

1. Safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults

Policy statement

Our setting will work with children, parents and the community to ensure the rights and safety of children, young people* and vulnerable adults. Our Safeguarding Policy is based on the three key commitments of the Pre-school Learning Alliance Safeguarding Children Policy.

Procedures

We carry out the following procedures to ensure we meet the three key commitments of the Alliance Safeguarding Children Policy, which incorporates responding to child protection concerns.

Key commitment 1

We are committed to building a 'culture of safety' in which children, young people and vulnerable adults are protected from abuse and harm in all areas of our service delivery. We are committed to promoting the welfare of all children, young people and adults in our setting.

- Group provision: Our designated person (a member of staff) who co-ordinates child, young person and vulnerable adult protection issues is: **June Slatter**
 - When the setting is open but the designated person is not on site, a suitably trained deputy is available at all times for staff to discuss safeguarding concerns: **June Slatter, Carolyn Cottrell**
 - Our designated officer (a member of the management team) who oversees this work is:
Merle Gallagher
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- The designated person, the suitably trained deputy and the designated officer ensure they have relevant links with statutory and voluntary organisations with regard to safeguarding.
 - The designated person (and the person who deputises for them) understands NORFOLK SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN'S PARTNERSHIP (NSPC) safeguarding procedures, attends relevant NORFOLK SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN'S PARTNERSHIP (NSPC) training at least every two years and refreshes their knowledge of safeguarding at least annually.
 - We ensure all staff are trained to understand our safeguarding policies and procedures and that parents are made aware of them too.
 - All staff have an up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding issues, are alert to potential indicators and signs of abuse and neglect and understand their professional duty to ensure safeguarding and child protection concerns are reported to the local authority children's social care team or the NSPCC. They receive updates on safeguarding at least annually.
 - All staff are confident to ask questions in relation to any safeguarding concerns and know not to just take things at face value but can be respectfully sceptical.

- All staff understand the principles of early help (as defined in *Working Together to Safeguard Children*, 2015 (last updated in 2023)) and are able to identify those children and families who may be in need of early help and enable them to access it.
- All staff understand NORFOLK SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN'S PARTNERSHIP (NSPC) thresholds of significant harm including the signs and symptoms of abuse and understand how to access services for families, including for those families who are below the threshold for significant harm.
- All staff understand their responsibilities under the General Data Protection Regulations and the circumstances under which they may share information about you and your child with other agencies.
- All staff understand how to escalate their concerns in the event that they feel either the local authority and/or their own organisation has not acted adequately to safeguard.
- All staff understand what the organisation expects of them in terms of their required behaviour and conduct, and follow our policies and procedures on positive behaviour, online safety (including use of mobile phones and social media), whistleblowing and dignity at work.
- Children have a key person to build a relationship with, and are supported to articulate any worries, concerns or complaints that they may have in an age-appropriate way.
- All staff understand our policy on promoting positive behaviour and follow it in relation to children showing aggression towards other children.
- Adequate and appropriate staffing resources are provided to meet the needs of children.
- Applicants for posts within the setting are clearly informed that the positions are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.
- Enhanced criminal records and barred lists checks, EY2 check reference and other suitability checks are carried out for staff and volunteers prior to their post being confirmed, to ensure that no disqualified person or unsuitable person works at the setting or has access to the children.
- Where applications are rejected based on information disclosed, applicants have the right to know and to challenge incorrect information.
- Enhanced criminal records and barred lists checks are carried out on anyone living or working on the premises.
- Volunteers must:
 - be aged 17 or over; (this can be younger as part of work experience or work placement, but from school year 10 upwards)
 - be considered competent and responsible;
 - receive a robust induction and regular supervisory meetings;
 - be familiar with all the settings policies and procedures;
 - be fully checked for suitability if they are to have unsupervised access to the children at any time.
- Information is recorded about staff qualifications, and the identity checks and vetting processes that have been completed including:
 - the criminal records disclosure reference number;
 - certificate of good conduct or equivalent where a UK DBS check is not appropriate;
 - the date the disclosure was obtained; and
 - details of who obtained it.

- All staff and volunteers are informed that they are expected to disclose any convictions, cautions, court orders or reprimands and warnings which may affect their suitability to work with children (whether received before or during their employment with us).
- All staff and volunteers are required to notify us if anyone in their household (including family members, lodgers, partners etc.) has any relevant convictions, cautions, court orders, reprimands or warnings or has been barred from, or had registration refused or cancelled in relation to any childcare provision or have had orders made in relation to care of their children.
- We notify the Disclosure and Barring Service of any person who is dismissed from our employment, or resigns in circumstances that would otherwise have led to dismissal for reasons of a child protection concern.
- Procedures are in place to record the details of visitors to the setting; they are always accompanied by a manager or staff.
- Security steps are taken to ensure that management and staff have control over who comes into the setting so that no unauthorised person has unsupervised access to the children.
- Steps are taken to ensure children are not photographed or filmed on video for any other purpose than to record their development or their participation in events organised by us. Parents sign a consent form and have access to records holding visual images of their child.
- Any personal information is held securely and in line with data protection requirements and guidance from the ICO.
- The designated person in the setting has responsibility for ensuring that there is an adequate online safety policy in place.
- We keep a written record of all complaints and concerns including details of how they were responded to.
- We ensure that robust risk assessments are completed, that they are seen and signed by all relevant staff and that they are regularly reviewed and updated, in line with our health and safety policy.
- The designated officer will support the designated person to undertake their role adequately and offer advice, guidance, supervision and support.
- The designated person will inform the designated officer at the first opportunity of every significant safeguarding concern; however, this should not delay any referrals being made to children's social care, the LADO, Ofsted or CADS.

Key commitment 2

We are committed to responding promptly and appropriately to all incidents, allegations or concerns of abuse that may occur and to work with statutory agencies in accordance with the procedures that are set down in 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused' (HMG, 2015) and the Care Act 2014.

Responding to suspicions of abuse or neglect

- We acknowledge that abuse of children can take different forms - physical, emotional, and sexual, as well as neglect.
- We ensure that all staff have an understanding of the additional vulnerabilities that arise from special educational needs and/or disabilities, plus inequalities of race, gender, language, religion, sexual

orientation or culture, and that these receive full consideration in relation to child, young person or vulnerable adult protection.

- When children are suffering from physical, sexual or emotional abuse, or experiencing neglect, this may be demonstrated through:
 - significant changes in their behaviour;
 - deterioration in their general well-being;
 - their comments which may give cause for concern, or the things they say (direct or indirect disclosure);
 - changes in their appearance, their behaviour, or their play;
 - unexplained bruising, marks or signs of possible abuse or neglect; and
 - any reason to suspect neglect or abuse outside the setting.
- We are aware of the 'hidden harm' agenda concerning parents with drug and alcohol problems and consider other factors affecting parental capacity and risk, such as social exclusion, domestic violence, radicalisation, mental or physical illness and parent's learning disability. This is also known as 'The trio of vulnerabilities'.
- We are aware that children's vulnerability is potentially increased when they are privately fostered and when we know that a child is being cared for under a private fostering arrangement, we inform our local authority children's social care team.
- We are prepared to take action if any member of staff has concerns about the welfare of a child who fails to arrive at a session when expected. The designated person will take immediate action to contact the child's parent to seek an explanation for the child's absence and be assured that the child is safe and well. If no contact is made with the child's parents and the designated person has reason to believe that the child is at risk of significant harm, the relevant professionals are contacted immediately, and NORFOLK SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN'S PARTNERSHIP (NSPC) procedures are followed. If the child has current involvement with social care the social worker is notified on the day of the unexplained absence.
- We are aware of other factors that affect children's vulnerability that may affect, or may have affected, children and young people using our provision, such as abuse of children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities; fabricated or induced illness; child abuse linked to beliefs in spirit possession; sexual exploitation of children, including through internet abuse; Female Genital Mutilation and radicalisation or extremism.
- In relation to radicalisation and extremism, we follow the Prevent Duty guidance for England and Wales published by the Home Office and NORFOLK SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN'S PARTNERSHIP (NSPC) procedures on responding to radicalisation.
- The designated person completes online Channel training, online Prevent training and attends local WRAP training where available to ensure they are familiar with the local protocol and procedures for responding to concerns about radicalisation. The referral process can be seen in the Prevent Policy, and a copy is kept in the kitchen/office.
- We are aware of the mandatory duty that applies to teachers, including early years practitioners, and health workers to report cases of Female Genital Mutilation to the police.
- We also make ourselves aware that some children and young people are affected by gang activity, by complex, multiple or organised abuse, through forced marriage or honour-based violence or may be victims of child trafficking. While this may be less likely to affect young children in our care, we may

become aware of any of these factors affecting older children and young people who we may come into contact with.

- Where we believe that a child in our care or that is known to us may be affected by any of these factors, we follow the procedures below for reporting child protection concerns and follow the NORFOLK SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN'S PARTNERSHIP (NSPC) procedures.
- Where such evidence is apparent, the child's key person makes a dated record of the details of the concern and discusses what to do with the member of staff who is acting as the designated person. The information is stored on the child's personal file.
- In the event that a staff member or volunteer is unhappy with the decision made of the designated person in relation to whether to make a safeguarding referral they must follow escalation procedures.
- We refer concerns to the local authority children's social care team and co-operate fully in any subsequent investigation. NB: In some cases, this may mean the police or another agency identified by the Local Safeguarding Children Board.
- We take care not to influence the outcome either through the way we speak to children or by asking questions of children.
- We take account of the need to protect young people aged 16-19 as defined by the Children Act 1989. This may include students or school children on work placement, young employees or young parents. Where abuse is suspected we follow the procedure for reporting any other child protection concerns. The views of the young person will always be taken into account, but the setting may override the young person's refusal to consent to share information if it feels that it is necessary to prevent a crime from being committed or intervene where one may have been, or to prevent harm to a child or adult. Sharing confidential information without consent is done only where not sharing it could be worse than the outcome of having shared it.
- All staff are also aware that adults can also be vulnerable and know how to refer adults who are in need of community care services.
- We have a whistleblowing policy in place.
- Staff/volunteers know they can contact the organisation Public Concern at Work for advice relating to whistleblowing; if they feel that the organisation has not acted adequately in relation to safeguarding, they can contact the NSPCC whistleblowing helpline (0800 0280285 or help@nscpp.org.uk).

Recording suspicions of abuse and disclosures

- Where a child makes comments to a member of staff that give cause for concern (disclosure), or a member of staff observes signs or signals that give cause for concern, such as significant changes in behaviour; deterioration in general well-being; unexplained bruising, marks or signs of possible abuse or neglect; that member of staff:
 - listens to the child, offers reassurance and gives assurance that she or he will take action. We do not jump to conclusions and would never promise a child confidentiality. We would explain that information will need to be passed on to keep them safe. This would be shared with the child using age and developmentally appropriate wording.
 - does not question the child, although it is OK to ask questions for the purposes of clarification;
 - makes a written record that forms an objective record of the observation or disclosure that includes: the date and time of the observation or the disclosure; the exact words spoken by the child as far as

possible; the name of the person to whom the concern was reported, with the date and time; and the names of any other person present at the time.

- These records are signed and dated and kept in the child's personal file, which is kept securely and confidentially.
- The Safeguarding CADS Flowchart Process and Worried about a Child, When to Contact CADS overviews are used to ensure the correct procedure for reporting concerns is followed. If we feel the child is a risk of immediate harm, we will call the police (999).
- The member of staff acting as the designated person is informed of the issue at the earliest opportunity, and within one working day.
- The child's parent/carer will be spoken to by the manager/deputy manager along with the member of staff the disclosure was made to, unless it is deemed a risk to the child to do so.
- For low level concerns we operate a '3 chances for change' system whereby parents are approached by manager/deputy and member of staff to provide parents with the opportunity to explain what happened or make changes going forward. Parents will be advised that each conversation will be logged and after 3 low level concerns a Safeguarding concern will be logged.

Low level concerns are issues such as

- size inappropriate clothing (too big, might fall down, too small, restricts movement or inhibits independence),
- inappropriate clothing (no coat in winter (time would be given to enable parent to purchase one),
- The same dirty clothes worn for 3 consecutive days),
- re occurring head lice,
- child arrives dirty/unkept
- Parent is late dropping off or collecting child by more than 10 minutes
- Where families are experiencing difficulties which may affect their wellbeing, their child's development or ability to flourish, we would work with the family to explore ways to offer help and support, such as a referral to the Family Hub and Early Help. Once these concerns have been raised with parents, we would maintain the relationship, showing care and offering help during the following days, weeks and months to ensure they have the support needed.
- Where the Local Safeguarding Children Board stipulates the process for recording and sharing concerns, we include those procedures alongside this procedure and follow the steps set down by the Local Safeguarding Children Board.
- Any concerns seen or heard out of Playgroup hours should be reported directly to the police or Children's Services by the person who saw/heard it. We encourage everyone to not cause a delay by waiting to tell a member of staff the next time they are at the setting. If someone has a concern, they must report it straight away.
- Where there are Cross Border concerns regarding other counties, we follow advice and procedures given by the CADS team.

Making a referral to the local authority children's social care team

- The Pre-school Learning Alliance's publication *Safeguarding Children* contains procedures for making a referral to the local children's social care team, as well as a template form for recording concerns and making a referral.
- We keep a copy of this document alongside the procedures for recording and reporting set down by our Local Safeguarding Children Board, which we follow where local procedures differ from those of the Pre-school Learning Alliance.

Escalation process

- If we feel that a referral made has not been dealt with properly or that concerns are not being addressed or responded to, we will follow the NORFOLK SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN'S PARTNERSHIP (NSPC) escalation process.
- We will ensure that staff are aware of how to escalate concerns.

Informing parents

- Parents are normally the first point of contact. Concerns are discussed with parents to gain their view of events, unless it is felt that this may put the child at risk or interfere with the course of a police investigation. Advice will be sought from social care if necessary.
- Parents are informed when we make a record of concerns in their child's file and that we also make a note of any discussion we have with them regarding a low-level concern as outlined above.
- If a suspicion of abuse warrants referral to social care, parents are informed at the same time that the referral will be made, except where the guidance of the Local Safeguarding Children Board does not allow this, for example, where it is believed that the child may be placed at risk.
- This will usually be the case where the parent is the likely abuser.
- If there is a possibility that advising a parent beforehand may place a child at greater risk (or interfere with a police response) the designated person should seek advice from children's social care, about whether or not to advise parents beforehand, and should record and follow the advice given.

Liaison with other agencies

- We work within the Local Safeguarding Children Board guidelines.
- The current version of 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused' is available for parents and staff and all staff are familiar with what they need to do if they have concerns.
- We have procedures for contacting the local authority regarding child protection issues, including maintaining a list of names, addresses and telephone numbers of social workers, to ensure that it is easy, in any emergency, for the setting and children's social care to work well together.
- We notify Ofsted of any incident or accident and any changes in our arrangements which may affect the well-being of children or where an allegation of abuse is made against a member of staff (whether the allegations relate to harm or abuse committed on our premises or elsewhere). Notifications to Ofsted are made as soon as is reasonably practicable, but at the latest within 14 days of the allegations being made.
- Contact details for the local National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) are also kept.

Allegations against staff

- We ensure that all parents know how to complain about the behaviour or actions of staff or volunteers within the setting, or anyone living or working on the premises occupied by the setting, which may include an allegation of abuse.
- We respond to any inappropriate behaviour displayed by members of staff, volunteer or any other person living or working on the premises, which includes:
 - inappropriate sexual comments;
 - excessive one-to-one attention beyond the requirements of their usual role and responsibilities, or inappropriate sharing of images.
- We follow the guidance of the Local Safeguarding Children Board when responding to any complaint that a member of staff or volunteer within the setting, or anyone living or working on the premises occupied by the setting, has abused a child.
- We ensure that all staff and volunteers know how to raise concerns about a member of staff or volunteer within the setting. We respond to any concerns raised by staff and volunteers who know how to escalate their concerns if they are not satisfied with the response
- We respond to any disclosure by children or staff that abuse by a member of staff or volunteer within the setting, or anyone living or working on the premises occupied by the setting, may have taken, or is taking place, by first recording the details of any such alleged incident.
- We refer any such complaint immediately to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) to investigate and/or offer advice. We contact the on-duty officer with this email address: LADO@norfolk.gov.uk .
- We also report any such alleged incident to Ofsted (unless advised by LADO that this is unnecessary due to the incident not meeting the threshold), as well as what measures we have taken. We are aware that it is an offence not to do this.
- We co-operate entirely with any investigation carried out by children's social care in conjunction with the police.
- Where the management team and children's social care agree it is appropriate in the circumstances, the member of staff or volunteer will be suspended for the duration of the investigation. This is not an indication of admission that the alleged incident has taken place, but is to protect the staff, as well as children and families, throughout the process.

Disciplinary action

Where a member of staff or volunteer has been dismissed due to engaging in activities that caused concern for the safeguarding of children or vulnerable adults, we will notify the Disclosure and Barring Service of relevant information, so that individuals who pose a threat to children and vulnerable groups can be identified and barred from working with these groups.

Key commitment 3

We are committed to promoting awareness of child abuse issues throughout our training and learning programmes for adults. We are also committed to empowering children through our early childhood curriculum, promoting their right to be strong, resilient and listened to.

Training

- Training opportunities are sought for all adults involved in the setting to ensure that they are able to recognise the signs and signals of possible physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse (including child sexual exploitation), radicalisation and neglect and that they are aware of the local authority guidelines for making referrals.
- Designated persons receive appropriate training, as recommended by the Local Safeguarding Children Board, every two years and refresh their knowledge and skills at least annually.
- We ensure that all staff know the procedures for reporting and recording any concerns they may have about the provision.
- We ensure that all staff receive updates on safeguarding via emails, newsletters, online training and/or discussion at staff meetings at least once a year.

Planning

- The layout of the rooms allows for constant supervision. No child is left alone with staff or volunteers in a one-to-one situation without being within sight and/or hearing of other staff or volunteers.

Curriculum

- We introduce key elements of keeping children safe into our programme to promote the personal, social and emotional development of all children, so that they may grow to be strong, resilient and listened to and so that they develop an understanding of why and how to keep safe.
- We create within the setting a culture of value and respect for individuals, having positive regard for children's heritage arising from their colour, ethnicity, languages spoken at home, cultural and social background.
- We ensure that this is carried out in a way that is developmentally appropriate for the children.

Confidentiality

- All suspicions and investigations are kept confidential and shared only with those who need to know. Any information is shared under the guidance of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Information can be recorded on accident forms, Incident forms, Low Level Concerns log and Safeguarding log.

Drop off and collection of children

- For drop off's at 9am and 3pm collections we require parents to wait on the playground. The use of mobile phones is not permitted on the playground at any time. For drop offs at 12.30 and pickups at 11.30/12.30 we require parents to stand outside the gate ensuring their child is kept safe from the road. At drop off and pick up times any important information regarding the child must be shared between the parent and a member of staff. Parents must be mindful and attentive to their child's needs at drop off and pick up.

Support to families

- We believe in building trusting and supportive relationships with families, staff and volunteers. However, we do not permit staff to "friend" family members of a child attending Playgroup on any social media

platform (this excludes immediate family members of any staff). Staff are not permitted to offer any information or advice regarding a child attending Playgroup outside of their working hours. If parents have queries they should contact Playgroup via our phone number, email or their Tapestry account.

- We do not offer, recommend or encourage babysitting by staff. If staff choose to do this, it is an agreement made separately from Feltwell Playgroup.
- We make clear to parents our role and responsibilities in relation to child protection, such as for the reporting of concerns, information sharing, monitoring of the child, and liaising at all times with the local children's social care team.
- We will continue to welcome the child and the family whilst investigations are being made in relation to any alleged abuse.
- We follow the Child Protection Plan as set by the child's social worker in relation to the setting's designated role and tasks in supporting that child and their family, subsequent to any investigation.
- Confidential records kept on a child are shared with the child's parents or those who have parental responsibility for the child in accordance with the Confidentiality and Client Access to Records procedure, and only if appropriate under the guidance of the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

Legal framework

Primary legislation

- Children Act (1989 s47)
- Protection of Children Act (1999)
- The Children Act (2004 s11)
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (2006)
- Childcare Act (2006)

Secondary legislation

- Sexual Offences Act (2003)
- Criminal Justice and Court Services Act (2000)
- Equality Act (2010)
- General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) (2018)
- Childcare (Disqualification) Regulations (2018)
- Children and Families Act (2014)
- Care Act (2014)
- Serious Crime Act (2015)
- Counter-Terrorism and Security Act (2015)

Further guidance

- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026)
- Domestic Abuse Act (2021)
- Online Safety Act (2023)
- What to do if you're Worried a Child is Being Abused (HMG, 2015)
- Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (DoH 2000)

- Family Support Process February 2018
- Statutory guidance on making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children under section 11 of the Children Act 2004 (HMG 2008)
- Hidden Harm – Responding to the Needs of Children of Problem Drug Users (2011)
- Information Sharing: Guidance for Practitioners providing Safeguarding Services (2024)
- Disclosure and Barring Service: www.gov.uk/disclosure-barring-service-check
- Revised Prevent Duty Guidance for England and Wales (HMG, 2023)
- Inspecting Safeguarding in Early Years, Education and Skills Settings, (Ofsted, 2018)
- Norfolk guidance to understanding continuum of needs (2023)
- Norfolk Graded Care Profile
- Safeguarding children and protecting professionals in Early Years Settings: online considerations 2019
- Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership: policies and procedures
- <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/briefings/definitions-signs-child-abuse>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-children-and-protecting-professionals-in-early-years-settings-online-safety-considerations/safeguarding-children-and-protecting-professionals-in-early-years-settings-online-safety-considerations-for-managers>
- <https://www.schools.norfolk.gov.uk/article/67950/Guidance-for-safer-working-practice-for-adults-who-work-with-children-and-young-people>
- <https://www.bsaci.org/resources/allergy-action-plans/>
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This policy was adopted by

Feltwell Playgroup

On

20.01.2026

Date to be reviewed

(on or before) 20.01.2027

Signed on behalf of the provider

J.I.

Name of signatory

Jonathan Irving

Role of signatory (e.g. chair, director or owner)

Committee Chairperson

Other useful Pre-school Learning Alliance publications

- Safeguarding Children (2013)
- Safeguarding through Effective Supervision (2013)
- The New Early Years Employee Handbook (2021)
- People Management in the Early Years (2016)

*A 'young person' is defined as 16 to 19 years old – in our setting they may be a student, worker, volunteer or parent.

Safeguarding CADS Flowchart Process

- 1 **Identify & Assess Risk:** Identify child at potential or actual risk.
- 2 **Consult DSL:** Report concerns to your organisation's Designated Safeguarding Lead and document them (e.g., CPOMS) and follow advice regarding contacting CADS or completing a Request for Support.
- 3 **Immediate Protection:** If the child is in immediate danger, call 999.
- 4 **Contact CADS if child protection or immediate safeguarding concerns.**
- 5 **Professionals call 0344 800 8021 and choose from the following options:**
 - Press 1** – if the child or young person is currently being supported by a Social Worker or Family Practitioner.
 - Press 2** – if your call relates to Child Exploitation.
 - Press 3** – if your call relates to Domestic Abuse.
 - Press 0** – for Child Protection and immediate safeguarding concerns. (If the lines are busy and your call is not answered within 40 minutes, a call back option will be offered).

To use the service, **members of the public** can call the Customer Service Centre number **0344 800 8020**.
- 6 **Request Support for Universal, Community based Early Help and Family Help**
Complete a Request for Support form:

Targeted early help and community-based support can be accessed via [Request for support - Norfolk County Council](#). Early Help is designed to support children, young people, and families experiencing difficulties that may affect their wellbeing, development, or ability to flourish.

Consent: Inform parents/carers of the concerns and gain consent for support from Early Help services, prior to a call or completing a Request for Support unless doing so places the child at further risk.

Universal services and community-based early help

Universal services and community based early help provide preventative support for children and families of all ages, strengthening resilience, improving outcomes, and reducing the risk of needs escalating. Delivered as a coordinated local system rather than a single service, this support is offered through universal provision such as education, health, and wider community services.



It includes services like Best Start Family Hubs, youth and housing support, and after school provision.

Best Start Family Hubs offer a clear pathway from pregnancy to age 19 (or 25 for young people with SEND), bringing together multi agency partners to provide accessible, ongoing community support and to safeguard families, including those transferring from targeted or specialist services.

Family Help – targeted early help, safeguarding, and promoting the welfare of children

Family Help is offered where universal services and community based early help have not achieved sufficient or sustained improvement, or where a child and family present with multiple, complex, or escalating needs. Delivered through a coordinated, multi agency approach led by Children's Services and its partners, Family Help provides structured support to address identified risks and concerns. Family Help will only be initiated where there is an agreed Family Plan, or a Graded Care Profile (GCP) in cases of neglect, which has been shared with CADS.

Family Help is a voluntary, consent based approach that supports families to build capacity, improve outcomes, and reduce risks, including families in kinship arrangements and those requiring additional support during pregnancy, with the aim of preventing the need for statutory child protection intervention.

Consent: Inform parents/carers of the concerns and gain consent for support from Early Help services, prior to a call or completing a Request for Support unless doing so places the child at further risk.

- 7 **CADS:** A member of the team responds to the call or Request for Support and decides on next steps.
- 8 **Information Gathering:** MASH partners (police, health, social care) share information if required.
- 9 **Outcome & Action:**
Information, advice and guidance
Community based Early Help
Family Help
- 10 **Feedback:** Following a call CADS provides feedback to the referrer regarding the outcome.

Worried about a child?

When to contact the Children's Advice and Duty Service (CADS)

Child Protection or Immediate Safeguarding concerns: if there are concerns that a child may be suffering significant harm; a child with unexplained injuries, domestic abuse in the household or a child at risk of exploitation.

Professionals can contact CADS
on **0344 800 8021**.

Members of the public can contact
Norfolk County Council's Customer
Service line on **0344 800 8020**.

Requesting support

You can request
support for Universal,
Community-based Early
Help and Family Help

If you feel a consultation is necessary, discuss this with your Designated Safeguarding Lead before completing a Request for Support form



Early Help is designed to support children, young people and families experiencing difficulties that may affect their wellbeing, development, or ability to flourish. Prior to completing the form, discuss the worries and gain consent for Early Help support with the family where appropriate to do so.

When to call CADS

Child with unexplained injuries:

- What's happening?
- Bruises inconsistent with explanation or development
- Injuries in unusual places on the body
- Delayed medical attention

How to describe it:

'During contact today we observed bruising to the child's upper arms and back. The explanation given doesn't appear consistent with the injuries, and we're concerned about possible physical harm.'

Why is this Safeguarding?

Possible physical abuse

Professionals can contact CADS on **0344 800 8021**

If you have an emergency call **999**

When to call CADS



Domestic abuse in the household:

- What's happening?
- Child discloses shouting, violence, or police attending the home
- Parent presents with injuries or low mood
- Child shows fear or anxiety about going home

How to describe it:

'A child has disclosed witnessing regular physical arguments between adults in the home, including police attendance. We're concerned about the impact on the child's emotional wellbeing and safety.'

Why is this Safeguarding?



Exposure to domestic abuse is emotional harm to a child

Professionals can contact CADS on **0344 800 8021**

If you have an emergency call **999**

When to call CADS



Child at risk of exploitation:

- What's happening?
- Child missing
- Older associates, unexplained money, or gifts
- Changes in behaviour, secrecy, or substance use

How to describe it:

'We're concerned about potential child exploitation. The young person has been missing from school or home three times in a month, is associating with unknown adults, and has unexplained money and gifts.'

Why is this Safeguarding?

Indicators of exploitation

Professionals can contact CADS on **0344 800 8021**

If you have an emergency call **999**

Request for

Support



Child experiencing neglect:

- What's happening?
- Child regularly arrives at school unwashed, hungry, or very tired
- Frequent, unexplained absences
- Parent not engaging with school or health services

Why complete a Request for Support?

Early help strategies have been attempted but have not led to sustained improvement. A Graded Care Profile has been completed, which indicates ongoing concerns regarding the child's unmet basic needs.



Prior to completing the form, discuss the worries and gain consent for Early Help support with the family where appropriate to do so.

Complete the form fully and upload copies of the current plan or any tools being used to support.

If you have an emergency call 999

Request for

Support



Parental mental health impacting care:

- What's happening?
- Parent experiencing severe depression, psychosis, or substance misuse
- Child is taking on caring responsibilities
- Home environment deteriorating

Why complete a Request for Support?

Early help strategies have been attempted but have not led to sustained improvement. The parent's mental health has significantly deteriorated, and this appears to be affecting their ability to meet the child's basic needs. We're seeing increasing concerns about safety and supervision.



Prior to completing the form, discuss the worries and gain consent for Early Help support with the family where appropriate to do so.

Complete the form fully and upload copies of the current plan or any tools being used to support.

If you have an emergency call 999

Request for Support



Young carer at risk:

- What's happening?
- Child providing excessive care for parent or siblings
- Child missing school, feeling exhausted, anxious

Why complete a Request for Support?

The child is undertaking substantial caring duties for a parent, including personal care, which is affecting their education and wellbeing. We're concerned this is no longer safe or appropriate.



Prior to completing the form, discuss the worries and gain consent for Early Help support with the family where appropriate to do so.

Complete the form fully and upload copies of the current plan or any tools being used to support.

If you have an emergency call 999

Definitions and signs of child abuse

Guidance for professionals who work with children on how to recognise the signs of child abuse

July 2020

What is child abuse?

Child abuse happens when a person harms a child. It can be physical, sexual or emotional, but can also involve neglect.

Children may be abused by:

- family members
- friends
- people working or volunteering in organisational or community settings
- people they know
- strangers.

General signs of abuse

Children experiencing abuse often experience more than one type of abuse over a period of time.

Children who experience abuse may be afraid to tell anybody about the abuse. They may struggle with feelings of guilt, shame or confusion – particularly if the abuser is a parent, caregiver or other close family member or friend.

Many of the signs that a child is being abused are the same regardless of the type of abuse. Anyone working with children or young people needs to be able to recognise the signs. These include a child:

- being afraid of particular places or making excuses to avoid particular people
- knowing about or being involved in 'adult issues' which are inappropriate for their age or stage of development, for example alcohol, drugs and/or sexual behaviour
- having angry outbursts or behaving aggressively towards others
- becoming withdrawn or appearing anxious, clingy or depressed
- self-harming or having thoughts about suicide
- showing changes in eating habits or developing eating disorders
- regularly experiencing nightmares or sleep problems
- regularly wetting the bed or soiling their clothes
- running away or regularly going missing from home or care
- not receiving adequate medical attention after injuries.

These signs do not necessarily mean that a child is being abused. There may well be other reasons for changes in a child's behaviour such as a bereavement or relationship problems between parents or carers. If you have any concerns about a child's wellbeing, you should report them following your organisation's safeguarding and child protection procedures.

➤ **Find out more about recognising and responding to abuse**

Physical abuse

What is physical abuse?

Physical abuse happens when a child is deliberately hurt, causing physical harm. It can involve hitting, kicking, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or suffocating.

It's also physical abuse if a parent or carer makes up or causes the symptoms of illness in children. For example, they may give them medicine they don't need, making them unwell. This is known as fabricated or induced illness (FII).

Spotting the signs of physical abuse

All children have trips, falls and accidents which may cause cuts, bumps and bruises. These injuries tend to affect bony areas of their body such as elbows, knees and shins and are not usually a cause for concern.

Injuries that are more likely to indicate physical abuse include:

Bruising

- bruises on babies who are not yet crawling or walking
- bruises on the cheeks, ears, palms, arms and feet
- bruises on the back, buttocks, tummy, hips and backs of legs
- multiple bruises in clusters, usually on the upper arms or outer thighs
- bruising which looks like it has been caused by fingers, a hand or an object, like a belt or shoe
- large oval-shaped bite marks.

Burns or scalds

- any burns which have a clear shape of an object, for example cigarette burns
- burns to the backs of hands, feet, legs, genitals or buttocks.

Other signs of physical abuse include multiple injuries (such as bruising, fractures) inflicted at different times.

If a child is frequently injured, and if the bruises or injuries are unexplained or the explanation doesn't match the injury, this should be investigated. It's also concerning if there is a delay in seeking medical help for a child who has been injured.

➤ [Find out more about physical abuse](#)

Neglect

What is neglect?

Neglect is not meeting a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs. This can result in serious damage to their health and development. Neglect may involve a parent or carer not:

- providing adequate food, clothing or shelter
- supervising a child or keeping them safe from harm or danger (including leaving them with unsuitable carers)
- making sure the child receives appropriate health and/or dental care
- making sure the child receives a suitable education
- meeting the child's basic emotional needs – this is known as emotional neglect.

Neglect is the most common type of child abuse. It often happens at the same time as other types of abuse.

Spotting the signs of neglect

Neglect can be difficult to identify. Isolated signs may not mean that a child is suffering neglect, but multiple and persistent signs over time could indicate a serious problem.

Some of these signs include:

- children who appear hungry - they may not have lunch money or even try to steal food
- children who appear dirty or smelly
- children whose clothes are inadequate for the weather conditions
- children who are left alone or unsupervised for long periods or at a young age
- children who have untreated injuries, health or dental problems
- children with poor language, communication or social skills for their stage of development
- children who live in an unsuitable home environment.

➤ [Find out more about neglect](#)

Sexual abuse

What is sexual abuse?

Sexual abuse is forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities. It doesn't necessarily involve violence and the child may not be aware that what is happening is abuse.

Child sexual abuse can involve contact abuse and non-contact abuse.

Contact abuse happens when the abuser makes physical contact with the child. It includes:

- sexual touching of any part of the body whether the child is wearing clothes or not
- rape or penetration by putting an object or body part inside a child's mouth, vagina or anus
- forcing or encouraging a child to take part in sexual activity
- making a child take their clothes off or touch someone else's genitals.

Non-contact abuse involves non-touching activities. It can happen online or in person and includes:

- encouraging or forcing a child to watch or hear sexual acts
- making a child masturbate while others watch

- not taking proper measures to prevent a child being exposed to sexual activities by others
- showing pornography to a child
- making, viewing or distributing child abuse images
- allowing someone else to make, view or distribute child abuse images.
- meeting a child following online sexual grooming with the intent of abusing them.

Online sexual abuse includes:

- persuading or forcing a child to send or post sexually explicit images of themselves, this is sometimes referred to as sexting
- persuading or forcing a child to take part in sexual activities via a webcam or smartphone
- having sexual conversations with a child by text or online.

Abusers may threaten to send sexually explicit images, video or copies of sexual conversations to the young person's friends and family unless they take part in other sexual activity. Images or videos may continue to be shared long after the abuse has stopped.

Abusers will often try to build an emotional connection with a child in order to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual abuse. This is known as grooming.

Spotting the signs of sexual abuse

There may be physical signs that a child has suffered sexual abuse.

These include:

- anal or vaginal soreness or itching
- bruising or bleeding near the genital area
- discomfort when walking or sitting down
- an unusual discharge
- sexually transmitted infections (STI)
- pregnancy.

Changes in the child's mood or behaviour may also cause concern. They may want to avoid spending time with specific people. In particular, the child may show sexual behaviour that is inappropriate for their age.

For example:

- they could use sexual language or know things about sex that you wouldn't expect them to
- they might become sexually active or pregnant at a young age.

- [Find out more about child sexual abuse](#)
- [Find out more about online abuse](#)

Child sexual exploitation

What is child sexual exploitation?

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a type of sexual abuse. Young people may be coerced or groomed into exploitative situations and relationships. They may be given things such as gifts, money, drugs, alcohol, status or affection in exchange for taking part in sexual activities.

Young people may be tricked into believing they're in a loving, consensual relationship. They often trust their abuser and don't understand that they're being abused. They may depend on their abuser or be too scared to tell anyone what's happening. They might be invited to parties and given drugs and alcohol before being sexually exploited. They can also be groomed and exploited online.

Some children and young people are trafficked into or within the UK for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Sexual exploitation can also happen to young people in gangs (Berelowitz et al, 2013).

Child sexual exploitation can involve violent, humiliating and degrading sexual assaults and involve multiple perpetrators.

- [Find out more about grooming](#)

Spotting the signs of child sexual exploitation

Sexual exploitation can be very difficult to identify. Young people who are being sexually exploited may:

- go missing from home, care or education
- be involved in abusive relationships
- hang out with groups of older people
- be involved in gangs or anti-social groups
- have older boyfriends or girlfriends
- spend time at places of concern, such as hotels or known brothels
- be involved in petty crime such as shoplifting
- have access to drugs and alcohol
- have new things such as clothes and mobile phones, which they aren't able to easily explain

- have unexplained physical injuries.

➤ [Find out more about child sexual exploitation](#)

Harmful sexual behaviour

What is harmful sexual behaviour?

Harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) is developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour which is displayed by children and young people and which may be harmful or abusive. It may also be referred to as sexually harmful behaviour or sexualised behaviour.

HSB encompasses a range of behaviour, which can be displayed towards younger children, peers, older children or adults. It is harmful to the children and young people who display it, as well as the people it is directed towards.

HSB can include:

- using sexually explicit words and phrases
- inappropriate touching
- using sexual violence or threats
- sexual activity with other children or adults.

Sexual behaviour between children is considered harmful if one of the children is much older – particularly if there is more than two years' difference in age or if one of the children is pre-pubescent and the other isn't (Davies, 2012). However, a younger child can abuse an older child, particularly if they have power over them – for example, if the older child is disabled (Rich, 2011).

Spotting the signs of harmful sexual behaviour

It's normal for children to show signs of sexual behaviour at each stage in their development. Children also develop at different rates and some may be slightly more or less advanced than other children in their age group. Behaviours which might be concerning depend on the child's age and the situation.

➤ [Find out more about harmful sexual behaviour](#)

Emotional abuse

What is emotional abuse?

Emotional abuse involves:

- humiliating, putting down or regularly criticising a child
- shouting at or threatening a child or calling them names
- mocking a child or making them perform degrading acts
- constantly blaming or scapegoating a child for things which are not their fault
- trying to control a child's life and not recognising their individuality
- not allowing a child to have friends or develop socially
- pushing a child too hard or not recognising their limitations
- manipulating a child
- exposing a child to distressing events or interactions
- persistently ignoring a child
- being cold and emotionally unavailable during interactions with a child
- not being positive or encouraging to a child or praising their achievements and successes.

Spotting the signs of emotional abuse

There aren't usually any obvious physical signs of emotional abuse but you may spot changes in a child's actions or emotions.

Some children are naturally quiet and self-contained whilst others are more open and affectionate. Mood swings and challenging behaviour are also a normal part of growing up for teenagers and children going through puberty. Be alert to behaviours which appear to be out of character for the individual child or are particularly unusual for their stage of development.

Babies and pre-school children who are being emotionally abused may:

- be overly-affectionate towards strangers or people they haven't known for very long
- not appear to have a close relationship with their parent, for example when being taken to or collected from nursery
- lack confidence or become wary or anxious
- be unable to play
- be aggressive or nasty towards other children and animals.

Older children may:

- use language, act in a way or know about things that you wouldn't expect for their age
- struggle to control strong emotions or have extreme outbursts
- seem isolated from their parents
- lack social skills or have few, if any, friends
- fear making mistakes
- fear their parent being approached regarding their behaviour
- self-harm.

➤ [Find out more about emotional abuse](#)

Domestic abuse

What is domestic abuse?

Domestic abuse is any type of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between people who are, or who have been in a relationship, regardless of gender or sexuality. It can include physical, sexual, psychological, emotional or financial abuse.

Exposure to domestic abuse is child abuse. Children can be directly involved in incidents of domestic abuse or they may be harmed by seeing or hearing abuse happening. Children in homes where there is domestic abuse are also at risk of other types of abuse or neglect.

Spotting the signs of domestic abuse

It can be difficult to tell if domestic abuse is happening, because abusers can act very differently when other people are around.

Children who witness domestic abuse may:

- become aggressive
- display anti-social behaviour
- suffer from depression or anxiety
- not do as well at school - due to difficulties at home or disruption of moving to and from refuges.

➤ [Find out more about domestic abuse](#)

Bullying and cyberbullying

What are bullying and cyberbullying?

Bullying is when individuals or groups seek to harm, intimidate or coerce someone who is perceived to be vulnerable.

Bullying includes:

- verbal abuse, such as name calling
- non-verbal abuse, such as hand signs or glaring
- emotional abuse, such as threatening, intimidating or humiliating someone
- exclusion, such as ignoring or isolating someone
- undermining, by constant criticism or spreading rumours
- controlling or manipulating someone
- racial, sexual or homophobic bullying
- physical assaults, such as hitting and pushing
- making silent, hoax or abusive calls.

Bullying can happen anywhere – at school, at home or online. When bullying happens online it can involve social networks, games and mobile devices. Online bullying can also be known as cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying includes:

- sending threatening or abusive text messages
- creating and sharing embarrassing images or videos
- 'trolling' - sending menacing or upsetting messages on social networks, chat rooms or online games
- excluding children from online games, activities or friendship groups
- setting up hate sites or groups about a particular child
- encouraging young people to self-harm
- voting for or against someone in an abusive poll
- creating fake accounts, hijacking or stealing online identities to embarrass a young person or cause trouble using their name.

Spotting the signs of bullying and cyberbullying

It can be hard to know whether or not a child is being bullied. They might not tell anyone because they're scared the bullying will get worse. They might also think that the bullying is their fault.

No one sign indicates for certain that a child's being bullied, but you should look out for:

- belongings getting 'lost' or damaged
- physical injuries such as unexplained bruises
- being afraid to go to school, being mysteriously 'ill' each morning, or skipping school
- not doing as well at school
- asking for, or stealing, money (to give to a bully)
- being nervous, losing confidence or becoming distressed and withdrawn
- problems with eating or sleeping
- bullying others.

➤ [Find out more about bullying](#)

Child trafficking

What is child trafficking?

Child trafficking is child abuse. It involves recruiting and moving children who are then exploited. Many children are trafficked into the UK from overseas, but children can also be trafficked from one part of the UK to another.

Children may be trafficked for:

- child sexual exploitation
- benefit fraud
- forced marriage
- domestic servitude such as cleaning, childcare, cooking
- forced labour in factories or agriculture
- criminal exploitation such as cannabis cultivation, pickpocketing, begging, transporting, drugs, selling pirated DVDs and bag theft.

Children who are trafficked experience many forms of abuse and neglect. Physical, sexual and emotional abuse is often used to control them and they're also likely to suffer physical and emotional neglect.

Child trafficking can require a network of organised criminals who recruit, transport and exploit children and young people. Some people in the network might not be directly involved in trafficking a child but play a part in other ways, such as falsifying documents, bribery, owning or renting premises or money laundering (Europol, 2011). Child trafficking can also be organised by individuals and the children's own families.

Traffickers trick, force or persuade children to leave their homes. They use grooming techniques to gain the trust of a child, family or community. Although these are methods used by traffickers, coercion, violence or threats don't need to be proven in

cases of child trafficking - a child cannot legally consent to their exploitation so child trafficking only requires evidence of movement and exploitation.

Modern slavery is another term which may be used in relation to child trafficking. Modern slavery encompasses slavery, servitude, forced and compulsory labour and human trafficking (HM Government, 2014). The **Modern Slavery Act** passed in 2015 in England and Wales categorises offences of slavery, servitude, forced or compulsory labour and human trafficking.

Spotting the signs of child trafficking

Signs that a child has been trafficked may not be obvious but you might notice unusual behaviour or events.

Children who have been trafficked may:

- have to do excessive housework chores
- rarely leave the house and have limited freedom of movement
- not have any documents (or have falsified documents)
- give a prepared story which is very similar to stories given by other children
- be unable or reluctant to give details of accommodation or personal details
- not be registered with a school or a GP practice
- have a history with missing links and unexplained moves
- be cared for by adults who are not their parents or carers
- not have a good quality relationship with their adult carers
- be one among a number of unrelated children found at one address
- receive unexplained or unidentified phone calls whilst in a care placement or temporary accommodation.

There are also signs that an adult is involved in child trafficking, such as:

- making multiple visa applications for different children
- acting as a guarantor for multiple visa applications for children
- having previously acted as the guarantor on visa applications for visitors who have not left the UK when the visa expired.

➤ **Find out more about child trafficking and modern slavery**

Female genital mutilation

What is female genital mutilation?

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is the partial or total removal of external female genitalia for non-medical reasons. It's also known as female circumcision or cutting.

The age at which FGM is carried out varies. It may be carried out when a child is new-born, during childhood or adolescence, just before marriage or during pregnancy (Home Office et al, 2016).

FGM is child abuse. There are no medical reasons to carry out FGM. It's dangerous and a criminal offence.

Spotting the signs of female genital mutilation

A child at risk of FGM may not know what's going to happen. But they might talk about or you may become aware of:

- a long holiday abroad or going 'home' to visit family
- relative or cutter visiting from abroad
- a special occasion or ceremony to 'become a woman' or get ready for marriage
- a female relative being cut – a sister, cousin or an older female relative such as a mother or aunt
- missing school repeatedly or running away from home.

A child who has had FGM may:

- have difficulty walking, standing or sitting
- spend longer in the bathroom or toilet
- appear withdrawn, anxious or depressed
- have unusual behaviour after an absence from school or college
- be particularly reluctant to undergo normal medical examinations
- ask for help, but may not be explicit about the problem due to embarrassment or fear.

Reporting requirements

Regulated health and social care professionals and teachers in England and Wales must report 'known' cases of FGM in under-18s to the police (Home Office, 2016).

➤ [Find out more about FGM](#)

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