



Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Policy Review Cycle

Last 6 review dates:

Review Date	Signed off by
July 2020	Sarah Louise Hopkins (DSL)
March 2021	Sarah Louise Hopkins (DSL)
September 2021	Sarah Louise Hopkins (DSL)
October 2022	Ben Sweet (DSL)
March 2023	Ben Sweet (DSL)
August 2023	Ella Kennedy (DDSL)
September 2023	Ben Sweet (DSL)

What is Safeguarding?

Everyone who works with children and young people including vulnerable adults has a responsibility for safeguarding.

In Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018):

Safeguarding is defined as:

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

- Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.
- And taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

Child Protection is defined in the Children Act 1989 (s.47) as when a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm. Under statutory guidance and legislation action must be taken to safeguard and promote the child's welfare.

We also have a statutory and ethical responsibility for the **vulnerable adults** we support and their effective safeguarding who are normally (but not always) young people under the age of 25 who are subject to EHCP plans which is why in this policy document they are often referred to inclusively within the term young people.

Adults are no longer deemed vulnerable because of their personal attributes, characteristics or abilities. An adult is considered 'vulnerable' if they are, or may be, in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation. The definition of abuse of adults is contained in The Care Act 2014. Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by another person or persons.

Love Squared Statement of Intent and Contextual framework for this Policy Document

As a specialist children and young people's charity working with children and young people with mental health needs and special educational needs, Love Squared is absolutely passionate about being committed to being a best practice organisation in safeguarding children and young people. This policy is written to provide clear practical guidance to all team members and engaged parties around Safeguarding and Child Protection.

In addition, all team and board members, including volunteers, have a responsibility to be vigilant about priority safeguarding areas such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and other priority areas such as child on child abuse. For this rationale, more information about these areas of risk to children and young people's safety are provided here in the policy. However, vigilance should be paid by all team members to changing areas of risk. It is the responsibility of all practitioners to be committed to best practice guidelines and full cooperation between agencies and workers.

Effective information-sharing underpins integrated working and is a vital element of both early intervention and safeguarding. Research and experience have shown repeatedly that keeping children and young people safe from harm requires practitioners and others to share information about:

- A child and young person's health and development and any exposure to possible harm;

- A parent who may need help, or may not be able to care for a child and young person adequately and safely; and
- Those who may pose a risk of harm to a child and young person.

Often, it is only when information from a number of sources has been shared and is then put together, that it becomes clear that a child and young person has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm. Practitioners should be proactive in sharing information as early as possible to help identify, assess and respond to risks or concerns about the safety and welfare of children and young people. This includes when problems first emerge, or where a child and young person is already known to local authority child and young person's social care (e.g. they are being supported as a child in need or have a child protection plan). Practitioners should also be alert to sharing important information about any adults with whom that child and young person has contact, which may impact on the child and young person's safety or welfare.

For detailed information on other areas of abuse and risk to children and young people, please see: <https://www.proceduresonline.com/swcpp/bristol/contents.html> and we encourage all team and board members not to see this policy in isolation but rather as part of a national and local initiative to uphold best practice safeguarding commitments.

Love Squared works within the recommended best practice procedures of South West Child Protection Procedures and is dedicated to aligning all standards to Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) and Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023). This policy contains detailed information on priority safeguarding areas which historically have been given less attention and for which there is urgent need to raise awareness; it provides detailed information on how to deal with disclosures and concerns about a child and young person, whistleblowing including concerns about professionals or other members of team, escalation procedures in inter-agency disputes, responsibilities of all Love Squared professionals and board members and signposting to relevant legislation, guidance and law for practitioners' further reference. A framework that defines best practice across programmes and projects, including face to face and virtual platform of communication, to support both the young person and the practitioner, is embedded within the policy document.

It is to be noted that Love Squared is committed to a Think Family approach but that there should be no confusion that the child and young person's voice should always be central, and that assessment of risks should always be holistic, aware of non-spoken cues, and look for patterns, and be disability and SEN aware. We will work within a best practise framework of 'safe uncertainty' and be curious, open minded, reflective and proactive in all our safeguarding practise. At Love Squared, we are committed to Early Intervention and Help, and the Policy includes details on Early Help and commitment to participation at all levels of inter-agency working as well as threshold criteria. We will use a strengths based approach to working with families – not just identifying problems and risks - but getting to know what is working well in a family and can be built upon.

Love Squared will ensure that policies and procedures, agreed by team and board members, are accessible, updated, understood and followed by all practitioners and volunteers within the service. Appropriate training opportunities will be given and training status and compliance reviewed

annually. Team are all aware and proactive about the additional barriers to recognising abuse and neglect in children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and there is a clear overarching theme of anti-discriminatory practice which is further developed in our equalities and diversity policy.

Love Squared is named as a relevant agency in the Local Safeguarding Partnership (Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership). This policy sets out its statutory duty to co-operate, follow and comply with published arrangements as set out by the Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership but also follows sensitively the needs of other local authorities with whom Love Squared works across London and the South West.

Children and young people have been clear about what they would like from safeguarding, and Love Squared will seek to uphold their wishes and aspirations by seeing safeguarding as a dynamic pivot to uphold their voices rather than simply a matter of legal compliance. In Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018), Children said they need:

- vigilance: to have adults notice when things are troubling them
- understanding and action: to understand what is happening; to be heard and understood; and to have that understanding acted upon
- stability: to be able to develop an ongoing stable relationship of trust with those helping them
- respect: to be treated with the expectation that they are competent rather than not
- information and engagement: to be informed about and involved in procedures, decisions, concerns and plans
- explanation: to be informed of the outcome of assessments and decisions and reasons when their views have not met with a positive response
- support: to be provided with support in their own right as well as a member of their family
- advocacy: to be provided with advocacy to assist them in putting forward their views
- protection: to be protected against all forms of abuse and discrimination and the right to special protection and help if a refugee.

In line with being child and young person focused, these needs should be the overarching themes that drive our safeguarding at Love Squared.

Abuse also impacts on vulnerable adults. Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child and young person or vulnerable adult, by another person or persons in a way that causes significant harm, or affects health, development or well-being. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child and young person or vulnerable adult by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children and young people or vulnerable adults may be abused from within their family and/or from individuals they come across in their day to day lives. These threats can take a variety of different forms, including: sexual, physical and emotional abuse; neglect; exploitation by criminal gangs and organised crime groups; trafficking; online abuse; sexual exploitation and the influences of extremism leading to radicalisation. Abuse may consist of a single act or repeated acts. It may be physical, verbal or psychological, it may be an act of neglect or an omission to act, or it may occur when a vulnerable person is persuaded to enter into a financial or sexual transaction to which he or she has not consented, or cannot consent. Abuse can occur in any relationship and may result in significant harm to, or exploitation of, the person subjected to it.

An adult at risk is any person who is aged 18 years or over and at risk of abuse or neglect because of their needs for care and or support. Where someone is over 18 but still receiving children's services and a safeguarding issue is raised, the matter should be dealt with as a matter of course by the adult safeguarding team.

Safeguarding of Vulnerable adults should always be guided by six principles:

1. Empowerment

People being supported and encouraged to make their own decisions and informed consent.

2. Prevention

It is better to take action before harm occurs.

3. Proportionality

The least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented.

4. Protection

Support and representation for those in greatest need.

5. Partnership

Local solutions through services working with their communities. Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse.

6. Accountability

Accountability and transparency in delivering safeguarding.

This policy is also framed contextually with the understanding that aims and principles of safeguarding vulnerable adults are clear and that appropriate referrals to differentiated social care and support services will be made where appropriate and the young adult's voice will be heard clearly at all at stages of safeguarding process and in planning, and response.

More information can be found in our Safeguarding Adults policy.

Summary of Key Safeguarding Objectives

At Love Squared:

- Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people is **everyone's** responsibility. **Everyone** who comes into contact with children and young people, their families and carers, has a role to play.
- In order to fulfil this responsibility effectively, all professionals should make sure their approach is child-centred. This means that they should always consider what is in the **best interests** of the child and young person.
- We take an '**it can happen here**' approach where safeguarding is concerned.
- **Everyone** who comes into contact with children and young people has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action.
- Victims of harm should **never** be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting abuse, sexual violence, or sexual harassment. Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report.
- Curiosity and open mindedness as modelled in '**Safe Uncertainty**' will be deployed in reflection and approach.
- **Think Family** approach deployed but child and young person's voice always central

- Training, reflective practice and vigilance to priority areas and new developments in safeguarding help create a best practise **learning environment** in which we learn from each other
- A whole team '**what more we could do**' approach to safeguarding
- Team and practitioners to support each other and their multi-agency partners by seeking **collaborative and supportive** ways of working in safeguarding
- Particular sensitivity and thought is paid to the particular community of children and young people impacted by mental health and special educational needs who we serve.
- Where a young person is aged 18 or over, particular thought needs to be given to where they are a vulnerable adult, and the best practice principles of adult safeguarding referred to in The Care Act 2014 and appropriate liaison with adult social care sought.
- We will be proactive and thoughtful about respect, consent and discussion with our children/ parent/ carers and our vulnerable young adults appropriately differentiating responses on a case by case basis whilst ensuring best practice compliance with the relevant legislation and frameworks.

Love Squared is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of young people by:

- The provision of a **safe environment** in which children and young people can thrive.
- **Acting** on concerns about a child and young person's welfare **immediately**.
- Fulfilling our legal and ethical responsibilities to identify children and young people who may need early help or who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm.
- Realising that the children and young people we support are at particular risk and face **specific barriers due to special educational needs/ disability and mental health** and being proactive about championing their voices
- Taking a **trauma informed** response to safeguarding as well as our wider work and ensure that this shapes safeguarding best practise and we are proactive in communicating this with our wider community.

Love Squared is aware and committed to the aims of safeguarding vulnerable adults by:

- To prevent harm and reduce the risk of abuse or neglect to adults with care and support needs
- To safeguard individuals in a way that supports them in making choices and having control in how they choose to live their lives "Making Safeguarding Personal"
- To promote an outcomes approach in safeguarding that works for people resulting in the best experience possible
- To raise public awareness so that professionals, other staff and communities as a whole play their part in preventing, identifying and responding to abuse and neglect.

This policy will contribute to the safeguarding of young people at Love Squared by:

- Clarifying safeguarding expectations for members of Love Squared' community, practitioners, board members, children and young people, and their families.

- Contributing to the establishment of a safe, resilient, and robust safeguarding culture in the setting, including outreach programmes and virtual platforms, built on shared values; that children and young people are treated with respect and dignity, taught to treat each other and team with respect, feel safe, **have a voice** and are listened to.
- Supporting **contextual safeguarding practice** recognising that the setting's various sites, including outreach locations and virtual learning platforms can be locations where harm can occur.
- Setting expectations for developing knowledge and skills within the setting's community (practitioners, children and young people, parents/carers) to the signs and indicators of safeguarding issues and how to respond to them.
- **Early identification of need** for vulnerable children and young people and provision of proportionate interventions to promote their welfare and safety.
- Working in **partnership** with children and young people, parents/carers, and other agencies in the Local Safeguarding Partnership across local authorities.

Team will be aware of their responsibilities to keep children and young people safe such as:

- All teams working in Education Placements will read Part 1 and Annex B of Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023) as per statutory guidelines.
- In addition to this all team and practitioners will be aware of the systems in place which support safeguarding including reading this Safeguarding/Child Protection Policy; the safeguarding response to children and young people who go missing from education; and the role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and deputies.
- All team members will maintain vigilance to enable them to identify signs or symptoms associated with child abuse and issues that impact on a young person's ability to thrive and inform the relevant authorities.
- All team members and practitioners will know who is the Designated Safeguarding Lead and how to contact the DSL and any deputies, the relevant board members and an identified board lead responsible for safeguarding.
- All team members will understand the importance of information sharing in safeguarding and be proactive in sharing information immediately.
- All team members and practitioners will be able to identify vulnerable children and young people and take action to keep them safe. Information or concerns about children and young people will be shared with the DSL where it includes but not limited to:
 - who may need a social worker and may be experiencing abuse or neglect;
 - requiring mental health support;
 - may benefit from early help;
 - where there is a radicalisation concern;
 - where a crime may have been committed.
- Be clear as to best practice guidance about child on child abuse, children and young people missing education and those requiring mental health support, and the impact of technology in relation to online safety and to other areas of priority which might otherwise be overlooked.

- Be involved in the implementation of individual plans to further safeguard vulnerable children and young people and understand their progress and attainment and maintain a culture of high aspirations within their programme of support with us.
- Record concerns appropriately and in a timely manner by using the Love Squared safeguarding systems, including using immediate 'concern for a child' notification detailed in this policy document.
- To be aware of the need to raise to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy any concerns they have about safeguarding practices within the organisation.
- To be aware that any allegations made by children and young people about professionals including about themselves whether direct or indirect should be raised with the DSL or LADO immediately.
- Be fully committed to equalities and diversity and anti-discriminatory practise in every element of work we undertake as a team.
- Being committed to the best practice guidelines that guide vulnerable adult safeguarding including being aware of the guiding principles of best practise adult safeguarding and ensuring that any concerns are flagged and followed up.
- Where appropriate we talk openly with our young people about relationship/sex education and preventative education promoting positive values and create zero tolerance cultures for sexism, misogyny/misandry, homophobia/bi-phobic and sexual violence/harassment. This is always tailored to the individual needs of the children and young people we work with.

Relevant Policy and Legislation

Action taken by Love Squared will be in accordance with current legislation including statutory, national and local guidance including:

- **Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)**, which sets out the multi-agency working arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people and protect them from harm; in addition, it sets out the statutory roles and responsibilities of schools.
- **Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023)** is statutory guidance issued by the Department for Education which all schools and colleges must have regard to when carrying out their duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people and which also needs to guide work we undertake where we are working with schools, and colleges and where we are the ALP commissioned by local authorities, as part of our outreach services.
- **Care Act 2014** - <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/23/contents/enacted>
- **Local Guidance from the Local Safeguarding Partnership:** around particular safeguarding topics are available on the [Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership Website](#). Other Local Authorities will have additional information regarding their Partnership working and protocols and this will be reviewed according to the Local Authority making the referral to Love Squared. Please also see [London Multiagency Adult Policy](#) and Bristol's [Safeguarding Adults Multi-Agency Policy](#).
- **Government guidance in relation to:**

- **COVID19: Refer to Government website and NHSE guidelines in addition to Love Squared Policy Documents including Glow and Outreach Covid Policies**
- **Specific topical safeguarding issues** – a collection of up-to-date guidance can be found on the Safeguarding in Education Team’s guidance page.
<https://www.bristolsafeguardingineducation.org/guidance/>. There is also helpful guidance on the NSPCC website which is easy to read and accessible and through NSPCC safeguarding updates. There is also helpful information for adult safeguarding in this NHS pocket guide.
<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/adult-pocket-guide.pdf>
- **Equalities and Human Rights Legislation:** With regards to safeguarding we will be proactive in our duties under the Equality Act 2010 and our general and, where relevant, specific duties under the Public Sector Equality Duty. General duties include:
 1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.
 2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
 3. Foster good relations across all protected characteristics between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
 4. We adhere to both the Bristol Equality Charter and Bristol Children’s Charter with a view to contribute towards the One City Plan.
 5. Love Squared also adheres to the principles of and promotes anti-oppressive practice in line with the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child and the Human Rights Act 1998.

This policy should be understood in conjunction with the following internal policies:

- Safer Recruitment Policy
- Love Squared Code of Conduct and Expectations of Team contained in Team Pack
- Bullying and Behaviour Policy
- Equalities and Diversity Policy
- Statements of Consent and Information sharing including young people friendly versions
- Health and Safety Policy
- Covid Annex to Safeguarding Policy with particular relation to Safeguarding Online and Telephone Guidelines
- Prevent Policy
- Adult Safeguarding Policy

Please note that Whistleblowing and Escalation Procedures can be found in this safeguarding policy as suitable for our setting scope.

This and other relevant policies will be shared with commissioning bodies when we begin working with a new child or young person as well as when the policy is reviewed and updated.

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Appendix

Section 1 – Definitions of Abuse and Priority Areas of Concern

All team members at Love Squared should be aware of indicators of abuse and neglect and extra familial harm, understanding that children can be at risk of harm inside and outside of the school/college, inside and outside of home and online. Exercising professional curiosity and knowing what to look for is vital for the early identification of abuse and neglect so that staff are able to identify cases of children who may be in need of help or protection. **Understanding contexts of harm and exercising professional curiosity (not just knowing what to look out for)**

Definitions of abuse

The following definitions are based on those identified in Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) and [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) (2023) edition:

Abuse

A form of maltreatment of a child and young person. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child and young person by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. children and young people may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others (e.g. via the internet). They may be abused by an adult or adults or another child or children and young people.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child and young person.

Physical harm may also be caused when a parent fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child and young person;

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child and young person such as to cause severe and persistent effects on the child and young person's emotional development, and may involve:

- Conveying to children and young people that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person;
- Imposing age or developmentally inappropriate expectations on children and young people. These may include interactions that are beyond the child and young person's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child and young person participating in normal social interaction;
- Seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another e.g. where there is domestic violence and abuse;
- Serious bullying, causing children and young people frequently to feel frightened or in danger;
- Exploiting and corrupting children and young people.

Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child and young person, 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 a high level of violence, whether or not the child and young person is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (e.g. rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing.

Sexual abuse includes non-contact activities, such as involving children and young people in looking at, including online and with mobile phones, or in the production of, pornographic materials,

watching sexual activities or encouraging children and young people to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child and young person 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 and young people.

In addition; Sexual abuse includes abuse of children and young people through sexual exploitation. Penetrative sex where one of the partners is under the age of 16 is illegal, although prosecution of similar age, consenting partners is not usual. However, where a child is under the age of 13 it is classified as rape under s5 [Sexual Offences Act 2003](#).

Neglect

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

Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance misuse, maternal mental ill health or learning difficulties or a cluster of such issues. Where there is domestic abuse and violence towards a carer, the needs of the child and young person may be neglected.

Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent failing to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
- Protect a child and young person 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.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child and young person's basic emotional, social and educational needs.

These definitions are used when determining significant harm and children and young people can be affected by combinations of maltreatment and abuse, which can be impacted on by for example domestic violence and abuse in the household or a cluster of problems faced by the adults.

In addition, research analysing Serious Case Reviews has demonstrated a significant prevalence of domestic abuse in the history of families with children and young people who are subject of Child Protection Plans. Children and young people can be affected by seeing, hearing and living with domestic violence and abuse as well as being caught up in any incidents directly, whether to protect someone or as a target. It should also be noted that the age group of 16 and 17 year olds have been found in recent studies to be increasingly affected by domestic violence in their peer relationships.

It should therefore be considered in responding to concerns that the Home Office definition of domestic violence and abuse (2013) is as follows:

"Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence and abuse between those aged 16 or over, who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender and sexuality.

This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:

- Psychological;
- Physical;

- Sexual;
- Financial;
- Emotional.

Controlling behaviour is: a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Coercive behaviour is: an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim."

Priority areas of Concern

Female Genital Mutilation

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is a collective term for procedures, which include the removal of part or all of the external female genitalia for cultural or other non-therapeutic reasons. The practice is medically unnecessary, extremely painful and has serious health consequences, both at the time when the mutilation is carried out and in later life. The procedure is typically performed on girls aged between 4 and 13, but in some cases it is performed on new-born infants or on young women before marriage or pregnancy. As a result of immigration and refugee movements, FGM is now being practiced by ethnic minority populations in other parts of the world, such as USA, Canada, Europe, Australia and New Zealand. FORWARD estimates that as many as 6,500 girls are at risk of FGM within the UK every year. There is no Biblical or Koranic justification for FGM and religious leaders from all faiths have spoken out against the practice.

FGM has been a criminal offence in the U.K. since the Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act 1985 was passed. The Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 replaced the 1985 Act and made it an offence for the first time for UK nationals, permanent or habitual UK residents to carry out FGM abroad, or to aid, abet, counsel or procure the carrying out of FGM abroad, even in countries where the practice is legal.

FGM has been classified by the World Health Organisation (WHO) into four types:

- Type 1 - Clitoridectomy: partial or total removal of the clitoris (a small, sensitive and erectile part of the female genitals) and, in very rare cases, only the prepuce (the fold of skin surrounding the clitoris);
- Type 2 - Excision: partial or total removal of the clitoris and the labia minora, with or without excision of the labia majora (the labia are the 'lips' that surround the vagina);
- Type 3 - Infibulation: narrowing of the vaginal opening through the creation of a covering seal. The seal is formed by cutting and repositioning the inner, or outer, labia, with or without removal of the clitoris; and
- Type 4 - Other: all other harmful procedures to the female genitalia for non-medical purposes, e.g. pricking, piercing, incising, scraping and cauterising the genital area.

The following are some signs that the child and young person may be facing/at risk of FGM:

- A female child is born to a woman who has undergone FGM or whose older sibling or cousin has undergone FGM;
- The family belongs to a community in which FGM is practised or have limited level of integration within UK community;
- The family indicate that there are strong levels of influence held by elders and/or elders are involved in bringing up female children and young people;
- If a female family elder is present, particularly when she is visiting from a country of origin, and taking a more active / influential role in the family;
- The family makes preparations for the child and young person to take a holiday, e.g. arranging vaccinations, planning an absence from school;
- The child and young person talks about a 'special procedure/ceremony' that is going to take place;
- An awareness by a midwife or obstetrician that the procedure has already been carried out on a mother, prompting concern for any daughters, girls or young women in the family;
- Repeated failure to attend or engage with health and welfare services or the mother of a girl is very reluctant to undergo genital examination, including cervical smears;
- Where a girl from a practising community is withdrawn from Sex and Relationship Education they may be at risk from their parents wishing to keep them uninformed about their body and rights.

Consider whether any other indicators exist that FGM may have or has already taken place, for example:

1. The child and young person has changed in behaviour after a prolonged absence from school;
2. The child and young person has health problems, particularly bladder or menstrual problems;
3. The child and young person has difficulty walking, sitting or standing and may appear to be uncomfortable.

Mandatory and appropriate safeguarding actions for FGM

Mandatory reporting duty: [Click here for government guidance](#)

This is a legal duty for practitioners to report known cases of FGM to the police through calling 101. This is when they:

1. are informed by a girl under 18 that an act of FGM has been carried out on her; or
2. observe physical signs which appear to show that an act of FGM has been carried out

These cases must be referred to the DSL who will support them to carry out their duty. It is also advised any referrals made to the police under the mandatory reporting duty is followed up with children and young people's social care so an assessment of need and support is concurrently considered.

Travel:

National guidance has highlighted going on holiday to a risk affected country is cause for concern, local guidance has been developed to prevent discriminatory action against families from risk affected communities.

- Families are encouraged to notify the education setting when they are looking to travel during term time dates.
- This will prompt a conversation with the DSL/ specialist trained member of team to discuss and explain what FGM is in that; it is significantly harmful and illegal to practice this.
- The setting will complete an [FGM Referral Risk assessment](#) (available on the [Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership website](#)) with the family to identify any support that the family may require in relation to FGM.
- Proportionate action is taken. Referrals to social care should NOT be automatically made – however should be made if there are high risk concerns identified from the FGM Referral Risk Assessment.
- These assessments should be saved onto the child and young person's case management file to avoid duplication with new incidents of travel.

More information and resources on FGM can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/female-genital-mutilation-resource-pack/female-genital-mutilation-resource-pack>

Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse can encompass a wide range of behaviours and may be a single incident or a pattern of incidents. That abuse can be, but is not limited to, psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional. Children can be victims of domestic abuse. They may see, hear, or experience the effects of abuse at home and/or suffer domestic abuse in their own intimate relationships (teenage relationship abuse). All of which can have a detrimental and long-term impact on their health, well-being, development, and ability to learn.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

The sexual exploitation of children is defined as:

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology. ([Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018](#)).

Any child or young person may be at risk of sexual exploitation, regardless of their family background or other circumstances. Child sexual exploitation damages children and young people and like any

form of abuse it can have long lasting consequences that can impact on every part of a child and young person's life and their future outcomes.

Child sexual exploitation has been shown to affect:

- Physical (including sexual) and mental health and well-being;
- Education and training and therefore future employment prospects;
- Family relationships;
- Friends and social relationships, current and as adults; and
- Their relationship with their own children and young people in the future.

Child sexual exploitation is complex and children and young people are often reluctant to disclose experiences of exploitation due to misplaced feelings of loyalty and shame. Many may not recognise what they are experiencing as abuse or that they require support or intervention, believing they are in control or in a healthy consensual relationship.

Sexual exploitation results in children and young people suffering harm, and causes significant damage to their physical and mental health. It can also have profound and damaging consequences for the child and young person's family. Parents and carers are often traumatised and under severe stress. Siblings can feel alienated and their self-esteem can be affected. Family members can themselves suffer serious threats of abuse, intimidation and assault at the hands of perpetrators.

There are strong links between children and young people involved in sexual exploitation and other behaviours such as running away from home or care, bullying, self-harm, teenage pregnancy, truancy and substance misuse.

In addition, some children and young people are particularly vulnerable, for example, children and young people with special needs, those in residential or foster care, those leaving care, migrant children and young people, unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people, victims of child marriage and those involved in gangs.

Child sexual exploitation can also occur without any of these vulnerabilities being present.

There is also often a presumption that children and young people are sexually exploited by people they do not know. However evidence shows that this is often not the case and children and young people are often sexually exploited by people with whom they feel they have a relationship, e.g. a boyfriend / girlfriend. They are often recruited into exploitation by those who they trust, those of a similar age and with similar hobbies, often the nature of child on child exploitation encompasses a sense of peer pressure and wanting to fit in.

Children and young people are often persuaded that the boyfriend / girlfriend is their only true form of support and encouraged to withdraw from their friends and family and to place their trust only within the relationship.

The key element of CSE is the imbalance of power and control within the exploitative relationship.

Many children and young people are groomed into sexually exploitative relationships but other forms of entry exist. Some young people are engaged in informal economies that incorporate the exchange of sex for rewards such as drugs, alcohol, money or gifts. Others exchange sex for accommodation or money as a result of homelessness and experiences of poverty. Some young people have been bullied, coerced and threatened into sexual activities by peers or gang members, which is then used against them as a form of extortion and to keep them compliant.

Due to the nature of the grooming methods used by their abusers, it is very common for children and young people who are sexually exploited not to recognise that they are being abused.

Practitioners should be aware that particularly young people aged 16 and 17 may believe themselves to be acting voluntarily and will need practitioners to work with them so they can recognise that they are being sexually exploited. This is not an issue, which affects only girls and young women, but boys and young men are also exploited. However, they often may experience other barriers to disclosure.

Technology such as mobile phones or social networking sites can play a part in sexual exploitation, for example, through their use to record abuse and share it with other like-minded individuals or as a medium to access children and young people in order to groom them.

The perpetrators of sexual exploitation are often well organised and use sophisticated tactics. They are known to target areas where children and young people gather without much adult supervision, e.g. parks, takeaway outlets or shopping centres or sites on the Internet.

Child sexual exploitation can affect any child and young person in any community, and is occurring across the country. Child sexual exploitation affects all ethnic and social groups. Victims of child sexual exploitation come from all ethnic and faith backgrounds.

Practitioners must also consider other factors which might influence the ability of the person to give consent, e.g. learning disability / mental ill health. Young people under the age of 16 cannot legally consent to sexual activity. Sexual intercourse with children and young people under the age of 13 is statutory rape. A child under 18 cannot consent to their own abuse through exploitation.

Even where a young person is old enough to legally consent to sexual activity, the law states that consent is only valid where they make a choice and have the freedom and capacity to make that choice. If a child and young person feels they have no other meaningful choice, are under the influence of harmful substances or fearful of what might happen if they don't comply (all of which are common features in cases of child sexual exploitation) consent cannot legally be given whatever the age of the child and young person.

Anyone who has regular contact with children and young people is in a good position to notice changes in behaviour and physical signs that may indicate involvement in sexual exploitation.

Young people with a disability may have increased vulnerability as well as young people up to the age of 21 who were looked after for whom the local authority has statutory care leaver responsibility and / or where there may be a child and young person in need and/or child protection issues.

Signs a young person might be at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation

In assessing whether a child or young person is a victim of sexual exploitation, or at risk, careful consideration should be given to the issue of consent. It is important to bear in mind that these are some signs that could indicate a risk of Child Sexual Exploitation, however the list is not exhaustive and such symptoms do not necessarily indicate CSE and should be understood in the context of a sensible and holistic intersectional relationship:

Health in context

- Physical symptoms (bruising suggestive of either physical or sexual assault);
- Chronic fatigue;
- Recurring or multiple sexually transmitted infections;
- Pregnancy and/or seeking an abortion;

- Evidence of drug, alcohol or other substance misuse;
- Sexually risky behaviour.

Education in context

- Truancy/disengagement with education or considerable change in performance at school.

Emotional and Behavioural Issues in context

- Volatile behaviour exhibiting extreme array of mood swings or use of abusive language;
- Involvement in petty crime such as shoplifting, stealing;
- Secretive behaviour;
- Entering or leaving vehicles driven by unknown adults;
- Reports of being seen in places known to be used for sexual exploitation, including public toilets known for cottaging or adult venues (pubs and clubs).

Identity in context

- Low self-image, low self-esteem, self-harming behaviour, e.g. cutting, overdosing, eating disorder, promiscuity.

Relationships in context

- Hostility in relationships with team, family members as appropriate and significant others;
- Physical aggression;
- Placement breakdown;
- Reports from reliable sources (e.g. family, friends or other professionals) suggesting the likelihood of involvement in sexual exploitation;
- Detachment from age-appropriate activities;
- Associating with other young people who are known to be sexually exploited;
- Known to be sexually active;
- Sexual relationship with a significantly older person, or younger person who is suspected of being abusive;
- Unexplained relationships with older adults;
- Possible inappropriate use of the Internet and forming relationships, particularly with adults, via the Internet;
- Phone calls, text messages or letters from unknown adults;
- Adults or older youths loitering outside the home;
- Persistently missing, staying out overnight or returning late with no plausible explanation;
- Returning after having been missing, looking well cared for in spite of having no known home base;

- Missing for long periods, with no known home base;
- Going missing and being found in areas where they have no known links.

Please note: Whilst the focus is often on older men as perpetrators, individuals or groups, males or females, and children and young people in and outside of the family may also be involved and practitioners should be aware of this possibility.

Social Presentation in context

- Change in appearance;
- Going out dressed in clothing unusual for them (inappropriate for age, borrowing clothing from older young people).

Family and Environmental Factors in context

- History of physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse; neglect; domestic violence; parental difficulties.

Housing in context

- Pattern of previous street homelessness;
- Having keys to premises other than those known about.

Income in context

- Possession of large amounts of money with no plausible explanation;
- Acquisition of expensive clothes, mobile phones or other possessions without plausible explanation;
- Accounts of social activities with no plausible explanation of the source of necessary funding.

Note: It is important that practitioners should not rely on 'checklists' alone but should carry out a holistic assessment of the vulnerability of the young persons that considers risk and protective factors.

Actions to take in relation to CSE:

- Any concerns whatsoever about potential for CSE should be reported immediately to DSL or deputy as with any safeguarding concerns and an immediate referral to social care or police normally made as well as notifying relevant partners where appropriate.
- Where there have been established cases of online abuse or grooming, Love Squared should alert - **Child Exploitation and Online Protection command (CEOPS)**
<https://www.ceop.police.uk/ceop-reporting/>
- Risk assessments for the individual child and young person should be updated in liaison with partner agencies and parent/ carers where appropriate and should be contextualised.

Child on Child abuse

A flowchart for reporting child on child abuse can be found in Appendix A.

All team should recognise that children and young people can abuse their peers (including online). It is important that incidents of abuse and harm are treated under safeguarding policy in conjunction with the behaviour and bullying policy. However, concerns regarding the welfare of children and young people requires process and records to be kept in the child case management file.

It is recognised that child on child abuse can happen inside and outside of settings or online.

At Love Squared:

- We have a 'zero tolerance' approach to abuse. Incidents are taken seriously. These will never be tolerated or passed off as 'banter,' just having a laugh' or 'part of growing up.' Banter and teasing can and should be acknowledged and recognised as bullying behaviour and may require proportionate intervention.
- Even with a zero-tolerance approach, we take steps to educate and take action to mitigate the risk of contributing to a culture of unacceptable behaviours or a culture that normalises abuse.
- It is understood that child on child harm may reflect equality issues in terms of those who may be targeted are more likely to have protected characteristics.
- It is understood that children with special educational needs and disabilities are three times more likely to be abused than their peers.
- Early identification of vulnerability to child on child harm is made by reviewing attendance, behaviour, attainment and safeguarding records at least on a termly basis.

There are clear systems in place (which are well promoted, easily understood and easily accessible) for children and young people to confidently report abuse knowing their concerns will be treated seriously. Love Squared will handle initial reports of harm by:

- Securing the immediate safety of children and young people involved in an incident and sourcing support for other young people affected.
- Listening carefully to the child and young person, being non-judgmental, being clear about boundaries and how the report will be progressed, not asking leading questions and only prompting the child and young person where necessary with open questions – where, when, what, etc;
- ensuring that victims will never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting abuse, sexual violence, or sexual harassment. They will never be made to feel ashamed for making a report and should instead be met with empathy, kindness and sensitivity.
- Ensuring the child and young person's wishes are taken into consideration in any intervention and any action is taken to ensure safety of the target and other members of the wider peer cohort.
- Not promising confidentiality as it is highly likely that information will need to be shared with others and explaining the known next steps to them so that they feel they have ownership as much as possible.

Actions to take in relation to sexual violence and sexual harassment in relation to child to child abuse.

Love Squared are aware that sexual assault covers a very wide range of behaviour so a single act of kissing someone without consent, or touching someone's bottom/breasts/genitalia without consent, can still constitute sexual assault.

Reference to Keeping Children Safe In Education (2023) and guidance [Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges 2022](#) (particularly paragraphs 458 - 483) should be made for more information on what practitioners should be aware of and in relation to taking protective action. Detailed information on processes and procedures from KCSIE (2023) guidance can be found in Appendix H.

Love Squared will take the following actions when responding to incidents of sexual violence and sexual harassment:

- The team member who receives the disclosure should follow the same steps as set out in the Disclosures and Reporting section of this Policy. Additional information specific to disclosures of child on child sexual abuse should be referred to in KCSIE (2023) - paragraphs 466 - 478.
- Incidents will be reported immediately to the DSL/ Deputy DSL who will undertake further assessment of what action should be taken proportionate to the factors that have been identified. [The Brook - Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Assessment Tool](#) can be utilised to inform assessment of risk and what actions to subsequently take. This may include seeking specialist advice and guidance from [Be Safe](#).
- DSLs/Deputies will take **proportionate** action and consider whether a case can be managed internally, through early help, or should involve other agencies.
- When an incident involves an act of **sexual violence** (rape, assault by penetration, or sexual assault) the starting point is that this should be passed on to police **regardless** of the age of criminal responsibility. This must be reported directly via 101 for recording purposes and accountability. This is on the understanding that the police will take a welfarist approach rather than a criminal justice one. A concurrent referral to social care must also be made. A strategy can be requested where education can voice explicit concerns of criminalisation in a multi-agency context.
- When the children and young people involved require a statutory assessment either under s.17 or s. 47 of the Children Act 1989 a referral to social care should be undertaken.
- Where the report includes an online element, the setting will follow [Searching, screening and confiscation at school - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) and [Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#). The key consideration is for the team not to view or forward illegal images of a child and young person. The highlighted advice provides more details on what to do when viewing an image is unavoidable.
- Risk assessments and or safety plans will be developed for individual children and young people who have been involved in an incident. This should be reviewed at least every 3 months or every time there is an occurrence of an incident. These should involve the child and young person and parents/carers and address contextual risks.

Contextual safeguarding approach to child on child harm:

Love Squared will minimise the risk of child on child abuse by taking a contextual approach to safeguarding by increasing safety in the contexts of which harm can occur – this can include the environment at Love Squared, peer groups and the neighbourhood by working with multi-agency partners.

Following any incidents of child on child harm, the DSL/Deputies will review and consider whether any practice or environmental changes can be made in relation to any lessons learned. This can include making changes to teaming and supervision, making changes to the physical environment and considering the utilisation and delivery of safeguarding and wellbeing.

Online Safety

Online safety is an integrated and interwoven theme with other safeguarding considerations. It is essential that the DSL takes a lead on ensuring that interventions are effective. This means coordinating support and engaging with other colleagues in the setting who may have more technological expertise.

Love Squared is committed to addressing online safety issues around content, contact, conduct and other issues which might impact. This includes:

- Ensuring that online safety is contained in relevant policies and procedures.
- Online safety is interwoven in safeguarding training for team and safeguarding on the curriculum for children and young people including being aware of the risks and positive potential associated with their digital world.
- Understanding movement in social work thinking and understanding such as the use of the 10 C's in interpreting the digital world such as explained in <https://www.ccinform.co.uk/knowledge-hubs/safeguarding-children-and-young-people-online/>
- Where pertinent, external specific online safeguarding training such as NPCC should also be accessed and kept up to date so that pace is always kept with rapidly changing developments.
- Being aware of how social isolation that impacts so many of our young people can impact both on the risks and positive opportunities created by the digital world and how mental health needs and ASC in particular can create particular intersectional dynamics with risks and opportunities.
- Ensuring that for children and young people with special educational needs, appropriate resources and work address the digital world as part of their sessions in a way which meets their needs, for example,
- Acknowledging that child on child abuse can happen via mobile and smart technology between individuals and groups. This should be approached in the same process outlined in section child on child Abuse.

- Understanding that specialist police and digital agency advice should be referred to and sought when dealing with online safety where necessary.
- Proactive attention should be paid to developments locally and nationally through local networks, CASPAR (NSPCC) and other sources.
- Ensuring that young people and, where relevant, parent/carers and supporting team who will be engaging with online learning are all sent NSPCC online safety advice with advice about controls and links to more information and that this is sent again after incidents or elevated risks.
- Ensure communications with parents and carers are used to reinforce the importance of children being safe online. This should also include making sure parents/ carers are aware of the websites used during sessions and encouraging use of parental controls.
- Ensuring that social workers and SEN teams are also updated with any potential escalated online risks as part of ongoing wellbeing and safeguarding updates and feedback.
- Provision of education via remote learning will comply with governmental advice [Safeguarding and remote education during coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/safeguarding-and-remote-education-during-coronavirus-covid-19)
- The effectiveness of the setting's ability to safeguard children and young people in respect to information security and management alongside the above will be reviewed annually.
- For concerns around individual cases where a child and young person has been harmed through online mediums, the DSL should be notified and advice and guidance can be found through the **Professional Online Safeguarding Helpline**, T: 0344 381 4772, E: helpline@saferinternet.org.uk
- Where there have been established cases of online abuse or grooming, Love Squared should alert - **Child Exploitation and Online Protection command (CEOPS)** <https://www.ceop.police.uk/ceop-reporting/>
- Please see Appendix C for further useful contacts and support services and advice related to Online Safety as in Annex D of KCSIE (2023).

Mental Health and Wellbeing

As a mental health non-profit, the mental health and wellbeing of our young people is central to all that we do. In relation to safeguarding, mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child and young person has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation, and or may require early help support.

Love Squared will commit to undertake the following.

- Early identification of vulnerability to mental health problems by initial and then ongoing review of attendance, behaviour, attainment, and safeguarding incidents and needs at least on a termly basis.
- Ensure that children and young people can report and share concerns easily and effectively that is appropriate for our community who usually already have existing mental health and/or special educational needs

- Team will follow a safeguarding process in terms of reporting concerns outlined in Section 2 of this policy so the DSL/Deputy DSLs can assess whether there are any other vulnerabilities which can be identified and proportionate support considered.
- Team will ensure the immediate health and safety of a child and young person who is displaying acute mental health distress. This may require support from emergency services via 999 if the child and young person is at risk of immediate harm and health support should generally be sought.
- Ensuring that as many of the team as possible are accredited Adolescent Mental Health First aid trained and trained in Understanding Developmental Trauma, as well as other relevant mental health training and that this training is proactively deployed in safeguarding considerations.
- DSLs/Deputies will consider whether a situation or issues can be managed internally through existing provision, or should involve other agencies but generally multi-agency working and communication should be sought due to the nature of our services and our holistic approach.
- We will communicate and work with the child and young person and parents/carers where possible to ensure that interventions are in the best interests of the child and young person, and are adjusted and personalised to their individual needs.
- DSLs will liaise with wider team to ensure reasonable adjustments are made and develop ways to support achieving positive outcomes across education, safety and wellbeing.
- Only appropriately trained professionals should attempt to make a diagnosis of a mental health problem – DSLs and relevant project team should be able to access specialist advice through targeted services or through their locality [Primary Mental Health Specialists from Child and Family Consultation Services](#) and liaise closely with existing multi-disciplinary partners in health and CAMHS where these are already in place for the young person.
- Deploying a trauma informed response across services, projects, and in service design and organisational strategy and communicating this trauma informed work with our multi-agency partners.
- That team reflective practise and supervision engages with changes and careful and sensitive monitoring of individual children and young people's mental health needs.

Contextual safeguarding approach to mental health:

Love Squared will ensure that preventative measures in terms of integrating safeguarding into our work with the children and young people will provide opportunities for children and young people to identify when they may need help.

Love Squared will take a 'whole organisation approach' to:

- deliver high quality interactions and interventions around mental health and wellbeing across projects and services.
- having a culture that promotes mental health and wellbeing;
- having an environment that promotes mental health and wellbeing;

- making sure children and young people, parents/ carers and team are aware of and proactively support them to access a range of mental health services that are right for their needs and to listen to and respect their voices in this process;
- Supporting team wellbeing
- And being committed to young people and parent/ carer and multi-agency participation at each level of service and project design.

Information on Children Missing in Education, Domestic Abuse Police notifications and other relevant further information on particular safeguarding areas can be found in Appendix G.

Children and young people with Disabilities and Special Educational Needs

As working and supporting children and young people impacted by special educational needs is core to our work, we need as an organisation to think proactively about how disabilities particularly in their social and environmental context impact in complex and intersectional ways in relation to safeguarding. From research put together and updated by the NSPCC in 2021, the following should be considered and reflected in practise by all team at Love Squared.

Disabled children and young people at greatest risk of abuse are those with behaviour or conduct disorders. Other high-risk groups include:

- children and young people with learning difficulties/disabilities
- children and young people with speech and language difficulties
- children and young people with health-related conditions
- d/Deaf children and young people

(Miller and Brown, 2014).

Why are disabled children and young people at greater risk of abuse?

There are several factors that contribute to disabled children and young people being at a greater risk of abuse.

Communication barriers

Children and young people with speech, language and communication needs (including those who are d/Deaf, or have a learning disability or physical disability) face extra barriers when it comes to sharing their worries and concerns.

- Adults may have difficulty understanding a child and young person's speech so they may not realise when a child and young person is trying to tell them about abuse.
- Adults may not have the knowledge and skills to communicate non-verbally with a child and young person, which can make it harder for children and young people to share their thoughts and feelings.
- Communicating solely with parents or carers may pose a risk if the child and young person is being abused by their parent or carer.
- It can be difficult to teach messages about what abuse is or how to keep safe to children and young people with communication needs. Without this knowledge children and young people may not recognise that they are being abused or won't know how to describe what's happening to them.

Misunderstanding the signs of abuse

It's not always easy to spot the signs of abuse. In some cases, adults may mistake the indicators of abuse for signs of a child and young person's disability.

- A child and young person experiencing abuse or attempting to disclose abuse may self-harm or display inappropriate sexual behaviour or other repetitive and challenging behaviours. If this is misinterpreted as part of a child and young person's disability or health condition rather than an indicator of abuse, it can prevent adults from taking action.
- Injuries such as bruising may not raise the same level of concern as they would if seen on a non-disabled child and young person. Adults may assume that bruising was self-inflicted or caused by disability equipment or problems with mobility.

Lack of education on staying safe

Personal safety programmes and relationships and sex education (RSE) are not always made accessible to d/Deaf and disabled children and young people, and not always taught in special schools. This can be for a number of reasons:

- teachers may not realise they need to teach RSE to children and young people with disabilities
- parents and professionals may think young people with learning disabilities shouldn't have relationships or sex
- teachers may feel they need more training about how to deliver RSE to children and young people with disabilities
- school governors may not approve RSE being taught in a different, more accessible way
- the school may prioritise other subjects over RSE
- sex and relationships education may not be taught in a way that makes sense to young people with learning disabilities (Garbutt et al, 2010).

As a result, a disabled child and young person may not know how to recognise abuse or who to tell.

Increased isolation

Disabled children and young people may have less contact with other people than non-disabled children and young people, because they have:

- fewer out of school opportunities than their peers
- fewer opportunities for spontaneous fun with friends
- less access to transport
- less provision for appropriate toilets and changing facilities
- difficulty finding out about accessible events (Franklin, 2016).

This means they have fewer people to turn to if they need help or support.

They may be further isolated if they:

- need carers to take them out
- have restricted independence because they use a wheelchair or require a sign language interpreter
- live away from home at a residential school.

Disabled children and young people and their families may have limited access to support systems. Support may not be available due to lack of funding or it may not be appropriate for the child and young person's physical, emotional or cultural needs. This can make it difficult for parents to provide the care their child needs and add to the pressure of caring for a disabled child.

Dependency on others

Children and young people with disabilities may have regular contact with a wide network of carers and other adults for practical assistance in daily living including personal intimate care. This can increase the opportunity for an abusive adult to be alone with a child and young person.

If a child and young person is abused by a carer they rely on, they may be more reluctant to disclose abuse for fear that the support service will stop.

Caring for a child and young person with little or no support can put families under stress. This can make it difficult for parents to provide the care their child and young person's needs and can lead to a child and young person being abused or neglected.

Inadequate support

It can be difficult for any child and young person who has experienced abuse to get the support they need, but disabled children and young people may face extra problems.

- Disabled children and young people are less likely to tell someone about experiencing abuse and more likely to delay telling someone than their non-disabled peers (Hershkowitz, Lamb and Horowitz, 2007).
- Adults may not understand or respond to a disabled child and young person's safeguarding needs.
- Communication barriers may prevent adults fully understanding what the child and young person is telling them.
- Some adults may not focus on a disabled child and young person's views.
- If abuse is reported to the police and/or children and young people's social care, the response may be affected if professionals lack skills or experience in working with disabled children and young people.

Contextual Safeguarding of children and young people with SEN and with disabilities at Love Squared

As an organisation who work with a social model of disability, and where the majority of our children and young people will be impacted by special educational needs and/ or another disability such as physical or mental health or an ongoing health condition, contextual safeguarding considerations are particularly important.

Individual risk assessments should carefully consider in a bespoke and personalised way how this might impact on safeguarding, and whilst we do not undertake personal care, particular attention to safe touch where this might be relevant for an individual child and young person should be considered and reflected on at team panel and multi-agency and parent/ carer views sought as well

as those of the child and young person where appropriate and be reflected in individual rather than a generalised risk assessment. The child and young person's voice and how it might be impacted by SEN/ and disabilities needs to be most carefully considered and where it does not seem to be heard, reasons unpicked and communicated with multi-agency partners. As an organisation, we do not use restraint of any kind but where this is specified as being necessary for example by multi-agency teams with specialist health and behavioural staffing input, individualised safe hold training to best practise standards through the requesting team should be sought for practitioners with existing special educational experiences but only ever deployed where it is essential to keep a child and young person safe and with training and input from specialist partners such as specialist paediatric and nursing and behavioural psychology teams and within their own risk assessment. Please also see Appendix G for more information on use of physical contact when need to restrain children and young people under 'use of reasonable force', however as an organisation due to the gentle and sensitive nature of our work with vulnerable children and young people who have mental health needs, this is not an approach we would use except in an emergency to prevent severe injury to a child and young person if possible.

Children Missing in Education and where attendance changes within Love Squared services/ projects

A child and young person missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect, or maybe an indicator of need for early help support. Team should follow the agreed procedure for absence with what has been agreed with for the individual child and young person (dependent on type of placement/ project/ commissioner/ point of referral) and for dealing with children and young people that go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions. These should be reported to the DSL and reported to the educational commissioner, normally the SEN case officer at the local authority and shared with allocated social worker where the young person has one.

Love Squared will be mindful of the guidance detailed in [Children Missing Education \(2016\)](#) and [Bristol City Council Education Welfare Service – Children Missing Education](#)

This will include notifying the local authority in which the child and young person lives:

- of any child or young person who fails to attend education sessions regularly,
- or has been absent without the commissioning body's permission for a continuous period of 10 school days or more, or at such intervals as are agreed between Love Squared and the local authority.

Lack of attendance and engagement with emotional wellbeing and support services from our Glow projects can also demonstrate or suggest that something has changed for that child and young person and could potentially indicate safeguarding concerns. This should be reflected on and proactively followed up on a case by case basis in liaison with multi-agency partners and Love Squared team. Changes to engagement should be a proactive concern for all Love Squared team.

Further information on children and young people potentially at greater risk of harm should be sought in KCSIE (2023), para 169. This includes care leavers and children and young people who are LGBT+.

Section 2 – Love Squared’s commitment to Safeguarding

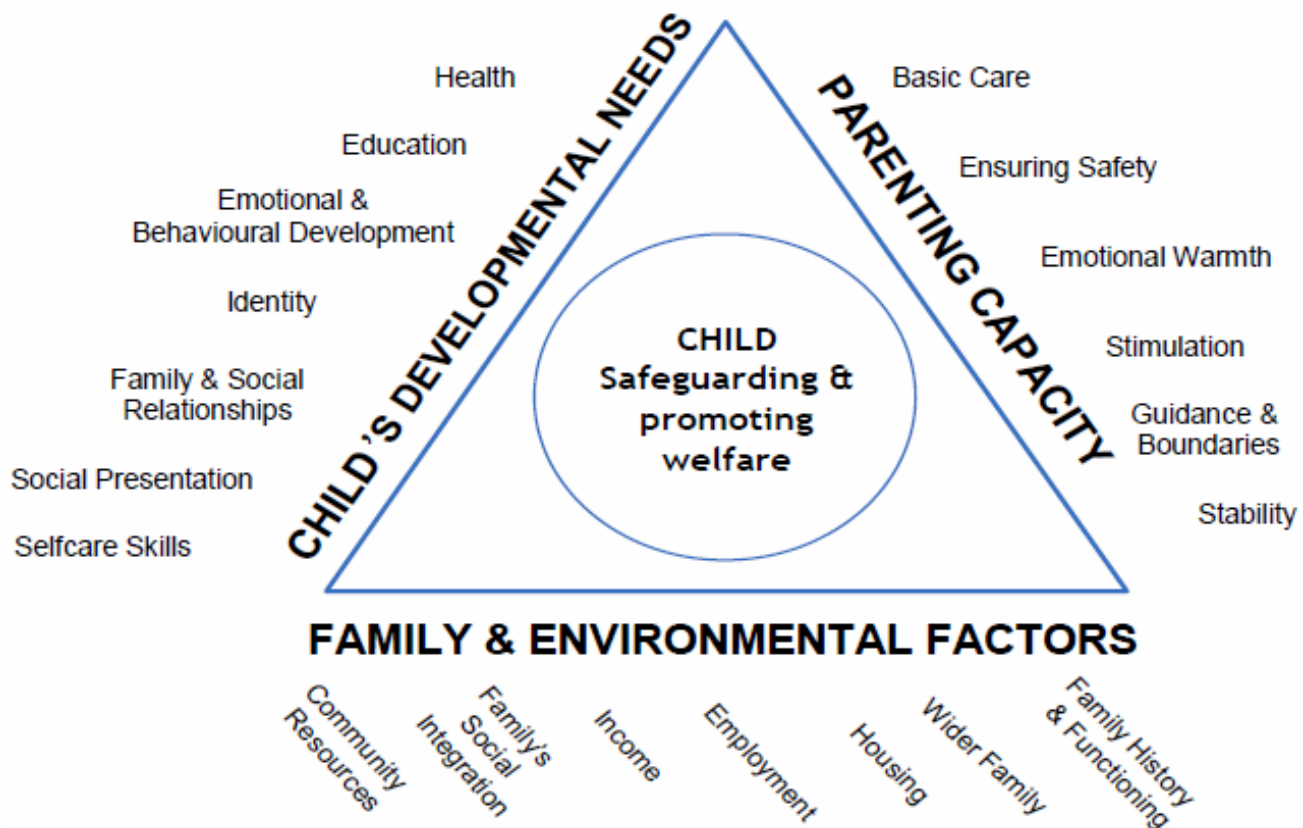
Love Squared exposure to insight and potential identification of safeguarding needs

As a specialist mental health and special educational needs organisation, many of the children and young people with whom we work are disabled or have special educational needs and mental health issues which might place them at a heightened risk of vulnerability and/ or make communication more challenging for them. They might also not be at school and so at heightened risk of concerns not being picked up by wider professionals such as the school team. These factors need to be carefully considered in every element of assessment, observation, planning and delivery of services and in delivering safeguarding and child protection best practice.

As much of our work can take place in the family home as well as in other settings, Love Squared practitioners may be exposed to behaviour or sides of the child and young person's domestic home life that is not seen by other people, including by other professionals. This puts us in a position to exercise professional curiosity and spot signs of neglect or abuse that may not be picked up by other people involved, and it is our professional responsibility to report to the DSL or deputy (Designated Safeguarding Lead) any concerns that make a practitioner feel worried, or uncomfortable, so Love Squared ensures that it is meeting best practice standards of safeguarding.

All of our team working in any capacity must work to safeguarding best practice standards and with clear attention the assessment framework triangle whilst being aware that we should also be considering the child/ young person’s digital world as another side of risk and positive opportunity also. Please see diagram below for the assessment triangle from WTSC (2018).

Assessment Framework



Responsibilities for Love Squared

Love Squared will:

Seek to provide highly appropriate training to all teams including volunteers who will have direct contact with children and young people so that signs of neglect and abuse can be identified.

- Ensure all team members including volunteers are aware of their responsibilities to discuss any concerns at all with the DSL (Designated Safeguarding Lead) and have clear knowledge on lines of responsibility in relation to safeguarding.
- Ensure that all team members are aware of this policy and that it is made accessible to them in full but that also it is clearly discussed with them during induction and that they are given the opportunity to discuss reflectively and proactively in formal and informal training opportunities.
- Ensure that safeguarding leads and other core team who experience high levels of safeguarding in their practise are advanced safeguarding trained in line with local authority standards and external advanced safeguarding training is refreshed at least every two years

but ideally annually and that this is complemented by other external training opportunities to meet children and young people's needs, as well as the ongoing reflective practise and safeguarding supervision that should be given time at least once a week and regular opportunities to be part of safeguarding networks to share best practice.

- That safeguarding leads should ensure that their training meets the requirements laid out in Keeping Children Safe in Education.
- That regular safeguarding training is ongoing and includes formal annual refresher training for the whole team, practitioners and volunteers, including extra familial, online safety and prevent modules.
- That regular safeguarding training also encompasses opportunity for regular and informal safeguarding reflection, discussion and updates through monthly team meetings and relevant emails. Ensure that any suppliers and organisations with whom we work and partner with, commit to the same level of adherence to safeguarding best practice.
- Ensure that any suspicions and worries are responded to appropriately. This might include following up to seek more information from other agencies involved with the child and young person, taking advice from social services, or a relevant professional body, making a referral to social services, or monitoring the situation carefully and keeping records of minor concerns so any isolated concerns can be traced into patterns which might then warrant further action.
- Treat all situations with confidentiality and professionalism and commitment to best practice and in line with Data Protection Policy and Procedures such as UK GDPR but that does not ever prevent effective information sharing where this is required for safeguarding.
- Ensure all practitioners are DBS (formerly CRB) enhanced checked and have all relevant other checks in place to work with before commencing sessions with children and young people, and that these are reviewed and refreshed in line with best practice guidance. Please see the Love Squared Safer Recruitment Policy (including updates to the [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) 2023 edition which states that types of behaviour which may indicate a person poses, or might pose, a risk of harm if they continue to work in regular or close contact with children and young people, known more commonly as the 'harm test': a person has 'behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children' (para 355). This addition is intended to capture a broader range of behaviour which may indicate risk where an incident occurs outside of school and did not involve children and young people but could have an impact on their suitability to work with children and young people, for example, being involved in a domestic violence incident at home that could pose a risk to children and young people at school. This is known as transferable risk.). More detailed information is contained within our Safer Recruitment Policy.
- Ensure that practitioners working with young people who have been identified as vulnerable, whether through self-identification, or because they belong to a demographic which is known to be more at risk than another, that the practitioner understands they need to be

alert, sensitive, and might need specialist input or training for the needs of the particular demographic.

- Enable participation with policy, training, and inter-agency working through clear opportunities to engage and be involved.
- Ensure that the DSL is covered by the DDSL so that even in cases of illness, annual leave or other issues with availability there is always a clear contact line.
- Ensure that there is a Board Level Safeguarding Lead who is currently Lucy Reynolds who can be contacted through our Administrative Assistant (Maddie) and marked as confidential if it feels important that it is kept confidential from the DSL or deputy DSL (Maddie@lovesquared.org.uk).
- Ensure that the Board have a clear and comprehensive sense of the importance and centrality of Safeguarding in all planning and operations, and that all organisational governance clearly centralises safeguarding, child protection and the centrality of the child and young person's voice to all activity.
- Ensure that the Board receives appropriate safeguarding and child protection (including online) training at induction and is regularly updated. This training should equip them with the knowledge to provide strategic challenge to test and assure themselves that the safeguarding policies and procedures in place at Love Squared are effective and support the delivery of a robust whole team approach to safeguarding.
- Ensure the Board of Trustees are aware of their obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998 , the Equality Act 2010, (including the Public Sector Equality Duty), and their local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.
- Ensure that the importance of Early Help, Preventative Action, a commitment to Wider THINK FAMILY approach and the centrality of the child and young person's voice are clearly advocated and disseminated at all times and across all levels of in house, and interagency working.
- All team members including volunteers should receive high quality supervision and an annual appraisal that assesses their safeguarding knowledge and training needs to provide an accountable process which develops knowledge, skills, and values to improve quality of work to agreed outcomes. These should be in line with Joint BSCB and BSAB Integrated Supervision Good Practice Guide and Tools found here: [Joint BSCB and BSAB Integrated Supervision Good Practice Guide and Tools](#)
- All team members including volunteers working with children and young people should have access to a supervision agreement which is clear to both parties and which has a clear commitment to critical thinking, reflective practice as well as formal monitoring and evaluation. All supervisions should be recorded clearly in supervision recording sheets.
- Ensure safeguarding self-audit takes place every year using appropriate South West Child Protection Procedures self-auditing tools and action plan. Safeguarding self-audit results to

be reviewed by DSL, DDSL and Board level and involve wider team stakeholders as much as possible.

- Ensure annual participation in external safeguarding audit such as for Bristol ALP (S. 175 audit) as pertinent which was last undertaken in February 2021 and submitted as requested.
- Ensure the DSL audits all individual safeguarding concerns/ records on a yearly basis and using our coded system they are able to draw out safeguarding concerns efficiently in order to assess the actions that took place and quality assure the resulting actions, fostering an environment of learning and improvement.
- Ensure that we follow the [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) 2023 edition which expands the remit of the DSL role and Annex B and states DSLs will: “help promote educational outcomes by sharing the information about the welfare, safeguarding and child protection issues that children, including children with a social worker, are experiencing, or have experienced, with teachers and school and college leadership team. Their role could include ensuring that the school or college, and their team, know who these children are, understand their academic progress and attainment and maintain a culture of high aspirations for this cohort; supporting teaching team to identify the challenges that children in this group might face and the additional academic support and adjustments that they could make to best support these children.”

Responsibilities for all team and practitioners

A flowchart for reporting concerns about a child and young person can be found in Appendix B.

Key to your role as Love Squared practitioners is:

- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. All professionals who come into contact with children and young people and families should be alert to their needs and any risks of harm that individual abusers, or potential abusers, may pose to children and young people
- This Policy must be adhered to and followed in full with reference to other relevant policies and statutory guidance such as indicated for further reading here in this policy. Failure to adhere to policy can place children and young people in danger.
- The child and young person's needs are paramount, and should be put first – before the needs of the professional, or the parents' needs so that every child receives the support they need.
- The child and young person's voice should always be central and must be heard above other 'noise'. This might require careful consideration where children and young people struggle with verbal communication and sensitive thought should be given to enabling the child and young person's voice through play, registering non verbal indicators, asking questions, giving space and time for communications, providing appropriate means to allow for SEN or disability or Mental Health.

- Assessment of risk must not default to check lists but involve a sensitive, imaginative, child and young person focused with a Think Family commitment and holistic assessment of needs.
- All children and young people's practitioners and team are expected to participate in every level of inter-agency working from Early Help through to Child Protection; this includes participation and attendance at TAC, LAC, CP conferences and other multi-agency conferences and meetings related to the well-being and safeguarding including those for vulnerable adults.
- Attend training and supervision which is necessary to maintain your safeguarding knowledge and best practice working and to be committed to challenge, reflective practice, and case review in the spirit of best practice safeguarding. Understand that this is a key part of your role as a children and young people's practitioner and embrace as part of a learning culture of curiosity.

Disclosures and Responding

All staff are aware that children may not feel ready or know how to tell someone that they are being abused, exploited, or neglected, and/or they may not recognise their experiences as harmful. For example, children may feel embarrassed, humiliated, or threatened. This could be due to their vulnerability, disability and/or sexual orientation or language barriers. This should not prevent staff from having a professional curiosity and speaking to the DSL if they have concerns about a child. It is also important that staff determine how best to build trusted relationships with children and young people which facilitate communication.

If a child and young person tells a Love Squared practitioner about something that has happened to them , that practitioner has a duty to:

- Allow the child or young person to do the talking and allow them to finish in their own time whilst offering warm non verbal cues which encourage them and enable them to feel as comfortable as possible. If it is possible to say something at this point, or if they ask you, always be clear that you cannot keep things confidential as you have to make sure they are safe and because you care about them.
- Listen without asking leading questions and use prompts such as Can you tell me, or could you explain a little bit more as long as you feel a young person is comfortable with this. Also ask where appropriate for their feelings and express empathy and kindness without making a young person feel overwhelmed. Use your knowledge of a young person's mental health and special educational needs to tailor your communication to what might make them feel more comfortable and respected in that moment.
- Reassure the child or young person that you are pleased that they are talking to you, and ensure that they understand they have been taken seriously. Always treat the child with

respect, dignity, and empathy, without making promises or assurances that you cannot guarantee.

- Tell the child or young person what you will do next and what actions you are taking including where possible who you will likely be talking to first, without making any promises you can't be sure to keep such as naming a specific person or a specific time scale for any actions/ response. Explain why you have to share this information and be understanding if they are cross or scared that you are sharing but explain it is because you care and because you have a duty to keep them safe.
- Thank the child or young person again for sharing with you and communicate with them that they have a right to be safe and protected.
- Record what was said as soon as possible, in language as close to what was said as possible and do not add opinions and interpretations but do add any questions that you have asked.
- Share concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Officer or Love Squared Session Lead (dependent on individual project guidelines) immediately. If you are remote, please use the CONCERN ABOUT A CHILD process detailed in the next section and make sure that this is followed straight away.
- In cases where there might be an urgent and immediate risk to the child and young person's safety, the police or social services should be contacted immediately and the practitioner should wait with the child and young person until they arrive, or follow the police's instructions to wait in a safe place for their arrival as well as notifying the DSL.
- Realise that the disclosure might relate to allegations of abuse concerning another child and young person or a professional and that it should still follow disclosure guidance but might require specialist procedures pertaining to Whistleblowing (detailed here) or further specialist work with other agencies in child to child abuse allegations.
- The 5 'R's are helpful in understanding what our professional's duties are in relation to responding to an incident: **Recognise – Respond – Reassure – Refer - Record.**
- For young people aged 18 and over, this information book created by the NHS has very useful information for DSL and wider team working with vulnerable adults to consider as part of the wider disclosure and consent sharing process:
<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/adult-pocket-guide.pdf>

Notes on disclosures particularly in relation to the children and young people at Love Squared:

Practitioners should be aware that verbal disclosures are rare, and they need to take responsibility to be alert to the signs of possible abuse, which are not verbally disclosed, and to report them immediately. They should never wait for a child and young person to tell them they are being abused

to take action on concerns. Disclosures can also be non verbal and indirect and secondary rather than direct, verbal and from the child and young person directly.

Children and young people may be reluctant to discuss abuse, or unaware that they are at risk, and practitioners should report any concerns they may have immediately - whether or not it has been possible to discuss this directly with the child and young person.

Children and young people with disabilities, special educational needs or mental health difficulties which might impact on their ability to communicate should be enabled to have an equal voice, and practitioners should challenge themselves to be particularly vigilant, and to enable means of alternative communication personalised to their needs which means that they can be kept safe including but not limited to being proactive about asking questions in a sensitive way, paying attention to non verbal cues, speaking to wider family and stakeholders and paying attention to a wider range of issues rather than just a narrow scope of focus. Attention should be paid to the learning in the NSPCC research report 'No one noticed, no one heard: a study of disclosures of childhood abuse'. Things that young people felt led to positive experiences after making a disclosure were being believed, something happening to protect them, and receiving appropriate emotional support and follow up from someone they trusted to help them through the process.

<https://www.norfolkscb.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/no-one-noticed-no-one-heard-report.pdf>

If in doubt whatsoever, then it is essential to share your concerns with DSL or Deputy so it can be reflected on: Do not keep any concerns to yourself under any circumstances.

Ways for Young People to Raise Concerns and make disclosures - Being Proactive about Hearing the children and young people's Voices

- Young People should always be told who they can talk to if they have a worry or a concern about their wellbeing and this should be put in age and needs appropriate language and this should happen at the beginning of every session, although for 1:1 sessions depending on age and the needs of the young person, it might be more appropriate for this to be once a month.
- This person would normally be their practitioner or the session leader but it should be someone who they feel they have a good and trusting relationship with. All young people on Glow sessions should also have a contact number for the Glow Projects Coordinator and safeguarding lead and all young people on outreach sessions should have contact details for their Case Manager and safeguarding lead so that they also have choice about who to talk to. They should be advised that they should text and someone will get back to them as soon as possible to arrange a time to chat. CONTACT NUMBERS AND NAMES HERE:
 - **Ben Sweet, Case Manager and DSL - 07397 851890**
 - **Deputy DSLs: Lottie Enfield (07497 308 748)**
- All young people should be reassured that nothing is too small to talk to us about and if anything or anyone is making them feel uncomfortable then we would love to know about it so we can talk it through and try and help.
- All young people should know, they can at any time and in any of these ways, raise a concern about anyone they want to including members of staff and should have contact details for

the safeguarding leads so they can do this and there are two contacts in case one of the concerns is about one of the safeguarding leads.

- For onsite sessions at Glow and the Garden (non educational/ ALP sessions which do not happen onsite), there should be a 'wellbeing box' with slips of paper and pens easily available where young people can write down any thoughts or worries about wellbeing and these should be checked at the end of every session.
- All young people should also have a link to the website with the contact form on it and told that if they prefer they can send in any worries or concerns on this contact form.
- Proactive discussions about feelings and sharing concerns and thoughts should be an ongoing part of interactive discussions and practise in sessions to create a sharing environment.
- Posters in Glow should contain clear references with visual references which avoid stereotyping for what young people can do if they have concerns about wellbeing or about bullying. There should be age appropriate and needs- appropriate versions.
- In Glow, there should be clear signage for external organisations such as Child Line and Papyrus as well as contact numbers for the safeguarding leads and also copies of these procedures with key details highlighted and easy to read so every young person feels empowered to act.
- This is all contextualised in our repeated presentation of Love Squared as a safe, warm and loving space in which bullying of any kind has no space, and is not ok.
- Young people should always be told of the importance of Kindness, and Keeping each other safe and how unkindness and hurting are never ok.
- Young people should always be involved proactively and interactively in their own behavioural code of conducts and these should be led and facilitated each session by their practitioner.

What to do when you are concerned about a child and young person

In most cases, we would expect the first point of contact to be the DCPO or deputy DCPO - please always share - nothing is 'too small':

- DSL – Ben Sweet – 07397851890 – TEXT 'CONCERN FOR CHILD'
- Deputy DSLs – Lottie Enfield (07497 308 748) - TEXT 'CONCERN FOR CHILD'

When contacting us about a concern, please send a text message stating 'CONCERN FOR CHILD' to highlight the nature of the contact to BOTH the DSL and the Deputy DSL on the numbers above, please do not call and leave a voicemail message or send an email. There will always be a safeguarding lead on duty during the core hours of 9-6 Monday to Friday when sessions are scheduled to take place. During these times a safeguarding lead will be on hand to take safeguarding concerns and deal with them effectively. If you are in a communication group for your child and young person, for example on Whats app, please put this message in the Whats app group. Some services such as Drop The Pressure have their own sharing concerns protocol, which for DTP is to share with the project lead in the safeguarding debrief at the end of the session, if not immediately. Where this project divergence exists, this will be clearly communicated and

practitioners regularly reminded of the project protocol but unless this has been made explicit please always follow the protocol cited here.

Where this is not appropriate because there is an immediate threat to the child and young person and for some reason DSL or DDSL cannot be reached, practitioners can contact, and where in any doubt, please ring the police straight away. Numbers for other contacts such as LADO, social services, and other helpful safeguarding contacts can be found Appendix F.

After reporting a concern, DSL or Deputy or other relevant core team will get back to you as quickly as possible and next steps will then be discussed and decided. We might ask for more information and will always try and ensure that practitioners are included in these where this is possible. Referrals will normally be made by DSL or Deputy or by Session Leads - it is usually better if referrals are made by the member of the team who has best knowledge of the concerns where this is balanced by the need for prompt referrals.

Follow up should be chased by an interested member of the team as part of a collaborative working together and learning environment and learning and information sharing for more effective safeguarding should be shared and disseminated promptly and effectively.

Further information on the role of the DSL can be found in Appendix D.

Wellbeing and support for practitioners in relation to safeguarding disclosures

We are keen to stress that our team will not be expected to deal with child-protection or safeguarding issues in isolation or without thought to their wellbeing. Designated Safeguarding Lead and deputy will be available to contact as well as other nominated project leads if they feel more trusted and then we can look at further and ongoing support as you need and feels right for you.

We recognise that safeguarding and child-protection issues can be difficult and stressful to deal with. Love Squared will endeavour to offer as much support and guidance as possible to ensure that practitioners feel supported and we understand that you will need support, empathy, and help from your wider team. You should feel respected and valued in every aspect of your work with us, and we will listen carefully to your concerns, and ensure that you are aware of how they are being processed and followed up on.

Multi-agency working and Information Sharing

Statutory Overview

Love Squared is a relevant agency in the Keeping Safe Partnership and will work together with appropriate agencies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people including identifying and responding to their needs across the different local authorities it works with. This is in compliance with statutory guidance [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018](#) and also mindful of adult safeguarding best practice.

Occasions that warrant a statutory assessment under the Children Act 1989:

- If the child and young person is in need under s.17 of the Children Act 1989 (including when a child and young person is a young carer and or subject to a private fostering arrangement).
- Or if the child and young person needs protection under s.47 of the Children Act 1989 where they are experiencing significant harm, or likely to experience significant harm.

Referrals in these cases should be made by the DSL (or Deputy DSLs) to Children's Social Care in the local authority in which that child and young person resides. The list of safeguarding contact and other key agencies are listed in Appendix F.

Where the child and young person already has a social worker, the request for service should go immediately to the social worker involved or, in their absence, to their team manager. If the child and young person is a child and young person in care, notification should also be made to the Hope Virtual School if the child and young person is based in Bristol or to equivalent in other local authorities, and this includes where the child and young person's school is moving them to a reduced time table.

Love Squared will cooperate with any statutory safeguarding assessments conducted by children and young people's social care: this includes ensuring representation at appropriate inter-agency meetings such as integrated support plan meetings initial and review child protection conferences and core group meetings.

Love Squared will also liaise and report concerns appropriately to adult social care in line with the Care Act 2014.

Additional considerations:

- Where a young person and/or their family is subject to an inter-agency child protection plan or a multi agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) meeting, the setting will contribute to the preparation, implementation, and review of the plan as appropriate.
- If a crime has been suspected or committed that involved the bringing of an offensive weapon onto the a site where we are working with a child, Love Squared will liaise with the Local Authority Violence Reduction Unit (Safer Options) who will consider a proportionate response or check that the lead agency such as the school, local authority or other agency has done so.
- If there is a risk of harm, the police should be called via 999. For other concerns of criminality, the non-statutory guidance ['When to Call the Police' from the NCPCC](#) can be helpful or contact the local PCSO/School Police Beat Officer/School Officer.
- In the rare and tragic event that a child is seriously harmed, Love Squared will notify the Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership as soon as is reasonably possible or ensure that this has already been done by a statutory partner organisation.

Early Intervention and Thresholds including Single Assessment Framework Commitment

Love Squared is committed to Early Intervention and a good understanding of thresholds for intervention and working in strong partnership with Early Help teams and to a THINK Family approach. This is incredibly important for proactive care and safety and to reduce future risks to child safety.

The earlier we offer help to families, the better it is for children and young people, and we will strive to reduce unnecessary escalation of problems or delay in providing help.

As stated in our intention for this policy, we will use a strengths based approach to working with families – not just identifying problems and risks - but getting to know what is working well in a family and can be built upon. BSCB continuum of need can be found here:

Our continuum model of need

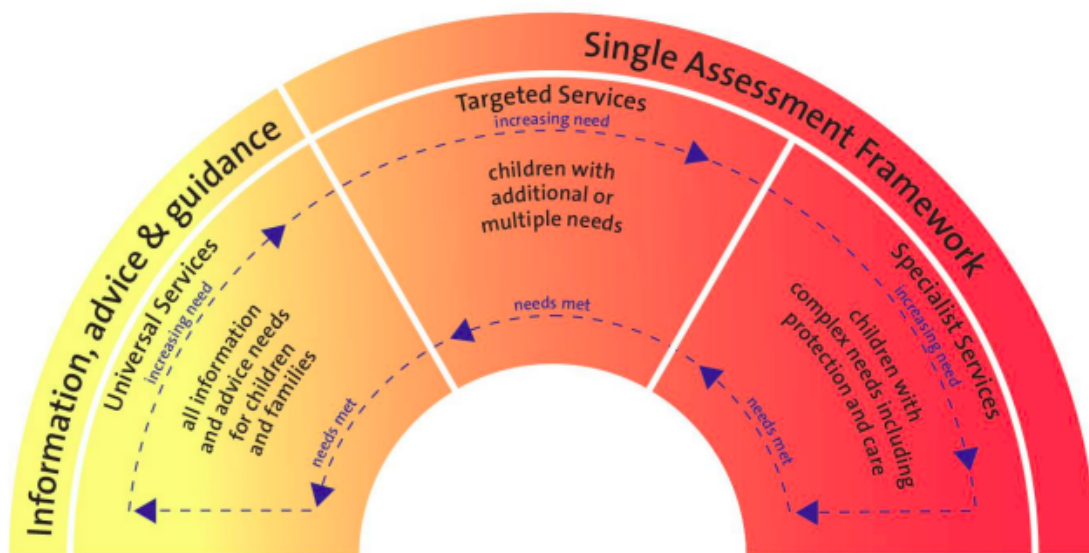


Fig 1 – Levels of need and support

Children and young people and families move back and forward across this continuum at different points and might need different access to services at different transition and crisis points. Emerging needs can sometimes be met within universal services, but might still require a SAF (Single assessment framework).

Children and young people with additional and/or multiple needs might require targeted services and might require a SAF or TAF (Team around Family).

Love Squared is committed to the Single Assessment Framework and to being proactive to engaging with Early Help, and other statutory and charity partners to discover where a SAF might already exist and to requesting a 'A request for Help' where this does not yet exist.

The Single Assessment Framework (SAF) has been developed to analyse, understand and record what is happening to children and young people within both their families and their community. It is part of a framework for joint and multi-agency working for all children, young people and families with additional needs. Further information on the assessment triangle can be found within the Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 guidance.

Love Squared is committed to adhering to the principles of Single Assessment Framework and ensuring that the children and young people and the family are at the heart of the assessment with the framework designed around following person-centred principles:

- Genuine involvement of children and young people and families in the process to inform decisions and commissioning intentions.
- Helping the child and young person and family to think about what they want now and in the future.
- Getting all the important people who support the child and young person and family to work together to help make things happen.
- Listening to the child and young person about what they want for their life.
- Strengthening the “voice” of the child and young person via the assessment so that anyone reading it understands what life is like for the child and young person.
- Use of ordinary language and images.
- Active identification of the child and young person's strengths as well as needs.

Love Squared team will be proactive about taking leadership professional roles where this is identified as appropriate and ensure commitment to effective interagency and multi-agency working including full participation and commitment to all levels of safeguarding multi-agency working across the continuum of need.

We will be proactive about partnership working and building relationships with Early Help as well as other organisations like CAMHS and charitable partners to ensure effective multi-agency working and full participation.

We will also seek to ensure participation and advocacy of children and young people and family's voices at all levels of continuum and in all communications and interactions, including a commitment to sourcing appropriate external advocacy where we feel this is not being provided or met to best practice guidelines.

For team making referrals to social care:

In line with concerns raised in safeguarding feedback from social care, attention should be given to the quality and detail given in written referrals to reduce pressure on social services and statutory partners and as much context and detail should be given as possible including where relevant the use of Safeguarding Threshold Matrix documents to guide referral language and threshold. More information can be found here about Bristol Threshold guidance (2018):

[Thresholds Guidance BRISTOL](#)

Love Squared is committed to working in a Think Family approach to being transparent with our families. Unless it would cause an escalated risk of harm to the child and young person, families should be informed when we are concerned about a child and young person and if a referral is being

made, and why the referral is being made. This would always be discussed with DSL and where DSL is unsure of accelerated risk, advice sought and obtained from social care, NSPCC or other appropriate agencies as appropriate.

Clear statements on Information Sharing and Safeguarding should always be shared with parent/ carers and young people as pertinent with alternative versions for contracted local authority specialist education and wellbeing cases (outreach) and for Glow services and projects.

Information Sharing in line with UK GDPR and Data Protection

Importantly, it should be clearly understood that The Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR do not prevent the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children and young people safe. Fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare and protect the safety of children and young people.

Love Squared is committed to have due regard to relevant data protection principles which allow for sharing (and withholding) personal information as provided for in the Data protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulations (UKGDPR). This includes how to store and share information for safeguarding purposes, including information which is sensitive and personal and should be treated as 'special category personal data'.

All team at the setting are aware that:

- 'Safeguarding' and 'individuals at risk' is a processing condition that allows practitioners to share special category personal data. This means that data protection should never be a barrier to the safety of a child and young person.
- Practitioners will seek consent to share data where possible in line with [Information Sharing for Safeguarding Practitioners 2018](#).
- It is always best practice to seek consent from child/ young person and parent/ carers, and to explain why you are seeking it except for the exceptions cited below.
- Where children and young people are over 16, special consideration should be given in consultation with the DSL and Deputy about consent from parent/ carer on a case by case and individualised basis which takes relationship, safety, wellbeing, and special educational needs and mental health into account.

There may be times when it is necessary to share information without consent such as:

- To gain consent would place the child and young person at risk,
- by doing so will compromise a criminal investigation,
- It cannot be reasonably expected that a practitioner gains consent,
- or, if by sharing information it will enhance the safeguarding of a child and young person in a timely manner, but it is not possible to gain consent.

There are also times when Love Squared will not provide a child or young person's personal data where the serious harm test under legislation is met, (by sharing the information the child and young person may be at further risk). When in doubt, Love Squared will seek further professional advice.

Sharing should always be done on the basis that it is: **necessary, proportionate, relevant, accurate, timely and secure.**

Identifying and monitoring the needs of vulnerable children and young people in collaboration with stakeholders

The DSL and Deputy DSL will regularly review and monitor those young people who have been identified as vulnerable. This can include reviewing attendance, behaviour, attainment and safeguarding incidents. This is to ensure that:

- Proportionate and early interventions can be taken to promote the safety and welfare of the young person and prevent escalation of harm.
- Information about vulnerable children and young people is shared with wider team and stakeholders at local authorities, schools and other stakeholders to promote the best possible outcomes for that individual child and young person.
- Children and young people who currently have, or have had, a social worker will have their progress and attainment reviewed and additional support including academic where this is relevant in educational placements will be provided to help them reach their full potential.
- Reasonable adjustments are made in relation to school-based interventions – for example responding to behaviour.

When we do not feel we can meet a child and young person's needs or when a partner school is considering suspension or exclusion

At Love Squared, as a not for profit mental health organisation who are not a school, we would not suspend or exclude a child or young person. However, when a school we work with is considering suspending or permanently excluding a child and young person where additional vulnerability is identified it is important that the child and young person's welfare is a paramount consideration and we should play a proactive role in supporting a school to think about the child and young person's wellbeing as well as the impact on wider family.

Thoughts to draw on in discussion and liaison might be:

- whether a statutory assessment should be considered in line with the principles of [Children Act 1989](#),
- that decisions are made in an anti-discriminatory manner in line with the [Equality Act 2010](#) (including having regard to the [SEND Code of Practice](#))
- and takes into consideration the child and young person's rights under the [Human Rights Act 1998](#).

- That Interventions should be consistent with statutory guidance [School suspensions and permanent exclusions - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-suspensions-and-permanent-exclusions)
- An assessment of need should be undertaken with multi-agency partners with a view to mitigate any identified risk of harm, in line with the section on Identifying the Needs of Vulnerable children and young people.
- If the child and young person is subject to a child protection plan or where there is an existing child protection file, that a multi agency risk-assessment meeting prior to making the decision to exclude.
- In the event of a one-off serious incident resulting in an immediate decision to exclude, the risk assessment *must* be completed prior to convening a meeting of the relevant school's governing body.
- That similar guiding principles of risk assessment takes place with the young adult at the centre of the process when the young person is 18 or over, should take place in liaison with adult social care and/or other relevant stakeholders.

At Love Squared, there might be rare circumstances, where we do not feel we can safely meet a child and young person's needs, or support them to thrive even when they want to continue working with us. In these circumstances, we should proactively seek to work collaboratively with stakeholders and partners to look at all the options and prioritise their safety and wellbeing, and work to find alternatives. If this is a contracted placement where the local authority is using it as part of a bespoke package, then this might mean requesting an emergency meeting, an early EHCP review, depending on what is most appropriate.

Whistleblowing Procedures and allegations raised about professionals in relation to Safeguarding and Child Protection

These procedures are also located in our Staff Code of Conduct.

Concerns that a reported concern is not being adequately dealt with.

If you are not happy with how the DSL or DDSL is handling any aspect of a safeguarding concern, we would ask you to inform them directly, and if they cannot resolve your concerns in way that you are satisfied with, we will refer your concerns on to a member of the Love Squared board who follow up on this and inform you of a time frame of response. You can contact the relevant board member, by emailing Maddie@lovesquared.org.uk and requesting a confidential exchange with Lucy Reynolds on the board.

We actively encourage any practitioners with reasonable concerns to draw attention to them, and would consider any punitive action against the practitioner as a result of this to be utterly unacceptable, and to be counter to whistleblowing legislation, and to our aims of being a best practice provider. You should feel listened to, respected, and comfortable when discussing your concerns. If you are not made to feel this way, then this should be included in your reference to the board and should be considered by the Board as a potential grievance matter against the DSL/DDSL. Please see Love Squared Grievance Policy and Disciplinary Policy.

If you feel an external agency is not dealing with a concern adequately, then please discuss immediately with DSL/ DDSL and see Escalation Procedures and Policy guidance in the Escalation section below.

Safeguarding concerns and allegations about a professional including foster carers

Team must report any concerns or allegations about a professional's behaviour that may meet the harm threshold (including colleagues, senior staff, volunteers, and other stakeholders including foster carers) where they may have:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child and young person or may have harmed a child and young person.
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child and young person.
- behaved towards a child or children and young people in a way that indicates he or she may pose a risk of harm to children and young people; or
- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children and young people.

Team must report any direct or indirect/ secondary accusations which a young person has made about themselves (e.g. you should immediately self-refer if you are the subject of the accusation) to the DSL immediately even if this is retracted immediately.

Immediate action must be taken on the same working day:

- Do not speak to the individual it concerns.
- Allegations or concerns about colleagues and visitors must be reported directly to the DSL who will follow guidance in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023, Part four: Allegations of abuse made against teachers and other staff) but would normally involve a same day consultation with the LADO within 12 hours. The DSL should always check with LADO on the same day.
- If the concern relates to DSL or the director of the organisation, it should be reported to the [Local Authority Designated Officer \(LADO\)](#) and they will decide on any action required and the board of Love Squared notified after consultation with the LADO.
- If there is a conflict of interest which inhibits this process of reporting, staff can report directly to the LADO.
- Allegations regarding foster carers or anyone in a position of trust working or volunteering with children and young people should be referred to the LADO on the day that the allegation is reported. The allocated social worker should also be informed on the day.
- Love Squared should not undertake any investigation unless the LADO advises this but then should follow the investigation process laid out.

If you have any safeguarding concerns about a practitioner, a member of the team, or another adult with whom we work, or if an allegation has been made against them, you should inform the DSL immediately. Your concerns will be respected, listened to, and dealt with in confidence and as a matter of high priority.

Low level concerns about professionals

This should be read in conjunction with the team Code of Conduct and Keeping children Safe in Education 2023. **A low level concern is not insignificant.** Love Squared works to create an open and transparent culture in which all low level concerns are dealt with promptly and appropriately. Sharing all concerns and dealing with them appropriately ensures we identify problematic behaviour early, minimise risk of abuse and ensure professional boundaries.

A low level concern is any concern – no matter how small, and even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a ‘nagging doubt’ - that an adult working in or on behalf of Love Squared may have acted in a way that:

- is inconsistent with the team code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work and
- does not meet the harm threshold or is otherwise not serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO.

Examples of such behaviour could include, but are not limited to:

- being over friendly with young people
- taking photographs of children on their mobile phone, contrary to Love Squared policy
- engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door, or
- humiliating pupils.

It is crucial that all low-level concerns are shared with the DSL. This process should be used for all concerns about professional conduct which do not meet the harm threshold set out at the beginning of this section.

- Reports should be made to the DSL/Deputy DSL (or the Board of Trustees of Love Squared if it is regarding the DSL). Love Squared will create an environment where team are encouraged and feel confident to self-refer where they have found themselves in a situation where they feel that they have acted inappropriately.
- The DSL will then make the decision on next appropriate actions. The DSL will handle and respond to such concerns sensitively and proportionately when they are raised
- The DSL will address unprofessional behaviour and support the individual to correct it at an early stage providing a responsive, sensitive, and proportionate handling of such concerns when they are raised.
- If there is any doubt as to whether the information which has been shared about a member of the team as a low-level concern in fact meets the harm threshold, the DSL will consult with the LADO.
- Review and correct any deficits and learning in regards to safeguarding processes.

All low level concerns will be recorded in writing and held securely in line with UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018.

Records will be reviewed so that potential patterns of inappropriate, problematic or concerning behaviour can be identified. Where a pattern of such behaviour is identified, the organisation will decide on a course of action, either through its disciplinary procedures or where a pattern of behaviour moves from a low level concern to meeting the harm threshold, in which case it will be referred to the LADO. Consideration should also be given to whether there are wider cultural issues within the organisation that enabled the behaviour to occur and where appropriate policies could be revised, or extra training delivered to minimise the risk of it happening again.

Information about a low level concern regarding a contractor or member of staff will be retained until the individual leaves our employment.

Responding to low level concerns

If the concern has been raised via a third party, the DSL or DDSL will collect as much evidence as possible by speaking:

- directly to the person who raised the concern, unless it has been raised anonymously, and
- to the individual involved and any witnesses.

The information collected will help them to categorise the type of behaviour and determine what further action may need to be taken. This information will be recorded in writing along with the rationale for their decisions and action taken.

Escalation Procedures

Love Squared works within and adheres to South West Child Protection Procedures as well as to escalation procedures in other local authorities in which case these should be proactively sought. In cases where professionals in different agencies dispute the handling of a safeguarding issue, Love Squared team members should immediately discuss with the DSL/ DDSL and initial discussion and attempts should be made to resolve the dispute informally, unless this might pose harm to the child and young person. There is detailed guidance contained within the BSCB Escalation framework and the flowchart contained on the BSCB Escalation Policy should be used to guide DSL actions and correct monitoring forms and procedures.

Details can be found here:

<https://bristolsafeguarding.org/media/1176/escalation-procedure.pdf>

The stages of the Flowchart: Escalation Procedure:

For professionals with Child Protection or child welfare concerns:

[STAGE 1] Professional is unhappy with decision or response from another agency following referral/ contact

[STAGE 2] Professional discusses with manager/ named agency lead for safeguarding in their own agency Manager/ named lead/ Safeguarding Advisor - referring agency discusses concern response with their opposite number in the other agency Has the disagreement been resolved to both agencies' satisfaction?

[STAGE 3] Concern discussed with their relevant/ line manager: Lead for child protection/ safeguarding will liaise with their equivalent, once notified, to enable the situation to be addressed at a senior management level and action to resolve the concern agreed. Has the disagreement been resolved to both agencies' satisfaction?

[STAGE 4] If concerns continue, the child protection/ safeguarding lead will inform the BSCB Service Manager who will consider whether the decision should be reviewed. Concerned professional advised of outcome by named professional: Exit process Has the disagreement been resolved to both agencies' satisfaction?

[STAGE 5] If concerns continue BSCB Service Manager will refer the situation to the Chair of the BSCB who will either: 1. Provide Mediation or, 2. In more complex situations convene a BSCB resolution panel to address the situation and inform those involved of a final binding decision.

Notes : At all stages decisions must be recorded in writing and shared with relevant personnel (see monitoring form to be used from STAG

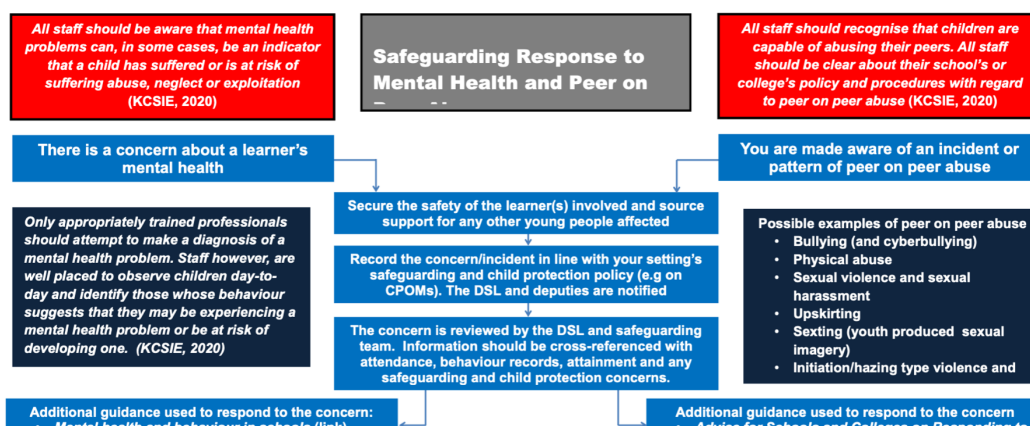
[BSCB Resolution of professional disagreements – Monitoring Form](#)

This form can be found on <https://bristolsafeguarding.org/media/1176/escalation-procedure.pdf>

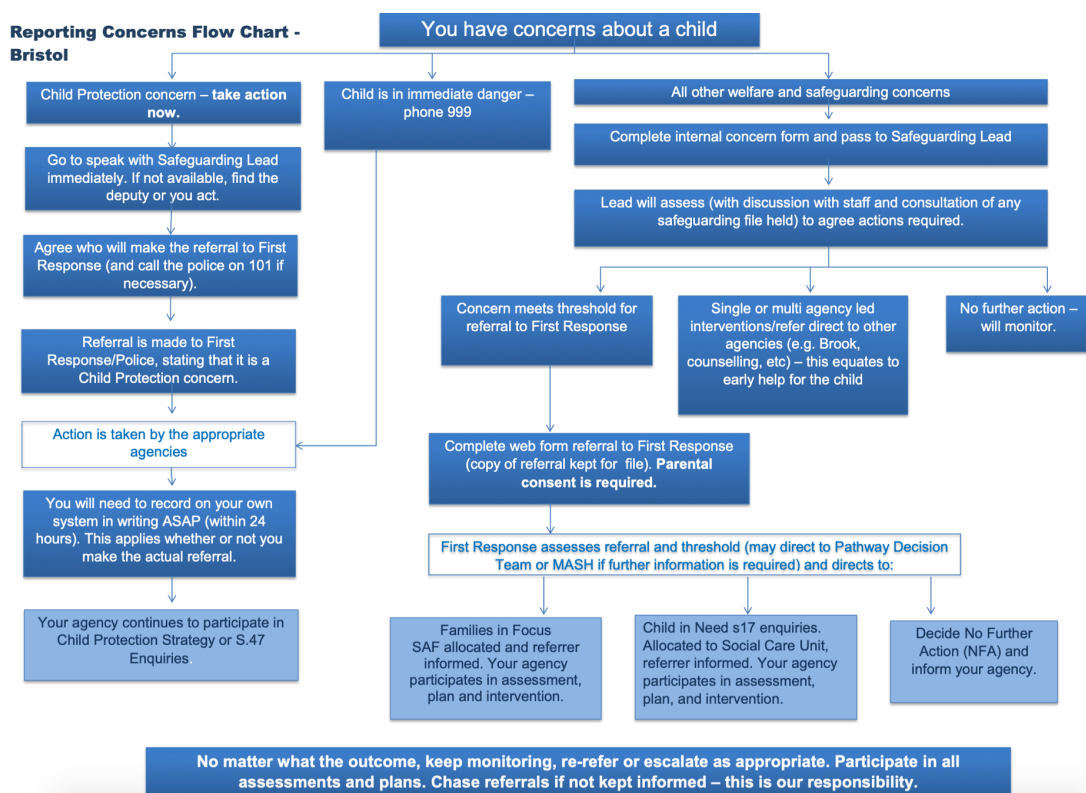
This policy should be understood by team in context of other relevant policies as explained, and should be reviewed and updated every twelve months. During the ongoing Covid -19, this policy must be understood in relation to the additional Covid 19 safeguarding annex, which is an additional supplement to this safeguarding policy.

Appendices

Appendix A - Safeguarding Response to Mental Health on Child on Child Abuse.



Appendix B - Reporting Concerns about a Child



Appendix C - Online Safety Further Contacts, Support Services and Advice.

- **From Annex D of Keeping Children Safe in Education:**

There is a wealth of information available to support schools, organisations, colleges and parents/carers to keep children safe online. The following list is not exhaustive but should provide a useful starting point:

Advice for governing bodies/proprietors and senior leaders

- [Childnet](#) provide guidance for schools and organisations on cyberbullying
- [Educateagainsthate](#) provides practical advice and support on protecting children from extremism and radicalisation
- [London Grid for Learning](#) provides advice on all aspects of a school, organisation or college's online safety arrangements
- [NSPCC](#) provides advice on all aspects of a school, organisation or college's online safety arrangements

- [Safer recruitment consortium](#) “guidance for safe working practice”, which may help ensure team behaviour policies are robust and effective
- [Searching screening and confiscation](#) is departmental advice for schools on searching children and confiscating items such as mobile phones
- [South West Grid for Learning](#) provides advice on all aspects of a school, organisation or college’s online safety arrangements
- [Use of social media for online radicalisation](#) - A briefing note for schools on how social media is used to encourage travel to Syria and Iraq
- UK Council for Internet Safety have provided advice on, and an [Online Safety Audit Tool](#) to help mentors of trainee teachers and newly qualified teachers induct mentees and provide ongoing support, development and monitoring
- Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) [Online safety guidance if you own or manage an online platform](#) provides practical steps on how companies can embed safety into the design of their online platforms. It offers information on common platform features and functions (such as private messaging) and their risks, as well as steps that can be taken to manage that risk.
- Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) [A business guide for protecting children on your online platform](#) provides guidance to businesses on how to protect children on their online platform. It outlines existing regulatory requirements and provides best practice advice on how to protect children’s personal data, ensure content is appropriate for the age of users, ensure positive user-to-user interactions and address child sexual exploitation and abuse.

Remote education, virtual lessons and live streaming

- [Case studies](#) on remote education practice are available for schools to learn from each other
- [Departmental guidance on safeguarding and remote education](#) including planning remote education strategies and teaching remotely
- [London Grid for Learning](#) guidance, including platform specific advice
- [National cyber security centre](#) guidance on choosing, configuring and deploying video conferencing
- [National cyber security centre](#) guidance on how to set up and use video conferencing
- [UK Safer Internet Centre](#) guidance on safe remote learning [Support for children](#)
- [Childline](#) for free and confidential advice
- [UK Safer Internet Centre](#) to report and remove harmful online content
- [CEOP](#) for advice on making a report about online abuse
[Parental support](#)
- [Childnet](#) offers a toolkit to support parents and carers of children of any age to start discussions about their online life, to set boundaries around online behaviour and technology use, and to find out where to get more help and support
- [Commonsensemedia](#) provide independent reviews, age ratings, & other information about all types of media for children and their parents
- [Government advice](#) about protecting children from specific online harms such as child sexual abuse, sexting, and cyberbullying

- [Government advice](#) about security and privacy settings, blocking unsuitable content, and parental controls
 - [Internet Matters](#) provide age-specific online safety checklists, guides on how to set parental controls on a range of devices, and a host of practical tips to help children get the most out of their digital world
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- [Let's Talk About It](#) provides advice for parents and carers to keep children safe from online radicalisation
 - [London Grid for Learning](#) provides support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online, including tips to keep primary aged children safe online
 - [Stopitnow](#) resource from [The Lucy Faithfull Foundation](#) can be used by parents and carers who are concerned about someone's behaviour, including children who may be displaying concerning sexual behaviour (not just about online)
 - [National Crime Agency/CEOP Thinkuknow](#) provides support for parents and carers to keep their children safe online
 - [Net-aware](#) provides support for parents and carers from the NSPCC and O2, including a guide to social networks, apps and games
 - [Parentzone](#) provides help for parents and carers on how to keep their children safe online
 - [Parent info](#) from Parentzone and the National Crime Agency provides support and guidance for parents from leading experts and organisations
 - [UK Safer Internet Centre](#) provide tips, advice, guides and other resources to help keep children safe online

Appendix D - Role and duties of DSL and DDSL

Duties are further outlined in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023

- The DSL is a senior member of team who undertakes lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection within the setting. They are given additional time, funding, training resources and support needed to carry out the role effectively.
- The DSL works relevant strategic leads, taking lead responsibility for promoting best outcomes by knowing the welfare, safeguarding and child protection issues that children and young people in need are experiencing or have experienced, and identifying the impact that these issues might be having on child and young person's attendance, engagement and achievement at school or college.
- Activities include the management of work undertaken by any Deputy DSLs.
- Manages early identification of vulnerability of children and young people and their families from team through cause for concerns or notifications. This will ensure detailed, accurate, secure written records of concerns and referrals.
- Manages referrals to local safeguarding partners where children and young people with additional needs have been identified. These can include those –
 - who need a social worker and may be experiencing abuse or neglect;
 - requiring mental health support;
 - who may benefit from early help;

- where there is a radicalisation concern;
- where a crime may have been committed.

The DSL will also:

- Work with others – acting as a point of contact for outside agencies about safeguarding.
- Support and advise other team in making referrals to other agencies.
- When required, liaise with the case manager and the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) in relation to child protection cases which concern a team member.
- Coordinate safeguarding training and raise awareness and understanding to the school community around policies and practice in relation to safeguarding.
- Help promote best outcomes by sharing information about vulnerable children and young people with relevant team. This includes ensuring that team:
 - know who these children and young people are,
 - understand their academic progress and attainment and maintain a culture of high aspirations for this cohort.
 - Are supported to identify the challenges that children and young people in this group might face.
 - Provide additional academic support or make reasonable adjustments to help children and young people who have **or have had** a social worker to reach their potential.
- Ensure the communication of the Safeguarding/Child Protection information when a child and young person moves on to a new setting within 5 days for in year transfer or the first 5 days of the start of a new term if not before.
- Ensure appropriate safeguarding cover and availability during term time/ any out of hours/out of term activities managed by Love Squared.

Appendix E - Merton/ London Contacts

- Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership - <https://www.mertonscp.org.uk>
- **Children's Social Care**
 - Referrals to children's social care can be made to MASH by completing a form via [this link](#) and emailing it to mash@merton.gov.uk, you can also call on 0208 545 4226/4227 to discuss possible referrals or to notify social care of an urgent situation.
- **Adult social services** - First Response Team Merton
 - **Telephone:** 020 8545 3983/020 8545 4388
 - **Email:** safeguarding.adults@merton.gov.uk
 - **Out of Hours (anytime outside of Mon-Fri 9am-5pm and on Bank Holidays) call:** 08456 18976
- **ChildLine** is the free confidential helpline for children and young people in the UK. Call 0800 1111.
 - The [NSPCC](#) has a helpline 0808 800 5000 for children and young people, and a website with helpful advice about what to do if you are worried or scared.
 - To speak with a social worker, phone: 020 8545 4226 or 020 8770 5000 (out of hours). You can also email mash@merton.gov.uk

- All families and those working alongside them are able to access information on the range of services and provision available in the borough by accessing our local service directories at www.merton.gov.uk/FSD
- **Other local agencies in Merton:**
<https://www.mertonscp.org.uk/children-young-people/local-services-other-useful-information/>
- **The Early Help Support Coordinators can offer support to;**
 - assess child and family needs utilising Effective Support Model
 - guide the undertaking of an early help assessment
 - convene a 'Team Around the Family' (this will include the offer of attending first meeting)
 - develop family plans/identify appropriate interventions
 - identify relevant support services / provide information on criteria and referral routes
 - To contact please email fsd@merton.gov.uk
- **CAMHS**
 - Where a child or young person is experiencing mental health difficulties or there are concerns regarding their emotional wellbeing, in the first instance consultation should take place via the **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) consultation line**. The consultation line can be reached via the **CAMHS Single Point of Access** on 0800 2922505.
- **FAMILY WELLBEING CASE WORK**
 - The **Family Wellbeing Case Practitioners** work to a whole family approach. Referrals to this one to one family support can be made where there are multiple / complex needs at level 3, that require a coordinated multi agency response to whole family needs and where there is evidence that needs cannot be met within existing accessible resources.
 - A referral can be made by completing the form via [this link](#).
- **Consultations**
 - If you are unsure about what support is available to families presenting with needs at Level 3 or above, you can contact the Children and Families' Hub and speak to a duty Social Worker, who can advise you of possible next steps. This can be done by calling 0208 545 4226/4227
- **MSCP Effective Support for Families in Merton Full Document**
<https://www.mertonscp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/MSCP-Effective-Support-for-Families-in-Merton-Full-Documents-Aug-21.pdf>
- **Merton Adults Safeguarding Board Website**
- **Merton Adult Support Services Directory**
- **Merton Domestic Violence One Stop Shop**
 - The one stop shop is a confidential service for people experiencing domestic violence or abuse in Merton. Open Monday from 9.30am – 12.30pm (closed Bank Holidays) For more information please telephone: 07852 155945 or 07950 138932

Appendix F - Helpful Bristol contacts for safeguarding concerns.

If a child is at immediate risk call the POLICE	POLICE 999	
To make an URGENT referral, i.e.A child is likely to suffer or is suffering significant harm, call children’s social care. For young people aged 18 or over please contact adult social care:	FIRST RESPONSE For Children - 0117 9036444 Adult social care - If you are worried that a young person aged 18 or over with support or care needs is at risk of harm/ abuse - 0117 922 2700 (Care Direct) Adult social care Emergency Duty Team on 01454 615 165	
Out of Hours	EMERGENCY DUTY TEAM - 01454 615 165	
To make a NON-URGENT referral, contact FIRST RESPONSE using the online form (must have parental/carer consent).	FIRST RESPONSE Online form https://www.bristol.gov.uk/social-care-health/make-a-referral-to-first-response For referral form for adult social services: https://www.bristol.gov.uk/social-care-health/form-contact-adult-care-services	
To raise concerns and ask for advice about radicalisation (also contact First Response).	PREVENT DUTY - 01278 647466 PreventSW@avonandsomerset.police.uk	
To liaise with the specialist Safeguarding Police unit	Lighthouse Safeguarding Unit – Avon and Somerset police 01278 649228	
Families in Focus (Targeted Support)- For advice and guidance about whether to make a referral		
South 0117 9037770	East Central 0117 3576460	North 0117 3521499

If you have concerns about a professional working with a child...

To raise concerns and ask for guidance in relation to the conduct of someone who works with children	Local Authority Designated Officer - (LADO) Nicola Laird T: 0117 9037795
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For information, advice, and guidance in relation to safeguarding policy and procedures.

<u>Safeguarding in Education Team</u> T: 0117 9222710 E: Safeguardingineducationteam@bristol.gov.uk
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South Advisor Helen Macdonald helen.macdonald@bristol.gov.uk	East Central Advisor Jess Curtis jessica.curtis@bristol.gov.uk	North Advisor Sarah Wooding sarah.wooding@bristol.gov.uk
Child sexual exploitation & child criminal exploitation	Operation Topaz (Avon and Somerset Police) https://www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/forms/vul	
Safer Options Team - Education inclusion managers		
South Ingrid.Hooper@bristol.gov.uk	East Central Calum.Paton@bristol.gov.uk	North Ross.Moody@bristol.gov.uk
Child Missing from Education	Bristol City Council – Education Welfare https://www.bristol.gov.uk/schools-learning-early-years/children-missing-education-cme	
Children affected by child marriage	child marriage Unit T: (0) 20 7008 0151 E: fmu@fco.gov.uk	
Online Safety Advice	Professional Online Safeguarding Helpline T: 0344 381 4772 E: helpline@saferinternet.org.uk	
Reporting online sexual abuse and grooming	Child Exploitation and Online Protection command https://www.ceop.police.uk/ceop-reporting/	
FGM advice	NSPCC FGM Helpline T: 0800 028 3550 E: fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk	
Domestic Abuse support (Bristol)	Directorate of local and national services https://www.bristol.gov.uk/crime-emergencies/abuse-violence	
Young Carers – advice and support.	Carers Support Centre T: 0117 958 9980 W: https://www.carerssupportcentre.org.uk/young-carers/contact-young-carers/	
Whistleblowing professional policy	NSPCC Whistleblowing hotline T: 0800 028 0285 E: help@nspcc.org.uk	
Mental health Advice (Local)		
Primary Mental Health Specialists (advice) Child and Adolescent Mental Health		
South 0117 3408121	East Central 0117 3408600	North 0117 3546800
Advice around harmful sexualised behaviour.	Be Safe 0117 3408700 W: https://cchp.nhs.uk/cchp/explore-cchp/be-safe	
	Brook Traffic Light Tool https://legacy.brook.org.uk/brook_tools/traffic/index.html?syn_partner=	

South West Local Authorities Contacts

Local Authority in which the child is resident	Contact details	Out of hours/ Weekend
South Gloucestershire	<p>Access and Response Team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 01454 866000 - Monday to Thursday 9.00 – 5.00, 4.30 on Friday • accessandresponse@southglos.gov.uk <p>Website: Access and Response Teams (ART) South Gloucestershire Council (southglos.gov.uk)</p>	<p>Emergency Duty Team</p> <p>01454 615165</p>
North Somerset	<p>Single Point of Access</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 01275 888 808 –Monday-Thursday 8.45am-5pm, Friday 8.45am-4.30pm <p>Website: Children, young people and families North Somerset Council (n-somerset.gov.uk)</p>	
Bath and North East Somerset (BANES)	<p>Children's Social Work Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 01225 396312 or 01225 396313 weekdays, 8.30am to 5pm, except Fridays when we're closed from 4.30pm • ChildCare_Duty@bathnes.gov.uk <p>Website: Report a concern about a child Bath and North East Somerset Council (bathnes.gov.uk) Report a Concern about an Adult 0300 247 0201 and select option 3 (our phone lines are open Monday to Thursday, 8.30am to 5pm, and Fridays, 8.30am to 4.30pm) https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/tell-us-about-adult-being-abused-or-neglected</p>	

Appendix G - Other Important areas of safeguarding consideration

These topics are themes that can impact on children and young people and families, there are specific areas of safeguarding that the setting has statutory responsibilities to address which are hyperlinked:

- children and young people in the court system
- children and young people affected by parental offending/imprisonment.
- [children who are absent from education](#) – including persistent absence.
- [Child Exploitation](#) (including both Child Sexual Exploitation and Child Criminal Exploitation and county lines, modern day slavery and trafficking)
- Cybercrime
- [Domestic Abuse](#)
- Homelessness
- So-called Honour based Abuse (including Female Genital Mutilation and child marriage),
- [Online Safety](#)
- [Mental health](#)
- [child on child/ child on child abuse](#):
 - Bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying).
 - Abuse in intimate personal relationships between peers.
 - Physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse).
 - Sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault;(this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence).
 - Sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be standalone or part of a broader pattern of abuse.
 - Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party.
 - Consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nude images and or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery).
 - Upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress, or alarm; and
 - Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals (this could include activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element).
- [Preventing Radicalisation \(The Prevent Duty\)](#)
- [Serious Youth Violence](#)
- Substance Misuse
- [Private Fostering](#)
- [Young Carers](#)

Additional information about key safeguarding areas can also be found in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023; Annex B); the [NSPCC website - Types of Abuse](#);

And for localised resources for education settings [The Bristol Safeguarding in Education website](#).

Serious Youth Violence

To be read in conjunction with the above section around Child Criminal Exploitation. There has been local guidance issued on the issue of [‘Offensive Weapons in Education Settings’](#).

It is important to note that should a weapon be used or there is threat of use, the police should be called immediately.

- The same day a weapon is found Safer Options should be called for a multi-disciplinary assessment of risk.
- Whilst it is acknowledged that the decision to pause sessions/ services remains with the DSL it is recommended that consultation with the Safer Options Education Inclusion Manager is made so as not to further put the child and young person at further risk of harm.
- Love Squared will liaise with the commissioning agency/ or relevant stakeholders to check that police are notified through the multi-agency discussion held at the ‘Out of Court Disposals Panel’ to prevent young people unnecessarily getting a criminal record.

Preventing Radicalisation - The Prevent duty

All schools and colleges are subject to a duty under section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (the CTSA 2015), in the exercise of their functions, to have “due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism”.¹¹⁰ This duty is known as the Prevent duty. The Prevent duty should be seen as part of schools’ and colleges’ wider safeguarding obligations. Designated safeguarding leads and other senior leaders should familiarise themselves with the revised [Prevent duty guidance: for England and Wales](#), especially paragraphs 57-76, which are specifically concerned with schools (and also covers childcare).

The guidance is set out in terms of four general themes:

- risk assessment,
- working in partnership,
- staff training, and
- IT policies.

Domestic Abuse

Operation Encompass is a national operation where local police forces notify when the police are called to an incident of domestic abuse. Avon and Somerset have their own version of this and will notify education settings whenever they have responded to a domestic abuse incident. This will enable the education setting to take proactive action and reasonable adjustments in relation to behaviour management and achieving positive educational outcomes.

Under the current information sharing protocol, the education setting **is not permitted** in sharing this information without seeking consent from Avon and Somerset police in case this can put a victim and children and young people at further risk of harm. The only exception to this is when information

is shared with new education setting (part of statutory duties in relation to transfer of the Safeguarding/ Child Protection file, Keeping Children Safe in Education). Additional instructions around this are sent out with every single notification.

- Education settings must have signed up to a Police Safeguarding Notification Briefing to receive these.
- Each setting should have at least 2 members of a trained team able to receive and act upon these notifications.
- Each setting should promote an open culture of safeguarding to enable children and young people and families to disclose and feel safe to talk about their experiences and what support may be required.

Private Fostering

A private fostering arrangement is one that is made privately (without the involvement of a local authority) for the care of a child and young person:

- under the age of 16 years (under 18, if disabled)
- by someone other than a parent or close relative(*Close family relative is defined as a 'grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt' and includes half-siblings and step-parents; it does not include great-aunts or uncles, great grandparents or cousins.)
- with the intention that it should last for 28 days or more.

Cases of private fostering arrangements must be reported to children and young people's social care to ensure that needs are adequately made.

Statutory guidance states that this should be done at least 6 weeks before the arrangement is due to start or as soon as you are made aware of the arrangements. Not to do so is a criminal offence.

Further support and reasonable adjustments should be made by the education setting to promote achievement of positive educational outcomes and this should be supported by Love Squared even where we have no responsibility for education.

Young Carers

A young carer is a person under 18 who regularly provides emotional and/or practical support and assistance for a family member who is disabled, physically or mentally unwell or who misuses substances.

The setting will support children and young people who are young carers to appropriate support. To find out what is available locally visit the Bristol City Council Website -

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/social-care-health/support-for-young-carers>

The Carers Support Centre can undertake an assessment of need and provide bespoke support.

<https://www.carerssupportcentre.org.uk/young-carers/making-a-referral/>

Alternative support centres and services should be sought proactively in other local authorities where we work and support children and young people.

Use of reasonable force and our approach

As an organisation, we do not use restraint of any kind except a) where this is specified as being necessary for example by multi-agency teams with specialist health and behavioural staffing input, individualised safe hold training to best practise standards through the requesting team should be sought for practitioners with existing special educational experiences but only ever deployed where it is essential to keep a child and young person safe and with training and input from specialist partners such as specialist paediatric and nursing and behavioural psychology teams and within their own risk assessment or b) except in an emergency to prevent severe injury to a child and young person if possible.

‘Reasonable force’ refers to the physical contact to restrain and control children and young people using no more force than is needed.’ The use of reasonable force is down to the professional judgement of the staff member concerned and will be determined by individual circumstances and the vulnerability of any child with Special Educational Needs or Disability (SEND) will be considered.

- The use of reasonable force will be minimised through positive and proactive behaviour support and de-escalation and will follow government guidance ([Use of Reasonable Force in Schools 2013](#); [Reducing the need for restraint and restrictive intervention, 2019](#)).
- There is robust recording of any incident where positive handling or restraint has been used. Further review of the incident is carried out to reflect on how the incident could be avoided, this will involve the child and young person and their family.

Appendix H - KCSIE (2023) Part 5 - Child-on-child sexual violence and sexual harassment

445. This part of the statutory guidance is about how schools and colleges should respond to all signs, reports and concerns of child-on-child sexual violence and sexual harassment, including those that have happened outside of the school or college premises, and/or online (what to look out for and indicators of abuse are set out in Part one of this guidance). As set out in Part one of this guidance, all staff working with children are advised to maintain an attitude of ‘it could happen here’, and this is especially important when considering child-on-child abuse.

What schools and colleges should be aware of

446. Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two or more children of any age and sex, from primary through to secondary stage and into college. It can occur also through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children. Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap; they can occur online and face-to-face (both physically and verbally) and are never acceptable. Schools and colleges should be aware of the importance of:

- making clear that there is a zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment, that it is never acceptable, and it will not be tolerated. It should never be passed off as “banter”, “just having a laugh”, “a part of growing up” or “boys being boys”. Failure to do so can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviour, an unsafe environment and in worst case scenarios a culture that normalises abuse, leading to children accepting it as normal and not coming forward to report it.
- recognising, acknowledging, and understanding the scale of harassment and abuse and that even if there are no reports it does not mean it is not happening, it may be the case that it is just not being reported.
- challenging physical behaviour (potentially criminal in nature) such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia, pulling down trousers, flicking bras and lifting up skirts. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them.

447. Children who are victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment wherever it happens, may find the experience stressful and distressing. This will, in all likelihood, adversely affect their educational attainment and will be exacerbated if the alleged perpetrator(s) attends the same school or college.

448. Whilst any report of sexual violence or sexual harassment should be taken seriously, staff should be aware it is more likely that girls will be the victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment and more likely it will be perpetrated by boys. Children

with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are also three times more likely to be abused than their peers.

449. Ultimately, it is essential that all victims are reassured that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe.

Sexual violence

450. It is important that schools and colleges are aware of sexual violence and the fact children can, and sometimes do, abuse other children in this way and that it can happen both inside and outside of school/college. When referring to sexual violence in this advice, we do so in the context of child-on-child sexual violence.

When referring to sexual violence we are referring to sexual offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 as described below:

Rape: A person (A) commits an offence of rape if: he intentionally penetrates the vagina, anus or mouth of another person (B) with his penis, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

Assault by Penetration: A person (A) commits an offence if: s/he intentionally penetrates the vagina or anus of another person (B) with a part of her/his body or anything else, the penetration is sexual, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

Sexual Assault: A person (A) commits an offence of sexual assault if: s/he intentionally touches another person (B), the touching is sexual, B does not consent to the touching and A does not reasonably believe that B consents. (NOTE- Schools and colleges should be aware that sexual assault covers a very wide range of behaviour so a single act of kissing someone without consent, or touching someone's bottom/breasts/genitalia without consent, can still constitute sexual assault.)

Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent: A person (A) commits an offence if: s/he intentionally causes another person (B) to engage in an activity, the activity is sexual, B does not consent to engaging in the activity, and A does not reasonably believe that B consents. (NOTE – this could include forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party.)

What is consent?

Consent is about having the freedom and capacity to choose. Consent to sexual activity may be given to one sort of sexual activity but not another, e.g. to vaginal but not anal sex or penetration with conditions, such as wearing a condom. Consent can be withdrawn at any time during sexual activity and each time activity occurs. Someone consents to vaginal, anal or oral penetration only if s/he agrees by choice to that penetration and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice.

- a child under the age of 13 can never consent to any sexual activity
- the age of consent is 16
- sexual intercourse without consent is rape.

451. When referring to sexual harassment we mean 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature' that can occur online and offline and both inside and outside of school/college. When we reference sexual harassment, we do so in the context of child-on-child sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is likely to: violate a child's dignity, and/or make them feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated and/or create a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment.

452. Whilst not intended to be an exhaustive list, sexual harassment can include:

- sexual comments, such as: telling sexual stories, making lewd comments, making sexual remarks about clothes and appearance and calling someone sexualised names
- sexual "jokes" or taunting
- physical behaviour, such as: deliberately brushing against someone, interfering with someone's clothes. Schools and colleges should be considering when any of this crosses a line into sexual violence – it is important to talk to and consider the experience of the victim.
- displaying pictures, photos or drawings of a sexual nature
- upskirting (this is a criminal offence), and
- online sexual harassment. This may be standalone, or part of a wider pattern of sexual harassment and/or sexual violence. It may include:

- consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos.¹³⁸ Taking and sharing nude photographs of U18s is a criminal offence. UKCIS Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people provides detailed advice for schools and colleges.
- sharing of unwanted explicit content
- sexualised online bullying
- unwanted sexual comments and messages, including, on social media
- sexual exploitation; coercion and threats, and
- coercing others into sharing images of themselves or performing acts they're not comfortable with online.

453. It is important that schools and colleges consider sexual harassment in broad terms. Sexual harassment (as set out above) creates a culture that, if not challenged, can normalise inappropriate behaviours and provide an environment that may lead to sexual violence.

Harmful sexual behaviour

454. Children's sexual behaviour exists on a wide continuum, ranging from normal and developmentally expected to inappropriate, problematic, abusive and violent. Problematic, abusive and violent sexual behaviour is developmentally inappropriate and may cause developmental damage. A useful umbrella term is "harmful sexual behaviour" (HSB). The term has been widely adopted in child protection and is used in this advice. HSB can occur online and/or face-to-face and can also occur simultaneously between the two. HSB should be considered in a child protection context.

455. When considering HSB, both ages and the stages of development of the children are critical factors. Sexual behaviour between children can be considered harmful if one of the children is much older, particularly if there is more than two years' difference or if one of the children is pre-pubescent and the other is not. However, a younger child can abuse an older child, particularly if they have power over them, for example, if the older child is disabled or smaller in stature. Confidential specialist support and advice on HSB is available from the specialist sexual violence sector and sources are listed in Annex B.

456. It is effective safeguarding practice for the designated safeguarding lead (and their deputies) to have a good understanding of HSB. This could form part of their safeguarding training. This will aid in planning preventative education, implementing preventative measures, drafting and implementing an effective child protection policy and incorporating the approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment into the whole school or college approach to safeguarding.

457. HSB can, in some cases, progress on a continuum. Addressing inappropriate behaviour can be an important intervention that helps prevent problematic, abusive and/or violent behaviour in the future. Children displaying HSB have often experienced their own abuse and trauma. It is important that they are offered appropriate support.

Preventing abuse

458. Effective safeguarding practice is demonstrated when schools and colleges are clear, in advance, about what local processes are in place and what support can be accessed when sexual violence or sexual harassment has occurred. It is important to prepare for this in advance and review this information on a regular basis to ensure it is up to date. As such:

- if required, the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) should discuss the local response to sexual violence and sexual harassment with police and local authority children's social care colleagues in order to prepare the school's or college's policies (especially the child protection policy) and responses, and
- the designated safeguarding lead (and their deputies) should be confident as to what local specialist support is available to support all children involved (including victims and alleged perpetrators) in sexual violence and sexual harassment and be confident as to how to access this support when required.

Specialist support and interventions can be found in Annex B in the additional advice and support section under sexual violence and sexual harassment.

Responding to reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment

459. Part two of this guidance is clear that systems should be in place (and they should be well promoted, easily understood and easily accessible) for children to confidently report abuse, knowing their concerns will be treated seriously.

460. Reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment are likely to be complex and require difficult professional decisions to be made, often quickly and under pressure. Pre- planning, effective training and effective policies will provide schools and colleges with the foundation for a calm, considered and appropriate response to any reports. Governing bodies and proprietors should ensure that the school or college contributes to multi-agency working in line with statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children (and as summarised in Part 2 of this guidance).

461. This part of the guidance does not attempt to provide (nor would it be possible to provide) detailed guidance on what to do in any or every case. The guidance provides effective safeguarding practice and principles for schools and colleges to consider in their decision-making process.

462. Ultimately, any decisions are for the school or college to make on a case-by-case basis, with the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) taking a leading role and using their professional judgement, supported by other agencies, such as local authority children's social care and the police as required.

463. The guidance also provides case studies. These are not intended to offer a step- by-step guide, but to provide an indication of some of the various options that are available to respond to reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment.

Support for schools and colleges

464. Schools and colleges should not feel that they are alone in dealing with sexual violence and sexual harassment.

465. Local authority children's social care and the police will be important partners where a crime might have been committed. Referrals to the police will often be a natural progression of making a referral to local authority children's social care. The designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) should lead the school or college response and should be aware of the local process for referrals to children's social care and making referrals to the police (also see the section "reporting to the police" on page 119 for further information). Schools and colleges may also find the following resources helpful:

- Child Exploitation and Online Protection command: CEOP is a law enforcement agency which aims to keep children and young people safe from sexual exploitation and abuse. Online sexual abuse can be reported on their website and a report made to one of its Child Protection Advisors
- The NSPCC provides a helpline for professionals at 0808 800 5000 and help@nspcc.org.uk. The helpline provides expert advice and support for school and college staff and will be especially useful for the designated safeguarding lead (and their deputies)
- Support from specialist sexual violence sector organisations such as Rape Crisis or The Survivors Trust
- The Anti-Bullying Alliance has developed guidance for schools about Sexual and sexist bullying.
Online: Schools and colleges should recognise that sexual violence and sexual harassment occurring online (either in isolation or in connection with face-to-face incidents) can introduce a number of complex factors. Amongst other things, this can include widespread abuse or harm across a number of social media platforms that leads to repeat victimisation. Online concerns can be especially complicated and support is available from:
- The UK Safer Internet Centre provides an online safety helpline for professionals at 0344 381 4772 and helpline@saferinternet.org.uk. The helpline provides expert advice and support for school and college staff with regard to online safety issues
- Internet Watch Foundation: If the incident/report involves sexual images or videos that have been made and circulated online, the victim can be supported to get the images removed by the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF)
- Childline/IWF *Report Remove* is a free tool that allows children to report nude or sexual images and/or videos of themselves that they think might have been shared online
- UKCIS Sharing nudes and semi-nudes advice: Advice for education settings working with children and young people on responding to reports of children sharing non-consensual nude and semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as sexting and youth produced sexual imagery). Please see footnote 8 for further information
- Thinkuknow from NCA-CEOP provides support for the children's workforce, parents and carers on staying safe online
- LGFL 'Undressed' provided schools advice about how to teach young children about being tricked into getting undressed online in a fun way without scaring them or explaining the motives of sex offenders.

Additional sources of support are listed at the end of Annex B.

The immediate response to a report

Responding to the report

466. It is important to understand that children may not find it easy to tell staff about their abuse verbally. Children can show signs or act in ways that they hope adults will notice and react to. In some cases, the victim may not make a direct report. For example, a friend may make a report, or a member of school or college staff may overhear a conversation that suggests a child has been harmed or a child's own behaviour might indicate that something is wrong. As per Part one of this guidance, if staff have any concerns about a child's welfare, they should act on them immediately rather than wait to be told.

467. The initial response by a school or college to a report from a child is incredibly important. How the school or college responds to a report can encourage or undermine the confidence of future victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment to report or come forward.

468. It is essential that all victims are reassured that they are being taken seriously, regardless of how long it has taken them to come forward, and that they will be supported and kept safe. Abuse that occurs online or outside of the school or college should not be downplayed and should be treated equally seriously. A victim should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting sexual violence or sexual harassment. Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report. It is important to explain that the law is in place to protect children and young people rather than criminalise them, and this should be explained in such a way that avoids alarming or distressing them.

469. As per Part one of this guidance, all staff should be trained to manage a report. Local policies (and training) will dictate exactly how reports should be managed. However, effective safeguarding practice includes:

- if possible, managing reports with two members of staff present, (preferably one of them being the designated safeguarding lead or a deputy)
- careful management and handling of reports that include an online element. Including being aware of searching screening and confiscation advice (for schools) and UKCIS Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people. The key consideration is for staff not to view or forward illegal images of a child. The highlighted advice provides more details on what to do when viewing an image is unavoidable. In some cases, it may be more appropriate to confiscate any devices to preserve any evidence and hand them to the police for inspection
- not promising confidentiality at this initial stage as it is very likely a concern will have to be shared further (for example, with the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) or local authority children's social care) to discuss next steps. Staff should only share the report with those people who are necessary in order to progress it. It is important that the victim understands what the next steps will be and who the report will be passed to

- recognising that a child is likely to disclose to someone they trust: this could be anyone on the school or college staff. It is important that the person to whom the child discloses recognises that the child has placed them in a position of trust. They should be supportive and respectful of the child
- recognising that an initial disclosure to a trusted adult may only be the first incident reported, rather than representative of a singular incident and that trauma can impact memory and so children may not be able to recall all details or timeline of abuse
- keeping in mind that certain children may face additional barriers to telling someone because of their vulnerability, disability, sex, ethnicity, and/or sexual orientation
- listening carefully to the child, reflecting back, using the child's language, being non-judgemental, being clear about boundaries and how the report will be progressed, not asking leading questions and only prompting the child where necessary with open questions – where, when, what, etc. It is important to note that whilst leading questions should be avoided, staff can ask children if they have been harmed and what the nature of that harm was
- considering the best way to make a record of the report. Best practice is to wait until the end of the report and immediately write up a thorough summary. This allows the staff member to devote their full attention to the child and to listen to what they are saying. It may be appropriate to make notes during the report (especially if a second member of staff is present). However, if making notes, staff should be conscious of the need to remain engaged with the child and not appear distracted by the note taking. Either way, it is essential a written record is made.
- only recording the facts as the child presents them. The notes should not reflect the personal opinion of the note taker. Schools and colleges should be aware that notes of such reports could become part of a statutory assessment by local authority children's social care and/or part of a criminal investigation, and
- informing the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy), as soon as practically possible, if the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) is not involved in the initial report.

Considering confidentiality and anonymity

Confidentiality

470. Staff taking a report should never promise confidentiality as it is very likely that it will be in the best interest of the victim to seek advice and guidance from others in order to provide support and engage appropriate agencies.

471. The school or college should only engage staff and agencies who are required to support the children involved and/or be involved in any investigation.

472. The victim may ask the school or college not to tell anyone about the sexual violence or sexual harassment. There are no easy or definitive answers when a victim makes this request. If the victim does not give consent to share information, staff may still lawfully share it, if there is another legal basis under the UK GDPR that applies. For example, the public task basis may apply, where the

overall purposes is to perform a public interest task or exercise official authority, and the task or authority has a clear basis in law. Advice should be sought from the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy), who should consider the following:

- parents or carers should normally be informed (unless this would put the victim at greater risk)
- the basic safeguarding principle is: if a child is at risk of harm, is in immediate danger, or has been harmed, a referral should be made to local authority children's social care, and
- rape, assault by penetration and sexual assaults are crimes. Where a report of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault is made, this should be referred to the police. Whilst the age of criminal responsibility is ten, if the alleged perpetrator is under ten, the starting principle of referring to the police remains. The police will take a welfare, rather than a criminal justice approach, in these cases.

473. Ultimately, the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) will have to balance the victim's wishes against their duty to protect the victim and other children.

474. If the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) decide to go ahead and make a referral to local authority children's social care and/or a report to the police against the victim's wishes, this should be handled extremely carefully, the reasons should be explained to the victim and appropriate specialist support should be offered.

475. Additional information on confidentiality and information sharing is available at Safeguarding Practitioners Information Sharing Advice and NSPCC: Information sharing and confidentiality for practitioners.

Anonymity

476. Where an allegation of sexual violence or sexual harassment is progressing through the criminal justice system, schools and colleges should be aware of anonymity, witness support, and the criminal process in general so they can offer support and act appropriately. 141 Relevant information can be found in: CPS: Safeguarding Children as Victims and Witnesses.

477. As a matter of effective safeguarding practice, schools and colleges should do all they reasonably can to protect the anonymity of any children involved in any report of sexual violence or sexual harassment. Amongst other things, this will mean carefully considering, based on the nature of the report, which staff should know about the report and any support that will be put in place for the children involved.

478. Schools and colleges should also consider the potential impact of social media in facilitating the spreading of rumours and exposing victims' identities. The unique challenges regarding social media are discussed at paragraph 469 along with potential support. In addition, the principles described in Childnet's cyberbullying guidance could be helpful.

Risk assessment

479. When there has been a report of sexual violence, the designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) should make 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 for a report of sexual violence should consider:

- the victim, especially their protection and support
- whether there may have been other victims
- the alleged perpetrator(s)
- all the other children, (and, if appropriate, adult students and staff) at the school or college, especially any actions that are appropriate to protect them from the alleged perpetrator(s), or from future harms, and
- The time and location of the incident, and any action required to make the location safer.

480. Risk assessments should be recorded (paper or electronic) and should be kept under review. At all times, the school or college should be actively considering the risks posed to all their pupils or students and put adequate measures in place to protect

It is not the role of schools and colleges to provide legal advice or support to victims, alleged perpetrators or parents in respect of a criminal justice process. Rather, schools and colleges should be aware of their own position and responsibilities.

481. The designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) should ensure they are engaging with local authority children's social care and specialist services as required. Where there has been a report of sexual violence, it is likely that professional risk assessments by social workers and or sexual violence specialists will be required. The above school or college risk assessment is not intended to replace the detailed assessments of expert professionals. Any such professional assessments should be used to inform the school or college approach to supporting and protecting their pupils or students and updating their own risk assessment.

Action following a report of sexual violence and/or sexual harassment

What to consider:

482. As set out above, sexual violence and sexual abuse can happen anywhere, and all staff working with children are advised to maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here'. Schools and colleges should be aware of and respond appropriately to all reports and concerns about sexual violence and/or sexual harassment both online and offline, including those that have happened outside of the school/college. The designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) is likely to have a complete safeguarding picture and be the most appropriate person to advise on the initial response by the school or college. Important considerations will include:

- the wishes of the victim in terms of how they want to proceed. This is especially important in the context of sexual violence and sexual harassment. 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. This will however need to be balanced with the school's or college's duty and responsibilities to protect other children

- the nature of the alleged incident(s), including whether a crime may have been committed and/or whether HSB has been displayed
- the ages of the children involved
- the developmental stages of the children involved
- any power imbalance between the children. For example, is/are the alleged perpetrator(s) significantly older, more mature, confident and well known social standing? Does the victim have a disability or learning difficulty?
- if the alleged incident is a one-off or a sustained pattern of abuse (sexual abuse can be accompanied by other forms of abuse and a sustained pattern may not just be of a sexual nature)
- that sexual violence and sexual harassment can take place within intimate

Personal relationships between children

- importance of understanding intra familial harms and any necessary support for siblings following incidents
- are there ongoing risks to the victim, other children, adult students or school or college staff, and
- other related issues and wider context, including any links to child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation.

483. As always when concerned about the welfare of a child, all staff should act in the best interests of the child. In all cases, schools and colleges should follow general safeguarding principles as set out throughout this guidance. Immediate consideration should be given as to how best to support and protect the victim and the alleged perpetrator(s) (and any other children involved/impacted).