



**COTSWOLD
DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults

Procedure and Guidance for Staff



December 2016

CONTENTS

	Page
1 <u>Introduction</u>	3
2 <u>Signs of Abuse</u>	3
3 <u>Recording a concern</u>	6
4 <u>Information Sharing</u>	7
5 <u>What to do if a child, young person or vulnerable adult tells you they are being abused</u>	7
6 <u>How to decide whether to make a Safeguarding Referral</u>	7
7 <u>Action in an emergency</u>	7
8 <u>How to make a Safeguarding Referral</u>	8
9 <u>What happens after a Safeguarding Referral is made</u>	8
10 <u>Concerns about abuse by a member of staff</u>	9
11 <u>Safeguarding Officers</u>	9
Appendix	
<u>Guidance on safe working practices with children and young people</u>	10

1. Introduction

All staff are expected to work in a way that helps, as far as possible, to safeguard children, young people under the age of 18 and vulnerable adults from harm. Please refer to the Cotswold District Council Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy for further information.

It is not the responsibility of those working for the Council to decide if abuse is occurring but it is your responsibility to act on concerns and notify the appropriate person or organisation.

If a child, young person or vulnerable adult says or indicates that they are being abused or information is obtained which leads a member of staff or Councillor to be concerned that abuse is occurring, immediate action should be taken to report the matter.

Raising concerns is in the best interests of the child or person and when information is passed onto the relevant authorities, they will make enquiries and form a full and accurate picture of the risks they might be facing and take appropriate action if necessary.

2. Signs of Abuse

Children and Young People

Abuse of a child may arise through neglect or through infliction of harm or by failure to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a wide variety of settings, by people known to them or by strangers, by men or women or other children.

Physical Abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health to a child for whom they are caring.

You should be concerned if you

- Witness someone physically harming a child or young person
- See evidence of suspicious looking bites and burns or an excessive amount of bruises
- See unexplained fractures and injuries to the mouth and eyes

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.

Examples include:-

- Conveying to children that they are worthless, unloved or inadequate or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person
- Imposition of age or developmentally inappropriate expectations on children, including interactions that are beyond the child's development capability, over - protection and limitation of exploring and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction
- A child seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another
- Serious bullying including online bullying

You should be concerned if you

- Witness the repeated verbal abuse of a child or young person, including someone being repeatedly critical of them
- See a child that is exceptionally withdrawn or constantly afraid
- See a child being frequently frightened
- See a child being corrupted or exploited

Sexual Abuse is any sexual activity with a child. It involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware that the activity is abusive. It is not solely perpetrated by adult males, women can commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration such as rape or oral sex and non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside clothing. It includes non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or to watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in a sexually inappropriate way or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet).

You should be concerned if you

- Witness the involvement of a child or young person in any form of sexual activity, including someone showing them any kind of pornographic material
- Witness anyone accessing pornographic material featuring children and young people
- Notice from a child's conversations or actions that they have sexual knowledge or experience that is beyond what you would expect for their age

Child Sexual Exploitation is a form of sexual abuse where children under 18 are sexually exploited for money, power or status. It can involve violent, humiliating and degrading sexual assaults. In some cases, young people are persuaded or forced into exchanging sexual activity for money, food, drugs, gifts, affection or status. Child sexual exploitation doesn't always involve physical contact and can happen online.

Consent cannot be given, even where a child may believe that they are voluntarily engaging in sexual activity with the person who is exploiting them. Children and young people are not making a free and informed choice to participate in the sexual activity. They often make constrained choices against a background of vulnerability and because of their age, unmet needs or vulnerability they are unable to give informed consent. Young people under the age of 16 cannot legally consent to sexual activity and sexual intercourse with children under the age of 13 is statutory rape.

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in serious impairment of the child's health and development. It involves

a pattern of failing to provide for a child's basic needs, whether it be adequate food, clothing, hygiene, supervision or shelter. It includes neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs, failure to protect a child from emotional harm or danger and failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

You should be concerned if you

- See a child who is extremely dirty, cold and underfed, particularly if this is in combination with the child being very withdrawn and/or afraid
- Witness neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs, failure to protect a child from emotional harm or danger or failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment
- See a child in poor physical condition or with delayed speech and language development

The following factors are also indicators of potential or actual child abuse:

- a change in a child's behaviour or appearance that causes you concern
- a statement by a child that he/she has been victimised
- a distrust of adults, particularly those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected

This list is not exhaustive and the presence of one or more of these indicators is not necessarily proof that abuse is actually taking place but it is important that what you have noticed is recorded as your record could help to put together a picture of what may be happening.

Vulnerable Adults

Safeguarding is aimed at people with care and support needs who may be in vulnerable circumstances and at risk of abuse or neglect. In these cases, local services must work together to spot those at risk and take steps to protect them.

Abuse is when someone does or says something which harms the person and makes them upset and scared. It is always unacceptable; everyone has a right to be treated with dignity and respect.

Abuse can be a single one off act or something that happens over weeks, months or years.

Abuse can happen in lots of different ways. Abuse and neglect can be defined in many ways and there can be no exhaustive list, however the most recent guidance from the government identifies the following types of abuse and neglect:

Physical abuse – Physical abuse includes assault, hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, being locked in a room, inappropriate sanctions or force-feeding, inappropriate methods of restraint, and unlawfully depriving a person of their liberty.

Domestic abuse – An incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse, by someone who is or has been an intimate partner or family member, regardless of gender or sexuality. This includes psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional abuse; so-called 'honour-based' violence; Female Genital Mutilation; forced marriage.

Sexual abuse – Sexual abuse including rape, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, inappropriate looking or touching, sexual teasing or innuendo, sexual photography, subjection to pornography or witnessing sexual acts, indecent exposure and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the adult has not consented or was pressured into consenting.

Psychological abuse – Psychological abuse includes 'emotional abuse' and takes the form of threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, rejection, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, indifference, harassment, verbal abuse (including shouting or swearing), cyber bullying, isolation or withdrawal from services or support networks.

Financial or Material abuse – This includes theft, fraud, internet scamming, coercion in relation to an adult's financial affairs or arrangements, including in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.

Modern Slavery – Modern slavery encompasses slavery, human trafficking, forced and compulsory labour and domestic servitude. Traffickers and slave masters use whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment.

Discriminatory Abuse – This includes discrimination on the grounds of race, faith or religion, age, disability, gender, sexual orientation and political views, along with racist, sexist, homophobic or ageist comments or jokes, or comments and jokes based on a person's disability or any other form of harassment, slur or similar treatment.

Organisational Abuse – Including neglect and poor care practice within an institution or specific care setting such as a hospital or care home, or where care is provided within their own home. This may range from one off incidents to on-going ill-treatment. It can be through neglect or poor professional practice as a result of the structure, policies, processes and practices within an organisation.

Neglect & Acts of Omission – These include ignoring medical, emotional or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services, and the withholding of the necessities of life such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.

Self-Neglect – Self-neglect entails neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding.

3. Recording a Concern

If you are concerned that abuse may be taking place, discuss your concerns and observations with your Line Manager and/or one of the Council's Safeguarding Officers at the earliest opportunity. Together, you need to decide whether a Safeguarding Referral should be made on the basis that you have reason to suspect that abuse may be taking place.

All concerns should be recorded on a Record of Concern Form which can be downloaded from the Safeguarding folder on the intranet. A record should be completed whether or not a Safeguarding Referral is made.

Completion of a Record of Concern should be:

- Factual (who, what, when, where, how)
- Supported by available evidence e.g. a summary of what has been disclosed or is known about the child or their family.

Include as much information as possible and try to include examples that demonstrate your concerns as well as any known risks and protective factors around the child, young person or vulnerable adult.

Assistance to complete a Record of Concern is available from the Lead Safeguarding Officer(s).

A copy of a Record of Concern should be emailed to simon.wright@westoxon.gov.uk (the Lead Safeguarding Officer).

4. Information Sharing

The duty of confidentiality and the Data Protection Act 1998 do not prevent you from sharing information to keep people safe. The Council is required to share information for a number of reasons, including when information is needed in connection with raising or investigating a concern about a person's welfare.

The types of information that may be shared include names, contact details, information about a person's physical or mental health and relations with others. The sharing of this information will be restricted to those who have a demonstrable need to know and robust protections, such as secure email and encryption should be used to share this information externally.

5. What to do if a child, young person or vulnerable adult tells you that they are being abused

In the event that a child, young person or vulnerable adult tells you that they are being abused, you should react calmly and quietly and take the allegation seriously. It is important not to panic, show your shock or distaste or make negative comments. Keep questions to a minimum and give time for them to talk. Explain confidentiality and that information will be shared with people who will be able to help. Make a full record of what has been said as soon as possible on the Record of Concern and discuss with your Line manager or a Safeguarding Officer. Do not speculate, make assumptions or approach the alleged abuser.

6. How to decide whether to make a Safeguarding Referral

If you have a concern regarding a child, young person or vulnerable adult you should contact your Service Head/Line Manager and one of the Lead Safeguarding Officers at the earliest opportunity.

The Safeguarding Lead(s) will be able to advise and progress the concern with the relevant social care team at Gloucestershire County Council who will assess what, if any, action should be taken in respect of the concern.

7. Action in an emergency

Where an immediate police or medical response is required e.g. if the child, young person or vulnerable adult is in immediate danger of harm/injury you should contact the emergency services on 999. Inform the Safeguarding Lead(s) at the earliest opportunity.

8. How to make a Safeguarding Referral

The Safeguarding Lead(s) will explain and action the process in respect of making a referral.

If it is known that the concerns relate to an already open case, contact will be made with the relevant Social Care Team.

Where a new Safeguarding Referral is considered to be needed, the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) may be notified.

The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is a partnership between Gloucestershire County Council, Gloucestershire Constabulary, Gloucestershire Domestic Abuse Support Service (GDASS), Gloucestershire Schools and Gloucestershire Health Services working together to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable adults.

Any calls that are deemed inappropriate to transfer to MASH will be directed to the relevant service.

Further useful information is available on the [Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Board](#) and [Gloucestershire Safeguarding Adults Board](#) websites.

9. What happens after a Safeguarding Referral is made

Children and Young People

In the MASH, a process of risk assessing cases is in operation. This means that the MASH will make an immediate response for the most urgent cases. For cases assessed as having lower level concerns, it may take up to three working days, to make an informed decision as to the most appropriate service required.

Section 47 Investigation

If the child is deemed to be at risk of significant harm, child protection procedures will be instigated immediately. This is the highest priority referral and will involve a discussion between social workers and the police. A strategy meeting will take place, involving the police and social workers, (with other agencies contributing where necessary) and a plan will be agreed about next steps. Examples of next steps could include the child having a medical examination or a video interview by the police and social workers. Following the initial strategy meeting there may be a review meeting to share information and make a new plan based on information and/or evidence gathered.

Section 17 Child in Need

If the child is not deemed to be at risk of significant harm but is in need of additional services, they are termed, 'A child in need'. The first step in a Section 17 enquiry is for the social worker to contact the parents/carers of the child to discuss the referral. This will be done via telephone where possible, but otherwise, a letter will be sent requesting contact within 1 week. The social worker will also make checks with other agencies, (for example, the school or the health visitor) and an initial assessment of the child's needs must be completed by the social worker within 7 days.

No further action

After considering the information contained in a referral the social worker may decide that the case requires 'NFA' (no further action). They may signpost the family to other services for support and as the referrer, you should be notified of this decision in writing. If you remain concerned about a child or family or if the circumstances change and you feel the risk to a child has increased, you can re-refer to the assessment team with additional information.

Vulnerable Adults

Every concern raised about the possible abuse of a vulnerable adult is taken seriously. When a concern is raised with the Health and Social Care team, they will pass this information to the Adult Safeguarding Team. The wishes of whoever is the subject of the concern will always be listened to and acted upon, and then a decision will be made about what needs to happen next if anything.

Usually the next steps will involve investigation of the allegation and further discussions with other professionals to ensure the individuals safety. Any safeguarding plan will try to ensure that the best possible outcome for the subject of the referral is achieved, and we have a very good track record in achieving this goal. Both the referrer and the person who is being abused will be informed of what is going on as far as possible.

10. Concerns about abuse by a member of staff

Where there are concerns about a member of staff's behaviour either inside or outside the workplace towards a child, young person or vulnerable adult this should be recorded and reported to your Line Manager or Head of Service and the Head of Human Resources at the earliest opportunity.

The matter will be investigated and the Council's Complaints and/or Disciplinary Procedures will be followed and appropriate action taken.

11. Safeguarding Officers

The following members of staff can be approached for advice about safeguarding concerns:

Simon Wright
Lead Safeguarding Officer for West Oxfordshire and Cotswold District Councils
simon.wright@westoxon.gov.uk
01993 861569

Diana Shelton
Shared Head of Leisure and Communities
diana.shelton@westoxon.gov.uk
01993 861569

Deborah Bainbridge
Head of Human Resources
deborah.bainbridge@cotswold.gov.uk
01285 623148

Appendix Guidance for safe working practices with children and young people

Exercise of Professional Judgement

It is possible to reduce situations in which abuse can occur and help protect employees and volunteers by promoting good practice. The following guidelines should be followed to ensure this can be achieved.

There may be occasions and circumstances in which staff will have to make decisions or take action in the best interest of the child or young person which could contravene this guidance or where no other guidance exists. Individuals are expected to make judgements about their behaviour in order to secure the best interest and welfare of the child or young person and in so doing will be seen to be acting reasonably.

Behaviour

An individual's behaviour, either in or out of the workplace, should not compromise his/her position within the work setting.

There are occasions when adults embark on a course of behaviour known as 'grooming' where the sole purpose is to gain the trust of the child or young person and manipulate that relationship so sexual or other abuse can take place. Staff should be aware that conferring special attention as a favour upon a child or young person might be construed as being part of a 'grooming' process.

Staff should not seek to establish social contact with children or young people who they have met through work for the purpose of securing a friendship or to strengthen a relationship. If a child or young person seeks to establish a social contact, or if this occurs coincidentally, the member of staff should exercise their professional judgement in making a response and be aware that such contact might be misconstrued as grooming.

Communication using technology

Children and young people use email, text, social networking and instant messenger technologies as a positive and creative part of their activities. They often use these methods to make plans with friends or organise events so if you are working with young people it might be necessary to communicate with young people in this way. However, staff should not give their personal contact details to children or young people including home address, personal e-mail address or mobile numbers.

Only equipment provided through work should be used to communicate with children/young people.

Under no circumstances should personal accounts in social networking sites be used to communicate with children/young people that staff members have met in the course of their work. The use of a professional networking site may only be used in line with council policy.

If staff do use a social networking site to communicate with young people staff should set up an account using their work e-mail address and only join groups that are managed by the District Council or County Council.

If young people you don't know 'invite you to be a friend' you should not accept their invitation. Do not pass on any young person's e-mail or mobile phone number without their permission.

Confidentiality

Confidential information about a child or young person should never be used casually in conversations or shared with any person other than on a need to know basis. In circumstances where the child/young person's identity does not need to be disclosed the information should be used anonymously.

For circumstances in which a member of staff is expected to share information about a child/young person, for example, when abuse is alleged or suspected, they have a duty to pass information on without delay, but only to those with designated responsibilities for child protection.

Risk Assessments

A risk assessment should be carried out for events that the Council organises for groups of children or young people.

Recording of Images

Staff should be aware of the potential for the recording of images to be misused for pornographic or 'grooming' purposes. Images recorded of children and young people should be functional as opposed to attractive and children and young people should be fully clothed.

Staff should make clear the purpose of recording images and what will happen to the photographs. Any images of children that are published should not include names without specific parent/carer consent (for children) or for a young person over the age of 16, their written consent.

Promoting good practice with children and young people

- Always work in an open environment, avoid private or unobserved situations
- Always put the welfare of each child first
- Build balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empowers children to share in the decision making process
- Ensure that if any form of manual/physical support is required, it should be provided openly and with due care
- Keep up to date with the appropriate technical skills and qualifications
- Ensure that children are unsupervised that they are accompanied by at least two employees or volunteers
- Be an excellent role model – this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of children whilst working
- Give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism
- Recognise the developmental needs and capacity of children
- Ensure that equipment and facilities are safe and appropriate to the age and ability of the child

Practice to be avoided

The following should be avoided except in emergencies. If cases arise where these situations are unavoidable they should only occur with the full knowledge and consent of a senior officer or the child's parent or guardian, for example:

- Spending excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others
- Taking children alone on car journeys, however short
- Taking children to your home

Employees and volunteers should never

- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child even in fun
- Allow allegations made by a child to go unrecorded or not acted upon
- Do things of a personal nature for children that they can do for themselves
- Invite or allow children to stay at their home
- Constantly shout at and/or taunt a child to 'keep control'

Work Experience Placements – good practice

All members of staff responsible for any child, young person, or vulnerable adult during work experience will be required to do the OSCB on-line training course.

The member of staff responsible for the work experience placement must be satisfied that the health and safety needs of every person can be met, and will ensure the above training takes place and for the following actions:

- Acquiring signed parent/carer permission for the student to take part in the scheme, where they are under 16.
- Acquiring information from parents/carers about any medical conditions and emergency contact information for parents/carers
- Acquiring relevant information about the student's history or behaviour from the organiser of the work placement
- Ensuring that a confidentiality and a statement of responsibility form is signed by the student
- Ensuring that there is a timetable of activities for the extent of the placement, including what member of staff will be supervising the student at any one time.
- Ensuring that there is an up to date risk assessment for all activities, which is returned to parents / carers, either directly or via the organiser of the work experience.
- Ensuring that the student is aware of health and safety, fire and first aid procedures while they are on placement
- Being the initial point of contact for the student to report any complaints/incidents to during their work experience particularly if in relation to their supervisor.

For the purposes of work experience placements, all students are regarded as employees.

Managers must assess the risks to children, young people and vulnerable adults before they start work, taking into account their inexperience, lack of awareness of risks, immaturity and other specific needs.