



THE FORUM CENTRE

Child Protection Policy

Adopted by the Management Committee on 11th October 2023

Our Nominated Governor for Safeguarding is:
Mark Lawson

Our Designated Safeguarding Lead is:
Sue Gilani

Our Deputy Safeguarding Leads are:
Jodi Songhurst, Jane Fairless, Kim Rickford

Signed

Mark Lawson:
Chair of The Management Committee
The Forum Centre

Child Protection Policy

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Child Protection Policy for

The Forum Centre

September 2023

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) – Sue Gilani
Deputy DSLs – Jodi Songhurst, Jane Fairless, Kim Rickford
Governor with responsibility for Safeguarding – Mark Lawson

Introduction

The Child Protection Policy for The Forum Centre is based on the Department for Education’s statutory guidance, [Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023](#) and [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023](#), [Guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings February 2022](#) and the [Maintained School Governance Guide](#). We comply with this guidance and the procedures set out by the Pan Dorset Inter-Agency Safeguarding Procedures (on the Dorset Safeguarding Children Board website), [Pan-Dorset Multi Agency Safeguarding](#).

This policy is also based on the following legislation:

Section 175 of the [Education Act 2002](#), which places a duty on schools and local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils

[The School Staffing \(England\) Regulations 2009](#), which set out what must be recorded on the single central record and the requirement for at least one person on a school interview/appointment panel to be trained in safer recruitment techniques

[The Children Act 1989](#) (and [2004 amendment](#)), which provides a framework for the care and protection of children

Section 5B(11) of the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003, as inserted by section 74 of the [Serious Crime Act 2015](#), which places a statutory duty on teachers to report to the police where they discover that female genital mutilation (FGM) appears to have been carried out on a girl under 18

Statutory Guidance on Female Genital Mutilation, [Female Genital Mutilation](#) which sets out responsibilities with regards to safeguarding and supporting girls affected by FGM

[The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974](#), which outlines when people with criminal convictions can work with children

Schedule 4 of the [Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006](#), which defines what ‘regulated activity’ is in relation to children

Statutory [guidance on the Prevent duty](#), which explains schools’ duties under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 with respect to protecting people from the risk of radicalisation and extremism.

The Department for Education’s guidance [meeting digital and technology filtering and monitoring standards in school](#)

The [Disqualification under the Childcare Act 2006](#) and [Childcare Act 2006](#), which set out who is disqualified from working with children.

Safeguarding Policy Statement

The Forum Centre recognises that the welfare of the child is paramount: the needs and wishes of each child will be put first. Throughout this document, 'child' refers to a young person under the age of 18.

We take seriously our duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children and young people in our care, and in accordance with Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023, HM Government statutory guidance, we recognise that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

This policy consists of:

- i) Definitions
- ii) Equality Statement
- iii) Roles and Responsibilities
- iv) Recognising Abuse and Taking Action
- v) Responding to concerns reported by parents or others in the community
- vi) Responding to allegations or concerns about staff or volunteers
- vii) If you discover that FGM has taken place or a pupil is at risk of FGM
- viii) Response from Children's Social Care to a school referral
- ix) Notifying parents or carers
- x) Confidentiality
- xi) Mobile phones and cameras

This child protection policy forms part of a suite of policies and other documents which relate to the wider safeguarding responsibilities of the school. In particular it should be read in conjunction with the

- staff behaviour policy (code of conduct)
- e-safety policies for pupils and staff, which include use of mobile technology
- safer recruitment policy and procedures
- procedures to handle allegations against members of staff and volunteers, including referring to the Disclosure and Barring Service (when appropriate)
- whistle blowing policy
- procedures to respond appropriately when children are missing education
- anti-bullying procedures

These policies and procedures are in the file marked 'The Forum Centre Policies – Safeguarding' in the Admin/Finance office, and on the Centre website

<https://theforumcentre.com/school/policies>

i) Definitions

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children means:

- Protecting children from maltreatment;
- Preventing impairment of children's mental health or physical development;

Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care;

Taking action to enable all children to have the best life chances.

Child protection is part of this definition and refers to activities undertaken to prevent children suffering, or being likely to suffer, significant harm.

Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child and may involve inflicting harm or failing to act to prevent harm. Appendix 1 explains the diverse types of abuse.

Neglect is a form of abuse and is 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. Appendix 1 defines neglect in more detail.

Significant harm, is the concept introduced by [The Children Act 1989](#), (and [2004 amendment](#)). It is the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention by statutory agencies in family life in the best interests of children.

ii) Equality Statement

All children have the right to be safeguarded from harm or exploitation whatever their:

- age;
- health or disability;
- gender or sexual orientation;
- race, religion, belief or first language;
- political or immigration status.

Some children have an increased risk of abuse, and additional barriers can exist for some children with respect to recognising or disclosing it. We are committed to anti-discriminatory practice and recognise children's diverse circumstances. We ensure that all children have the same protection, regardless of any barriers they may face.

Any child may benefit from early help, but all school staff should be particularly alert to the potential need for early help for children who:

- Have special educational needs or disabilities;
- Are young carers;
- Are Looked After, by appointing a Designated Teacher to promote the educational achievement of children who are looked after/in care and to work closely with the Virtual School head to discuss how pupil premium plus additional funding can support the progress of these children;
- May experience discrimination due to their race, ethnicity, religion, gender identification or sexuality;
- Have English as an additional language;
- Are known to be living in difficult situations – for example, temporary accommodation or where there are issues such as substance abuse, domestic violence or adult mental health issues;

- Are misusing drugs or alcohol themselves;
- Are showing signs of being drawn into anti-social or criminal behaviour, including gang involvement and association with organised crime groups;
- Are frequently missing/go missing from care or from home;
- Are at risk of modern slavery, trafficking or exploitation;
- Are at risk of FGM, sexual exploitation, forced marriage, or radicalisation;
- Are asylum seekers.

Children with special educational needs and children who are disabled

Research shows that children with special educational needs and who are disabled are especially vulnerable to abuse and adults who work with them need to be vigilant and take extra care when interpreting apparent signs of abuse or neglect.

Additional barriers can exist for adults who work with such children, in respect of recognising abuse and neglect. These can include

- Assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's disability without further exploration;
- Children with SEN and who are disabled can be disproportionately impacted by things like bullying – without outwardly showing any signs; and
- Communication barriers and difficulties in overcoming these barriers

These child protection procedures will be followed if a child with special educational needs or who is disabled discloses abuse or there are indicators of abuse or neglect. There are no different or separate procedures in these incidences.

Staff responsible for intimate care of children will undertake their duties in a professional manner at all times and in accordance with the school's intimate care policy.

Full details of how The Forum Centre aims to develop all students to their full potential and to value them equally, and to ensure a high level of staff expertise to meet pupil need through continuing professional development, can be found in the Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) Policy 2023 at <https://theforumcentre.com/school/policies>

iii) Roles and Responsibilities

Safeguarding and child protection is **everyone's** responsibility. This policy applies to all staff, volunteers and governors in the school and is consistent with the procedures of the Dorset Safeguarding Children Board. Our policy and procedures also apply to extended school and off-site activities.

All staff

All staff will read and understand part 1 of the Department for Education's statutory safeguarding guidance, [Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023](#), and review this guidance at least annually. This policy applies to the Headteacher, all staff, including supply and peripatetic staff, regular volunteers (ie those who come into school once

a week or more or 4 times in a 30 day period), governors or anyone working on behalf of the school.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- afford protection for all pupils;
- enable staff and volunteers to safeguard and promote the welfare of children;
- promote a culture which makes this school a safe place to learn and in which children feel safe;
- ensure Governors, staff and regular volunteers in this school understand the importance of taking appropriate action and working in partnership with children, their parents/carers and other agencies in order to safeguard children and promote their welfare.

All staff will be aware of:

Our systems which support safeguarding, including the Staff Code of Conduct, the use of MyConcern for reporting child protection concerns, BehaviourWatch for safeguarding and pastoral issues, and the role of the Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL).

The early help process using the [Continuum of Need](#) guidance, and their role in it, including identifying emerging problems, liaising with the DSL, and sharing information with other professionals to support early identification and assessment.

The process for making referrals to local authority children's social care and for statutory assessments that may follow a referral, including the role they might be expected to play.

What to do if they identify a safeguarding issue or a child tells them they are being abused or neglected, including specific issues such as FGM, and how to maintain an appropriate level of confidentiality while liaising with relevant professionals.

The signs of different types of abuse and neglect, as well as specific safeguarding issues, such as child sexual exploitation (CSE), FGM and radicalisation

Appendix 3 of this policy outlines in more detail forms of abuse.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

Our DSL is Sue Gilani, Support Services Manager. The DSL takes lead responsibility for child protection and wider safeguarding. During term time, the DSL will be available during school hours for staff to discuss any safeguarding concerns. Out of hours, staff should email her on s.gilani@tfc.dorset.sch.uk and she will follow up with discussion at the first opportunity.

When the DSL is absent the Deputies, Jodi Songhurst – j.songhurst@tfc.dorset.sch.uk Jane Fairless – j.fairless@tfc.dorset.sch.uk or Kim Rickford, Headteacher will act as cover, k.rickford@tfc.dorset.sch.uk.

The DSL will be given the time, funding, training, resources and support to:

- provide advice and support to other staff on child welfare and child protection matters;
- have overall responsibility for online safety and understanding the filtering and monitoring systems and processes in place.
- take part in strategy discussions and inter-agency meetings and/or support other staff to do so;
- contribute to the assessment of children;
- refer suspected cases, as appropriate, to the relevant body (local authority children's social care, Channel programme, Disclosure and Barring Service, and/or police), and support staff who make such referrals directly.

The DSL will also keep the Headteacher informed of any issues and liaise with local authority case managers and designated officers for child protection concerns as appropriate. She will also work with the Safer Schools and Communities Team officers in relation to contextual safeguarding and issues which can be addressed in school.

The Governing Board

The Forum Centre has a Management Committee. The Management Committee will act in accordance with section 175 of the [Education Act 2002](#) and the supporting statutory guidance [Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023](#) to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in this school.

In accordance with [Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023](#), the Management Committee appoints a senior board level (or equivalent) lead to monitor the effectiveness of this policy in conjunction with the Management Committee. This is always a different person from the DSL. The Management Committee will approve this policy at each review and hold the Headteacher to account for its implementation. The Chair of the Management Committee will act as the 'case manager' in the event that an allegation of abuse is made against the Headteacher.

All governors receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection training, which will equip them with the knowledge to challenge, or to assure themselves, that the school's safeguarding procedures deliver a robust whole-school approach.

It is a Dorset Safeguarding Standard (recommended by the Dorset Safeguarding Children Board) that governors receive an annual report from the Designated Safeguarding Lead and Nominated Governor in order to help monitor compliance with statutory responsibilities.

The Dorset Standards also include that each school and college completes and submits to the Safeguarding Children Board an annual audit of its safeguarding and child protection arrangements, including an action plan. This will be completed in due course upon request.

The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for the implementation of this policy, including:

- Ensuring that staff (including temporary staff) and volunteers are informed of this policy as part of their induction;
- Communicating this policy to parents when their child joins the school and via the school website;
- Ensuring that the DSL has appropriate time, funding, training and resources, and that there is always adequate cover if the DSL is absent;
- Ensuring that all staff undertake appropriate safeguarding and child protection training and update this regularly;
- Acting as the 'case manager' in the event of an allegation of abuse made against another member of staff or volunteer;
- Ensuring the relevant staffing ratios are met, where applicable.

Staff Training

Child protection forms part of induction for all staff and regular volunteers new to the school. They are given a copy of this policy, the Code of Conduct, details about the role of the DSL and part one of 'Keeping Children Safe in Education: information for all school and college staff'. This is followed up by basic child protection training that equips individuals to recognise and respond appropriately to concerns about pupils

A proportional risk-based approach will be taken regarding the level of information provided to all temporary staff and volunteers. As a minimum they will be provided with, and will be expected to follow, the child protection summary sheet which forms part of this policy.

Staff who do not have designated responsibility for safeguarding and child protection will undertake suitable refresher training at appropriate intervals. The Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership recommends this is at least every three years. In The Forum Centre all staff members will receive regular safeguarding and child protection updates from the DSL as required, but at least annually. Staff will also have an understanding of expectations, roles and responsibilities in relation to filtering and monitoring of school devices and school networks. Child protection updates will include learning from local and national serious cases when the learning becomes available.

All staff will have training in preventing radicalisation and extremism ('Prevent') – either by attending a Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent (WRAP) or completing an on-line course, followed by a discussion with the DSL. The DSL is the Prevent Lead and will attend a WRAP.

When DSLs and Deputies take up the role, they will attend enhanced (Level 3) training – provided through the Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership multi-agency course. They must be updated at 2 yearly intervals after that.

Their knowledge and skills will be updated regularly - at least annually. These individuals are expected to take responsibility for their own learning about safeguarding and child protection by, for example, taking time to read and digest newsletters and relevant research articles; attending training offered by the Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership on matters such as domestic abuse, attachment and child sexual exploitation; completing on-line training on FGM; attending local DSL forums etc.

Designated Teachers for Looked-After Children (mandatory for maintained schools and academies; good practice in independent schools which have or are likely to have Looked-After Children) will undertake appropriate training. In Dorset this is provided by the Virtual School for Children in Care.

Headteacher and at least one governor will complete safer recruitment training (mandatory in maintained schools; best practice in others) either through a multi-agency taught session or by completing the NSPCC on-line course. Further information about safer recruitment and DBS checks can be read in Appendix 4.

It is recommended by the Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership that all governors attend training, briefings or other input which equips them to understand fully and comply with their legal safeguarding duties *as governors*, set out in 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' 2023. Attendance includes those who also work with children and have attended child protection training in that role.

iv) Recognising Abuse and Taking Action

See Appendix 1 – Definitions of Abuse

See Appendix 2 – Possible Indicators of Abuse

See Appendix 3 – Forms of Abuse

Staff, volunteers and governors must follow the procedures set out below in the event of a safeguarding issue. **If a child is in immediate danger:**

Tell the DSL or Deputy DSL, or failing this, make a referral to children's social care and/or the police **immediately** if a child is in immediate danger or at risk of harm. **Anyone can make a referral.** Tell the DSL as soon as possible if you make a referral directly.

If you are concerned about a child's welfare or worried they are being abused, you can make a referral to Children's Social Care in Dorset by phone.

Professionals must phone the Children's Advice and Duty (ChAD) Service. Consultant social workers will be available to provide advice and support when professionals are concerned about a child or young person. They will ask key questions about the risks and strengths within families and then agree who is best placed to meet the needs of a child. There is no longer a requirement to complete an inter-agency referral form, and all referrals will be taken following a professional discussion.

Children's Advice and Duty Service (for professionals)

01305 228558

If you are unsure the [Dorset Children's Services Procedures Manual](#).

Alternatively you can call ChildLine for advice on 0800 1111 or email them by visiting www.childline.org.uk.

If a child makes a disclosure to you

Children may not feel ready to tell someone they are being abused, exploited, or neglected and/or they may not recognise their experiences as harmful. For example, they may feel embarrassed, or being threatened due to vulnerability, disability and/or sexual orientation or language barriers. This should not prevent staff from having professional curiosity and report to the DSL if they have concerns.

If a child makes a disclosure:

- Listen carefully to what is said.
- Avoid showing shock or disbelief.
- Observe the child's demeanour.
- Find an appropriate opportunity to explain that the information will need to be shared with others; that you will not promise to keep the information confidential or a 'secret'.
- Allow the child to continue at her/his own pace and do not interrupt if the child is freely recalling events. You must not stop him/her in order to find a 'witness' as this could inhibit the child from saying more.
- Avoid asking questions or pressing for more information. Ask for clarification only. If questions are necessary they should be framed in an open manner and not 'lead' the child in any way: Tell me.... Explain.... Describe...
- Reassure the child, if necessary, that s/he has done the right thing in telling. Do not tell them they should have told you sooner.
- Explain what will happen next and with whom the information will be shared.

- Do not ask the child to repeat the disclosure to anyone else in school – including the DSL - or ask him/her or any other children who were present to write a written account or 'statement'.
- Write up your conversation as soon as possible in the child's own words. Stick to the facts, and do not put your own judgement on it.
- Sign and date the write-up and pass it on to the DSL. Alternatively, if appropriate, make a referral to children's social care and/or the police directly, and tell the DSL as soon as possible that you have done so.

Taking action

- Where physical injuries have been observed, these will be carefully noted but not photographed. The staff member will not ask to see injuries that are said to be on an intimate part of the child's body.
- Any disclosure or indicators of abuse will be reported verbally to the DSL or Deputy straight away or, where they are not available and concerns are immediate, ensure a referral is made without delay to Children's Social Care. In Dorset this team is known as the Children's Advice and Duty Service (ChADS). The phone number is 01305 228558.
- Where the child already has an allocated social worker, that person or a manager or duty worker in the same team will be contacted promptly. (See Appendix 5 for contact numbers).
- A record will then be created on MyConcern of what was said, including the child's own words, as soon as possible, which will be accessed by the DSL and Deputy DSLs.
- If the child can understand the significance and consequences of making a referral to social workers, they will be asked for their views. It will be explained that whilst their views will be taken into account, the school has a responsibility to take whatever action is required to ensure the child's safety and that of other children.
- The DSL will decide whether to contact parents at this stage, judging whether to do so is likely to place the child at risk of harm from their actions or reactions - for example in circumstances where there are concerns that a serious crime such as sexual abuse, domestic violence or induced illness has taken place. If in any doubt, the DSL or staff member will call the duty worker or ChADS first and agree with him/her when parents/carers should be contacted and by whom. The reason for the decision not to contact parents first will be recorded in the child's school child protection file.
- A child protection referral from a professional cannot be treated as anonymous.
- Where there is no disclosure by a child but concerns are accumulating, such as in relation to neglect or emotional abuse, the DSL will ensure that all information is

brought together and that s/he makes a professional judgement about whether to refer to outside agencies.

- The Pan-Dorset Continuum of Need guidance, [Continuum of Need Guidance](#), should be used to help clarify the pathway required for a child: whether concerns will be managed within the school; or with the help of other agencies as part of early help; or whether they require specialised support such as a social work assessment or referral to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).
- A member of staff who reports concerns to the DSL should expect some feedback, although confidentiality might mean in some cases that this is not detailed. If the member of staff is not happy with the outcome s/he can press for reconsideration and if following this, s/he still believes the correct action has not been taken, will refer the concerns directly to social workers.

v) Responding to concerns reported by parents or others in the community

Occasionally parents or other people in the local community tell school staff about an incident in or accumulation of concerns they have about the family life of a child who is also a pupil at the school.

If the incident or concern relates to *child protection*, the information cannot be ignored, even if there are suspicions about the motives of the person making the report. Members of staff will therefore pass the information to the DSL in the usual way.

It is preferable if the parent / community member who witnessed or knows about the concerns or incident makes a call to Children's Social Care themselves as they will be better able to answer any questions. They can ask for their name not to be divulged if a visit is made to the family. The DSL will advise accordingly and later confirm that this referral has been made.

If the parent / community member refuses to make the referral, the DSL will clarify that she (the DSL) has a responsibility to do so and will also need to pass on to social workers how she is aware of the information.

This process also applies to parents / community members who are also school staff. As professionals who work with children they cannot be anonymous when making the referral but can ask for the situation to be managed sensitively and, if necessary, for their identity to be withheld from the family if it will cause difficulties in their private life.

The Forum Centre has signed up to Operation Encompass, which is a reporting process managed by the police. If a Public Protection Notification (PPN) is raised when a police officer attends a domestic violence incident at which a child is present, the school will be advised at the beginning of the school day via a secure email address. The Forum Centre will, in these incidences, be able to put support measures in place when the child arrives at school.

Remember

Any suspicion or concern that a child or young person may be suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm, MUST be acted on. Doing nothing is not an option. Any suspicion or concerns will be reported without delay to the DSL or a Deputy. During term time the Designated Safeguarding Lead and/or a Deputy should always be available (during school or college hours) for staff to discuss any safeguarding concerns. However, if for whatever reason they are not available, the staff member will discuss their concerns as soon as possible with either

- another senior member of staff or,
- the consultant social worker on the professionals' helpline at the Children's Advice and Duty Service, 01305 228558

Anyone can make a referral, not just the DSLs.

It is important that everyone in the school is aware that the person who first encounters a case of alleged or suspected abuse is not responsible for making a judgement about whether or not abuse has occurred and should not conduct an 'investigation' to establish whether the child is telling the truth. That is a task for social workers and the Police following a referral to them of concern about a child. The role of school staff is to act promptly on the information received.

This applies regardless of the alleged 'perpetrator': whether the child raises concerns about a family member or someone outside school, a member of staff or another child/pupil.

A careful record will be made of what has been seen/heard that has led to the concerns and the date, time, location and people who were present. As far as possible, staff should record verbatim what was said and by whom. The record will be passed to the DSL.

The DSL will keep a record of the conversation with the duty worker and other social workers, noting what actions will be taken and by whom, giving the date and time of the referral. Any pre-existing assessments such as through the Common Assessment Framework should be explained to the social worker.

A school child protection file will be started in the child's name, where the child is not already known to social workers. If a file already exists, the new information will be added to the chronology.

vi) Responding to allegations or concerns about staff or volunteers

Rigorous recruitment and selection procedures and adhering to the school's code of conduct and safer practice guidance should mean that there are relatively few allegations against or concerns about staff or volunteers. However, if a member of staff, or any other person, has any reason to believe that another adult has acted in any way inappropriately or abused a child or young person, they will take action by reporting to the Headteacher (not the DSL if this is a different person). Even though

it may seem difficult to believe that a colleague may be unsuitable to work with children, the risk is far too serious for any member of staff to dismiss such a suspicion without taking action. We promote a culture whereby members of the school community should feel able to raise with the Headteacher, or any member of the leadership team, any concerns about staff conduct. If the reporter feels that the issue has not been addressed they should contact someone outside of the school, such as the Chair of the Management Committee or the LADO.

If the allegation/concern is about the Headteacher the person with concerns will contact the Chair of Governors or the Designated Officer (also known as the LADO) in the Local Authority Safeguarding and Standards Team. See Appendix 5 for contact numbers.

In all cases of allegations against staff or volunteers, the Headteacher and Chair of Governors, will contact the Designated Officer (LADO) without delay and follow the correct procedures as set out in the separate school Whistleblowing Policy. This must comply with Part Four of [Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023](#).

vii) If you discover that FGM has taken place or a pupil is at risk of FGM

The Department for Education's [Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023](#) explains that FGM comprises "all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs". FGM is illegal in the UK and a form of child abuse with long-lasting, harmful consequences. It is also known as 'female genital cutting', 'circumcision' or 'initiation'. Possible indicators that a pupil has already been subjected to FGM, and factors that suggest a pupil may be at risk, are set out in Appendix 3.

Any teacher who discovers that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out on a pupil under 18 must immediately report this to the police, personally. This is a statutory duty, and teachers will face disciplinary sanctions for failing to meet it. The duty above does not apply in cases where a pupil is *at risk* of FGM or FGM is suspected but is not known to have been carried out. Staff should not examine pupils.

Any other member of staff who discovers that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out on a pupil under 18 must speak to the DSL and follow our local safeguarding procedures.

Any member of staff who suspects a pupil is *at risk* of FGM must speak to the DSL and follow our local safeguarding procedures.

viii) Response from Children's Social Care to a school referral

Referral

Once a referral is received by the team, a manager will decide on the next course of action within one working day. When there is concern that a child is suffering, or likely to suffer significant harm, this will be decided more quickly and a strategy

discussion held with the Police and Health professionals and other agencies as appropriate (section 47 Children Act 1989) . The ChADS works closely with the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) police and health partners, who provide vital cross-agency checks.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead should be told within three working days of the outcome of the referral. If this does not happen s/he will contact the duty worker again.

Assessment

All assessments should be planned and co-ordinated by a qualified social worker. They should be holistic, involving other professionals, parents/carers and the children themselves as far as practicable. Assessments should be contextual, show analysis, be focused on outcomes and usually take no longer than 45 working days from the point of referral. School staff have a responsibility to contribute fully to the assessment.

S47 Enquiries (regarding significant harm)

The process of the investigation is determined by the needs of the case, but the child/young person will always be seen as part of that process and sometimes without parents' knowledge or permission. On occasion, this will mean the child/young person is jointly interviewed by the Police and social workers, sometimes at a special suite where a video-recording of the interview is made.

The Child Protection Conference

If, following the s47 enquiries, the concerns are substantiated and the child is judged to be at risk of significant harm, a Child Protection Conference (CPC) will normally be convened. The CPC must be held within 15 days of the first strategy discussion and school staff will be invited to attend - normally the DSL or Headteacher. This person will produce a written report in the correct format (a pro forma is available on the Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership website [Pan-Dorset Multi Agency Safeguarding](#)). This will be shared with the child/young person and his/her family before the conference is held. A copy will also be sent to the person chairing the initial CPC at least 24 hours in advance.

More information is in the inter-agency safeguarding procedures ('Child Protection Conferences') on the Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership website [Pan-Dorset Multi Agency Safeguarding](#).

If the DSL disagrees with the decisions made by social workers regarding the outcome of the referral, the conclusions of the assessment or any actions taken, the matter should be discussed and if necessary escalated to more senior managers (under the escalation policy available at [Pan-Dorset Escalation Policy](#)), *particularly* if the child's situation does not appear to be improving.

ix) Notifying parents and carers

Where appropriate, we will discuss any concerns about a child with the child's parents. The DSL will normally do this in the event of a suspicion or disclosure. Other staff will only talk to parents about any such concerns following consultation with the DSL.

If we believe that notifying the parents would increase the risk to the child, we will discuss this with the local authority children's social care team before doing so.

In the case of allegations of abuse made against other children, we will normally notify the parents of all the children involved.

If you have any questions about this please speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead: Sue Gilani.

x) Confidentiality

Timely information sharing is essential to effective safeguarding

Information must be shared on a 'need-to-know' basis, but you do not need consent to share information if a child is suffering, or at risk of, serious harm.

Staff should never promise a child that they will not tell anyone about an allegation, as this may not be in the child's best interests

The Forum Centre has a Confidentiality Policy and confidentiality is also addressed in this policy with respect to record-keeping in Appendix 6.

xi) Mobile phones and cameras

Staff are allowed to bring their personal phones to school for their own use, but will limit such use to non-contact time when pupils are not present. Staff members' personal phones will remain in their bags or cupboards during contact time with pupils. Staff must adhere to The Forum Centre Social Networking Policy.

Staff will not take pictures or recordings of pupils on their personal phones or cameras.

We will follow the General Data Protection Regulation when taking and storing photos and recordings for use in the school.

APPENDIX 1 – DEFINITIONS OF ABUSE

What is child abuse?

It is generally accepted that there are four main forms of abuse. The following definitions are from [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023](#)

Physical abuse

A form of abuse which 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.

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 the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or 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

Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. 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 (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. 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 as a result of maternal substance use. 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 care-givers); or
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

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

It is accepted that in all forms of abuse there are elements of emotional abuse, and that some children are subjected to more than one form of abuse at any one time. In most cases multiple issues will overlap with one another.

APPENDIX 2 – POSSIBLE INDICATORS OF ABUSE

The following information is not designed to turn school staff into experts but it will help them to be more alert to the signs of possible abuse. The examples below are not meant to form an exhaustive list; Designated Safeguarding Leads and other staff will find it helpful to refer to Government advice '[what to do if you're worried a child is being abused \(2015\)](#)' and the inter-agency safeguarding procedures on the Pan Dorset Safeguarding Children site [Pan-Dorset procedures report a concern](#) .

Physical Abuse

Most children will collect cuts and bruises in their daily lives. These are likely to be in places where there are bony parts of the body, like elbows, knees and shins. Some children, however, will have bruising which is less likely to have been caused accidentally. An important indicator of physical abuse is where bruises or injuries are unexplained or the explanation does not fit the injury or there are differing explanations. A delay in seeking medical treatment for a child when it is obviously necessary is also a cause for concern. Bruising may be more or less noticeable on children with different skin tones or from different ethnic groups and specialist advice may need to be taken.

Patterns of bruising that are suggestive of physical child abuse can include:

- bruising in children who are not independently mobile;
- bruises that are seen away from bony prominences;
- bruises to the face, back, stomach, arms, buttocks, ears and hands;
- multiple bruises in clusters;
- multiple bruises of uniform shape;
- bruises that carry the imprint of an implement used, hand marks, fingertips or a belt buckle.

Although bruising is the commonest injury in physical abuse, fatal non-accidental head injury and non-accidental fractures can occur without bruising. Any child who has unexplained signs of pain or illness must be seen promptly by a doctor.

Other physical signs of abuse can include:

- cigarette burns;
- adult bite marks;
- broken bones;
- scalds.

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate physical abuse:

- fear of parents being approached for an explanation;
- aggressive behaviour or severe temper outbursts;
- flinching when approached or touched;
- reluctance to get changed, for example wearing long sleeves in hot weather;

- missing school;
- running away from home.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse can be difficult to measure, and often children who appear otherwise well cared for may be emotionally abused by being taunted, put down or belittled. They may receive little or no love, affection or attention from their parents or carers. Children who live in households where there is domestic violence often suffer emotional abuse. In this respect they are victims: they may hear, see or experience the effects of domestic abuse at home or in their own relationships. Emotional abuse can also take the form of children not being allowed to mix/play with other children.

The physical signs of emotional abuse can include:

- a failure to thrive or grow, particularly if the child puts on weight in other circumstances, e.g. in hospital or away from parents' care;
- sudden speech disorders;
- developmental delay, either in terms of physical or emotional progress.

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate emotional abuse include:

- neurotic behaviour, e.g. sulking, hair twisting, rocking;
- being unable to play;
- fear of making mistakes;
- self harm;
- fear of parents being approached.

Sexual Abuse

Adults who use children to meet their own sexual needs abuse both girls and boys of all ages, including infants and toddlers. It is important to remember that children can also be sexually abused by other children (i.e. those under 18).

Usually, in cases of sexual abuse it is the child's behaviour which may cause concern, although physical signs can also be present. In all cases, children who talk about sexual abuse do so because they want it to stop. It is important, therefore, that they are listened to, taken seriously and appropriate action taken promptly.

The physical signs of sexual abuse can include:

- pain or itching in the genital/anal areas;
- bruising or bleeding near genital/anal areas;
- sexually transmitted disease;
- vaginal discharge or infection;
- stomach pains;
- discomfort when walking or sitting down;

- pregnancy.

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate sexual abuse can include:

- sudden or unexplained changes in behaviour, e.g. becoming aggressive or withdrawn;
- fear of being left with a specific person or group of people;
- having nightmares;
- missing school;
- running away from home;
- sexual knowledge which is beyond their age or developmental level;
- sexual drawings or language;
- bedwetting;
- eating problems such as overeating or anorexia;
- self harm or mutilation, sometimes leading to suicide attempts;
- saying they have secrets they cannot tell anyone about;
- alcohol / substance / drug use;
- suddenly having unexplained sources of money;
- not being allowed to have friends (particularly in adolescence);
- acting in a sexually explicit way towards adults or other children.

Neglect

Neglect can be a difficult form of abuse to recognise, yet have some of the most lasting and damaging effects on children and young people.

The physical signs of neglect can include:

- constant hunger, sometimes stealing food from other children;
- being constantly dirty or smelly;
- loss of weight, or being constantly underweight;
- inappropriate dress for the conditions.

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate neglect can include:

- complaining of being tired all the time;
- not requesting medical assistance and/or failing to attend appointments;
- having few friends;
- mentioning being left alone or unsupervised.

It is important that adults in school recognise that providing compensatory care might address the immediate and presenting issue but could cover up or inhibit the recognition of neglect in all aspects of a child's life. Compensatory care is defined as 'providing a child or young person, on a regular basis, help or assistance with basic needs with the aim of redressing deficits in parental care'. This might involve, for example, providing each day a substitute set of clothing because those from home are dirty, or showering a child whose personal hygiene or presentation is such that it is affecting his/her interaction with peers. It does not include isolated or irregular

support such as giving lunch money or washing a child who has had an 'accident'. If any adult in school finds s/he is regularly attending to one or more aspects of a child's basic needs then this will prompt a discussion with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

The general rule is: the younger the child, the higher the risk in terms of their immediate health. However, serious neglect of older children and adolescents is often overlooked, on the assumption that they have the ability to care for themselves and have made a 'choice' to neglect themselves. Lack of engagement with services should be seen as a potential indicator of neglect.

School staff should be mindful of the above and discuss any concerns with the DSL who will take the appropriate action in accordance with the inter-agency neglect guidance on the Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership website.

APPENDIX 3 – FORMS OF ABUSE

Allegations made by children about other children, including child on child abuse, sexual violence and sexual harassment

Full guidance is given in [Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023](#). The Government has also published training for teachers on delivering relationships and sex education - [intimate and sexual relationships](#).

Child on child abuse

All staff should be aware that children can abuse other children (often referred to as child on child abuse). This is most likely to include, but may not be limited to:

- bullying (including cyberbullying);
- physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm;
- sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault;
- sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be stand-alone or part of a broader pattern of abuse;
- upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm;
- sexting, sharing nudes or semi-nudes (also known as youth produced sexual imagery); and
- initiation/hazing type violence and rituals.

The school's initial response to a report from a child is important. It is essential that all victims are reassured that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. A victim should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting an incident, nor should they be made to feel ashamed. Effective safeguarding practices should be implemented, as with any form of child protection disclosure. (See iv) If a child makes a disclosure to you).

The nature and severity of the allegation or concern will determine whether staff will implement the school's anti-bullying or other school procedures or whether a referral needs to be made to social workers or the Police. The Designated Safeguarding Lead should be consulted if there is any doubt about the right course of action.

A referral to Children's Social Care will be made in all cases of domestic abuse relating to young people aged 16 and 17 who experience physical, emotional, sexual and/or financial abuse, or coercive control, in their intimate relationships.

A referral to Children's Social Care will be made if a child or young person displays sexually harmful behaviour. This involves one or more children engaging in sexual discussions or acts that are inappropriate for their age or stage of development. It is also considered harmful if it involves coercion or threats of violence or if one of the children is much older than the other.

The process for managing sexually harmful behaviour can be found in the inter-agency safeguarding procedures on the Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership website. In brief, a multi-agency meeting should be convened by Children's Social Care following a referral and an action plan agreed. There is also Government guidance in Part 5 of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 - [Child on child sexual violence and sexual harassment](#)

When there has been a report of sexual violence, the DSL or Deputy carries out an immediate risk and needs assessment. Where there has been a report of sexual harassment, the need for a risk assessment should be considered on a case-by-case basis. The risk and needs assessment should consider:

- the victim, especially their protection and support;
- the alleged perpetrator; and
- all the other children (and, if necessary, staff) at the school, especially any actions that are appropriate to protect them.

The DSL or Deputy will advise on the school's response, and will take into consideration:

- the wishes of the victim in terms of how they want to proceed. Victims should be given as much control as is reasonably possible over decisions regarding how any investigation will be progressed and any support that they will be offered in or out of school.
- the nature of the alleged incident(s), including whether a crime may have been committed and consideration of harmful sexual behaviour;
- the ages and/or developmental stages of the children involved;
- any power imbalance between children, e.g. age, maturity, confidence, disability or learning difficulty;
- if this incident is a sustained pattern of abuse or a one-off event;
- are there ongoing risks to the victims, students or staff;
- contextual safeguarding issues.

Staff should not dismiss abusive behaviour as 'normal' between young people and should not develop high thresholds before taking action.

Staff should be aware of the potential uses of information technology for bullying and abusive behaviour between young people. 'Upskirting' is now a criminal offence.

Sharing nudes and semi-nudes

This involves images or videos which are indecent or of a sexual nature, generated by children under the age of 18 or of children under the age of 18, shared via a mobile phone, handheld device or website. Each individual incident will be investigated in accordance with the Government guidance [Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people](#). Appropriate and safe relationships are investigated through the curriculum in PSHE lessons. Risk assessments are carried out for students for whom this has been identified as a

need. 1:1 ELSA and keyworker sessions are available for students. The Safer Schools and Communities Team provide training for students and staff and internet safety awareness training is delivered to students by staff.

Pupils engaging in under-age sexual activity

Sexual activity where one of the partners is under the age of 16 is illegal, although prosecution of young people who are consenting partners of a similar age is not usual. Designated Safeguarding Leads will exercise professional judgement when deciding whether to refer or take advice from social workers, taking into account such things as any imbalance of power, wide difference in ages or developmental stages etc.

Where a child is under the age of 13 penetrative sex is classified as rape under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 so must be reported to social workers in every case.

The inter-agency safeguarding procedures, on the Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership website, have more information about under-age sexual activity, [Pan-Dorset Multi Agency Safeguarding](http://www.dorsetlscb.co.uk/)<http://www.dorsetlscb.co.uk/>.

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) and child criminal exploitation (CCE)

Both CSE and CCE are forms of abuse and both occur where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance in power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into sexual or criminal activity. Whilst age may be the most obvious, this power imbalance can also be due to a range of other factors including gender, sexual identity, cognitive ability, physical strength, status, and access to economic or other resources. In some cases, the abuse will be in exchange for something the victim needs or wants and/or will be to the financial benefit or other advantage (such as increased status) of the perpetrator or facilitator. The abuse can be perpetrated by individuals or groups, males or females, and children or adults. The abuse can be a one-off occurrence or a series of incidents over time, and range from opportunistic to complex organised abuse. It can involve force and/or enticement-based methods of compliance and may, or may not, be accompanied by violence or threats of violence. Victims can be exploited even when activity appears consensual and it should be noted exploitation as well as being physical can be facilitated and/or take place online.

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. This form of abuse may involve, for example, exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people receive something (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money, mobile phones) as a result of their performing, and/or another/others performing on them, sexual acts. It can occur through the use of technology without the child's immediate recognition; e.g. being persuaded to post sexual images on the Internet/mobile phones without immediate payment or gain.

Recognition of child sexual exploitation is part of staff training. We note that any child or young person may be at risk of this form of abuse, regardless of family

background or other circumstances, and can experience significant harm to physical and mental health. The DSL has had specific Level 3 CSE training and is available to other staff for consultation.

Due to the grooming methods used by abusers, it is common for young people not to recognise they are being abused and may feel they are 'in a relationship' and acting voluntarily. Sex and relationships issues are discussed in PSHE lessons.

Any concerns about child sexual exploitation will be discussed with the Designated Safeguarding Lead who will take appropriate action which might include completing a risk assessment form. The form and more detailed local procedures are in the inter-agency safeguarding procedures on the Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership website, [Pan-Dorset Multi Agency Safeguarding](#).

Child criminal exploitation; county lines. Criminal exploitation of children is a geographically widespread form of harm that is a typical feature of county lines criminal activity: drug networks or gangs groom and exploit children and young people to carry drugs and money from urban areas to suburban and rural areas, market and seaside towns. Key to identifying potential involvement in county lines are missing episodes, when the victim may have been trafficked for the purpose of transporting drugs, a change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups, a significant decline in performance, signs of self-harm or a significant change in wellbeing, or signs of assault or unexplained injuries. Unexplained gifts or new possessions could also indicate that children have been approached by, or are involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs.

Advice for schools is provided in the Home Office's [Preventing youth violence and gang involvement](#) and [Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: county lines](#) guidance.

Forms of abuse linked to culture, faith or belief

All staff in this school will promote mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. Some forms of abuse are linked to these and staff should strive to suspend professional disbelief (i.e. that they 'could not happen here') and to report promptly any concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead who will seek further advice from statutory agencies, prior to contacting parents/carers.

Female Genital Mutilation is illegal and involves intentionally altering or injuring female genital organs for non-medical reasons. It can have serious and long lasting implications for physical health and emotional well-being. Possible indicators include taking a girl out of school / country for a prolonged period or talk of a 'special procedure' or celebration. In addition to reporting any concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, teachers (along with regulated health and social care professionals) have a statutory duty to report personally to the Police if they discover that female genital mutilation has or appears to have been carried out on a girl under 18. Those failing to report such cases will face disciplinary sanctions.

Forced Marriage is also illegal and occurs where one or both people do not or, in cases of people with learning disabilities, cannot consent to the marriage and pressure or abuse is used. It is not the same as arranged marriage. Young people at risk of forced marriage might have their freedom unreasonably restricted or being 'monitored' by siblings. There might be a request for extended absence from school or might not return from a holiday abroad. We recognise that school staff can play an important role in safeguarding children from forced marriage.

So called 'honour-based' violence is a crime or incident which has or may have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or community. It can exist in all communities and cultures and occurs when perpetrators perceive that a relative has shamed the family and/or community by breaking their honour code. Females are predominantly, but not exclusively, the victims and the violence is often committed with some degree of approval and/or collusion from family or community members. All forms of so called honour- based violence are abuse, regardless of the motivation, and should be referred accordingly.

Radicalisation and extremism

Radicalisation refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and extremist ideologies associated with terrorist groups.

Extremism is defined by HM Government as 'Vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs; and/or calls for the death of members of our armed forces, whether in this country or overseas'.

In this school we recognise that safeguarding against radicalisation and extremism is no different from safeguarding against any other vulnerability.

Our curriculum promotes respect, tolerance and diversity. Children are encouraged to share their views and to understand that they are entitled to have their own different beliefs which should not be used to influence others.

We recognise that children with low aspirations are more vulnerable to radicalisation and therefore we strive to equip our pupils with confidence, self-belief, respect and tolerance as well as setting high standards and expectations for themselves.

Children are taught about how to stay safe when using the Internet and are encouraged to recognise that people are not always who they say they are online. They are taught to seek adult help if they are upset or concerned about anything they read or see on the Internet.

Any concerns about pupils becoming radicalised or being drawn into extremism will be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead who will *not* speak to parents/carers or other family members at this stage but will take prompt advice from the Police by e-mailing the Safeguarding Referral Unit: sru@dorset.pnn.police.uk.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is also the Prevent Lead.

Dorset has a Channel Panel in place, in accordance with its duties under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015. This is a multi-agency meeting which discusses individuals who have been referred by the Police as being vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. Where pupils at this school are being discussed, the DSL or Headteacher will attend the Panel meetings.

Staff and governors in this school have either attended a WRAP (Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent) session or have completed on-line Prevent training.

Mental Health

All staff should be aware that mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation.

Only appropriately trained professionals should attempt to make a diagnosis of a mental health problem. Staff however, are well placed to observe children day-to-day and identify those whose behaviour suggests that they may be experiencing a mental health problem or be at risk of developing one.

Where children have suffered abuse and neglect, or other potentially traumatic adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), this can have a lasting impact throughout childhood, adolescence and into adulthood. It is key that staff are aware of how these children's experiences, can impact on their mental health, behaviour and education.

If staff have a mental health concern about a child that is also a safeguarding concern, immediate action should be taken, following their child protection policy and speaking to the DSL or a deputy.

Children missing education or absent from education

We recognise that a child going missing from education, or not attending education is a potential indicator of abuse and neglect, including the specific types of abuse detailed above and/or travelling to conflict zones.

A child missing education is one who is not on any school roll. If a pupil is removed from school roll and their whereabouts is unknown the Local Authority will be advised. If a child is absent from education, they are on the school roll but not attending and the school's procedures for liaising with the locality attendance officer are implemented.

Therefore, it is important that all staff follow the school's procedure for recording absence, especially unauthorised and particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify vulnerable pupils and to help prevent the risks of their going missing in future.

There is more information about specific safeguarding issues including links to websites in Part one and Annex A of [Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023](#).

APPENDIX 4 – SAFER RECRUITMENT AND DBS CHECKS – POLICY AND PROCEDURES

We will record all information on the checks carried out in the school's single central record (SCR). Copies of these checks, where appropriate, will be held in individuals' personnel files. We follow requirements and best practice in retaining copies of these checks, as set out below.

Appointing new staff

When appointing new staff, we will:

- Verify their identity

- Obtain (via the applicant) an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate, including barred list information for those who will be engaging in regulated activity (see definition below). We will not keep a copy of this for longer than 6 months

- Obtain a separate barred list check if they will start work in regulated activity before the DBS certificate is available

- Verify their mental and physical fitness to carry out their work responsibilities

- Verify their right to work in the UK. We will keep a copy of this verification for the duration of the member of staff's employment and for 2 years afterwards

- Verify their professional qualifications, as appropriate

- Ensure they are not subject to a prohibition order if they are employed to be a teacher

- Carry out online checks, including social media profiles, relevant to their working with vulnerable children.

- Carry out further additional checks, as appropriate, on candidates who have lived or worked outside of the UK, including (where relevant) any teacher sanctions or restrictions imposed by a European Economic Area professional regulating authority, and criminal records checks or their equivalent

We will ensure that appropriate checks are carried out to ensure that individuals are not disqualified under the Childcare Disqualification (Regulations) 2009 and Childcare Act 2006. Where we take a decision that an individual falls outside of the scope of these regulations and we do not carry out such checks, we will retain a record of our assessment on the individual's personnel file. This will include our evaluation of any risks and control measures put in place, and any advice sought.

Regulated activity means a person who will be:

- Responsible, on a regular basis in a school or college, for teaching, training, instructing, caring for or supervising children

- Carrying out paid, or unsupervised unpaid, work regularly in a school or college where that work provides an opportunity for contact with children

- Engaging in intimate or personal care or overnight activity, even if this happens only once and regardless of whether they are supervised or not

Existing staff

If we have concerns about an existing member of staff's suitability to work with children, we will carry out all the relevant checks as if the individual were a new member of staff. We will also do this if an individual moves from a post that is not a regulated activity to one that is.

We will refer to the DBS anyone who has harmed, or poses a risk of harm, to a child or vulnerable adult:

Where the 'harm test' is satisfied in respect of the individual (i.e. that no action or inaction occurred but the present risk that it could was significant)

Where the individual has received a caution or conviction for a relevant offence

If there is reason to believe that the individual has committed a listed relevant offence, under the [Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 \(Prescribed Criteria and Miscellaneous Provisions\) Regulations 2009](#)

If the individual has been removed from working in regulated activity (paid or unpaid) or would have been removed if they had not left

Agency and third-party staff

We will obtain written notification from any agency or third-party organisation that it has carried out the necessary safer recruitment checks that we would otherwise perform. We will also check that the person presenting themselves for work is the same person on whom the checks have been made.

Contractors

We will ensure that any contractor, or any employee of the contractor, who is to work at the school has had the appropriate level of DBS check. This will be:

An enhanced DBS check with barred list information for contractors engaging in regulated activity

An enhanced DBS check, not including barred list information, for all other contractors who are not in regulated activity but whose work provides them with an opportunity for regular contact with children

We will obtain the DBS check for self-employed contractors. We will not keep copies of such checks for longer than 6 months. Contractors who have not had any checks will not be allowed to work unsupervised or engage in regulated activity under any circumstances. We will check the identity of all contractors and their staff on arrival at the school.

Trainee/student teachers

Where applicants for initial teacher training are salaried by us, we will ensure that all necessary checks are carried out.

Where trainee teachers are fee-funded, we will obtain written confirmation from the training provider that necessary checks have been carried out and that the trainee has been judged by the provider to be suitable to work with children. In both cases, this includes checks to ensure that individuals are not disqualified under the Childcare Disqualification (Regulations) 2009 and Childcare Act 2006.

Volunteers

We will:

Never leave an unchecked volunteer unsupervised or allow them to work in regulated activity

Obtain an enhanced DBS check with barred list information for all volunteers who are new to working in regulated activity

Obtain an enhanced DBS check without barred list information for all volunteers who are not in regulated activity, but who have an opportunity to come into contact with children on a regular basis, for example, supervised volunteers

Carry out a risk assessment when deciding whether to seek an enhanced DBS check for any volunteers not engaging in regulated activity

Ensure that appropriate checks are carried out to ensure that individuals are not disqualified under the Childcare Disqualification (Regulations) 2009 and Childcare Act 2006. Where we decide that an individual falls outside of the scope of these regulations and we do not carry out such checks, we will retain a record of our assessment. This will include our evaluation of any risks and control measures put in place, and any advice sought

Governors

All governors will have an enhanced DBS check without barred list information. They will have an enhanced DBS check with barred list information if working in regulated activity.

Adults who supervise pupils on work experience

When organising work experience, we will ensure that policies and procedures are in place to protect children from harm. We will also consider whether it is necessary for barred list checks to be carried out on the individuals who supervise a pupil under 16 on work experience. This will depend on the specific circumstances of the work experience, including the nature of the supervision, the frequency of the activity being supervised, and whether the work is regulated activity.

APPENDIX 5 – USEFUL CONTACTS

1) For NEW referrals (concerns about children),

Children’s Advice and Duty Service (for professionals) 01305 228558

(members of the public) 01202 228866

2) To contact children’s allocated social workers through the locality hubs:

West Area 01308 425241

East Area 01202 868224

Purbeck Area 01929 557000

North Dorset 01258 474036

Dorchester 01305 224220

Chesil 01305 762400

3) Out of Hours Service 0300 123 9895

4) Dorset Safeguarding and Standards Team 01305 221122

The team comprises Children’s Services managers and advisors including:

- The Education Safeguarding Standards Advisor who offers advice and support to Headteachers and Designated Safeguarding Leads in relation to safeguarding and child protection issues
- The Local Authority Designated Officer (the LADO) to whom allegations against adults who work with children in education establishments must be reported
- The Children’s Services ‘Prevent’ Lead

5) Dorset Virtual School for Children who are in Care/ Looked After

01305 228307

6) Dorset Governor Services (for governor safeguarding training)

01305 224382

APPENDIX 6 – RECORD KEEPING - BEST PRACTICE: TO BE READ AND FOLLOWED BY ALL DSLs AND DEPUTIES

Introduction

The importance of good, clear child welfare and child protection record keeping has been highlighted repeatedly in national and local Serious Case Reviews. It is the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)'s responsibility to ensure that child protection files, access, storage and transfer meet the required professional standards as detailed in this document.

The common law of confidentiality, Data Protection and Human Rights principles must be adhered to when obtaining, processing or sharing personal or sensitive information or records. In summary, the General Data Protection Regulation requires that records should be securely kept, accurate, relevant, up-to-date and be kept for no longer than is necessary for the purpose for which they were made.

Any electronic record keeping system should comply with the general standards set out below. (The 'MyConcern' system in use in many local schools, including The Forum Centre, has been checked for compliance.)

Pupil Information

The school's record-keeping policy for child welfare and child protection is consistent with the Pan Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership.

In order to keep children safe and provide appropriate care for them, our school requires accurate and up to date information regarding:

- Names and contact details of persons with whom the child normally lives;
- Names and contact details of all persons with parental responsibility (if different from above);
- Emergency contact details (if different from above);
- Details of any persons authorised to collect the child from school (if different from above);
- Any relevant court orders in place including those, which affect any person's access to the child (e.g. Residence Order, Contact Order, Care Order, Injunctions etc.);
- If the child is or has been subject to a child in need, child protection or care plan;
- Name and contact detail of GP;

Any other factors which may impact on the safety and welfare of the child.

Record to be made by an adult receiving a disclosure of abuse (when a child talks about abuse)

This record should be made as soon as possible **after** the individual hearing the disclosure has reported it verbally to the DSL. The facts, not opinions (unless of

particular relevance), should be accurately recorded in a non judgemental way. It is important to remember that expressing an opinion as to whether the child is telling the truth is not helpful and can prejudice how a case proceeds.

The record should ideally be made on electronic 'MyConcern' or alternatively in writing to DSL, and should include:

- The child's name, gender and date of birth
- Date and time of the conversation
- What was the context and who was present during the disclosure?
- What did the child say? – verbatim if possible
- What questions were asked? – verbatim
- Responses to questions –verbatim
- Any observations concerning child's demeanour and any injuries
- The name of the person to whom the disclosure was reported
- Printed name and job title of the author, followed by signature and date.

The record about a disclosure of abuse will be passed electronically to DSLs and Deputy DSLs if using MyConcern but if made in paper form should be passed to the DSL and retained in the pupil's child protection file in its original and contemporaneous form (as it could be used as evidence in court proceedings), even if later typed or if the information is incorporated into a report.

Schools should never ask pupils, regardless of their involvement in a child protection matter (i.e. the subject of an allegation, a witness or the alleged 'perpetrator'), to write out their 'statements' of what has happened. In some cases this could have the unintended consequence of jeopardising a child protection investigation. This applies regardless of whether the incident(s) took place within or outside school.

Records kept by the Designated Safeguarding Lead

The Forum Centre uses MyConcern for recording child protection concerns and Behaviourwatch for pastoral incidences, which will be read by the DSL. Alternatively, if recording in written form, it should be passed to the DSL who will make a judgement about what action needs to be taken, in accordance with local inter-agency safeguarding procedures, using the Threshold Tool, if necessary. The decision about any action, whether or not a referral is made to Social Care, will be recorded clearly by the DSL.

Concerns which initially seem trivial may turn out to be vital pieces of information later, so it is important to give as much detail as possible. A concern raised may not progress further than a conversation by the DSL with the parent, or, at the other end of the scale, could lead to matters being heard in a court.

All 'lower level' / pastoral concerns about a child's welfare, which will generally have been discussed with parents/carers, are kept in the child's main file, or recorded on the electronic reporting system BehaviourWatch. These records should not be labelled 'child protection'.

It is never good practice to keep pupil welfare records in a diary or day-book system. Often it is only when a number of seemingly minor issues relating to an individual pupil over a period of time are seen as a whole that a pattern can be identified indicating a child protection concern.

Starting a school child protection file

A school child protection file does not necessarily mean that the pupil is or has been the subject of a child protection conference or plan. 'Child protection file' denotes a high level of school concern which has warranted referral to/ involvement of, and in most cases assessment by, child care social workers.

It is the responsibility of the DSL to start a school child protection file when a social worker is or was involved, e.g.:-

- a) A formal referral is made by the school to Children's Social Care using the ChADS phone line
- b) Social Care inform the school they have commenced an assessment in relation to a pupil resulting from information from another source or
- c) A child protection file is forwarded to the school by a previous school or pre-school attended by the pupil or
- d) A child who is in care/looked after transfers into the school or
- e) A pupil is privately fostered

It is not good practice to make 'family files'; each child should have his/her own record which includes information specific to him/her and which will be sent to the next school at the time of transfer. The names of siblings and/or other children who live in the household who also attend the school should be clearly noted on individual files.

If two (or more) pupils at the school are referred to Social Care for the same concern (for example, an allegation of sexually harmful behaviour), then child protection files will be started on both/all pupils.

'Document wallet' - type files are not ideal as the papers therein can easily fall out or get 'out of order'.

School child protection files are never 'closed' or de-categorised. Once a school has started a child protection file, the chronology is maintained so that any future concerns can be considered in the context of past events, even if Social Care ceases involvement.

Note - If there is an allocated social worker because a child is disabled or a young carer and there are no child protection concerns then a child protection file should not be started.

Adopted children

When a pupil is admitted to a school in Reception class and parents provide the information that s/he was adopted prior to commencing education, this should be recorded with their permission on the main school file in order that appropriate support can be provided in future if necessary. In these situations it is not necessary to start a child protection file unless the criteria described above also apply.

Some older adopted children will have school child protection files because they were initially in care/looked after and were subsequently adopted. During the period when the child is 'placed for adoption' (prior to an adoption order being made) any file that contains information that identifies both the birth family and the adoptive family must be classed as highly sensitive and this information should only be shared on a strictly 'need to know' basis.

Once the adoption order has been made the DSL in the school that holds the child protection file must overhaul the file. The principle is that there must be nothing that identifies the child's birth name or the birth family. In sifting the file it is acceptable to destroy documents that will continue to be held by other agencies: for example, child protection conference minutes and LAC review minutes which will be in Social Care records.

A chronology should be prepared that gives an overview of the information previously held in the file but without giving the child's birth name or any details which would identify the birth family.

The overhauled file should only contain the new chronology and any information that has originated from within school (for example concern forms). This file should now be in the child's new name, contain no information which identifies the birth name or birth family, will be held in the school as long as the child remains or sent onto a new school.

Please note that once a child is adopted, all school records, not just child protection files, must be amended so that there is nothing which gives the birth name or identifies the birth family.

The format of child protection files

It is helpful if individual files have a front sheet with key information about the pupil and contact details of parents/carers, social worker and any other relevant professionals.

If the child is Looked-After the front sheet should include important information about legal status, parental responsibility, arrangements for contact with birth

parents and extended family, levels of authority delegated to carers and the name of the virtual school head in the authority that looks after the child.

If a pupil is or was subject of a child protection plan or in care/looked after, this should be highlighted in some way to make it immediately obvious to anyone accessing the record.

It is a multi-agency standard that children's child protection files must have at the front an up to date chronology of *significant* incidents or events *and* subsequent actions/outcomes. Maintaining the chronology is an important part of the DSL role; it aids the DSL, Deputy and others to see the central issues 'at a glance' and helps to identify patterns of events and behaviours.

It should make sense as a 'stand alone' document: anyone else reading the chronology should be able to follow easily what the concerns are/have been, whether the concerns have escalated and why plus the actions taken by the school to support and protect the child. This will be particularly useful for DSLs in receiving schools when pupils transfer, for professionals involved in collating information for Serious Case Reviews and for parents/pupils/ex-pupils if they view the record.

Once a chronology is started it should be updated as appropriate even if Social Care later ceases involvement.

The file should be well organised and include, as appropriate, school 'concern forms', copies of correspondence, school reports to and minutes of child protection conferences, documents relating to children in care/'looked after' etc. The DSL will decide which relevant information which pre-dates the starting of the child protection file, such as CAF or other pastoral care documentation, will also be included.

Storage

All records relating to child protection concerns are sensitive and confidential so will be kept in a secure (i.e. locked at all times) filing cabinet, separate from other school files, and accessible through the DSL, the Deputy(ies) and other senior staff in larger schools.

The pupil's general school file should be marked in some way (e.g. a yellow star) to indicate that a child protection file exists. All staff who may need to consult a child's school file should be made aware of what the symbol means and to speak to the DSL if necessary if they see this symbol and have concerns. For example, a member of the office staff who is looking in the main file for a parent's contact details because of unexplained absence might decide to report this to the DSL if they see the indicator, in case the absence is significant.

Sharing of and access to child protection records

It is highly unlikely that all members of staff need to know the details of a child's situation, or that there should be widespread access to the records. Access to, and

sharing of, information should be on a need-to-know basis, decided case by case. The DSL is the best person to decide this. Consideration must also be given to *what* needs to be shared. Generally speaking, the closer the day-to-day contact with the child, the more likely the need to have some information.

The child who is the subject of a child protection record has the right to access the file, *unless* to do so would affect his/her health or well-being or that of another person, or would be likely to prejudice a criminal investigation or a Section 47 assessment (which relates to significant harm) under the Children Act 1989.

Parents (i.e. those with parental responsibility in law) are entitled to see their child's child protection file, with the same exemptions as apply to the child's right to access the record. Note that an older pupil may be entitled to refuse access to the record by his/her parents. As a guide, this applies to pupils who are 12 years of age or above, if they are of normal development or maturity.

References by name to children other than the pupil who is the subject of the file should be removed when disclosing records, unless consent is obtained from the individual/s concerned (or their parents/carer on their behalf). Care must be taken to ensure all identifying information is removed from the copy of the record to be shared.

Always seek advice from your legal advisor or Dorset Data Protection Officer (01305 225175) if there are any concerns or doubt about a child or parents reading records. However, it is generally good practice to share all information held unless there is a valid reason to withhold it, e.g. to do so would place the child or any other person at risk of harm. Any requests to see the child's record should be made in writing to give time for confidential information, such as any details of other pupils, to be removed.

In respect of requests from pupils or parents for information which wholly or partly consists of an educational record, access should be granted within 15 school days. This might be relevant to 'welfare' concerns in a main school file, for example. Viewing-only access to these records is free but it is reasonable to charge for copies on a sliding scale from £1 - £50 (maximum) depending on the number of pages.

However, should the request only seek access to a child protection file (which is not classed as an educational record), access should be granted within 40 calendar days. A discretionary maximum fee of £10 can be charged for viewing access to or a copy of a child protection record.

If the record to be disclosed contains information about an adult professional, that information can be disclosed if it relates to the performance by that person of their job or other official duties e.g. a reference to a teacher in their teaching role or a school nurse in their nursing role. However, if the reference refers to that individual's private life, it should be removed (unless this relates to a child protection matter which is relevant to the record to be disclosed).

Child protection information should not normally be shared with professionals other than those from Social Care, the Police, Health or the Local Authority. Ofsted and

other school inspectors can view individual child protection files. Information should not be released to parents' solicitors on request; advice should be sought from the school's legal advisor in such cases.

Governors, including the Nominated Governor, should not access the records.

Transfer of child protection records

When a pupil transfers to another school (including to a Learning Centre because of permanent exclusion) the DSL should inform the receiving school as soon as possible in person or by telephone that child protection records exist. The original records must be passed on either by hand or sent by recorded delivery, separate from the child's main school file. Care must be taken to ensure confidentiality is maintained and the transfer process is as safe as possible.

If the records are to be posted, they should be copied and these copies retained until there has been confirmation in writing that the originals have arrived at the new school. They can then be shredded.

Whether child protection files are passed on by hand or posted, there should be written evidence of the transfer (such as a form or slip of paper signed and dated by a member of staff at the receiving school.) This receipt should be retained by the originating school for 6 years (in line with guidance from the Records Management Society).

If the pupil is removed from the roll to be home educated, the school should pass the child protection file to the LA EHE Administrator and a receipt obtained as described above.

If a pupil with a child protection record leaves the school without a forwarding address and no contact is received from a new school the DSL should follow the school's Child Missing Education (CME) procedures. If there is reason to suspect the pupil is suffering harm then the DSL will refer to Social Care in the usual way.

If a child arrives in the school in an unplanned way and / or there are concerns about them from the outset, it is worth contacting the previous school for a discussion with the DSL. There might be a child protection file which has not been passed on.

School 'welfare' or pastoral records (i.e. where concerns or issues have been raised but there has been **no** referral to or involvement by a social worker) should also be passed on to the next school for their information and can be included in the main school file, for example. In respect of data protection, parents/carers should be made aware (either individually or through newsletters, for example) that information is transferred in this way to enable the next school to properly support their child. Most parents will understand the reason for this but if for whatever reason a parent disagrees with you passing on non child protection documents, you should not do so.

'Dual registered' pupils

Where a pupil is on roll at the school and starts to attend a Learning Centre (LC), the chronology and other relevant information in the child protection file should be copied and passed to the DSL at the LC at the earliest opportunity. Because of the nature of such 'bespoke' arrangements for individual pupils, the two DSLs should agree on which one of them will keep the chronology updated and how best to communicate to each other significant events and issues in relation to that pupil.

Retention of records

The school should retain the record for as long as the pupil remains in school and then transferred as described above.

Guidance from the Records Management Society is that when a pupil with a child protection record reaches statutory school leaving age (or where the pupil completed 6th form studies), the last school attended should keep the child protection file until the pupil's 25th birthday. It should then be shredded (and a record kept of this having been done, date, and why).

The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse has instructed relevant organisations, including schools and colleges, that they should NOT destroy, for the foreseeable future, any of their records that could potentially come within the scope of the inquiry (i.e. any records relating to sexual abuse).

Electronic child protection records

Electronic records must be password protected with access strictly controlled in the same way as paper records.

They should be in the same format as paper records (i.e. with well maintained chronologies etc) so that they are up to date if/when printed, if necessary.

Electronic files must not be transferred electronically to other schools unless there is a secure system in place (such as cjsm, GCSX or IronPort) but should be printed in their entirety, linked with paper documentation such as conference minutes and transferred as described above. When the receipt has been returned to confirm that the file has been received at the new school, the computer record should be deleted.

Sharing information with Further Education (FE) Colleges

A protocol is in place with DSLs at FE colleges: at the start of each academic year they will send to secondary school DSLs a list of newly enrolled students who have previously attended the school, requesting any relevant information. Secondary school DSLs will use their professional judgement but should always disclose if a young person is in care/looked after, is or has been subject of a child protection plan or is assessed as posing a risk to themselves or other students.

Note this applies only to Dorset schools and FE Colleges with whom the protocol has been agreed.

APPENDIX 7 – CHILD PROTECTION SUMMARY FOR ALL VISITING PROFESSIONALS THE FORUM CENTRE

As an adult working directly with children in this school you have a duty of care towards all pupils. This means you must act at all times in a way that is consistent with their safety and welfare.

It is your responsibility to keep your child protection training up to date; you might be asked for evidence of this.

You must follow the principles of safer working practice, which include use of technology – on no account should you make contact or take images of pupils on personal equipment, including your mobile 'phone.

If the behaviour of another adult in the school gives rise to concern you must report it to the Headteacher.

If you have a concern about a child, particularly if you think s/he may be suffering or at risk of suffering harm, it is your responsibility to share the information promptly with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), Sue Gilani, or the Deputies, Jodi Songhurst, Jane Fairless or Kim Rickford.

The following is not an exhaustive list but you might become concerned as a result of:

- seeing a physical injury which you believe to be non-accidental
- observing something in the appearance of a pupil which leads you to think his/her needs are being neglected
- a pupil telling you that s/he has been subjected to some form of abuse

In any of these circumstances you must write down what you observed or heard, date and sign the account and give it to the DSL or Deputy.

If a pupil talks to you about (discloses) sexual or physical abuse you:

- listen carefully without interruption, particularly if they are freely recalling significant events
- only ask sufficient questions to clarify what you have heard. You might not need to ask anything but, if you do, you must not 'lead' the pupil in any way so should only ask 'open' questions
- make it clear you are obliged to pass the information on, but only to those who need to know
- tell the DSL or Deputy without delay
- write an account of the disclosure as soon as you are able (definitely the same day), date and sign it and give it to the DSL.

Do not ask the pupil to repeat the disclosure to anyone else in school, ask them or any other pupil to write a 'statement', or inform parents. You are not expected to make a judgement about whether the child is telling the truth.

Remember – share any concerns, don't keep them to yourself.