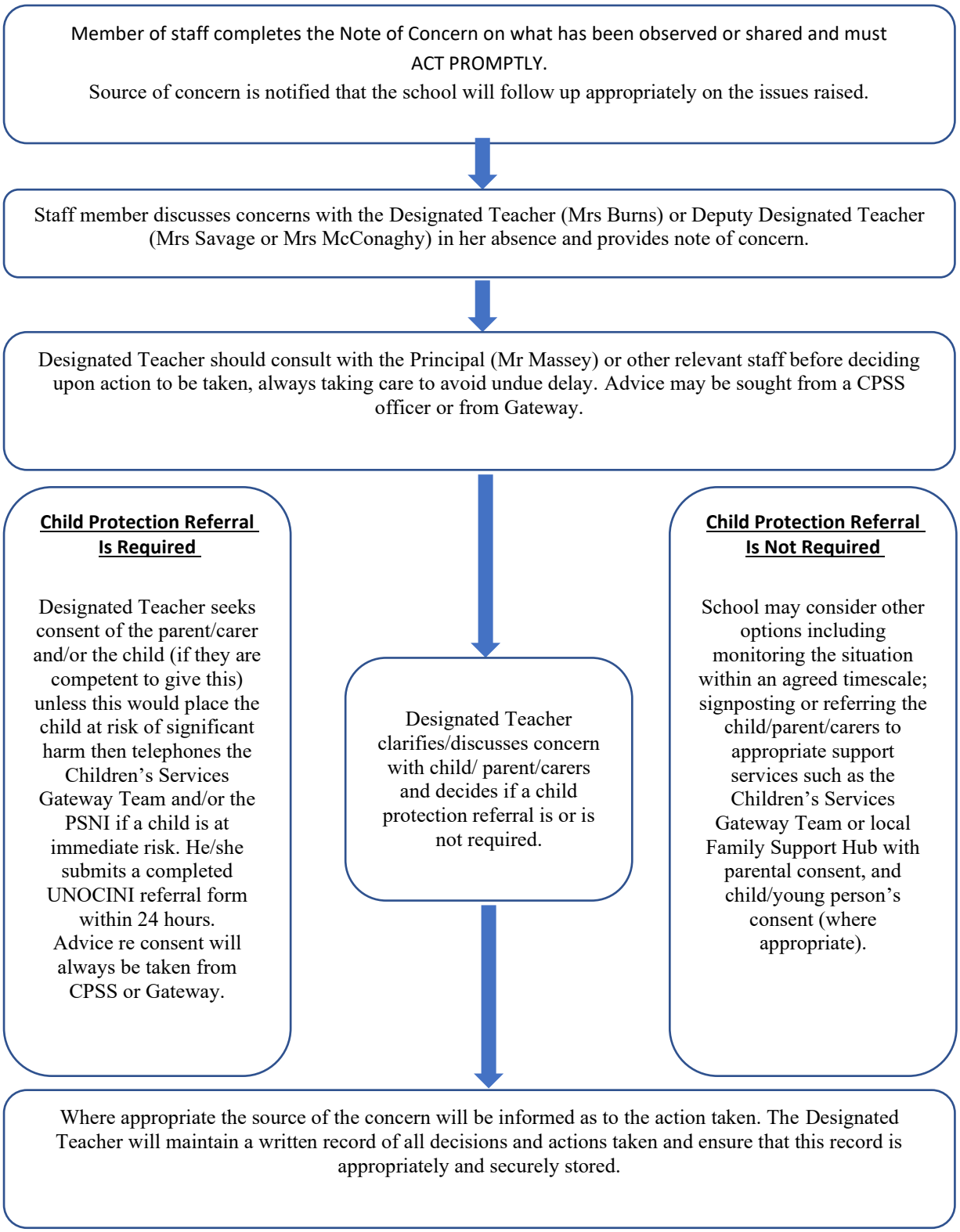
If the Designated or Deputy Designated Teachers are not available I can talk to the Principal, Mr Massey

If I am still concerned, I can talk/write to the Chair of the Board of Governors, Mr G Ennis

At any time I can talk to the local Children's Services Gateway Team 028 9050 7000 (9am – 5pm) or 028 9504 9999 (after working hours/bank holidays) or the PSNI Central Referral Unit at 101 if I have a concern about a child's safety or suspect abuse within the local community.

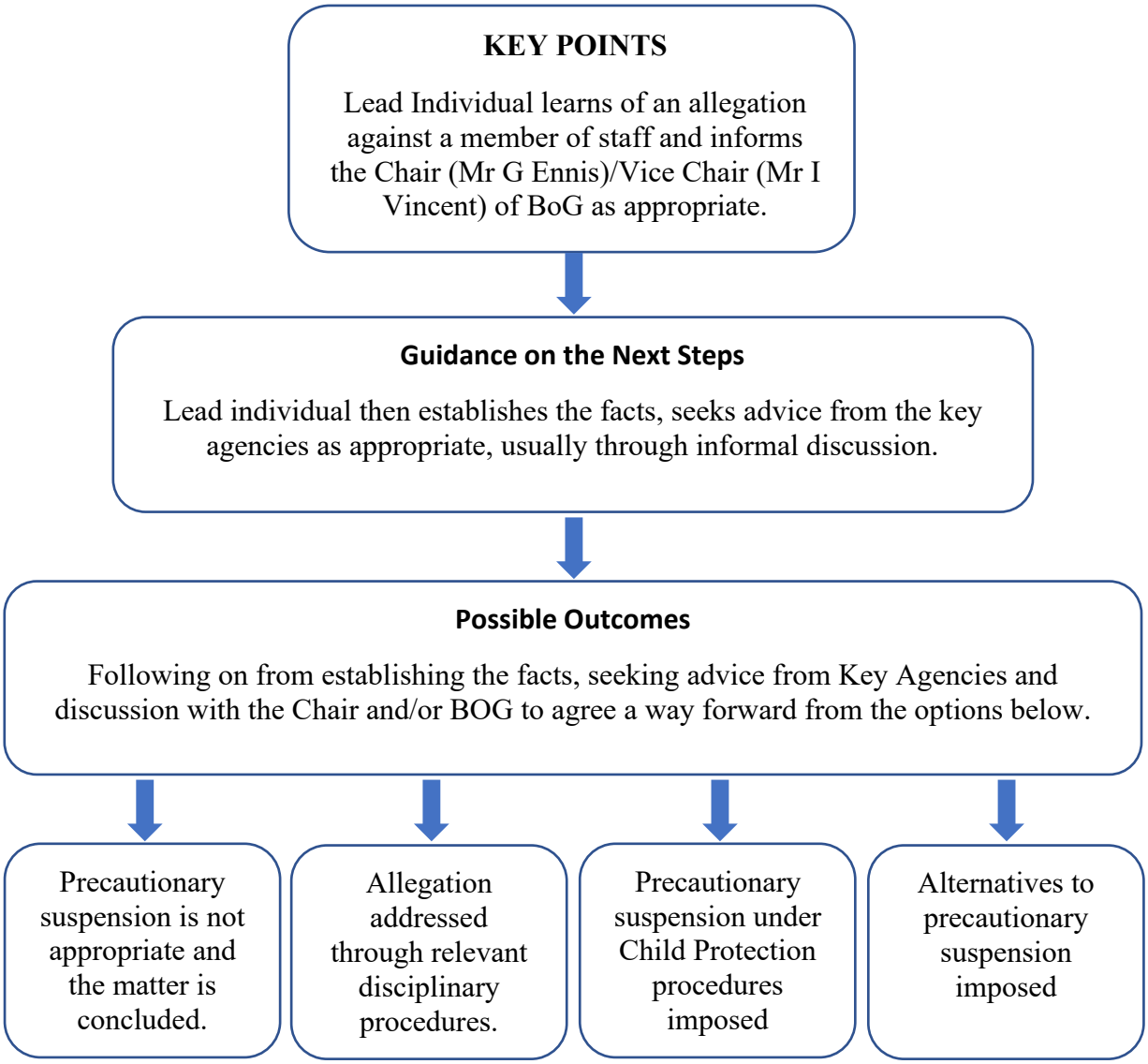
If you have escalated your concern as set out in the above flowchart and are of the view that it has not been addressed satisfactorily, you may revert to the school's complaints policy. This policy will detail the option for you to contact the NI Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) who has the legislative power to investigate your complaint.

## Procedure Where the School Has Concerns, or Has Been Given Information, about Possible Abuse by Someone Other Than a Member of Staff



**Appendix 5**

## Dealing with Allegations of Abuse Against a Member of Staff



**Appendix 6**

Inspire. Believe. Achieve

**CONFIDENTIAL**

**NOTE OF CONCERN**

## Child Protection Record - Reports to Designated Teacher

| |
|---|
| Name of Pupil: |
| Year Group: |
| Date, Time of Incident/Disclosure: |
| Circumstances of Incident/Disclosure: |
| Nature And Description Of Concern: |
| Parties involved, including any witnesses to an event and what was said or done and by whom: |
| Action Taken At The Time: |

| |
|---|
| Details Of Any Advice Sought, From Whom And When: |
| Any Further Action Taken: |
| Written Report Passed To Designated Teacher: Yes: No:<br>If 'No' state reason: |
| Date And Time Of Report To The Designated Teacher: |
| Written Note From Staff Member Placed On Pupil's Child Protection File<br><br>Yes No<br><br>If 'No' state reason: |

**Name of Staff Member Making the Report:** _____

**Signature of Staff Member:** _____ **Date:** _____

**Signature of Designated Teacher:** _____ **Date:** _____

**APPENDIX 7**

## Signs and Symptoms of Child Abuse

This section contains information for all professionals working with children and families and is not an exhaustive list. The following pages provide guidance only and should not be used as a checklist.

The first indication that a child is being abused may not necessarily be the presence of a severe injury. Concerns may become apparent in a number of ways e.g.

- by bruises or marks on a child's body
- by remarks made by a child, his parents or friends
- by overhearing conversation by the child, or his parents
- by observing that the child is either being made a scapegoat by or has a poor relationship/bond with his parents.
- by a child having sexual knowledge or exhibiting sexualised behaviour which is unusual given his age and/or level of understanding.
- by a child not thriving or developing at a rate which one would expect for his age and stage of development.
- by the observation of a child's behaviour and changes in his behaviour.
- by indications that the family is under stress and needs support in caring for their children.
- by repeat visits to a general practitioner or hospital.

There may be a series of events which in themselves do not necessarily cause concern but are significant, if viewed together. Initially the incident may not seem serious but it should be remembered that prompt help to a family under stress may prevent minor abuse escalating into something more serious.

It is important to remember that abused children do not necessarily show fear or anxiety and may appear to have established a sound relationship with their abuser(s). Staff should familiarise themselves on 'attachment theory' and its implications for assessing the bond between parents and their children.

### Suspicions should be raised by e.g.

- discrepancy between an injury and the explanation
- conflicting explanation, or no explanation, for an injury
- delay in seeking treatment for any health problem
- injuries of different ages
- history of previous concerns or injuries
- faltering growth (failure to thrive)
- parents show little, or no, concern about the child's condition or show little warmth or empathy with the child
- evidence of domestic violence
- parents with mental health difficulties, particularly of a psychotic nature

- evidence of parental substance abuse

Signs and symptoms are indicators and simply highlight the need for further investigation and assessment.

## Parental Response to Allegations of Child Abuse Which Raise Concern

Parents' responses to allegations of abuse of their child are very varied. The following types
of response are of concern:

- there may be an unequivocal denial of abuse and possible non-compliance with enquiries.

- parents may over-react, either aggressively or defensively, to a suggestion that they may be responsible for harm to their child.

- there may be reluctance to give information, or the explanation given may be incompatible with the harm caused to the child, or explanations may change over time.

- parents may display a lack of awareness that the child has suffered harm, or that their actions, or the actions of others, may have caused harm.

- parents may seek to minimise the severity of the abuse or not accept that their actions constitute abuse.

- parents may fail to engage with professionals.

- blame or responsibility for the harm may be inappropriately placed on the child or an unnamed third party.

- parents may seek help on matters unrelated to the abuse or its causes (this may be to deflect attention away from the child and his injuries).

- the parents and/or child may go missing.

## Physical Abuse

Children receive bumps and bruises as a result of the rough and tumble of normal play. Most children will have bruises or other injuries, therefore, from time to time. These will be accidental and can be easily explained.

It is not necessary to establish intent to cause harm to the child to conclude that the child has been subject to abuse. Physical abuse can occur through acts of both commission and/or omission.

Insignificant but repeated injuries, however minor, may be symptomatic of a family in crisis and, if no action is taken, the child may be further injured. All injuries

should be noted and collated in the child's records and analysed to assess if the child requires to be safeguarded.

If on initial examination the injury is not felt to be compatible with the explanation given or suggest abuse it should be discussed with a senior paediatrician.

A small number of children suffer from rare conditions, e.g. haemophilia or brittle bone disease, which makes them susceptible to bruising and fractures. It is important to remain aware, however, that in such children some injuries may have a non-accidental cause. A "clotting screen" only excludes the common conditions which may cause spontaneous bleeding. If the history suggests a bleeding disorder, referral to a haematologist will be required.

## Recognition of Physical Abuse

### a) Bruises + Soft Tissue Injuries

Common sites for accidental bruising depend on the developmental stage of the child. They include:

- forehead
- crown of head
- bony spinal protuberances
- elbows and below
- hips
- hands
- shins

Less common sites for accidental bruising include:

- Eyes
- Ears
- Cheeks
- Mouth
- Neck
- Shoulders
- Chest
- Upper and Inner Arms
- Stomach
- Genitals
- Upper and Inner Thighs
- Lower Back and Buttocks
- Upper Lip and Frenulum
- Back of the Hands.

**Non-accidental bruises may be:**

- frequent
- patterned, e.g. finger and thumb marks
- in unusual positions, (note developmental level and activity of the child).

Research on aging of bruises (from photographs) has shown that it is impossible to accurately age bruises although it can be concluded that a bruise with a yellow colour is more than 18 hours old. Tender or swollen bruises are more likely to be fresh. It is not possible to conclude definitely that bruises of different colours were sustained at different times.

**The following should give rise to concern e.g.**

bruising in a non-mobile child, in the absence of an adequate explanation,

bruises other than at the common sites of accidental injury for a child of that developmental stage,

facial bruising, particularly around the eyes, cheeks, mouth or ears, especially in very young children.

soft tissue bruising, on e.g. cheeks, arms and inner surface of thighs, with no adequate explanation.

a torn upper lip frenulum (skin which joins the lip and gum).

patterned bruising e.g. linear or outline bruising, hand marks (due to grab, slap or pinch may be petechial), strap marks particularly on the buttocks or back.

ligature marks caused by tying up or strangulation.

Most falls or accidents produce one bruise on a single surface, usually a bony protuberance. A child who falls downstairs would generally only have one or two bruises. Children usually fall forwards and therefore bruising is most usually found on the front of the body. In addition, there may be marks on their hands if they have tried to break their fall.

Bruising may be difficult to see on a dark-skinned child. Mongolian blue spots are natural pigmentation to the skin, which may be mistaken for bruising. These purplish-blue skin markings are most commonly found on the backs of children whose parents are darker skinned.

**b) Eye Injuries**

**Injuries which should give cause for concern:**

black eyes can occur from any direct injury, both accidental and non-accidental. Determining how the injury occurred is vital, therefore; bilateral "black eyes" can

occur accidentally as a result of blood tracking from a very hard blow to the central forehead (Injury should be evident on mid-forehead, bridge of nose). It is rare for both eyes to be bruised separately, accidentally however and at the same time.

sub conjunctival haemorrhage

retinal haemorrhage.

### c) Burns and Scalds

**Accidental scalds often:**

are on the upper part of the body
are on a convex (curved) surface
are irregular
are superficial
leave a recognisable pattern.

**It can be difficult to distinguish between accidental and non-accidental burns. Any burn or scald with a clear outline should be regarded with suspicion e.g.**

circular burns
linear burns
burns of uniform depth over a large area
friction burns
scalds that have a line which could indicate immersion or poured liquid
splash marks
old scars indicating previous burns or scalds.

**When a child presents with a burn or scald it is important to remember:**

a responsible adult checks the temperature of the bath before a child gets into it.

a child is unlikely to sit down voluntarily in too hot water and cannot accidentally scald his bottom without also scalding his feet.

"doughnut" shaped burns to the buttocks often indicate that a child has been held down in hot water, with the buttocks held against the water container e.g. bath, sink etc.

a child getting into too hot water of its own accord will struggle to get out and there are likely to be splash marks.

small round burns may be cigarette burns but can often be confused with skin conditions. Where there is doubt, a medical/dermatology opinion should be sought.

### *d) Fractures*

***The potential for a fracture should be considered if there is pain, swelling and discoloration over a bone or joint or a child is not using a limb, especially in younger children. The majority of fractures normally cause pain, and it is very difficult for a parent to be unaware that a child has been hurt. In infants, rib and metaphysical limb fractures may produce no detectable ongoing pain. However, It is very rare for a child aged under one year to sustain a fracture accidentally, but there may be some underlying medical condition, e.g. brittle bone disease, which can cause fractures in babies.***

The most common non-accidental fractures are to the long bones in the arms and legs and to the ribs. The following should give cause for concern and further investigation may be necessary:

- any fracture in a child under one year of age
- any skull fracture in children under three years of age
- a history of previous skeletal injuries which may suggest abuse
- skeletal injuries at different stages of healing
- evidence of previous fractures which were left untreated.

### e) Scars

Children may have scars from previous injuries. Particular note should be taken if there is a large number of scars of different ages, or of unusual shapes or large scars from burns or lacerations that have not received medical treatment.

### f) Bites

Bites are always non-accidental in origin; they can be caused by animals or human beings (adult/child); a dental surgeon with forensic experience may be needed to secure detailed evidence in such cases.

### g) Other Types of Physical Injuries

- poisoning, either through acts of omission or commission
- ingestion of other damaging substances, e.g. bleach
- administration of drugs to children where they are not medically indicated or prescribed
- female genital mutilation, which is an offence, regardless of cultural reasons
- unexplained neurological signs and symptoms, e.g. subdural haematoma

### h) Fabricated or Induced Illness

Fabricated or induced illness, previously known as Munchausen's Syndrome by Proxy, is a condition where a child suffers harm through the deliberate action of the main carer, in most cases the mother, but which is attributed to another medical cause.

It is important not to confuse this deliberate activity with the behaviour and actions of over-anxious parents who constantly seek advice from doctors, health visitors and other health professionals about their child's wellbeing.

There is a need to exercise caution about attributing a child's illness, in the absence of a medical diagnosis, to deliberate activity on the part of a parent or carer to a fabricated or induced illness, as stated in the Court of Appeal judgement in the case of Angela Cannings.

**(R v Cannings (2004) EWCA Criml (19 January 2004)).**

**The following behaviours exhibited by parents can be associated with fabricated or induced illness:**

- deliberately inducing symptoms in children by administering medication or other substances, or by means of intentional suffocation.
- interfering with treatments by over-dosing, not administering them or interfering with medical equipment such as infusion lines or not complying with professional advice, resulting in significant harm.
- claiming the child has symptoms which may be unverifiable unless observed directly, such as pain, frequency of passing urine, vomiting or fits.
- exaggerating symptoms, causing professionals to undertake investigations and treatments which may be invasive, unnecessary and, therefore, are harmful and possibly dangerous.
- obtaining specialist treatments or equipment for children who do not require them.
- alleging psychological illness in a child.

**There are a number of presentations in which fabricated or induced illness may be a possibility. These are:**

- failure to thrive/growth faltering (sometimes through deliberate withholding of food.)
- fabrication of medical symptoms especially where there is no independent witness
- convulsions.
- pyrexia (high temperature).
- cyanotic episode (reported blue tinge to the skin due to lack of oxygen).
- apnoea (stops breathing).
- allergies
- asthmatic attacks
- unexplained bleeding (especially anal or genital or bleeding from the ears)
- frequent unsubstantiated allegations of sexual abuse, especially when accompanied by demands for medical examinations
- frequent ‘accidental’ overdoses (especially in very young children).

**Concerns may arise when:**

- reported symptoms and signs found on examinations are not explained by any medical condition from which the child may be suffering.
- physical examination and results of medical investigations do not explain reported symptoms and signs.
- there is an inexplicably poor response to prescribed medication and other treatment.
- new symptoms are reported on resolution of previous ones.
- reported symptoms and/or clinical signs do not occur when the carers are absent
- over time the child is repeatedly presented to health professionals with a range of signs and symptoms.
- the child's normal, daily life activities are being curtailed beyond that which might be expected for any medical disorder or disability from which the child is known to suffer.

It is important to note that the child may also have an illness that has been diagnosed and needs regular treatment. This may make the diagnosis of fabricated or induced illness difficult, as the presenting symptoms may be similar to those of the diagnosed illness.

### Sexual Abuse

Most child victims are sexually abused by someone they know, either a family member or someone well known to them or their family. In recent years there has been an increasing recognition that both male and female children and older children are sexually abused to a greater extent than had previously been realised.

There are no 'typical' sexually abusing families. Children who have been sexually abused are likely to have been put under considerable pressure not to reveal what has been happening to them. Sexual abuse is damaging to children, both in the short and long term.

Both boys and girls of all ages are abused, and the abuse may continue for many years before it is disclosed. Abusers may be both male and female.

It is important to note that children and young people may also abuse other children sexually.

Children disclosing sexual abuse have the right to be listened to and to have their allegations taken seriously. Research shows it is rare for children to invent allegations of sexual abuse and that in fact they are more likely to claim they are not being abused when they are.

It is important that the indicators listed below are assessed in terms of significance and in the context of the child's life, before concluding that the child is, or has been, sexually abused.

Some indicators take on a greater, or lesser, importance depending upon the child's age.

### Recognition of Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse often presents in an obscure way. Whilst some child victims have obvious genital injuries, a sexually transmitted infection or are pregnant, relatively few children are so easily diagnosed. The majority of children subjected to sexual abuse, even when penetration has occurred, have on medical examination no evidence of the abuse having occurred.

The following indicators of sexual abuse may be observed in a child. There may be occasions when no symptoms are present, but it is still thought that a child may be, or has been, sexually abused. Suspicions increase where several features are present together.

**The following list is not exhaustive and should not be used as a check list.**

### Pre-School Child (0-4years)

**Possible physical indicators in the pre-school aged child include:**

- bruises, scratches, bite marks or other injuries to buttocks, lower abdomen or thighs
- itching, soreness, discharge or unexplained bleeding
- physical damage to genital area or mouth
- signs of sexually transmitted infections
- pain on urination
- semen in vagina, anus, external genitalia
- difficulty in walking or sitting
- torn, stained or bloody underclothes or evidence of clothing having been removed and replaced
- psychosomatic symptoms such as recurrent abdominal pain or headache.

**Possible behavioural indicators include:**

- unusual behaviour associated with the changing of nappy/underwear, e.g. fear of being touched/hurt, holding legs rigid and stiff or verbalisation like "stop hurting me".

- heightened genital awareness - touching, looking, verbal references to genitals, interest in other children's or adults' genitals.

- using objects for masturbation - dolls, toys with phallic-like projections.

- rubbing genital area on an adult - wanting to smell genital area of an adult, asking adult to touch or smell their genitals.

- simulated sexual activity with another child e.g. replaying the sexually abusive event or wanting to touch other children etc.

- simulated sexual activity with dolls, cuddly toys.

- fear of being alone with adult persons of a specific sex, especially that of the suspected abuser.

- self-mutilation e.g. picking at sores, sticking sharp objects in the vagina, head banging etc.

- social isolation - the child plays alone and withdraws into a private world.

- inappropriate displays of affections between parent and child who behave more like lovers.

- fear of going to bed and/or overdressing for bed.

- child takes over 'the mothering role' in the family whether or not the mother is present.

**Primary School Age Children**

**In addition to the above there may be other behaviour especially noticeable in school:**

- poor peer group relationships and inability to make friends.

- inability to concentrate, learning difficulties or a sudden drop in school performance.

- reluctance to participate in physical activity or to change clothes for physical education, games or swimming.

- unusual or bizarre sexual themes in child's art work or stories.

- frequent absences from school that are justified by one parent only, apparently without regard for its implications for the child's school performance.

- unusual reluctance or fear of going home after school.

## The Adolescent

**In addition to the physical indicators previously outlined in the preschool and pre-adolescent child, the following indicators relate specifically to the adolescent:**

- recurrent urinary tract infections.

- pregnancy, especially where the information about or the identity of the father is vague or secret or where there is complete denial of the pregnancy by the girl and her family.

- sexually transmitted infections.

**Possible behavioural indicators include:**

- repeated running away from home
- sleep problems - insomnia, recurrent nightmares, fear of going to bed or overdressing for bed
- dependence on alcohol or drug
- suicide attempts and self-mutilation
- hysterical behaviour, depression, withdrawal, mood swings
- vulnerability to sexual and emotional exploitation, fear of intimate relationships, promiscuity
- eating disorders — e.g. anorexia nervosa and bulimia
- low self-esteem and low expectation of others
- persistent stealing and /or lying
- sudden school problems - taunting, lack of concentration, falling standard or work etc.
- fear or abhorrence of one particular individual.

## Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is as damaging as other, visible, forms of abuse in terms of its impact on the child. There is increasing evidence of the adverse long-term consequences for children's development where they have been subject to emotional abuse. Emotional abuse has an impact on a child's physical health, mental health, behaviour and self-esteem. It can be particularly damaging for children aged 0 to 3 years.

Emotional abuse may take the form of under-protection, and/or over-protection, of the child, which has a significant negative impact on a child's development.

The parents' physical care of the child, and his environment, may appear to meet the child's needs, but it is important to remain aware of the interactions and relationship which occur between the child and his parents to determine if they are nurturing and appropriate.

An emotionally abused child may be subject to constant criticism and being made a scapegoat, the continuous withholding of approval and affection, severe discipline or a total lack of appropriate boundaries and control. A child may be used to fulfil a parent's emotional needs.

The potential of emotional abuse should always be considered in referrals where instances of domestic violence have been reported.

### Recognition of Emotional Abuse

Whilst emotional abuse can occur in the absence of other types of abuse, it is important to recognise that it does often co-exist with them, to a greater or lesser extent.

### Child Behaviours associated with Emotional Abuse

Some of the symptoms and signs seen in children who are emotionally abused are presented below. It is the degree and persistence of such symptoms that should result in the consideration of emotional abuse as a possibility. Importantly, it should be remembered that whilst these symptoms may suggest emotional abuse they are not necessarily pathognomic of this since they often can be seen in other conditions.

### Possible behaviours that may indicate emotional abuse include:

- serious emotional reactions, characterised by withdrawal, anxiety, social and home fears etc.
- marked behavioural and conduct difficulties, e.g. opposition and aggression, stealing, running away, promiscuity, lying.
- persistent relationship difficulties, e.g. extreme clinginess, intense separation reaction.
- physical problems such as repeated illnesses, severe eating problems, severe toileting problem.
- extremes of self-stimulatory behaviours, e.g. head banging, comfort seeking, masturbation etc.
- very low self-esteem, often unable to accept praise or to trust and lack of self-pride.
- lack of any sense of pleasure in achievement, over-serious or apathetic.
- over anxiety, e.g. constantly checking or over anxious to please.
- developmental delay in young children, and failure to reach potential in learning.

### Parental Behaviour Associated with Emotional Abuse

### Behaviour shown by parents which, if persistent, may indicate emotionally abusive behaviour includes:

- extreme emotions and behaviours towards their child including criticism, negativity, rejecting attitudes, hostility etc.

- fostering extreme dependency in the child
- harsh disciplining, inconsistent disciplining and the use of emotional sanctions such as withdrawal of love
- expectations and demands which are not appropriate for the developmental stage of the child, e.g. too high or too low
- exposure of the child to family violence and abuse
- inconsistent and unpredictable responses to the child
- contradictory, confusing or misleading messages in communicating with the child
- serious physical or psychiatric illness of a parent where the emotional needs of the child are not capable of being considered and/or appropriately met
- induction of the child into bizarre parental belief systems
- break-down in parental relationship with chronic, bitter conflict over contact or residence arrangements for the child
- major and repeated familial change, e.g. separations and reconstitution of families and/or changes of address
- making a child a scapegoat within the family

## Neglect

Neglect and failure to thrive/growth faltering for non-organic reasons requires medical diagnosis. Non-organic failure to thrive is where there is a poor growth for which no medical cause is found, especially when there is a dramatic improvement in growth on a nutritional diet away from the parent's care. Failure to thrive tends to be associated with young children but neglect can also cause difficulties for older children.

There is a tendency to associate neglect with poverty and social disadvantage. Persistent neglect over long periods of time is likely to have causes other than poverty, however. There has to be a distinction made between financial poverty and emotional poverty.

**There are a number of types of neglect that can occur separately or together, for example:**

- medical neglect
- educational neglect
- simulative neglect environmental neglect
- environmental neglect
- failure to provide adequate supervision and a safe environment.

## Recognition of Neglect

Neglect is a chronic, persistent problem. The concerns about the parents not providing "good enough" care for their child will develop over time. It is the accumulation of such concerns which will trigger the need to invoke the Child Protection Process. In cases of neglect, it is important that details about the standard of care of the child are recorded and there is regular inter-agency sharing of this information.

It is important to remember that the degree of neglect can fluctuate, sometimes rapidly, therefore ongoing inter-agency assessment and monitoring is essential.

The assessment of neglect should take account of the child's age and stage of development, whether the neglect is severe in nature and whether it is resulting in, or likely to result in, significant impairment to the child's health and development.

The following areas should be considered when assessing whether the quality of care a child receives constitutes neglect.

### Child

#### Health presentation indicators include:

- non-organic failure to thrive (growth faltering)
- poor weight gain (improvement when away from the care of the parents
- poor height gain
- unmet medical needs
- untreated head lice/other infestations
- frequent attendance at 'accident and emergency' and/or frequent hospital admissions
- tired or depressed child, including a child who is anaemic or has rickets
- poor hygiene
- poor or inappropriate clothing for the time of year
- abnormal eating behaviour (bingeing or hoarding).

#### Emotional and behavioural development indicators include:

- developmental delay/special needs
- presents as being under-stimulated
- abnormal reaction to separation/ or attachment, disorder
- over-active and/or aggressive
- soiling and/or wetting
- repeated running away from home
- substance misuse
- offending behaviour, including stealing food
- teenage pregnancy.

#### Family and social relationship indicators include:

- high criticism/low warmth
- excluded by family
- sibling violence
- isolated child
- attachment disorders and /or seeking comfort from strangers
- left unattended/or to care for other children
- left to wander alone day or night
- constantly late to school/late being collected

- not wanting to go home from school or refusing to go to school
- poor attendance at school/nursery
- frequent name changes and/or change of address or parental figures within the home.
- management of a child with a disability who is not attaining the level of functioning which is commensurate with the disability.

Consideration should be given as to whether a child and adolescent mental health assessment is required. Have all children in the family been seen and their views explored and documented?

### Parents

### Lack of emotional warmth indicators include:

- unrealistic expectations of child
- inability to consider or put child's needs first
- name calling/degrading remarks
- lack of appropriate affection for the child
- violence within the home from which the child is not shielded
- partner resenting non-biological child and hostile in attitude towards him
- failure to provide basic care for the child.

### Lack of stability indicators include:

- frequent changes of partners
- poor family support/inappropriate support
- lack of consistent relationships
- frequent moves of home
- enforced unemployment
- drug, alcohol or substance dependency
- financial pressures/debt
- absence of local support networks, neighbours etc.

### Issues relating to providing guidance and setting boundaries indicators include:

- poor boundary setting
- inconsistent attitudes and reactions, especially to child's behaviour
- continuously failing appointments
- refusing offers of help and services
- failure to seek or use advice and/or help offered appropriately
- seeks to mislead professionals by providing inaccurate or confusing information
- failure to provide safe environment.

### Social Presentation

- aggressive/threatening behaviour towards professionals and volunteers
- disguised compliance
- IOW self-esteem
- lack of self-care.

### Health

- mental ill health
- substance misuse
- learning difficulties
- (post-natal) depression
- history of parental child abuse or poor parenting
- physical health.

### Home and Environmental Conditions

### The following home and environmental conditions should be considered:

- poor housing conditions
- overcrowding
- lack of water, heating, sanitation
- no access to washing machine
- piles of dirty washing
- little or no adequate clean bedding/furniture
- little or no food in cupboards
- human and/or animal excrement
- uncared for animals
- referrals to environmental health
- unsafe environment
- rural isolation.

### Impediments to ongoing assessment and appropriate multidisciplinary support

- failure to see the child
- no ease of access to whole house
- fear of violence and aggression
- failure to seek support and advice or consultation, as appropriate, from line manager
- failure to record concern and initial impact
- inability to retain objectivity
- unwitting collusion with family
- failure to see beyond conditions in the home
- child's view is lost
- geographical stereotyping
- minimising concern
- poor networking amongst professionals
- inability to see what is/is not acceptable
- familiarity breeding contempt; and
- failure to make connections with information available from other services.

**(Hammersmith & Fulham Inter-Agency Procedures 2002)**

When staff become aware of any of the above features they should review the case with their line manager.

### Children with Disability

In recognising child abuse, all professionals should be aware that children with a disability can be particularly vulnerable to abuse. They may need a high degree of physical care; they may have less access to protection and there may be a reluctance on the part of professionals to consider the possibility of abuse.

### Recognition of Abuse of Children with Disability

### Recognition of abuse can be difficult in that:

- symptoms and signs may be confused
- the child may not recognise the behaviour as abusive
- the child may have communication difficulties and be unable to disclose abuse
- there may be a dependency on several adults for intimate care
- there is a reluctance to accept that children with disabilities may be abused.

Children with disability will usually display the same symptoms and signs of abuse as other children. These may be incorrectly attributed, however, to the child's disability.

## Risk Factors Associated with Child Abuse

A number of factors may increase the likelihood of abuse to a child. The following list is not exhaustive and does not preclude the possibility of abuse in families where none of these factors are evident.

### Child

- poor bonding due to neo-natal problems
- attachment interfered with by multiple caring arrangements
- a 'difficult' child, a 'demanding' baby
- a child under five years is considered to be most vulnerable
- a child's name or sibling's names previously on the Child Protection Register
- a baby/child with feeding/sleeping difficulties
- birth defects/chronic illness/developmental delay.

### Parents

- both young and immature (i.e. aged 20 years and under) at birth of the child
- parental history of deprivation and/or abuse
- slow jealousy and rivalry with the child
- expect the child to meet their needs
- unrealistic expectations/rigid ideas about child development
- history of mental illness in one or both parents
- history of domestic violence
- drug and alcohol misuse in one or both parents of the child
- frequent changes of carers
- history of aggressive behaviour by either parent

- unplanned pregnancy
- unrealistic expectations of themselves as parents.

### Home and Environmental Conditions

- unemployment
- no income/poverty
- poor housing or overcrowded housing
- social isolation and no supportive family
- the family moves frequently
- debt
- large family

**Appendix 8**

**ROLE OF SOCIAL SERVICES AND OTHER AGENCIES**

Social Services have a statutory duty to investigate any case where they receive information suggesting that a child or young person may be in need of care, protection or control unless satisfied that such enquiries are unnecessary. Their objective is to ensure the safety and welfare of the child. They have a lead role in co-ordinating the work of all the agencies and professionals concerned with the child's family. A joint protocol has been established between the Social Services and the Police for investigative purposes. This will involve the police in investigating situations where a crime may have been committed.

When there is suspicion that a child has been abused, Social Services may convene a multi-disciplinary Case Conference which may involve principals or their nominees depending upon who is best placed to contribute effectively to the discussion of the child's welfare.

The objectives of the Case Conference are to:

i. share and exchange relevant information on a confidential basis,
ii. determine the nature and degree of abuse or risk of abuse and whether to place the child's name on the Child Protection Register,
iii. devise a Child Protection plan which identifies the contribution that individual agencies and professionals will make,
iv. identify a case co-ordinator (normally from the Social Services Department) and to arrange for the review of the plan on at least six monthly basis.

Decisions of Case Conferences will be forwarded to principals and should be stored separately and securely. If the child transfers to another school, the Social Services Co-ordinator should be informed, and the receiving school should be advised that the child's name is on the Child Protection Register. All Child Protection records held by the school from which the child transfers should be destroyed, including case conference records; the receiving school should approach the Social Services directly for information.

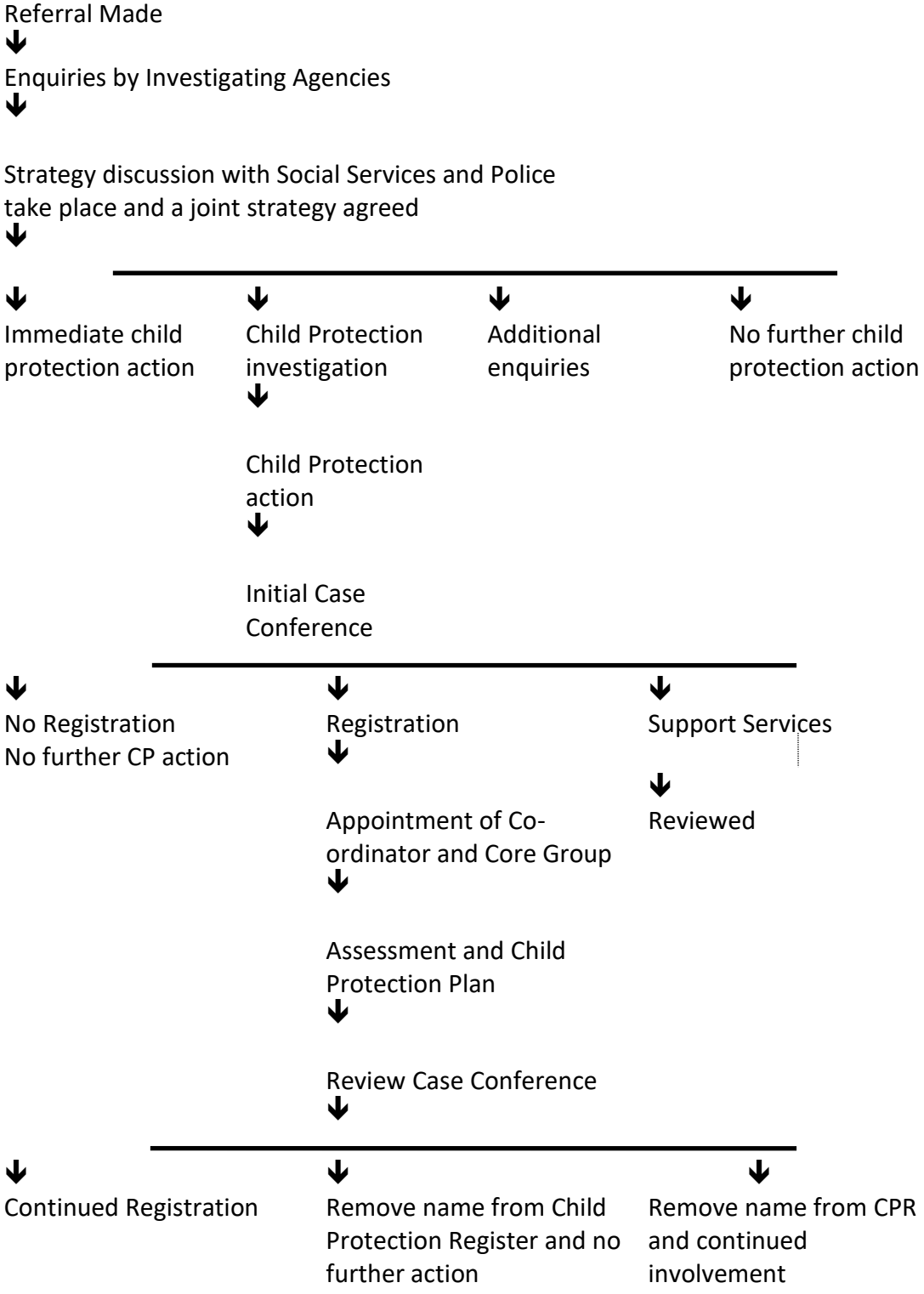
Social Services will send information in writing to the school about any child whose name has been included on the Child Protection Register, including whether the child is in the care of Social Services and what information has been made known to the parents about allegations or suspicions of abuse. Social Services will ask the school authorities to pay particular attention to such children in respect of their attendance record, emotional and social development and any other cause for further concern. A social worker will liaise with the principal and / or other education staff about the child's progress. When a child's name is removed from the Child Protection Register schools will be informed in writing by Social Services. Records should be destroyed when the child's name is removed from the Child Protection Register.

**Appendix 9**

**WHAT HAPPENS AFTER A REFERRAL IS MADE (OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL ROLE)**

**ROLES OF OTHER AGENCIES**

The welfare of the child is paramount and the following interagency procedures are intended to ensure a prompt and co-ordinated response to any referral.



**APPENDIX 10 Key Terms**

**ARTICLE 8 ORDERS**

**RESIDENCE ORDER (Formerly Custody Order)**

50%/50% split - can be any percentage.
40%/60% - Both parents can have access to child at home, rather than just one.

**CONTACT ORDER (Formerly Access Order)**

Try to find out from parents who has right to contact child. If parents are married they both have the right to see a child unless a contact order has been made against one of the parents.

**PROHIBITED STEPS ORDER (Formerly Wardship Order)**

Limits parent from taking child out of Northern Ireland.

**SPECIFIC ISSUE ORDER**

eg, difference over which secondary school a child should go to.

**PUBLIC LAW ORDERS**

**CARE ORDER** (Article 52) - Residential or foster care

**SUPERVISION ORDER** (Article 54) - Social Worker befriends child and tries to work out best way forward.

**EDUCATION SUPERVISION ORDER** (Article 55) - EWO implements this - attendance, etc. Needs parental co-operation. May or may not make a difference to a child.

**INTERIM ORDER** (Article 57) - temporary order leading to full order.

**ASSESSMENT ORDER** (Article 62) - investigation order child may not be in care parents must co-operate.

**EMERGENCY PROTECTION ORDER** (Article 64) - child taken into care initially 8 days - 7 days can be added.

**RECOVERY ORDER** (Article 69) - child with care order runs away.