



Safeguarding Procedures Policy

(To accompany Safeguarding Policy Statement)

Approved September 2026
Review September 2027

Safeguarding Procedures

September 2026

Recognising Child Abuse

Abuse can take many forms and the examples in the definitions below are not exhaustive. There may be other situations not covered in the examples below that give you concern for a child's safety and wellbeing. If you have a concern, follow the reporting flowchart.

DEFINITIONS OF ABUSE - CHILDREN

Definitions from *Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2026*.

Physical Abuse

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

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is 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 children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), 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

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving high levels of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (rape, or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Neglect

Neglect 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. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:-

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers);
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment
- provide suitable education

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

Criminal and Sexual Exploitation

Signs of exploitation may include:

- Frequently absent from and doing badly in school.
- Going missing from home, staying out late and travelling for unexplained reasons.
- In a relationship or hanging out with someone older than them.
- Being angry, aggressive or violent.
- Being isolated or withdrawn.
- Having unexplained money and buying new things.

Missing children

We know that children who are missing are vulnerable to exploitation; that a child missing is also an indicator of exploitation and that children in care who go missing are particularly vulnerable to exploitation.

Attendance and Missing Education

Children who are persistently absent, severely absent or not receiving suitable education may be at increased risk of neglect, exploitation, abuse, radicalisation or criminal activity.

Safeguarding concerns relating to attendance must be escalated promptly through safeguarding procedures.

See Attendance Policy and Missing Person Policy for more details

County lines

This is an issue that often overlaps with other forms of abuse and criminal exploitation. It can lead to serious physical and emotional harm to young people (Home Office, 2020a).

This can also lead to children not getting the safeguarding support and protection they need. Perpetrators may also use drugs and alcohol to entice young people into the gang lifestyle.

There is a strong link between county lines activity and physical violence including; serious violence such as knife and gun crime, the use of substances such as acid as a weapon and

homicide (Home Office, 2018).

The Prevent duty

We have a duty under section 26 of the Counterterrorism and Security Act 2015, to identify vulnerable children and young people and prevent them from being drawn into terrorism. This is known as the Prevent duty. Children can be exposed to different views and receive information from various sources. Some of these views may be considered radical or extreme.

Radicalisation is the process through which a person comes to support or be involved in extremist ideologies. It can result in a person becoming drawn into terrorism and is in itself a form of harm.

Extremism is 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.

If staff have concerns about the wellbeing of a baby, child or young person, they will follow the child protection process on the GSCP website.

<https://gloucestershirescp.trixonline.co.uk/chapter/responding-to-abuse-and-neglect>

Female Genital Mutilation and Forced Marriage

Since October 2015 it has been mandatory to report to the police any incidence of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) being carried out on a girl who is under the age of 18.

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

Aspire Foundation recognises that violence against women and girls can include:

- sexual harassment
- sexual violence
- stalking
- coercive control
- misogynistic behaviour
- online abuse

Staff should challenge harmful attitudes and respond to concerns in accordance with safeguarding procedures.

Online Risks

Children may be exposed to:

- AI-generated images and deepfakes
- nudification apps
- misinformation and disinformation
- online radicalisation
- online grooming
- image-based abuse
- harmful online challenges
- coercive control through technology.

Staff should report concerns through safeguarding procedures and not treat online harms as less serious than offline abuse.

Recording:

Child protection and safeguarding information will only be kept remotely on a secure drive including copies of referrals, invitations to child protection conferences, core groups and reports.

Child protection information will only be shared within settings on the basis of 'need to know in the child's interests' and on the understanding that it remains strictly confidential.

All recording of concerns and actions taken for Targeted Support will be recorded on EHM system.

All recording for concerns and actions taken for Early Years will be recorded on ongoing records for the individual child/children.

All recording should include dates and details including record on the chronology.

Staff are aware that the Voice of the Child should be heard and appropriately reported if a concern is raised. What a child may say is taken seriously and staff know not to ask leading questions and to always accurately report what a child has said in any give situation.

When a child leaves one of our settings, the DSL will make contact with the DSL at the new setting or school and will ensure that the child protection file is forwarded to the receiving setting or school in an appropriately agreed manner [files should be transferred in a confidential manner and sent separately to any other files] We will retain evidence to demonstrate how the file has been transferred; this may be in the form of a written confirmation of receipt from the receiving setting or school and /or evidence of recorded delivery.

All safeguarding concerns should be shared with parent/s/carer/s **unless** where to do so would:

- place the child at an increased risk of significant harm
- place an adult at risk of serious harm
- undermine the prevention, detention or prosecution of a serious crime.

Any injury sustained by a child whilst at the Children and Family Centre or Early Years Setting should be recorded in the accident book as soon as possible and parents informed and asked to sign the accident book. Where a setting is recording an accident or injury on Tapestry the parent will be asked to acknowledge the report.

The wishes of children, young people and families should always be respected. However, information must be shared if there is a need to keep a child safe. (See the Information Sharing section within the *Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children and Partnership Procedures Manual* on the GSCP website) The need to share information overrides lack of consent. Advice should be sought from the designated safeguarding lead when there is doubt.

Safeguarding discussions, decisions and actions will be recorded in writing to ensure that

there is a clear audit trail.

The GSCP *Escalation Policy* will be followed if there is a need to resolve professional disagreements across agencies in relation to safeguarding. A copy of the *Escalation Policy* is available on the GSCP website.

Definitions of Abuse – Vulnerable Adults

A vulnerable adult is someone aged 18 or over who is or may need community care services because of a disability, age or illness and is unable to take care of themselves, or unable to protect themselves against abuse or exploitation (*No Secrets 2:3*)

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons. It can consist of a single act or repeated acts and can take the following form of physical, emotional, sexual, financial, neglect, discrimination or institutional abuse.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse involves the deliberate use of force that results in pain, injury, or impairment.

Includes:

- Hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, or restraint
- Misuse of medication (over/under medicating)
- Inappropriate use of physical interventions
- Force-feeding or withholding food/drink
- Unauthorised restraint or restriction of movement

Indicators may include:

- Unexplained bruises, burns, fractures
- Frequent injuries or inconsistent explanations
- Fear of specific individuals
- Signs of over-sedation or untreated medical issues

Emotional / Psychological Abuse

Emotional abuse involves behaviour that causes mental distress, fear, or loss of dignity and self-worth.

Includes:

- Verbal abuse (shouting, humiliation, threats)
- Bullying or intimidation
- Controlling or coercive behaviour
- Isolation from family, friends, or activities
- Gaslighting (making someone doubt their reality)
- Cyberbullying or online harassment

Indicators may include:

- Low self-esteem, anxiety, or depression
- Withdrawn or fearful behaviour
- Reluctance to speak openly

- Sudden changes in personality

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves any sexual activity without valid consent, including where a person lacks capacity to consent.

Includes:

- Rape or sexual assault
- Unwanted touching or sexual harassment
- Exposure to sexual content or acts
- Non-consensual sharing of images
- Sexual exploitation or grooming
- Coercion into sexual activity

Indicators may include:

- Bruising or injury in intimate areas
- Sexually transmitted infections
- Sudden behavioural changes
- Avoidance of certain people or situations

Financial / Material Abuse

Financial abuse involves the unauthorised or improper use of a person's money, property, or assets.

Includes:

- Theft or fraud
- Pressure to change wills or financial decisions
- Misuse of bank accounts or benefits
- Scams (including online scams and misinformation-led fraud)
- Exploitation by family members, carers, or professionals

Indicators may include:

- Missing money or possessions
- Unexplained financial transactions
- Sudden inability to pay bills
- Changes in financial decision-making

Neglect and Acts of Omission

Neglect occurs when there is a failure to meet basic physical, emotional, or medical needs.

Includes:

- Failure to provide food, clothing, or shelter
- Lack of access to healthcare or medication
- Poor hygiene or living conditions
- Ignoring emotional needs
- Failure to protect from harm or danger

Indicators may include:

- Malnutrition or dehydration
- Poor personal hygiene
- Untreated medical conditions
- Unsafe or unclean environment

Discriminatory Abuse

Discriminatory abuse occurs when a person is treated unfairly or abusively due to a protected characteristic.

Includes:

- Racist, sexist, or homophobic behaviour
- Harassment based on disability, religion, age, gender identity, or ethnicity
- Denial of services or rights
- Hate crime or hate incidents

Indicators may include:

- Offensive language or slurs
- Social exclusion
- Unequal treatment or access to care
- Emotional distress linked to identity

Equality, Inclusion and Anti-Discriminatory Practice

Aspire Foundation recognises that discrimination, racism, prejudice and bias can adversely affect safeguarding outcomes for children and adults.

Staff must:

- provide equitable safeguarding responses
- recognise disproportionality and barriers to reporting
- challenge discriminatory behaviour
- ensure children's identities, culture, religion, disability and lived experiences are fully considered when assessing risk.

See Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy for more details.

Organisational / Institutional Abuse

Organisational abuse refers to poor care practices or systemic failures within a service, setting, or organisation.

Includes:

- Rigid routines that ignore individual needs
- Lack of dignity, privacy, or respect
- Inadequate staffing or training
- Unsafe or neglectful care environments
- Normalisation of poor practice
- Failure to follow safeguarding procedures

Indicators may include:

- Consistent poor care across a service

- Lack of choice or independence
- Task-focused care with no person-centred approach
- Multiple complaints about the same service

Abuse can consist of a single act or repeated acts. It may be deliberate or unintentional, and can occur in any setting, including the person's own home, care environments, community settings, or online.

Procedure: Immediate Response

If a concern arises before escalation:

Step 1 – Listen

- Stay calm and do not interrupt
- Take disclosures seriously
- Do not promise confidentiality

Step 2 – Reassure

- Confirm they did the right thing
- Avoid judgement

Step 3 – Clarify (minimal)

- Only ask open questions if necessary
- Do NOT investigate

Step 4 – Record

- Write factual notes immediately:
 - Date/time
 - Exact words
 - Observations (not opinions)

Reporting Process

Staff must:

- Report ALL concerns to DSL immediately (same day)

If DSL unavailable:

- Contact deputy DSL or senior manager

If immediate danger:

- Contact emergency services (999)

Management Escalation Process

DSL responsibilities:

1. Review concern
2. Decide threshold:

- Family help
 - MASH referral (child) - **01452 426565**
 - Adult safeguarding referral - **01452 426868**
3. Consult external agencies if unsure
 4. Record decisions and rationale
 5. Ensure follow-up and monitoring

If it is believed there is an immediate risk to a child or young person a referral will be made under the CP procedure.

Domestic Abuse and Honour Bases Violence

Domestic abuse includes coercive control, emotional abuse, economic abuse, stalking, technology-facilitated abuse and post-separation abuse.

Exposure to domestic abuse should be regarded as a safeguarding concern in its own right.

Family Support Workers are trained in the MARAC process and complete a risk assessment form (DASH) where domestic abuse, honour based violence or stalking is disclosed. This form can be accessed on the CAADA website. Standard and Medium Risk forms are returned to GDASS at gdass.referral@splitz.org.cjism.net and High-Risk forms are referred to MARAC at marac@gloucestershire.pnn.police.uk.

Any referrals for GDASS can be done online and sent to gdass.referral@gsg.cjism.net

We are also aware of the MAPPA process (updated March 2023).

If a family with which we are working is reported to have experienced a very serious incidence of domestic abuse the named Family Support Team Leader will attend the MARAC to share information and formulate an action/safety plan for the child and the vulnerable adult.

Procedures for assessing and supporting Domestic Abuse through Targeted Family Support are detailed in the Aspire Foundation '*Domestic Abuse Support Process*'

Designated safeguarding leads, (Strategic Leads, Team Managers and Early Years Leads) are included in *Operation Encompass** notifications about any child attending our settings who has been present when police have attended a family home in response to domestic abuse concerns.

- *In signing up to *Gloucestershire Encompass* the Trustees, Governing Body, Directors and Senior Leadership Team:
- endorse the *Gloucestershire Encompass* model and support the Key Adults in our settings to fulfil the requirements of the Gloucestershire Encompass Protocol.

- Promote and implement Gloucestershire Encompass processes and use these in accordance with internal safeguarding children processes.
- Recognise the sensitive nature of the information provided and ensure that this is retained in accordance with the principles of data protection

If honour-based violence, forced marriage or female genital mutilation is suspected or disclosed and there is a risk to a child or young person the above Safeguarding procedure will be followed.

Allegations Management; Allegation against a member of staff (this includes volunteers, agency workers, contractors or Directors)

If an allegation is made against a member of staff or there are concerns about the action of a member of staff in relation to a child, the allegations process must be followed – this is on the GSCP website.

The Directors Group will be informed of incidents under Allegations Management by the Strategic Leads, Team Managers or Early Years Leads as appropriate. In addition, the Strategic Leads, Early Years Leads or Team Manager will inform Ofsted of any incident if it meets the criteria to do so.

Parents/Carers who are concerned about possible abuse by a member of staff or volunteer, should in the first instance contact the Team Manager for the individual centre (contact details are displayed around centres) or the Strategic Leads (contact details are displayed around centres).

If an allegation of abuse is made against a member of staff the following procedure will apply:

- One of the designated persons should immediately contact the relevant Strategic Lead who with the Organisation Strategic Lead will contact the Local Authority Designated Officers (LADO) for safeguarding, on 01452 426994 or 01452 583638 to discuss the allegation.
- The Organisation Strategic Lead may then be asked to contact the police, Child Protection Unit 01242 261112 or the Children and Families Helpdesk 01452 426565.
- Suspension is a neutral act and will only be considered where necessary to protect children, preserve evidence or facilitate an investigation. Alternative arrangements should also be considered.
- Confidentiality will be maintained as far as is practicable.
- The Strategic Lead will notify Ofsted and the LADO of the abuse allegation and staff details.

- The investigation into the allegation will be undertaken by the Safeguarding Children Service and Police with the full co-operation of the centre management. Access to written documentation relevant to the child and the allegation, will be made available to the relevant investigating bodies.
- Should the investigation result in the allegation being unfounded, the employee will be reinstated.
- Should the investigation outcome result in a charge being made, the local authority disciplinary procedures will be followed.

Failure to follow these procedures could result in disciplinary action.

Linked Policies:

GSCP Escalation Policy - [gscp-escalation-policy.pdf \(trixonline.co.uk\)](https://www.trixonline.co.uk/gscp-escalation-policy.pdf)

Domestic Abuse, Sexual Violence & Stalking Policy

Working Together to Safeguard Children

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Attendance Policy

Missing Person Policy