



Whitewell
METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE



**Safeguarding
Policy**

2026

Review History

This policy was first introduced in April 2025 to replace our 2017 policy.

This policy was re-published in February 2026 to include greater awareness of how safeguarding is to be practically implemented within Whitewell Metropolitan Tabernacle.

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Introduction

Leadership and Safeguarding Team Joint Statement

Whitewell Metropolitan Tabernacle ('Whitewell') is committed to creating a healthy church environment and a safe space for all in line with our Statement of Faith. We recognise that Safeguarding is executed well when it follows the six main principles of: empowerment, prevention, protection, proportionality, partnerships and accountability.

We recognise that there are many ways in which children and adults connect with our church.

Weekly Sunday services and activities including:

- Morning and Evening Service (also livestreamed)
- Creche (leader and/or parental supervised)
- Soft Play (Sunday evening – leader supervised)
- Weewellers and WOW (Sunday School Sessions – leader supervised)
- Befrienders (enabling church attendance for those with disabilities)

Weekly mid-week services and activities including:

- Pastoral Home and Hospital Visitations
- Monday Morning Prayer Meeting
- Monday Evening Prayer Meeting (also livestreamed/separate service online)
- Wednesday Night Bible Study (also livestreamed)
- Genesis Course (teaching for new believers)
- Mother's and Toddlers
- Girls' Brigade and Scouts
- Junior and Senior Well (youth meetings) - including trips for Senior Well
- Kick for Christ (children's football ministry)
- Gospel Outreach and Manna for Many Homeless Outreach (Belfast City Centre)
- Invitation Distribution

Ad-hoc activities including:

- Holiday Bible Clubs (for school-aged children)
- WILD (evening women's ministry)
- Women Together (day-time women's ministry)
- Men's Fellowship (evening men's ministry)
- Men's Friendship Group (day-time men's ministry)
- Grief Share (bereavement support ministry)
- The Shepherd's Academy (Bible College) - including trips (some overseas)
- Food and Toy Bank & Christmas Hamper distribution
- Christmas Fayre
- Gospel Outreaches and Invitation Distribution ahead of ALIVE Belfast, Carol Service etc (Belfast City Centre)
- Foreign Missions in Kenya and Ethiopia – including volunteer trips and ministry desks in Foyer of main church building.

Our church should be a safe place for everyone, where all feel welcome, valued, respected and cared for. We can promote this by:

- Instilling a culture of dignity and respect towards those being cared for which is achieved by listening to children, young people and adults who place their trust in us and respecting the boundaries and privacy of those in our care.
- Utilising age-appropriate learning modules from Thirty-One: Eight (Safeguarding professionals with a Christian ethos) to promote Safeguarding such as "Raise your roar with Roarry" (children's safeguarding resources) and "More Than Words" (youth leader safeguarding resources) [or equivalent] to deliver practical learning to those in our care and those providing care.
- Utilising training delivered by Thirty-One Eight to enhance Safeguarding knowledge for those in Positions of Trust – e.g. Safeguarding Lead(s), Pastors, Trustees etc. (in addition to 2-yearly Safeguarding Awareness training).
- Ensuring that our buildings are accessible - recognising any design limitations and addressing these – including the acoustics and lighting.
- Using appropriate language and suitable vocabulary that reflects a respectful attitude towards others – this includes our online and social media usage as a church.

- Ensuring that everyone understands that they have a role and responsibility in safeguarding our children, young people and adults by identifying and reporting concerns to our dedicated Safeguarding Team.
- Ensuring that all ministries and activities are risk assessed and that guidance, including relevant training, is in place for all those in positions of trust.
- Promoting good working practice of openness, transparency and accountability which enables staff and volunteers to conduct activities safely, develop good relationships and minimise the risk of any false accusations.
- Ensuring that every effort is made to preserve confidentiality but understanding that our Safeguarding Team need to be informed of concerns of abuse or neglect to protect those at risk, which may require involving statutory agencies as deemed necessary.

We recognise that there are ways in which children and adults can be at risk of harm, abuse or neglect. Children rely on adults to keep them safe by providing a stable and nurturing environment where they can reach their full potential. Similarly, some adults are in greater need of protection, care and support. Such adults can be identified by using the definition of “Adult at Risk” (“Key Definitions” – pg.8).

We also recognise that the subject of harm, abuse and neglect can be a difficult and complex issue to understand. It is for this reason that we have a dedicated Safeguarding Team in place who anyone can talk to about their concerns. We further acknowledge that abuse or neglect can be caused by inflicting harm or failing to prevent harm. We, therefore, endeavour to create a culture to minimise opportunities for abuse and neglect to occur. This requires having a safeguarding policy which sets out clearly defined principles, standards and guidelines required to keep everyone safe. This policy includes procedures for reporting concerns or allegations of abuse, as well as practical guidance for safer recruitment, use of online communications and church wide safeguarding training and supervision for all individuals working with children and adults at risk.

We also recognise that, for many victims/survivors of abuse, where the abuse has taken place within the context of the church or by someone professing a Christian faith, it can have an impact on their spiritual development.

We want to ensure that everyone in our care is empowered to speak with our dedicated Safeguarding Team if they have suffered any form of harm. Everyone has the right to be listened to, treated with respect and protected from all forms of abuse and neglect. Empowering those who need our help and creating a culture of a safe church environment for all ensures that all aspects of church life are open to all.

We have produced an overarching Safeguarding Policy for the protection, care and well-being of everyone across all our activities in recognition that we work with children and young

people, with adults who may be vulnerable or at risk, with victims and survivors of abuse and neglect and with those who may pose a risk of harm. .

It is the expectation that all those working with children and adults have access to our church Safeguarding Policy. Our church website holds the most easily accessed, up-to-date copy of this policy. A condensed “Quick Guide” version of this policy will also be supplied with all new staff and volunteer application packs from January 2026 onwards and will also be available to all ministry leaders and via appropriate noticeboards in various ministry rooms/spaces where children and adults at risk are most likely to be. It is expected that all staff and volunteers will have read it, become familiar with it and agreed to fully adhere to the policy, procedures and practice guidance as a condition of continuing in their role. It is also expected that all staff and volunteers understand how to raise a concern with our Safeguarding Team.

Church Website - <https://www.whitewell.church/safeguarding>

Safeguarding Awareness

Key Definitions regarding Safeguarding

- **Child** - someone under the age of 18; the general term of 'child' is used to describe both children and young people (see also Appendix A).
- **Adult At Risk** - as adult safeguarding systems have developed terminology has also developed (see also Appendix A) (below adapted from 1)
 - 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
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
- AND/OR
 - b) 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 (as above)
- AND/OR
 - b) life circumstances (as above)
- AND
 - c) who is unable to protect their own well-being, property, assets, rights or other interests
- AND
 - where the action or inaction of another person or persons is causing, or is likely to cause, him/her to be harmed.

¹ <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dhssps/adult-safeguarding-policy.pdf>

- Adults have a right to self-determination and independence. No one should be making decisions for anyone except in circumstances, where for example, the mental capacity of the individual is impaired, where a crime is being committed, or where children may be harmed because of adults' inaction. In such cases, the matter must be reported to the Safeguarding Lead. Sometimes an adult can put themselves in situations that others would judge to be inappropriate or abusive in the exercising of their own choice and autonomy. In such circumstances, when unsure of what actions to take, the Safeguarding Lead should seek advice from Thirty-One: Eight.
- **Position of Trust** - An individual in a Position of Trust is someone whose role places them within direct and regular contact with children or adults at risk in such a way that they have power or control over that child/adult at risk. It is against the law for someone in a position of trust to engage in sexual activity with a child in their care, even if that child is over the age of consent (age 16 in the UK).

Key Facts regarding Safeguarding

The following four categories of abuse apply to children and adults in Northern Ireland:

- Physical Abuse; Emotional/Psychological Abuse; Sexual Abuse; and Neglect

A victim may be suffering from more than one form of abuse at a given time.

- Regarding children...
- There are other forms of abuse (such as Domestic Abuse, Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE), Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), County Lines, Modern Slavery, Trafficking and Extremism) which come under these four main headings when instigating a child protection plan (see Appendix B for further developed definitions).
- See Appendix C for a developed list of signs and symptoms of abuse in respect of children.
- See Appendix G for developed diagrams depicting accidental and non-accidental injury.
- Regarding adults...
- There are other forms of abuse (such as Domestic Abuse and Violence, Financial or Material Abuse, Modern Slavery, Trafficking, Discriminatory Abuse, Institutional/Organisational abuse, Neglect (including self-neglect) and Acts of Omission) which fall under these four main headings (see Appendix D for further developed definitions).
- See Appendix E for a developed list of signs and symptoms of abuse in respect of adults.
- See Appendix G for developed diagrams depicting accidental and non-accidental injury.
- Children and adults at risk may be abused within a family setting, community setting or an institutional setting, including but not limited to the church.
- Those who abuse or neglect children and adults at risk are usually known by the children or adult at risk whom they abuse or neglect.
- Sadly, some people in a position of trust or authority have misused their power and authority in church contexts to cause abuse and neglect.
- Anyone can be a perpetrator of abuse or neglect – male and female; adult and child.

Key Legislation/Frameworks regarding Safeguarding

UK

- Human Rights Act 1998 (based on European Convention of Human Rights)
- UN Convention on the Right of the Child 1989
- UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948

Northern Ireland

- Safeguarding for Northern Ireland (SBNI) Procedures Manual (Nov 2017)
- Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2017
- The Children (NI) Order 1995
- Adult Safeguarding: Prevention and Protection in Partnership Key Documents (2015)
- Mental Capacity Act (Northern Ireland) 2016
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007
- Disability Discrimination Acts 1995
- Rehabilitation of Offenders (Northern Ireland) Order 1978
- Section 5 of the Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 known as 'Abuse of Position of Trust'
- The Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act (Northern Ireland) 2021
- Recognises the impact on a child who sees, hears, or experiences the effects of domestic abuse and treats them as victims of domestic abuse where they are related to or under parental responsibility of either the abuser or the abused. It is also recognised that young people can experience abuse in their relationships.

Northern Ireland frameworks

- The SBNI Core Policy and Procedures (2018)
- Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland [UNOCINI]

Key Stakeholders regarding Safeguarding

- Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT)
 - Primary Responsibility for protecting against harm
 - Adult Social Service Work – contact details available in this policy
 - Social workers within HSCTs are the lead professionals for safeguarding adults at risk. If an adult is at risk or in danger of serious harm, then a referral can be made to the Adult Protection Gateway Service.
 - Children's Social Service Work – contact details available in this policy
 - Social workers within HSCTs are the lead professionals for safeguarding children and young people. As a profession, social workers and their managers have responsibility to safeguard children and young people, including the management and maintenance of the Child Protection Register, its associated systems and for ensuring that all statutory functions delegated to HSCTs in respect of safeguarding and protecting children are satisfactorily fulfilled.
- Have lead responsibility for investigating all allegations or suspicions of abuse when concerned about the welfare of an adult
 - Children's Social Service Work – contact details available in this policy
 - Social workers within HSCTs are the lead professionals for safeguarding children and young people. As a profession, social workers and their managers have responsibility to safeguard children and young people, including the management and maintenance of the Child Protection Register, its associated systems and for ensuring that all statutory functions delegated to HSCTs in respect of safeguarding and protecting children are satisfactorily fulfilled.
- Have lead responsibility for investigating all allegations or suspicions of abuse where there is a concern about a child
- Local Adult Safeguarding Partnerships (LASPs) - accountable to regional HSCT's
- Police Service of Northern Ireland - contact details available in this policy
 - Will be primarily involved if a crime is alleged or suspected - **where an allegation suggests that a criminal offence may have been committed then the Police should be contacted as a matter of urgency.**
 - Where there is an immediate concern about the safety of a child or young person the PSNI has powers which enable its officers to afford emergency protection
- The Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland
- The Independent Guardian

- Advocate on behalf of separated and trafficked children until such times as their long-term care arrangements are determined and may continue to have a role into leaving care and aftercare arrangements
- The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland
- Northern Ireland Guardian ad Litem Agency (NIGALA)
- Northern Ireland Adult Safeguarding Partnership (NIASP)
- Elim Church Ireland
- ThirtyOne:Eight – Safeguarding Professionals with a Christian ethos - contact details available in this policy

As a church, we are committed to working with all necessary stakeholders and implementing all necessary legislation, frameworks and best practice guidance, as appropriate, to deliver the necessary Safeguarding procedures and processes within Whitewell.

The Safeguarding Team

The Leadership within our church have appointed a Safeguarding Lead and Safeguarding Team to respond to any safeguarding concerns of abuse or neglect. The Leadership fully supports the Safeguarding Team in their role of acting, on behalf of Whitewell, in the best interests of the child or adult and reporting to the statutory authorities (see above) all allegations of abuse or neglect. Whilst recognising that the very nature of safeguarding means that we must respond to allegations both sensitively and confidentially, this does not mean secretly. We strive to be open, transparent and accountable. This means seeking advice and liaising with social services, the police and other agencies as necessary.

All safeguarding concerns should be immediately reported to the Safeguarding Lead or Safeguarding Team in the church. **No one in receipt of a disclosure of abuse or suspicion of abuse or neglect should investigate the matter.** Our Safeguarding Team will act on all allegations or suspicions of abuse in reporting to the statutory safeguarding authorities (see above). In the absence of the Safeguarding Lead, the report should be made to any other member of the Safeguarding Team.

In our commitment to openness, should anyone have a concern that our church, or the Safeguarding Lead/Safeguarding Team have not dealt appropriately with a safeguarding concern we would encourage that person to contact Thirty-One: Eight or to make a direct referral to social services or the police. Contact details are available within this policy.

The Role of our Safeguarding Lead

Our Safeguarding Lead is **Tim Hancock**. Our Safeguarding Lead is the first point of contact for advice and support within Whitewell for all Safeguarding Concerns. The Safeguarding Lead leads the Safeguarding Team. The responsibilities of the Safeguarding Lead are as follows:

- Overseeing the Safer Recruitment of staff/volunteers who have contact with children and adults at risk. This includes attaining approval of all new staff/volunteers from the Oversight Board of Whitewell.
- Overseeing Safeguarding Training for all staff/volunteers every two years.
- Overseeing all applications for AccessNI certificates, including renewals every three years.
- Providing updates at each meeting of the Board of Trustees within Whitewell via the Safeguarding Trustee.
- Ensuring compliance with statutory agencies including AccessNI audits. This includes ensuring that all record keeping in Whitewell is in line with current requirements.
- Reporting Safeguarding concerns to the relevant stakeholders and statutory agencies.

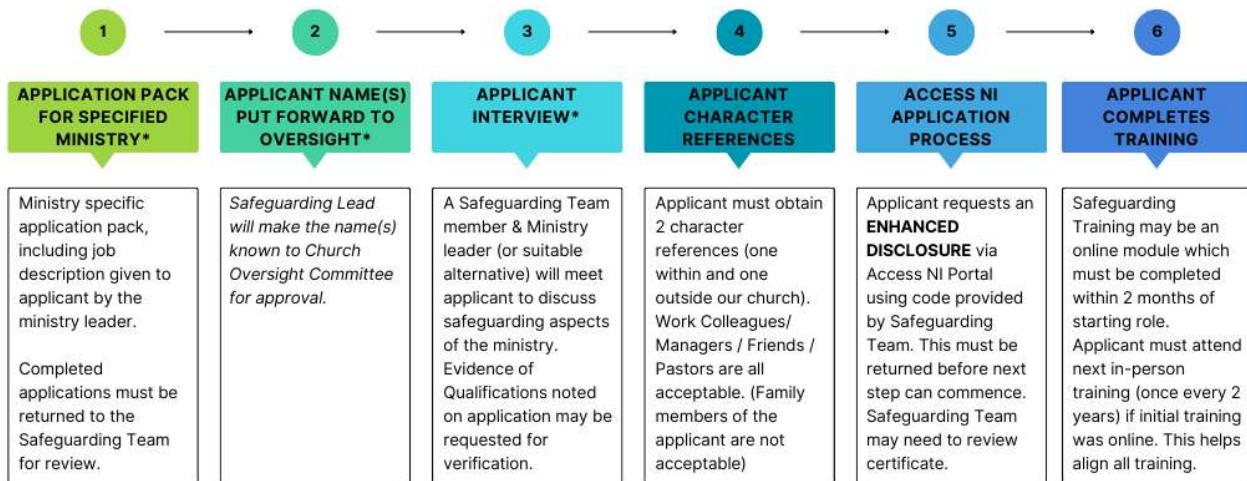
Safer Recruitment

Safeguarding is most effectively accomplished through an effective and efficient recruitment process for new staff/volunteers who will have contact with children and adults at risk. This ensures that only the right people who have been adequately screened (internally and externally, through government processes) will be able to work with children and adults at risk. To accomplish this, we have a robust recruitment process which is outlined below. In addition to this, Whitewell is committed to supporting all staff and volunteers and ensuring they receive support and supervision, as necessary, to carry out their role.

Safeguarding Process for Inducting New Volunteer Leaders and Helpers

This process:

- *is applicable to **ALL** Whitewell Metropolitan Tabernacle ministries where leader/helper roles involve providing services to or having close and regular supervision of children or adults at risk.*
- **MUST** be completed before the leader/helper (applicant) begins to serve in the specified ministry. *The process is anticipated to take no longer than 4-6 weeks. The Safeguarding Lead must be aware of all ministries the leader/helper serves in. This process will be shorter (1-3 only) for applicants returning to serving within 2 years.*



Safeguarding Lead contact: tim.hancock@whitewell.church

Please note that if you have applied to serve in a Children's Ministry you are not able to automatically serve in an Adults at Risk Ministry – namely Befrienders and Griefshare – without a separate Access NI check. Please speak to the Safeguarding Lead or a member of the team if you need advice on this matter.

We will ensure all staff and volunteers are appointed, trained, supported and supervised in accordance with government/expert guidance on safer recruitment.

This includes ensuring that...

- Appointments are based on:
- A clearly communicated job description made available to outline the role to each member of staff and volunteer.
- All completed staff and volunteer applications are reviewed by the Safeguarding Team and approved by the Oversight Committee.
- The reading and understanding of the Safeguarding Policy by the staff member and volunteer via the church website. This will include how to raise a concern to the Safeguarding Team. A condensed version of the policy ("Quick Guide") will also be included in the application pack for quick reference/refresher purposes.
- Completion of a self-disclosure form by each worker member of staff and volunteer which provides the opportunity to self-declare any convictions relevant to the ministry role in consideration. This information will be treated with strict confidentiality by the Safeguarding Team.
- An interview with Safeguarding Team and Ministry Leader (as applicable/based on availability) being completed by all staff and volunteers to ensure effective understanding of safeguarding and general suitability of the candidate for the role in question.
- Two character references to be submitted for each member of staff and volunteer to assure of their suitability for the role in question. Ideally one reference would be from within Whitewell.
- The completion of a criminal record check (Access NI or equivalent) in accordance with the position that the person has applied for. Where necessary, it is important to complete checks outside Northern Ireland when someone is applying to work with vulnerable groups and has lived outside the province. This must also be reviewed every 3 years.
- The completion of Safeguarding Training within 2 months of the member of staff or volunteer commencing their role. This may be an online module completed at home if there is no scheduled refresher training in person at Whitewell Metropolitan. To assist the alignment of all training, the member of staff or volunteer will be required to complete the next in-person training which is held every 2 years at Whitewell as a refresher session.
- At the discretion of the Safeguarding Team, the recruitment process may be condensed for those serving in multiple ministries and those returning staff and

volunteers who have taken a break in service of less than 2 years from the date of their Safeguarding Training. The Safeguarding Team must be informed of all new areas of service undertaken by an individual, even if they have already completed the Safer Recruitment process. At all times the Safeguarding Team will act in a manner consistent with the Code of Practice requirements regarding the treatment of staff and volunteers and handling of information in a manner consistent with GDPR.

- If a new volunteer would like to take part in “taster sessions” to understand how the ministry works in practice before applying, the Safeguarding Team must be informed by the Ministry Leader, in writing, not less than 72 hours prior to each “taster session”. The prospective candidate must not be unsupervised at any time. The prospective candidate must not be counted within the Leader Ratio. This arrangement remains solely at the discretion of the Safeguarding Team in each case.
- Training, Support and Supervision are delivered through:
 - Online and In-person Safeguarding training as noted above.
- The availability of contact information for the Safeguarding Team in candidate Application Packs; throughout the Whitewell Metropolitan premises (Information Desk, Minor Hall, Activity Centre and The McConnell Youth Centre); and on our website (www.whitewell.church/safeguarding). These contact details should be used if Ministry Leaders are struggling to meet Leader Ratio requirements (see the following section) so that the Safeguarding Team can assist with the recruitment of more workers (staff/volunteers).
- Regular check-ins to ministries during their operation by the Safeguarding Team.
- The ministry leader will also be expected to deliver relevant training that will most likely be specific to the functioning of each ministry in our church. This will ensure that all workers (staff and volunteers) feel supported and valued in the work they undertake, have opportunity to develop their skills as desired, and have an available forum to be supported through ministry or personal concerns.

Leader Ratios including Pastoral Visitations

Compiled with expert knowledge from Thirty-One Eight Members Knowledge Hub

It is imperative for the safe functioning for all our ministries involving children and young people (under 18), that the below ratios are followed.

Where a child with a Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND) attends any ministry, it is necessary that the ministry leader speaks directly with the Safeguarding Lead to determine if Leader Ratios need to be reviewed for their ministry – the existence of an Educational, Health and Care Plan (ECHP) will help to identify the required adjustments/accommodations that must be made to allow every child to be fully included in the ministry.

It is imperative that these ratios are implemented. If these ratios cannot be met, the ministry meeting MUST NOT proceed. All activities within a ministry should always have a minimum of two staff/volunteers. This enables one member of staff or volunteer to respond to an issue, while the other member(s) of staff or volunteer(s) supervise the remaining children and young people. If the first member of staff or volunteer needs to leave the room, it is recommended another member of staff or volunteer steps into their place to ensure no member of staff or volunteer is left alone with the children and young people in their care. This protects the members of staff and volunteers if any allegations would be made.

| | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| • Children aged 0-2 years | 1 adult to 3 children |
| • Children aged 2-3 years | 1 adult to 4 children |
| • Children aged 4-8 years | 1 adult to 6 children |
| • Children aged 9-12 years | 1 adult to 8 children |
| • Children aged 13-18 years | 1 adult to 10 children |

It is necessary that Ministry Leaders complete risk assessments for all ad-hoc activities and regularly review risk assessments for regular/weekly activities – at least once annually.

It is necessary that Ministry Leaders have a scheduled rota of members of staff/volunteers, including one or two relief members of staff/volunteers who can be contacted to step in when there are staff/volunteer shortages. It is expected of all members of staff/volunteers communicate to the Ministry Leader in good time if they cannot fulfil their scheduled obligation to attend.

It is also recommended, where possible, that Ministry Leaders ask all parents/legal guardians to pre-register their child(ren) to assist with staff/volunteer ratio planning. It is also necessary that Ministry Leaders have contact information for all parents/legal guardians should the ministry activity be cancelled or finish early – especially in unforeseen circumstances. This should be captured on ministry consent forms. It is recommended that Ministry Leaders complete an annual check that all contact details remain up to date.

For ministries such as Befrienders, Grief Share etc that work directly with adults at risk, it is recommended that the Ministry Leader speak directly with the Safeguarding Lead to determine suitable ratios for the safe functioning of the ministry.

For all ministries, it is important that the Safeguarding Team and Health and Safety Team are aware of the number of wheelchair users or those who may require assistance if a partial or full emergency evacuation were to be required.

For all ministries whereby children or adults at risk may need accompanied to the toilet, it is necessary that two members of staff/volunteers accompany the child or adult in question. It is considered best practice that no leader is ever in an enclosed or private space on their own with someone availing of their ministry. This also includes storerooms, kitchen/food preparation zones and vehicles. This protects all parties from risk of abuse and/or allegation of abuse.

For all those attending Pastoral Visitations, it is highly recommended, where possible, that all Visitations take place in pairs, especially when children or adults at risk are involved.

Safeguarding our online communication

Compiled with expert knowledge from Thirty-One Eight Members Knowledge Hub

Online spaces where our church family interacts require equal consideration, protection and diligence as the physical space does. Our process for raising concerns also covers online harm and abuse, which may occur exclusively online or also overtake physical spaces. Our safeguarding team will take online risks/concerns as seriously as offline risks/concerns.

Safeguarding risks online can relate to:

- Illegal, inappropriate or harmful content;
- Harmful interactions/contact with other users;
- Behaviour or conduct that causes or increases the likelihood of harm; and
- Exposure to financial/commercial harm and abuse

Comments and interaction on our Facebook channel and YouTube channel, including livestreams, are monitored in house by our Technical Team. Content which falls into the above categories is removed as quickly as possible with evidence recorded in advance should a concern need to be raised with our Safeguarding Team.

In general, church staff or volunteers should not directly contact individuals under the age of 18 – instead the parent/legal guardian should be contacted. WhatsApp groups or channels, or similar online communities where arrangements/plans are posted for church activities/ministries should be limited to over 18's. Where there is a need for an individual under 18 to be within such communities, it is recommended that such is discussed with the Safeguarding Team in advance to determine if the need is legitimate. Church staff or volunteers should not hold any contact details for anyone under 18s under any circumstances. Care should also be taken when communicating online with adults at risk. It is recommended that WhatsApp groups or channels, or similar online communities are restricted to enable only administrators of the group to post messages/media.

Safeguarding our use of digital media

Photography and Videography

Compiled with expert knowledge from Thirty-One Eight Members Knowledge Hub

Photos and videos are considered 'personal data' under the Data Protection Act 2018. Whilst events in public (not on church premises/on public land) can be photographed without breaking the law, private events can be policed more closely whereby our church policy must be followed. Expectations must be made clear by event/trip organisers and/or ministry leaders (as applicable) to prevent unauthorised taking of photos or videos. This is to ensure that vulnerable groups are kept safe. Appearing in published photos or videos may put some individuals at risk, for example, those experiencing domestic abuse. We therefore endeavour to not take images of children or adults at risk whose images should not be released but commit to reviewing all footage with the Ministry Leader before publication, understanding that singling out those who cannot be included in footage could cause isolation when footage is being recorded.

General advice is as follows:

- Children
 - Written permission is sought in advance from the parents of the child(ren) via consent form for the taking and publication of photos and videos for the activity taking place. Permission can be withdrawn at any time.
 - Children must not be identified by name or personal information such as location - the person taking the photo or video should take note of background signage/branding/identifiers.
- Adults at Risk
 - Written permission from adults at risk (or the registered carer thereof) to be sought before publication. The purpose of publication should be made clear. Permission can be withdrawn at any time.
 - *N.B. Appearing in church livestream footage (which is broadcasted online during regular services and available on-demand) is covered by a clearly visible disclaimer displayed at all main entrances to the main church building.*
 - Those appearing in photos or videos are clear on the purpose of such recordings.
 - Group photos and videos are preferred over individual recordings.

Safeguarding our Transport

Compiled with expert knowledge from Thirty-One Eight Members Knowledge Hub

- Church Transport (minibus/church organised and approved coach provider) is used to transport those who do not drive and adults at risk (including Befrienders) to our regular services and events. It is expected that the below requirements are in place.
 - All vehicles are checked before each journey to assess roadworthiness
 - All drivers complete a log of journeys including start and end location(s), start and end time(s) and number of passengers
 - No under 18's should travel via this means without a parent/legal guardian present.
 - Seat belts should be always worn
- Additionally, for adults at risk (including Befrienders)
- The adult (or if more appropriate their responsible carer) should be aware and happy with all transport arrangements including but not limited to:
 - A suitable number of adult helpers to assist entry and exit from the vehicle ensuring all physical access needs are met
 - Pick-up and drop-off times arranged in advance with suitable help available at all stages to ensure the adult at risk arrives at church and back at home safely
 - Suitable help and support for the driver from another helper who can safely attend to any needs or communicate to the driver to safely stop the vehicle – this will help to ensure the driver is not distracted at any part of the journey
 - Adequate wheelchair restraint/security during the journey

Safeguarding our Trips

Including Overnight Trips & Accommodation

Compiled with expert knowledge from Thirty-One Eight Members Knowledge Hub

In addition to insurance, first aid provision checks and risk assessments (including a visit to risk assess the venue), there are some general requirements which must be taken into consideration by trip organisers:-

- Church Transport (minibus/church organised and approved coach provider) is to be used by all trip attendees.
- All vehicles must be in a road-worthy condition prior to use.
- Those who have passed their driving test and wish to take their own vehicle must seek the permission of the trip organiser. Permission for drivers to use their own vehicle remains at the prerogative of the trip organiser at all times and should never be assumed by attendees. If the driver is under the age of 18, permission to drive their own vehicle should also be noted on their Parental Consent form but it is recommended that drivers under the age of 18 utilise church transport. Immediate family members or friends of a driver, who are over the age of 18, may travel with the driver at the trip organiser's discretion and provided the driver is suitably insured. If the immediate family member is under the age of 18, their ability to travel with the driver must be expressly stated on parental consent forms. Anyone else who is under the age of 18 who is not a family member must travel via church transport.
- Safer Recruited leaders must travel on church transport/church organised and approved coach provider in line with ratios outlined in our leader-ratios section of this policy. Leaders must be distributed evenly throughout the vehicle. No-one under the age of 18 should sit in the front seats of a church minibus or travel in a leader's vehicle.
- No-one should be dropped off or picked up from a location that has not been previously agreed (and expressly stated in a parental consent form for those under the age of 18). Whitewell grounds operate as the drop-off and collection location by default.
- Overnight trips and accommodation
- Overnight trips and accommodation should not involve a mix of over 18 and under 18 participants (except for Safer Recruited leaders).
 - All overnight accommodation and toilet/shower arrangements must be limited to single-sex spaces. This should be thoroughly considered during the trip planning process.

- Safer Recruited Leaders should not share accommodation with trip attendees – separate toilet/shower arrangements must be in place for leaders.
- Parental Consent forms must be completed for all those under the age of 18. Emergency contact details and relevant allergy/medical information must be made available on this form and be always carried with the trip organiser. Such forms must be stored in line with all relevant GDPR guidelines and legislation.
- If anyone requires leaving a trip, overnight trip or accommodation early, except in cases of unavoidable emergency, this should be arranged in advance, even if the individual in question is over the age of 18 as this will affect roll calls in the event of an emergency.
- To meet required leader ratios, any additional leaders attending trips with those under the age of 18 or adults at risk present must be Safer Recruited – this includes parents who volunteer to attend.
- A record of trip attendee (names and ages) and leaders in attendance should be submitted to the Safeguarding Team for record keeping.

This list is not intended to be exhaustive, and it is recommended that trip organisers speak to a member of our Safeguarding Team to ensure each trip, which will vary in nature, is effectively and correctly safeguarded.

Safeguarding our Pastoral Care and Support

– Code of Conduct

Compiled with expert knowledge from Thirty-One Eight Members Knowledge Hub

It is important that anyone seeking pastoral care knows exactly what to expect in terms of good conduct, that those caring for them are accountable and that any boundaries set are respected. We recognise that naturally, pastoral care needs differ from person to person.

Those providing pastoral care should:

- Do so with another trusted person (including visitations)
- Avoid any behaviour that may give the impression of favouritism.
- Be aware of the limits of their own ability and competence and seek further help when dealing with situations outside their expertise.
- Ensure that clear guidelines are in place to ensure financial integrity regarding any aspect of personal finance such as collecting benefits or pensions or going shopping for someone.

Whitewell is committed to offering pastoral care and support to individuals who have been affected by abuse or neglect who are part of our church or with whom we may have contact. We recognise that the nature of the abuse or neglect experienced will require varying forms of pastoral care as those affected by abuse or neglect are often dealing with complex issues. Such circumstances may also necessitate varying levels of interaction with statutory agencies. With the individual's permission, we may also deem it appropriate to engage counselling agencies.

Safeguarding under specific circumstances

- We commit to supporting, listening to and working towards healing for everyone affected, either directly or indirectly by any form of abuse.

Ex-Offenders and Handling of Criminal Disclosures

- We are a welcoming church, which recognises that in following the mission of the church we may have ex-offenders join us. We undertake to treat all applicants fairly and not to discriminate unfairly or unlawfully against the subject of a disclosure based on conviction or other information revealed. In such circumstances where an ex-offender wishes to join us, our Safeguarding Team will engage with the person concerned, and/or with any safeguarding professional (e.g. a designated risk manager) involved to ensure that their involvement in church does not compromise the safety and well-being of children or adults. To ensure this we will take appropriate and proportionate measures, including working with relevant partners to complete a risk assessment and asking the individual to adhere to a Safeguarding Agreement (Behaviour Contract). Disclosure Information declared during our application process will be stored securely and handled only by individuals authorised to do so. Such information will only be retained for as long as reasonably required². Further information on our use and retention of Data is covered by our GDPR policies.

Modern Slavery

- We recognise the personal dignity and rights of adults who find themselves victims of forced marriage or modern slavery and will ensure all our policies and procedures reflect this.

Allegations or Suspicion against those in a Position of Trust

- Where an allegation or suspicion of abuse is made against someone working with children or adults, or is in a position of trust, then the Safeguarding Lead will contact Thirty-One: Eight for advice or the statutory authorities where necessary.

² This is in line with the Service Level Agreement and Code of Practice for Access Registered Bodies. Available at: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2025-04/SERVICE-LEVEL-AGREEMENT-responsible-Body-April-2025-%281%29.PDF> and <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2021-11/accessni-code-of-practice.pdf>

Raising a Concern/Complaint to the Safeguarding Team

The below template form is available from all ministry leaders and the Safeguarding Team. Upon completion these should be given to the Safeguarding Lead or a member of the Safeguarding Team. The purpose of these forms is to ensure that all the relevant information is captured to aid the Safeguarding Team in reaching a resolution. This form can be used to raise a concern regarding something you personally witnessed but it is essential that you only record the details that you know to be personally true. This form can also be used if an individual in your care wishes to raise a concern to you. Some practical advice follows this section if an individual in your care wishes to raise a concern to you. Please remember that if there is a situation of immediate risk, you must contact emergency services.

It must be stressed that it is not the job of the ministry leader or those reporting the concern to carry out an investigation. In our commitment to openness and transparency, flow charts are available in Appendix F detailing the steps the Safeguarding Team may take to determine the appropriate response.

| CONFIDENTIAL NOTE OF CONCERN | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| Please return your form to Reception in an envelope marked private and confidential for the attention of Safeguarding Lead. Please only record information that you personally know to be true. | |
| Practical Guidance on completing a Note of Concern is available within our Safeguarding Policy if you require it. | |
| Name of person that your concern relates to | |
| Church 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 leader * Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| If No' state reason | |
| Date and time of report to the designated leader | |
| Name of person/leader making the report | |
| Contact details of the person/leader making the report (should our Safeguarding Team require more information) | Mobile: _____ Email: _____ |
| Signature of person/leader | Date _____ |
| Signature of Designated Leader * | Date _____ |
| *Your concern will be accepted without this if you believe obtaining such may represent a conflict of interest* | |
|  Whitewell METHODIST CHURCHES | |
| 837-869 Shore Road, Belfast BT15 4HS Tel: 028 9077 7074 Email: info@whitewell.church Web: whitewell.church | |

How to respond if an individual in your care wishes to disclose a concern of abuse or neglect - Practical Advice and Code of Conduct

- Ensure that the physical environment is welcoming, giving opportunity for the individual to talk in private but always make sure that another worker (staff/volunteer) is aware the conversation is taking place - you may wish to clarify with the individual raising the concern that their concern is not about the other worker (staff/volunteer) who you are making aware to avoid a conflict of interest.
- A welcoming physical environment can be encouraged by:
- using helpful phrases such as:
- “you’ve done the right thing in telling” or
- “I’m glad you have told me”
- and avoiding unhelpful phrases/questions such as:
- “Why didn’t you tell anyone before? “
- “I can’t believe it!”
- “Are you sure this is true?”
- allowing time and space for the individual to talk
- listening without interrupting
- being attentive and looking at the individual whilst they are speaking
- showing acceptance to what the individual is saying (however unlikely the story may sound)
- remaining calm, even if you feel differently internally
- being honest with the individual
- **Don't make promises that you can't keep regarding confidentiality - you should make the individual aware that you need to pass this information to the Safeguarding Team**
- Understanding that if the individual wishes not to proceed with their disclosure, you should accept their decision but let them know that you are always ready to listen
- If you are concerned there is an immediate risk to the individual, you may need to contact PSNI/Gateway/Social Services etc. Contact details are available within this Safeguarding Policy and the Quick Guide.
- using language that is age appropriate and, for those with disabilities, ensure there is someone present who understand sign language, braille etc.”.

How Concerns will be Handled within Whitewell

To ensure that the appropriate course of action has been taken, the below process has been outlined.

The Safeguarding Lead, or in the Safeguarding Lead's absence, another member of the Safeguarding Team, will collate and clarify the precise details of the allegation or suspicion of abuse. The above note of concern will be the first stage in this process.

It is imperative that all safeguarding concerns are raised directly with the Safeguarding Lead, or in the Safeguarding Lead's absence, another member of the Safeguarding Team. It is imperative that concerns brought to the attention of the Safeguarding Team remain confidential. It is important to remember that confidentiality does not mean secrecy. This means that where Safeguarding practice deems necessary, the Safeguarding Team may need to liaise with other stakeholders, including statutory agencies.

If Whitewell is faced with a safeguarding issue and advice is required, it is the responsibility of the Safeguarding Lead to contact Thirty-One: Eight who are independent and trusted safeguarding experts with a Christian ethos. It is important that up-to-date advice is sought from Thirty-One: Eight to ensure that any response is open; transparent; involves the statutory safeguarding authorities; and provides the required quality assurance.

Where abuse is suspected, the Safeguarding Lead will pass this information to the statutory authorities who have a legal duty to investigate.

In cases of immediate danger to a child or an adult, or where there is concern that a crime may have been committed, contact should be made to the Police dialling 999 or through contacting the Police Child Protection Team.

Where a safeguarding matter involves a church worker, then such a response may include initiating complaints or disciplinary procedures in addition to following safeguarding protocols.

Relevant Contact Details

Whitewell Safeguarding Team

| Name | Role | Phone | Email Address |
|-----------------|--|--------------|-------------------------------|
| Tim Hancock | Safeguarding Lead | 07554 815971 | safeguarding@whitewell.church |
| Alan Cartwright | Trustee with responsibility for Safeguarding | 07936 937676 | |
| Cherith Moore | Safeguarding Coordinator | | |
| Sarah Hancock | Safeguarding Coordinator | | |
| Julie Kane* | Safeguarding Administration only | | |

* Responsible solely for managing, storing, maintaining and updating safeguarding records

Where someone has passed information to the Safeguarding Lead or Safeguarding Team and believes they have not been responded to appropriately, then they should follow our Whistleblowing Procedures (detailed in the next section) and in cases of immediate danger make a direct referral to Social Services (Gateway) or the PSNI. The Leadership of Whitewell endorse this position to demonstrate our commitment to safeguarding children and adults at risk.

Thirty-One:Eight

| | | |
|------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Thirty-One:Eight | Email: Helpline@thirtyoneeight.org | 0303 003 1111 Mon-Fri 9am-5pm |
|------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|

Immediate Professional (Statutory) Advice

| | | |
|---|--------------------------|----------------|
| Gateway (Children's Social Services, Belfast Trust) | Mon to Fri 9am-5pm | 028 9050 7000 |
| Gateway (Adult Social Services, Belfast Trust) | Mon to Fri 9am-5pm | 028 9504 1744 |
| NI-wide Social Services | Available Out of Hours | 0800 197 9995 |
| Gateway (Out-of-hours) | Weekends & Bank Holidays | 028 9504 9999 |
| Police Service of NI | 101 | Emergency: 999 |

Whistleblowing Policy: Processes and Procedures

Compiled with expert knowledge from Thirty-One Eight Members Knowledge Hub

In continuing to create a healthy church environment and a safe space for all in line with our Statement of Faith, Whitewell want to observe high standards of business and personal ethics in the conduct of staff duties and responsibilities. In practice this requires honesty and integrity and compliance with all applicable laws and regulations. To support this, we endeavour to train all our workers and volunteers in Whistleblowing Law and Organisational Policies.

Definition: Whistleblowing is the action someone takes to report wrongdoing at work that affects others. For example, it could affect the public. Legally this is known as 'making a disclosure in the public interest'. The action of whistleblowing is sometimes called 'blowing the whistle'.

By law, there are several issues an individual can whistle blow about. These are called 'qualifying disclosures'.

Qualifying disclosures include:

- a criminal offence – for example, an employer has been trying to bribe people
- the breach of a legal obligation by an organisation – for example, an employer has neglected their duty of care towards children in a care home
- a miscarriage of justice – for example, a member of staff has been dismissed for something that turned out to be a computer error
- someone's health and safety being in danger – for example, an employer has forced staff to serve contaminated food
- damage to the environment – for example, an employer has been regularly polluting local rivers

An individual can also whistle blow about someone trying to cover up information about any of these issues. An individual can make a qualifying disclosure about an issue that's happened at any time. This includes if it's likely to happen in the future. It can also be about something that takes place overseas. An individual can report one or more qualifying disclosures.³ An individual does not need to provide evidence of their concern. A concern can be raised anonymously, but doing so may limit the ability for Whitewell to investigate the concern if there is not enough information.

³ <https://www.acas.org.uk/whistleblowing-at-work/>

The suggested reporting structure for such concerns is as follows:

- Concern raised to immediate team leader/supervisor.
- In cases where the individual cannot raise their concern to their immediate team lead/supervisor (e.g. the concern is about their immediate team lead/supervisor, or a friend of the person of concern) the concern can be raised with the Safeguarding Team or Safeguarding Trustee. The existing Note of Concern template can be used for this purpose.
- In cases where the concern is in relation to the Safeguarding Team or Safeguarding Trustee, the point of contact should then be:

| Name | Role | Email Address |
|--------------|---------|--|
| Ken Leneghan | Trustee | ken.leneghan@whitewell.church |

After a concern is raised, Whitewell will determine how to respond in a responsible and appropriate manner on the understanding that each concern will vary in nature. A suggested response outline would be to conduct Independent internal enquiries first which may necessitate formal or informal investigation by internal or external investigators as deemed necessary.

Whitewell will endeavour to complete investigation within a reasonable time and provide updates at each stage to the individual raising the concern. Whitewell will not be able to inform the individual raising the concern of any matters which would infringe the duty of confidentiality owed to others but will take reasonable steps to maintain the confidentiality of the whistleblower where requested (unless required by law to break that confidentiality).

If the whistleblower is anonymous, Whitewell cannot guarantee feedback can be given and the action of looking into a concern could be limited.

Employees will not be opening themselves up to detrimental treatment, retribution or risking their job security by whistleblowing, and all staff have organisational protection if they raise concerns in the right way. Any person who victimises a bona fide whistleblower will be liable to disciplinary action and liable to an employment tribunal claim (which may include liability for unlimited damages) brought by the whistleblower against them personally. Further information on protection is available⁴. To ensure the protection of all our employees, those who maliciously make an allegation, they do not reasonably believe to be true and/or made in the public interest, may also be liable to disciplinary action.

⁴ <https://www.acas.org.uk/whistleblowing-at-work>

If the individual raising the concern is not satisfied with Whitewell's handling of the concern, they may contact those listed below for further advice.

| Name | Phone | Email Address / Web Portal |
|-------------|---------------|---|
| Protect | 020 3117 2520 | https://protect.tfaforms.net/f/advice-line-form-for-charity-sector |
| NSPCC | 0800 028 0285 | help@nspcc.org.uk |
| NI Direct | | https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/blowing-whistle-workplace-wrongdoing |

Personal grievances (e.g. bullying, harassment, discrimination) are not covered by whistleblowing law, unless it is in the public's interest. These would be addressed through the complaint's procedure (detailed in the next section).

Anti-Bullying Policy: Processes and Procedures

Compiled with expert knowledge from Thirty-One Eight Members Knowledge Hub

Definition: Bullying is the repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or a group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. Bullying can take place explicitly face to face or explicitly through digital methods including online and social media or through a mixture of face to face and digital. Anyone can be a victim of bullying. Whitewell is committed to treating bullying incidents seriously regardless of how they start and how they take place. We commit to supporting those who report bullying behaviour.

It is expected that all children, parents, carers, staff and volunteers understand what bullying is, are aware of possible signs and understand how to respond.

We can prevent bullying by having group rules for our ministries and Codes of Conducts in place for staff and volunteers such as those found within this policy. We can also have discussions about bullying and why it matters with children and adults within our church. Additionally, there are useful tools that we can use with our children, such as “Raise your Roar with Roarry”, to help teach them about bullying.

Reporting and Responding to a report of Bullying:

- A bullying incident should be reported to (as applicable):
 - the immediate leader within the ministry of the child experiencing bullying behaviour
 - the carer of an adult at risk experiencing bullying behaviour
 - the immediate ministry lead/line manager of a member of staff/volunteer experiencing bullying behaviour
- The person in receipt of the reported bullying must ensure that details are carefully recorded and checked before taking an action. They may wish to make use of the above Note of Concern to record the reported bullying.
- The person in receipt of the reported bullying may wish to inform the parents/guardians/carers of the individual(s) responsible for the bullying, however due consideration must be given to factors that may be taking place at home which may be causing/exacerbating the cause of bullying (e.g. witnessing domestic violence within the home or abuse/neglect at home). The person in receipt of the reported bullying may wish to speak to the Safeguarding Team who may have context to wider areas of concern before speaking to the parents/guardians/carers of the individual(s) responsible for the bullying. Confidentiality will be maintained at all times.
- If there is concern that an offence has been committed, consideration should be given to contacting the police.
- Actions should be taken to ensure the bullying is investigated and stopped quickly
- This may involve mediating the two parties to find a resolution; monitoring behaviour for a reasonable period, mindful that bullying could start again; or separating the two parties for a period/permanently to prevent bullying re-occurring.

- The appropriateness of the response should take into consideration the views and feelings of the individual(s) in receipt of the bullying behaviour
- The individual(s) responsible for the bullying incident should be made aware of how their behaviour is inappropriate which should include seeking an apology to be made to those in receipt of the bullying behaviour. The individual(s) responsible should also be offered help with their behaviour, taking into consideration there may be external factors causing/exacerbating the behaviour as noted above.
- Other ministry leaders should be kept up to date where required and as soon as possible
- Records should be kept up to date and a clear note made when the bullying incident(s) have been resolved.
- Outcomes should be reported to necessary parents/guardians/carers of the individuals in receipt of the bullying behaviour and of the individuals responsible for the bullying behaviour.

Our Safeguarding Team are contactable at any stage should advice or support be required.

General Code of Conduct (Staff and Volunteers)

Compiled with expert knowledge from Thirty-One Eight Members Knowledge Hub

Good practice

- Treat everyone with dignity, respect and fairness, and have proper regard for individuals' interests, rights, safety and welfare
- Work in a responsible, transparent and accountable way
- Be prepared to challenge unacceptable behaviour or to be challenged
- Listen carefully to those you are supporting
- Avoid any behaviour that could be perceived as bullying, emotional abuse, harassment, physical abuse, spiritual abuse or sexual abuse (including inappropriate physical contact such as rough play and inappropriate language or gestures)
- Seek advice from someone with greater experience when necessary
- Work in an open environment – avoid private or unobserved situations
- Follow policies, procedures and guidelines and report all disclosures, concerns, allegations, and suspicions to the safeguarding co-ordinator
- Don't make inappropriate promises particularly in relation to confidentiality
- Do explain to the individual what you intend to do and don't delay acting

Unacceptable behaviour

- Not reporting concerns or delaying reporting concerns
- Taking unnecessary risks
- Any behaviour that is or may be perceived as threatening or abusive in any way
- Passing on your personal and/or social media contact details and any contact that breaches [name of group/organisation] social media policy
- Developing inappropriate relationships
- Smoking and consuming alcohol or illegal substances
- Favouritism/exclusion – all people should be equally supported and encouraged

Breaching the Code of Conduct and expectations outlined in this policy is a serious matter. If a member of staff or volunteer has behaved inappropriately in this respect, they will be subject to disciplinary procedures (particularly in the case of paid staff). Depending on the seriousness of the situation, the individual may be asked to leave their role, and a referral may be made to statutory agencies such as the police and/or Gateway and/or Access NI. If you become aware of a breach of this code or the general principles and expectations outlined in this policy, you should escalate your concerns to the Safeguarding Team or line manager of a paid member of staff (as applicable).

Appendix A: Terminology

This Safeguarding Policy covers children and adults. A child is defined as someone under the age of 18; the general term of 'child' is used to describe both children and young people.

An adult is generally defined as someone over the age of 18. As adult safeguarding systems have developed there has been a move away from using the term 'vulnerable adult' whilst recognising that certain pieces of legislation and different agencies use this term. The terms 'adult at risk' or 'adult in need of protection' are generally now replacing the term 'vulnerable adult', focusing on the situation rather than the characteristics of the adult themselves. The label 'vulnerable adult' may wrongly imply that some of the fault for the abuse lies with the abused adult. The Care Act 2014 does not use the word 'vulnerable' but instead uses 'an adult with care and support needs' who is at risk of abuse or neglect. In this policy 'adults' is used to mean adults in need of protection.

This policy will use various terms interchangeably except when referring to specific legislation or government guidance.

Safeguarding is a wider term and encompasses, when referring to children, child protection and the welfare of a child. When referring to adults it covers adult protection and welfare. Defining who is 'an adult at risk' or 'an adult in need of care and protection' can be complex as there are many different definitions within legislation; reaching a certain age or having a disability does not necessarily mean that an individual is vulnerable. For example, determining who qualifies for a criminal record disclosure check through Access NI is based on a specific definition of who is an adult at risk.

Appendix B: Statutory Definitions of Abuse (Children)

Child protection legislation throughout the UK is based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Northern Ireland has incorporated the Convention within its legislation and guidance.

The definitions of abuse below are based on the government guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children: A Guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the Welfare of Children' (HM Government July 2018).

Safeguarding professionals must assess if they need to intervene to protect a child and this is based on whether a child is suffering from, or likely to suffer from, significant harm.

Abuse

A form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or more rarely by others. Abuse can also take place online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

Physical Abuse

A form of abuse that may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

In Scotland and Wales, physical punishment of a child (including hitting, shaking, slapping) is now illegal

Emotional Abuse

The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may also involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another individual. It could involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), frequently causing children to feel frightened or in danger, as well as the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Sexual Abuse

Whether or not the child is aware of what is happening or not, it involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities. It does not necessarily involve a high level of violence. The activities 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 of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Adult males do not solely perpetrate sexual abuse; women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Neglect

The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy because of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- Protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger.
- Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers)
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

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

Domestic Abuse

An incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading and violent behaviour, including sexual violence. This is often by a partner or ex-partner but also by family members or carers. The Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act (NI) 2021 recognises the impact on a child who sees, hears or experiences the effects of domestic abuse in their own right where they are related to or under parental responsibility of either the abuser or the abused. It is also recognised that young people can experience abuse in their relationships.

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

This occurs where an individual or group take advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into becoming involved in criminal activity. This is often in exchange for something the victim needs or wants and/or for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or through violence or the threat of violence. For example, gifts, status in a group or gang, somewhere to live etc. The acts or favours required in return are usually criminal in nature. A child may still have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears to be something that they have agreed or consented to. There are several different types of CCE: child sexual exploitation, county lines, trafficking, modern slavery and money mules.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

This is a form of child sexual abuse and occurs where an individual or group take 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 wants or needs and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator. 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 using technology.

County Lines

This involves illegal drugs networks between large urban areas, small towns and rural areas. Intimidation, blackmail and violence are used to coerce children and young people into transporting and selling items for criminal enterprise such as drugs, cash and weapons. This takes place across counties and dedicated mobile phones used to make these arrangements are known as the “county/deal lines”.

Modern Slavery

This affects anyone no matter what their age and gender. Examples include human trafficking, exploitation servitude and forced or compulsory marriage. Modern slavery is used as an umbrella term for mostly hidden crime, therefore acquiring a true picture of the situation and its prevalence is challenging.

Trafficking

Moving humans from one place to another with the intention of involving them in forced labour, slavery or sexual exploitation. This is one of the fastest growing areas of international crime involving gangs and criminal organisations.

Extremism

This goes beyond terrorism and includes people who target the vulnerable including the young, by seeking to sow division between communities because of race, faith or denomination; justify discrimination towards women and girls; persuade others that minorities are inferior; or argue against the primacy of democracy and the rule of law in our society.

Extremism is defined in the Counter Extremism Strategy 2015 as the vocal or active opposition to our fundamental values, including the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also regard calls for the death of members of our armed forces as extremist.

Appendix C: Signs and Symptoms of Abuse in Children

The following signs could be indicators that abuse has taken place but should be considered in the context of a child's whole life.

Physical Abuse

- Injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them
- Injuries that occur in places not normally exposed to falls or usual children's activities
- Injuries that have not received medical attention
- Reluctance to change for, or participate in, games or swimming
- Repeated urinary infections or unexplained tummy pains
- Bruises on babies, bites, burns, fractures which do not have an accidental explanation
- Cuts/scratches/substance abuse (these can also be indications of self-harm)

Sexual Abuse

- Any allegations made concerning sexual abuse
- Excessive preoccupation with sexual matters and detailed knowledge of adult sexual behaviour
- Age-inappropriate sexual activity through words, play or drawing
- Child who is sexually provocative or seductive with adults
- Inappropriate bed-sharing arrangements at home
- Severe sleep disturbances with fears, phobias, vivid dreams or nightmares, sometimes with overt or veiled sexual connotations
- Eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia

Emotional Abuse

- Changes or regression in mood or behaviour, particularly where a child withdraws or becomes clingy
- Depression, aggression or extreme anxiety
- Nervousness or frozen watchfulness
- Obsessions or phobias
- Leaving home / care without explanation

- Unexplained absences from school, college, training or work
- Returning home unusually late or staying out all night
- Coming home looking dishevelled
- Suspicion of physical assault or unexplained injuries
- Carrying weapons
- Starting or increasing drug use or being found to have large amounts of drugs on them
- Starting or increasing alcohol use
- Loss of interest in school and significant decline in performance
- Using sexual, gang, drug-related or violent language you wouldn't expect them to know
- Meeting with unfamiliar people or associating with a gang
- Becoming isolated from peers or social networks
- Self-harming
- Significant changes in emotional wellbeing
- Sudden changes in lifestyle
- Increasingly disruptive or violent behaviour
- Getting into trouble with the police

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

- Unhealthy or inappropriate sexual behaviour
- Persistently going missing for periods of time or regularly returning home late
- Frequently staying out late or overnight with no explanation as to where they have been
- Being secretive about who they are talking to and where they are going
- Using more than one phone
- Spending more time online or on their devices
- Excessive receipt of texts or phone calls, letters or emails
- Having an older girlfriend or boyfriend or having relationships with controlling older individuals or groups

- Unexplained absences from school, college, training or work
- Suddenly acquiring expensive gifts such as mobile phones, jewellery - even drugs – and not being able to explain how they came by them
- Having mood swings and changes in temperament
- Having hotel cards or keys to unknown places
- Noticeable change in behaviour – becoming secretive, defensive or aggressive when asked about their personal life
- Wearing inappropriate clothing that is too adult or revealing for their age.
- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration
- Inappropriate relationships with peers and / or adults
- Attention-seeking behaviour
- Persistent tiredness
- Running away, stealing or lying

Neglect

- Under nourishment, failure to grow, constant hunger, stealing or gorging food
- Untreated illnesses
- Inadequate care

Domestic Abuse

- Anxious or depressed
- Difficulty sleeping
- Complain of physical symptoms such as tummy aches
- Starting to wet the bed
- Behave as though they are much younger than they are
- Have problems with school
- Become aggressive or internalise their distress and withdraw from other people.
- Lowered sense of self-worth
- Older children may begin to truant or start using alcohol or drugs
- Begin to self-harm by taking overdoses or cutting themselves

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) and County Lines

- Persistently going missing from school or home and/or being found out-of-area
- Unexplained acquisition of money, clothes, jewellery or mobile phones
- Excessive receipt of texts or phone calls
- Spending more time online or on their devices
- Using more than one phone
- Having hotel cards or keys to unknown places
- Being secretive about who they are talking to and where they are going
- Relationships with controlling older individuals or groups
- Significant changes in emotional wellbeing
- Sudden changes in lifestyle
- Increasingly disruptive or violent behaviour
- Getting into trouble with the police
- Bruises, marks on the body, bleeding in their genital or anal area, sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse or self-harm

Child Trafficking and Modern Slavery

- Rarely leaving the house
- Living apart from family or having limited social contact with friends and family
- Living somewhere inappropriate like a work address or cramped, unhygienic or overcrowded accommodation, including caravans, sheds, tents or outbuildings
- Being seen in inappropriate places (for example factories or brothels)
- Having their movements controlled or being unable to travel on their own
- Lacking personal items
- Consistently wearing the same clothes
- Not being registered with a school or a GP practice
- Having money or things you wouldn't expect then to have
- Being moved by others between specific locations (e.g. to and from work) which may happen at unusual times such as very early in the day or at night

- Being unsure, unable or reluctant to give details such as where they live
- Fearful or withdrawn behaviour
- Being involved in gang activity
- Being involved in the consumption, sale or trafficking of drugs
- Having their communication controlled by somebody else and acting as though they are being instructed by another person
- Tattoos or other marks indicating ownership
- Physical ill-health, looking unkempt or malnourished
- Physical injury, including the kinds of injuries you might get from a workplace
- Reluctance to seek help, avoidance of strangers, being fearful or hostile towards authorities
- Providing a prepared story (which might be similar to stories given by other children) or struggling to recall experiences
- Inconsistent accounts of their experiences

Radicalisation and Extremism

- Withdrawal from family and friends or changing circle of friends
- Hostility towards others
- Talking as if from a script
- Being unwilling to discuss their views
- Increased levels of anger
- Being secretive, particularly around what they are doing on the internet
- Using extremist terms to exclude people or incite violence
- Expressing the values of extremist or terrorist organisations (including political or religious based grievances)
- Supporting violence and terrorism towards other culture, nationalities or religions
- Writing or creating artwork that promotes extremist values
- Talking about being a martyr
- Possession of extremist literature or other material or trying to access extremist websites

- Possession of any material about weapons, explosives or military training

Appendix D: Statutory Definitions of Abuse (Adults)

The safeguarding duties apply to an adult who:

- Has a need for care and support (whether the local authority is meeting any of those needs) and;
- Is experiencing or at risk of experiencing abuse or neglect; and
- As a result of those care and support needs are unable to protect themselves from either the risk of or the experience of abuse or neglect

Physical Abuse

Including assault, hitting, slapping, pushing, misuse of medication, restraint or inappropriate physical sanctions.

Domestic Abuse and Violence

Including psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional abuse, so-called 'honour' based violence. There is also any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence, or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of sexuality or gender. This might involve but is not limited to psychological, sexual, financial and emotional abuse. The Domestic Abuse and Civil Proceedings Act (NI) 2021 created a new offence of controlling and coercive behaviour within intimate and familial relationships.

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

Including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, cyberbullying, isolation or unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal of services or supportive networks.

Financial or Material Abuse

Including 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

Encompasses slavery, human trafficking, forced 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.

Trafficking

Moving humans from one place to another with the intention of involving them in forced labour, slavery or sexual exploitation. This is one of the fastest growing areas of international crime involving gangs and criminal organisations.

Discriminatory Abuse

Including forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment because of race, gender and gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion.

Organisational Abuse

Including neglect and poor care practice within an institution or specific care setting such as a hospital or care home or in relation to care provided in one's own home. This may range from one-off incidents to on-going ill-treatment. It can be through neglect or poor professional practice because of the structure, policies, processes and practices within an organisation.

Neglect and Acts of Omission

Including ignoring medical, emotional or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health care and support or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.

Self-neglect

This covers a wide range of behaviour neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding, incidents of abuse may be one-off or multiple and affect one person or more.

Appendix E: Signs of Possible Abuse (Adults)

Physical Abuse

- History of unexplained falls, fractures, bruises, burns or minor injuries
- Signs of under-use or over-use of medication and / or medical problems left unattended
- Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them
- Bruising and discolouration- particularly if there is a lot of bruising of different ages and in places not normally exposed to falls, rough games etc.
- Recurring injuries without plausible explanation
- Loss of hair, loss of weight and change of appetite
- Person flinches at physical contact and / or keeps fully covered even in hot weather
- Person appears frightened or subdued in the presence of a particular individual or individuals

Domestic Abuse and Violence

- Unexplained injuries or excuses for marks or scars
- Controlling and/or threatening relationships including psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional abuse, so-called 'honour-based' violence and Female Genital Mutilation
- Low self-esteem
- Feeling that the abuse was their fault
- Physical evidence of violence such as bruising, cuts and broken bones
- Verbal abuse and humiliation in front of others
- Fear of outside intervention
- Damage to home or property
- Isolation – not seeing friends or family
- Extreme jealousy and possessiveness

Sexual Abuse

- Pregnancy in a woman who lacks mental capacity or is unable to consent to sexual intercourse

- Unexplained change in behaviour or sexually explicit behaviour
- Torn, stained or bloody underwear and / or unusual difficulty in walking or sitting.
- Infections or sexually transmitted diseases
- Full or partial disclosures or hints of sexual abuse
- Self-harming
- Emotional distress
- Mood changes
- Disturbed sleep patterns

Psychological Abuse

- Alteration in psychological state e.g. withdrawn, agitated, anxious or tearful
- Intimidated or subdued in the presence of a carer
- Fearful, flinching or frightened of making choices or expressing wishes.
- Unexplained paranoia
- Changes in mood, attitude and behaviour, excessive fear or anxiety
- Changes in sleep pattern or persistent tiredness
- Loss of appetite
- Helplessness or passivity
- Confusion or disorientation
- Implausible stories and attention seeking behaviour
- Low self-esteem

Financial or Material Abuse

- Disparity between assets and living conditions
- Unexplained withdrawals from accounts or disappearance of financial documents or loss of money
- Sudden inability to pay bills or getting into debt
- Carers or professionals fail to account for expenses incurred on a person's behalf
- Recent changes of deeds or title to property
- Missing personal belongings

- Inappropriate granting and / or use of Power of Attorney, or unexplained changes to a Will

Modern Slavery and Trafficking

- Physical appearance unkempt, inappropriate clothing, malnourished
- Movement monitored, rarely alone, travel early or late at night to facilitate working hours
- Few personal possessions or identity documents
- Fear of seeking help or trusting people

Discriminatory Abuse

- Inappropriate remarks, comments or lack of respect
- Poor quality or avoidance of care
- Low self-esteem
- Withdrawn
- Anger
- Person puts themselves down in terms of their gender or sexuality
- Abuse may be observed in conversations or reports by the person of how they perceive themselves

Institutional / Organisational Abuse

- Low self-esteem
- Withdrawn
- Anger
- Person puts themselves down in terms of their gender or sexuality
- Abuse may be observed in conversations or reports by the person of how they perceive themselves
- No confidence in complaints procedures for staff or service users
- Neglectful or poor professional practice

Neglect and Acts of Omission

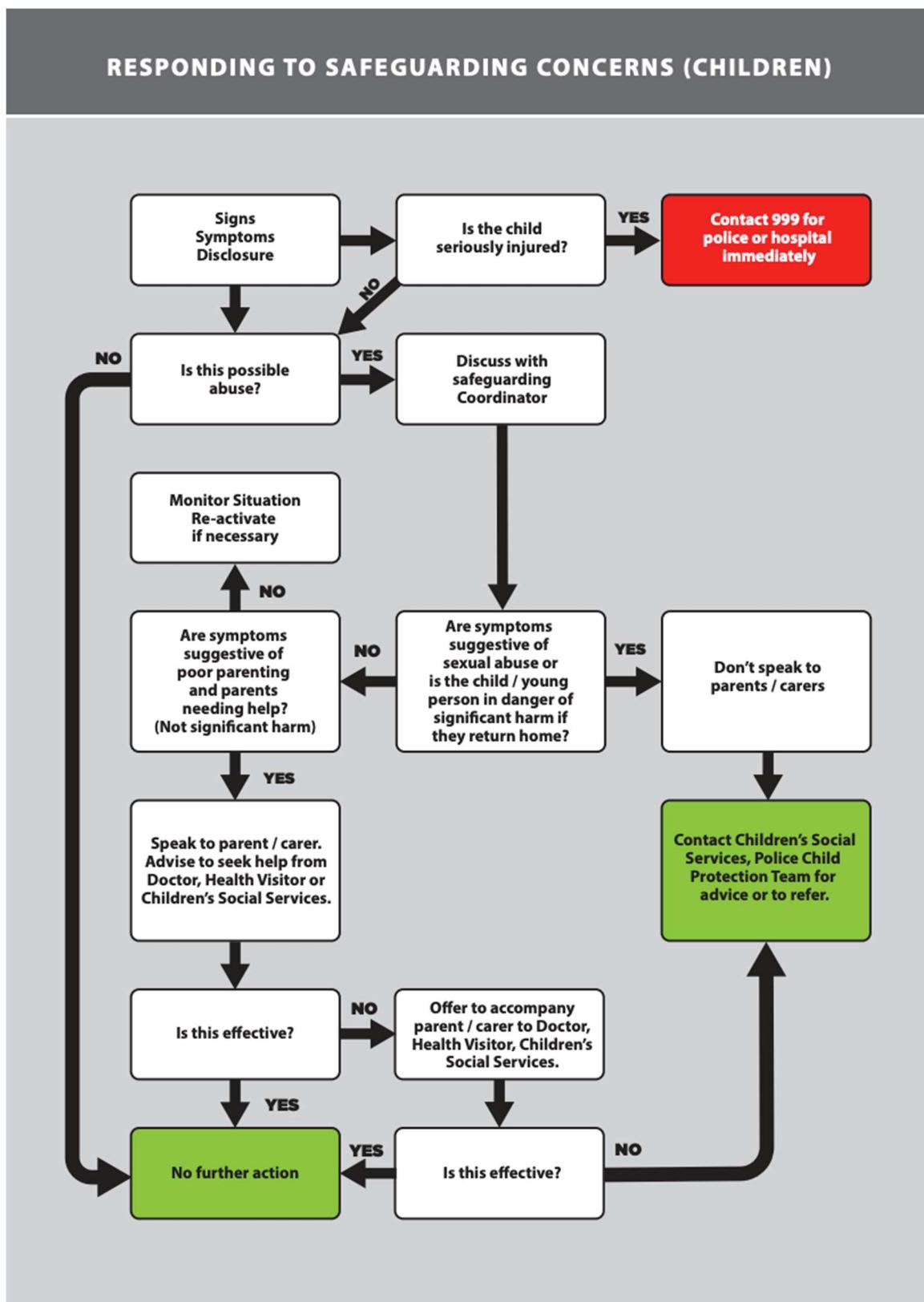
- Deteriorating despite apparent care
- Poor home conditions, clothing or care and support

- Lack of medication or medical intervention

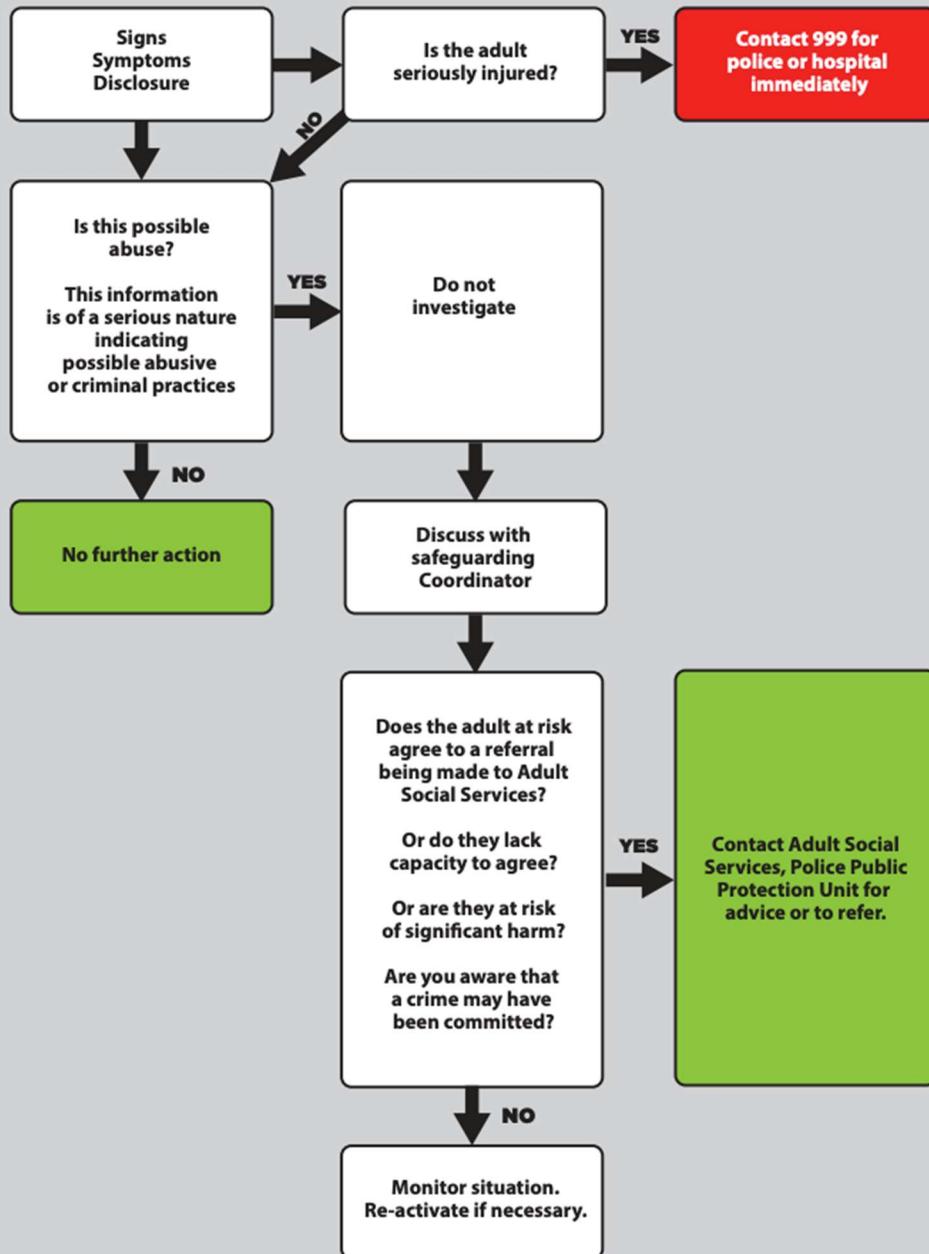
Self-neglect

- Hoarding inside or outside a property
- Neglecting personal hygiene or medical needs
- Person looking unkempt or dirty and has poor personal hygiene
- Person is malnourished, has sudden or continuous weight loss, is dehydrated, is constantly hungry, stealing or gorging food
- Person is dressed inappropriately for the weather conditions
- Dirt, urine or faecal smells in a person's environment
- Home environment does not meet basic needs (for example, no heating or lighting)
- Depression

Appendix F: Process Flow - Appropriate Responses

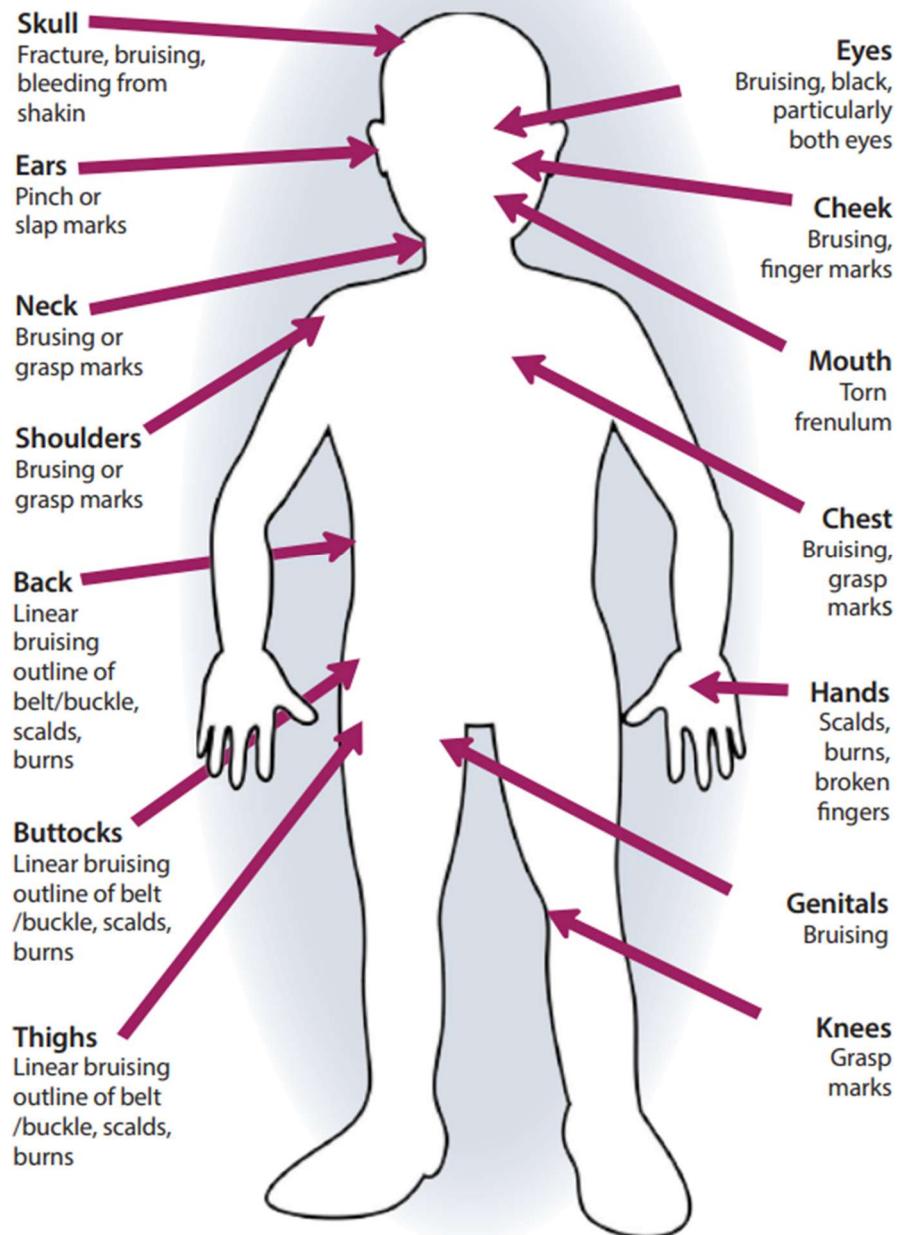


RESPONDING TO SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS (ADULTS)



Appendix G: Common Signs of Accidental and Non-Accidental Injury

Common sites for **non-accidental** injury



Common sites for **accidental** injury

