

Child Protection and Safeguarding Children Policy

TechBloq Learning Centre

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1. KEY CONTACTS FOR SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION AT THE CENTRE

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Newham Children's Social Care (Child Protection)

020 3373 4600 (9am - 5:15pm)

020 8430 2000 (other times)

Childline Freephone 0800 1111

NSPCC Freephone 0800 800 5000

2. PURPOSE OF POLICY

TechBloq Learning Centre fully recognises its responsibilities for safeguarding children. Our **students' welfare and safety are at the heart of our centre's ethos and in everything we do.**

In this policy, a 'child' means all children and young people **below 18 years of age.**

In accordance with relevant law and guidance, this policy details our procedures for **safeguarding and child protection.**

It is applicable to the **whole centre.**

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility, whether they work or volunteer in the centre. Everyone has a role to play in child protection and safeguarding. The centre adopts a **whole-centre approach to safeguarding children.**

All staff and volunteers will ensure that their approach and actions are **child-centred** – putting the wishes and feelings of children at the heart of any safeguarding response. This means that they'll consider, at all times, what is in the **best interests of the child.**

We will work together with our **local safeguarding partners** (the Local Authority, Clinical Commissioning Group/Integrated Care Board, and the Chief Officer of Police for our Local Authority area) to safeguard and promote the welfare of local children, including

identifying and responding to their needs, in line with "**Working Together to Safeguard Children**" (latest version).

These are the foundations on which all of TechBloq Learning Centre's safeguarding, child protection, and welfare systems are built:

- Ensuring that all staff and volunteers understand their **responsibilities** with regard to safeguarding and child protection.
- Ensuring that all staff are trained to understand the **risk factors** for all child protection, safeguarding and welfare concerns, know the **indicators of abuse, neglect, and exploitation**, and know the **appropriate reporting mechanism**.
- Creating and maintaining an environment where all students **feel secure**, are **encouraged to communicate**, and are **listened to**.
- Ensuring that every student understands that they can **report any concern to any member of staff**, knowing they will be believed and never made to feel like raising a concern is a problem.
- Ensuring that staff listen to victims well and know how to report any concerns about **sexual violence or harassment between peers**.
- Having a procedure to deal with any issues of **peer-on-peer abuse** which includes a robust and credible reporting system that is well-promoted, accessible, and simple to understand.
- Ensuring a **zero-tolerance attitude** towards any form of peer-on-peer harassment or sexual violence, and appropriate responses to issues we encounter – never adopting the attitude that sexualised harassment is "just banter" or "boys being boys".
- Ensuring all staff understand that, even when it isn't formally reported, harassment and sexual violence can be happening.
- Teaching students to keep themselves safe, including online, from all forms of abuse, bullying, harassment, or exploitation.
- Swiftly and effectively addressing any child protection or safeguarding concerns and ensuring robust, timely referrals are made to other agencies in line with local safeguarding protocols.
- Ensuring effective links with relevant agencies in all matters regarding safeguarding and child protection, including Early Help procedures.
- Supporting students who are subject to child protection plans and contributing to the implementation of the plan.
- Ensuring that the cohort of students who have a social worker, or have been or are currently looked after, are supported to stay in education and achieve good educational outcomes.
- Keeping meticulous, written records of concerns about students, even where there is no need to refer the matter immediately (this includes recording dates, times, people responsible, and actions), and ensuring all records are kept securely and shared appropriately.

- Ensuring the suitability of all staff through safe recruitment practice and maintaining an accurate and up-to-date Single Central Record.
- Maintaining clear procedures in line with the latest guidance for reporting allegations against staff members.
- Ensuring that parents and carers also have an understanding of the responsibility placed on the centre and its staff for safeguarding and child protection.

Furthermore, TechBloq Learning Centre recognises that:

- Some students are at increased risk of abuse.
- Some students face additional barriers with respect to recognising or disclosing abuse.

The centre is committed to recognising **diversity** and ensures **anti-discriminatory practices**. We ensure that all students have the same protection. We give special consideration to students who:

- Have special educational needs (SEN) or disabilities (further information is in Section 18).
- Are young carers.
- Show signs of mental health problems.
- Are missing education.
- May experience discrimination due to their race, ethnicity, religion, gender identification, or sexuality.
- Are at risk of FGM, sexual exploitation, forced marriage, or radicalisation.
- Are asylum seekers.
- Have English as an additional language.
- Are known to be living in difficult situations, e.g. where there are issues at home, such as substance abuse/misuse, domestic abuse, or where a family member is in prison or has mental health needs.
- Are at risk due to either their own or a family member's mental health needs.
- Are within the care system and are looked after or have been previously looked after or have a social worker.
- Are home-educated.

3. SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN

TechBloq Learning Centre recognises that safeguarding covers a broad range of areas and it aims to achieve the following:

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

- Ensuring children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.
- Enabling children to have optimum life chances, so they can enter adulthood successfully.
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

Child protection refers to activities undertaken to prevent children suffering, or being likely to suffer, **significant harm**.

As part of meeting a child's needs, TechBloq Learning Centre:

- Recognises that sharing information, particularly with safeguarding partner agencies and other professionals, in a **timely manner is crucial** in identifying and tackling all forms of abuse and neglect.
- Knows that fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of the need to promote the welfare, and protect the safety, of children. The **Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and UK GDPR do not prevent, or limit, the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe**. The centre recognises the government's **seven golden rules of information sharing**. Where any doubt exists, staff will seek support from the DSL.
- Recognises that, to facilitate the sharing of 'special category personal data,' the DPA 2018 contains 'safeguarding of children and individuals at risk' as a processing condition that allows practitioners to share information without consent. If it is not possible to gain consent, or if to gain consent would place a child at risk, it cannot be reasonably expected that a practitioner gains consent.
- Recognises the importance of confidentiality in all data the centre holds and in particular in relation to safeguarding and child protection records.
- Will identify children who may benefit from the **Early Help process** and make timely disclosures to the Local Authority to enable that process to begin, working with safeguarding partners and other professionals to assist with these assessments and work flowing from these assessments.
- Recognises that **mental health issues** can be an indicator of abuse and neglect, and will share any such concerns appropriately.
- Will identify students who may be suffering from significant harm and make child protection referrals.
- Will identify students who need extra help and make appropriate referrals, including to early help processes, to prevent concerns escalating.

TechBloq Learning Centre also understands the importance of **contextual safeguarding**, i.e. that incidents or behaviours can be associated with factors outside the home or the centre and can occur between children outside of the centre. All staff should be considering wider environmental factors that are present in a child's life which are a threat to their safety and/or welfare. This information will also form part of any referrals the centre makes, if the centre considers this appropriate.

TechBloq Learning Centre also recognises the importance of partnership working to keep students safe: <https://www.newhamscp.org.uk>

4. LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

This policy for TechBloq Learning Centre is derived from a variety of legislative provisions and statutory guidance. In particular, it is based on good practice found in:

- **Working Together to Safeguard Children (latest version, e.g., 2023 or 2024)** – This is the key statutory guidance for all agencies involved in safeguarding children.
- **The DfE Voluntary Code of Practice for Out-of-School Settings (2019)** – While voluntary, this code provides a framework of good practice for out-of-school settings on safeguarding, health and safety, and governance. TechBloq Learning Centre strives to meet the standards set out in this Code.

Our safeguarding policy and procedures comply with all of this guidance and are updated with local arrangements agreed and published by the local safeguarding partners.

The following legislation is also incorporated into this policy:

- **The Children Act 1989 (and 2004 amendment)**, which gives a broad framework for the care and protection of children and includes provisions for Local Authority inquiries, care proceedings, and emergency provisions.
- **The Domestic Abuse Act 2021**, which broadened the definition of domestic abuse to include children as victims who see, hear, or experience the effects of abuse.
- **Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 S 5B(11)**, as inserted by section 74 of the Serious Crime Act 2015, places a statutory duty on certain professionals to report to the police where they discover/find that female genital mutilation (FGM) appears to have been carried out on a girl under 18. Responsibilities for safeguarding and supporting girls affected by FGM are found in Statutory Guidance on FGM.
- **The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974**, which outlines provisions for when people with criminal convictions can work with children.
- **'Regulated activity'** in relation to children is found in Schedule 4 of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006.
- **The Online Safety Act 2023**, which aims to make the UK the safest place in the world to be online, reinforcing the need for online safety measures and education.
- **The Sexual Offences Act 2003.**

Other statutory provisions and guidance relevant to child protection and safeguarding include:

- Guidance on Sharing Information.
- Guidance on Peer-on-Peer Sexual Abuse.
- Guidance on Nudes and Semi-Nudes.

Related Policies Safeguarding covers more than the contribution made to child protection in relation to individual young people. It also encompasses issues such as staff conduct, health and safety, bullying, online safety, arrangements for meeting medical needs, providing first aid and/or intimate care, drugs and substance misuse, positive behaviour management, and the use of physical intervention and restraint.

This document must therefore be read, used, and applied alongside the centre's policies and procedures referred to below:

- The Single Central Record of identity, qualification, and vetting checks for all staff and volunteers.
- The staff safer recruitment and selection processes.
- Local Authority policies and procedures on dealing with allegations against members of staff.
- Safer working practices guidelines for staff and volunteers.
- E-safety and information technology/acceptable use policy/bring your own device policy.
- Staff behaviour policy or code of conduct (whichever applies to the centre) or low-level concern policy.
- Data protection policy and privacy notices.
- Attendance policy.
- Online safety policy.
- Mobile phone use policy.
- Guidelines and agreements for using a computer and personal technology in the centre (students).
- Behaviour policy.
- Anti-bullying policy.
- Equality policy.
- The confidentiality policy.
- The health and safety policy.
- First aid policy.
- The trips and visits policy.
- The whistleblowing policy.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

TechBloq Learning Centre recognises that safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is **everyone's responsibility**. Everyone who comes into contact with children and their parents, those with parental responsibility or carers has a role to play in safeguarding children.

All staff who work directly with children must be familiar with the **relevant sections of "Working Together to Safeguard Children" and the DfE Voluntary Code of Practice for Out-of-School Settings**, and understand the centre's Child Protection and Safeguarding

Policy. Staff who do not work directly with children should read the relevant summary sections where appropriate.

All staff must:

- Provide a safe environment in which children can learn.
- Be able and prepared to identify any child in need of early help.
- Be able to reassure victims that they are being taken seriously, and will be supported and kept safe. Staff should never give the impression that reporting abuse causes problems, and victims should not feel ashamed.
- Be aware of the role of the DSL, including how and when to contact them.
- Follow the centre's reporting structures for safeguarding concerns which reflect best practice as outlined in "Working Together to Safeguard Children."
- Be able and prepared to deal with any safeguarding concern including knowing who to speak to and understand how to deal with sharing information and confidentiality issues.
- Be aware of, and act on, the contents of (a) this Child Protection Policy which covers all peer-on-peer abuse; (b) the Behaviour Policy (which includes measures to prevent bullying, including cyberbullying, prejudice, and discriminatory bullying); (c) the centre's Online Safety Policy. In addition, staff must be aware of and understand their Code of Conduct/Staff Behaviour Policy.
- Receive appropriate training about safeguarding and child protection (including online safety), which is updated via email or bulletins at least annually or as required.
- Understand the child protection process, including Section 17 and Section 47 of the Children's Act 1989 and multi-agency meetings, and be aware of local arrangements for the early help process (sometimes referred to as the common assessment framework), understanding their role in each.
- Be aware of what to do if a child tells them about being abused, neglected, or exploited.
- Be able to recognise physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect, as well as safeguarding issues surrounding child sexual exploitation (CSE), child criminal exploitation (CCE) including county lines, peer-on-peer abuse, serious violence, Prevent-related issues, and female genital mutilation (FGM) - AND understand that often safeguarding issues overlap.
- Be aware that safeguarding concerns can be linked to or caused by factors in a child's wider environment outside of the family, such as sexual and criminal exploitation, and serious youth violence. This is often referred to as **contextual safeguarding**.
- Be aware that mental health issues can be a significant indicator of abuse or neglect.
- Be able to report concerns about safeguarding arrangements within the centre and know not to hesitate before doing so.

Further information to support staff to fulfil these responsibilities is contained throughout this policy and is covered in the centre's safeguarding and related training programme.

The Management/Leadership Team will, as part of their responsibilities:

- Have **strategic leadership responsibility for safeguarding** in the centre.
- Will ensure that the centre is compliant with all duties under legislation and statutory guidance such as "**Working Together to Safeguard Children**" and the **DfE Voluntary Code of Practice for Out-of-School Settings**. This includes making sure that policies, procedures, and training are effective.
- Ensure that a **DSL is appointed** who has the status and authority to carry out all of the DSL duties. The Management/Leadership Team will also ensure the DSL has the time, training, and funding to carry out the role.
- Together with the DSL, the Management/Leadership Team will ensure that **all staff are appropriately trained** in child protection and safeguarding issues (including online safety) both at induction and on an ongoing basis, as specified in the centre's policy.
- Ensure that there is a **whole-centre approach to safeguarding**, i.e. safeguarding and child protection should be at the forefront of thinking and should underpin relevant policies and procedures. Policies and procedures should all operate with the best interests of the child at their heart. They will further ensure that teaching safeguarding to children (including online safety) is integrated into the curriculum where appropriate.
- Ensure that the centre creates a culture that safeguards and promotes the welfare of children. This includes ensuring unsuitable people are not employed by the centre and ensuring **compliant safer recruitment practices** are in place, e.g. making sure that those involved in recruitment are trained in safer recruitment.
- Ensure policies, procedures, and mechanisms are in place to fulfil safeguarding responsibilities to those students who are "looked after".
- Ensure the centre has effective policies on a range of safeguarding related areas (in line with all good practice and relevant guidance) including:
 - Child protection and safeguarding (including in respect of information about peer-on-peer abuse).
 - Behaviour.
 - Staff behaviour.
 - Appropriate safeguarding arrangements for those who go missing from education.
 - Low-level concerns/handling allegations against staff where the threshold is not met.
- Ensure that the centre has systems for dealing with safeguarding issues which are "**well promoted, easy to understand and easily accessible for children confidently to report abuse**, knowing their concerns will be treated seriously, and knowing they can safely express their views and give feedback".

- Ensure that these policies and procedures reflect the challenges SEND children can face in terms of safeguarding -e.g. communication barriers and increased risk of bullying - and allow for identification of any mental health issues that children may be experiencing.
- Ensure, when fulfilling their responsibility to teach children about safeguarding including online safety, that this learning is, where necessary, tailored and contextualised for individuals including more vulnerable children, victims of abuse and some SEND children.
- Ensure they are aware of and understand local arrangements for safeguarding and the centre contributes to multi-agency working.
- Ensure that the centre has appropriate filters in place to keep children safe online whilst ensuring that filters are not unreasonable.
- Ensure child protection files are maintained properly (in line with data protection laws and best practice for record keeping).
- Ensure that the centre recognises the importance of sharing information to keep children safe.
- Ensure the centre has appropriate safer recruitment policies and procedures in place, ensuring that all relevant checks are conducted for staff and volunteers.
- Ensure that the centre has more than one contact number for children (i.e., so that a child missing who is also a safeguarding concern has more than one responsible adult the centre can contact).
- Ensure that any hire agreement or similar contract for use of centre premises includes safeguarding requirements – any breach should lead to termination.
- Assess the impact of this policy in keeping children safe.
- Review and annually approve the safeguarding policy, ensuring it complies with all law, regulations, and good practice. They will also hold the DSL and other relevant leaders to account for its implementation.
- Receive any allegations made against the DSL or Centre Manager.

The Centre Manager will, as part of their responsibilities:

- Be responsible for the **operational implementation** of this and all related policies and procedures, ensuring that the outcomes are monitored.
- Meet regularly with the DSL and report to the Management/Leadership Team regularly regarding the effectiveness of safeguarding and implementation of related policies.
- Ensure that the DSL has appropriate time, funding, training, and resources to fulfil all of their functions and ensure adequate cover in the event that the DSL isn't available.
- Ensure that everyone connected to the centre is aware of this policy including safeguarding and child protection procedures and online safety.
- Ensure that everyone connected with the centre understands and follows this and connected policies.

- Ensures that everyone has appropriate training, including online training – at induction and regularly thereafter.
- Take a risk-based approach to the information visitors to the centre should receive.
- Ensure safe recruitment practice is followed when recruiting for posts, and act as a case manager when an allegation is made against a member of staff or volunteer. This includes being the recipient of any low-level concerns (i.e. those that do not meet the threshold).
- Ensure the centre has a robust system for gathering all appropriate checks in relation to all staff, volunteers, and visitors.
- Ensure the centre offers a safe environment via a robust health and safety policy and procedure to meet the statutory responsibilities for the safety of students and staff at the centre.
- Ensure the relevant staffing ratios are met, where applicable for registered childcare.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), who is a member of the SMT, is the lead for child protection and safeguarding in the centre. This is one part of their responsibilities for safeguarding and child protection, which also include:

- Having the appropriate status and authority to carry out their role – deputies (if appointed) must be trained to the same standard as the DSL.
- Having the time, support, training, funding, and resources to be able to deliver all their functions as a DSL.
- Delegating certain functions (except lead responsibility) to the deputies, and deputies can be contacted when the DSL is away or absent from the centre.

The role of DSL includes:

- Being available in term time – this can (in exceptional circumstances) be via Skype or other media if they are not physically in the centre during term time for staff, volunteers, parents, or students to provide advice and support on child welfare, safeguarding, and child protection matters.
- Being the point of contact for staff who have a concern about a child's welfare, safeguarding, or a child protection issue, including where the concern involves a mental health issue.
- Acting as a point of contact for safeguarding partners - for example, the police in relation to Operation Encompass - and, where required, taking part in and contributing to strategic discussions and inter-agency meetings, and supporting other staff to engage with this process.
- Liaising with other staff (as needed) - for example, pastoral teams or senior mental health leads and SENCOs - when referring matters to children's social care, so that the reports are as holistic as possible.

- Ensuring that account is taken of the risk to children outside of their families and considering whether children are at risk of abuse relating to exploitation and serious violence.
- Where a safeguarding concern has a mental health element, ensuring discussions are had with the senior lead for mental health.
- Managing referrals to the Local Authority Children's Services or other services (such as the police where a crime has been committed), or to the Channel programme, or the DBS (where someone has been dismissed or has left because of the harm they have caused or the risk of harm they pose to children).
- Liaising with other agencies and partners in cases where early help is considered the most appropriate response, and contributing to any ongoing support and further assessments.
- Working closely with children's social care and any child's social worker – in particular where there is a statutory response, and ensuring that actions the centre proposes to take do not jeopardise an ongoing investigation.
- Where children's social care do not investigate, the DSL should not be afraid to refer again or challenge the decision. If the decision remains not to investigate, the DSL should look for other support such as early help.
- Where there has been an allegation/report of sexual violence, the DSL will support by advising the centre how to proceed, including undertaking an immediate risk assessment of need (risk assessments should be considered on a case-by-case basis for reports of sexual harassment). The risk and needs assessment should include:
 - The victim and how best to support them.
 - Whether it is a single victim.
 - The alleged perpetrator.
 - Risks to other children. The risk assessment must be dynamic and retained in electronic form.
- Taking the lead role in any decisions about sexual violence or sexual harassment which are reported to the centre.
- Where an allegation is proved to be unsubstantiated, unfounded, false, or malicious, the DSL will consider whether the person who made the allegation is in need of support for other abuse – and whether the report could be a cry for help. If so, the DSL should consider whether or not to refer to children's social care.
- Where there has been an allegation against a member of staff which is judged to meet the threshold (for referral to the LADO), ensuring the child is not at risk and determining whether or not the case should be referred to children's social care as a suspected abuse case.
- Being aware of local protocols and arrangements in respect of the Prevent referrals.
- Being aware of local arrangements for Early Help.
- Being aware of all the local and national support systems in place for victims of sexual violence.

- Being the point of contact for all peer-on-peer reports, and being aware of issues and supporting actions where consent or power balances are in issue - for example, in sexual violence reports.
- Making referrals (where appropriate) to the Cyber Choices programme when a child may be involved in cybercrime.
- Where a staff member reports FGM, deciding whether or not to refer the matter to children's social care.
- Encouraging a culture of supportive engagement with parents/carers around safeguarding and child welfare – this is especially so in circumstances where the family may be encountering challenging circumstances.
- Ensuring children's views are heard by encouraging a culture of listening, taking account of their wishes and feelings, and building trust between children and staff so that communication and reporting issues are most effective.
- Working with a range of colleagues to promote the educational outcomes of 'children in need' by understanding the extra challenges this cohort can face because of the safeguarding/welfare or child protection issues they have been involved in.
- Thinking about how the issues can affect attendance, engagement, and achievements for children.
- Knowing the cohort of students who have or have had a social worker and ensuring their academic progress, attainment, and aspirations.
- Supporting teaching staff to help with any reasonable adjustments or extra support to assist the above group, recognising that even where statutory services support has ended, there can be long term consequences for the child.
- Sharing information (as appropriate) with staff to achieve these goals for this cohort.
- Providing support for staff so that they are confident about welfare, safeguarding, and child protection issues - including during a referral process - and helping them to see the links between safeguarding and academic/pastoral support.
- In relation to child protection files the DSL must:
 - Keep clear, accurate, up-to-date records of any concerns, actions taken, and how these were followed up. The DSL will also support staff to keep records in this way. Records must be held securely and only shared with those who need to know – in line with data legislation and regulations.
 - Hold files separately from the main file. Transferring them to a new centre as soon as possible and no longer than 5 days after the transfer, or 5 days after the start of a new term if the transfer is not in term time. The DSL must obtain a receipt for the file.
 - Consider whether or not it is appropriate to inform a new centre that a child is involved in a Channel programme.
 - Have details of the local authority Personal Advisor appointed to guide and support a care leaver, and liaise with them as necessary regarding any issues of concern affecting the care leaver.

- Where a perpetrator transfers to a new centre, make the new centre aware of potential risks, protective factors, and any ongoing support the child is receiving.

In relation to policies and procedures, the DSL must ensure that:

- The centre's child protection policy and procedures are reviewed annually and always remains up to date – working with staff and the Management/Leadership Team to achieve this.
- Staff have access to and understand the centre's child protection policy and procedures, and it is available publicly to parents, who should also be made aware of the centre's role in the child protection process.
- Staff are aware of local safeguarding arrangements.
- The DSL should also receive appropriate training (including Prevent) to undertake all their role and responsibilities, and this includes:
 - Understanding about specific needs that can increase vulnerability as well as specific harms that put children at risk.
 - Understanding the assessment process for referrals to LA, including those relating to early help and child protection.
 - Attending conferences so that they can be an effective participant in the process(es) and understand the importance of information sharing with other agencies.
 - Understanding how important their role is for providing information to children's social care so that children can be safeguarded, and their welfare promoted.
 - Understanding the effect adverse childhood experiences and trauma can have on children, including the impact it can have on behaviour, mental health, and educational outcomes.
 - Understanding and being alert to the specific vulnerable groups such as children in need, with SEND, or with other health conditions.
 - Supporting the centre with fulfilling its Prevent duty and stay up to date with the latest guidance in relation to Prevent.
 - Being aware of local protocols and how to use them – for example, when contacting the police about a serious violent sexual offence such as rape.
 - Being aware of the contact details for the local housing authority so that any issues of homelessness can be referred correctly and swiftly.
 - Understanding the risk for children posed by online activity, and the risk for specific groups, such as those with SEND.
 - Understanding the barriers that stop children from reporting issues and how to build trust to help with this.
 - Building a culture of listening and making sure the wishes and feelings of the children are considered, and encouraging staff in the measures the centre may put in place to promote this.

- Having the ability to keep accurate, detailed, secure written records of safeguarding and welfare issues.

6. CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING PROCEDURES

Where there is a child protection or safeguarding concern about a student

All staff at TechBloq Learning Centre will follow the necessary child protection procedures if an incident occurs.

If a DSL or deputy is not immediately available

- Where a child is in immediate danger or at risk of significant harm, and the DSL or senior leader is not available, a referral should be made to children's social care and/or the police immediately.
- Anyone can make a referral to the police in an emergency, or to children's services if there is a child protection or safeguarding concern.
- Where staff have a concern about a student that does not raise an issue of either immediate harm or a risk of significant harm, the staff member should not delay but, in the first instance, speak to a member of the Senior Management Team or contact the Local Authority children's services to determine the most appropriate way to proceed.
- <https://www.newhamscp.org.uk> will take you to the local referral arrangements in Newham.
- Staff should not assume that somebody else will take action/share information that might be critical in keeping children safe.
- Where referrals are not made by the Designated Safeguarding Lead, the Designated Safeguarding Lead should be informed, as soon as possible, that a referral has been made.
- **Designated professionals** are responsible for reporting concerns relating to **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)** and reporting is mandatory where either the individual:
 - Is informed by a girl under 18 that an act of FGM has been carried out on her; or they
 - Observe physical signs which appear to show that an act of FGM has been carried out on a girl under 18 and they have no reason to believe that the act was necessary for the girl's physical or mental health or for purposes connected with labour or birth.
- They can also discuss the concern with the DSL, who will offer support and help.

Where the DSL is available and a member of staff at TechBloq Learning Centre suspects that any student may have been subject to abuse, neglect, or exploitation - or a student has suggested that abuse has taken place - the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), or the Deputy DSL if the DSL is off site, must be informed immediately.

The DSL or Deputy DSL will:

- Ensure the allegation is acted on immediately, no later than within the same centre day.
- Determine the most appropriate course of action:
 - Where the allegation reveals a risk of significant harm or the student is in immediate danger, the DSL will refer the matter to the police and/or children's social care. Children's social care should respond within 1 day. There are a range of responses available to social care. If the concern meets their threshold for intervention, children's social care will begin assessments and investigations under the Care Act 1989 (normally under Section 17 or 47). It may be that the DSL or a member of staff will be asked to be involved in these assessments – if this is the case, the DSL will offer support to all members of staff.
 - Where the risk is considered to be less serious, the DSL may start the procedure for Early Help. This may be a multi-agency response, and the centre may be asked to lead on this process as the lead professional. Staff may be asked to have input in this process. If, at any time during Early Help, those involved consider the risk to the student has escalated, the matter must then be referred to children's social care.

Allegations or concerns about serious peer-on-peer abuse which require a safeguarding or child protection response (rather than being dealt with under the centre's behaviour policy)

- In the case of a violent sexual assault or sexual harassment, TechBloq Learning Centre will follow the procedures outlined in this policy (specifically refer to Appendix 3 for detailed guidance on peer-on-peer abuse).
- Staff must record the allegation and report it to the DSL immediately, but not investigate it themselves.
- The DSL will contact the Local Authority children's social care team and follow its advice, as well as the advice of the police, if the allegation involves a potential criminal offence.
- The DSL will put a risk assessment and support plan into place for all children involved (including the victim(s), the child(ren) against whom the allegation has been made, and any others affected) with a named person they can talk to if needed. Where there is a report of sexual harassment, the need for a risk assessment will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- The DSL can, where appropriate, contact the children and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS).

Where a student's behaviour causes significant harm to other students, staff should follow the child protection procedures for the centre. The DSL will refer the child in line with the local area safeguarding protocol for these children.

Where the issue involves 'sharing nude or semi nudes' (also known as sexting) by using online communications, text, or image messaging, please refer to the online safety policy. The Child Exploitation Online Protection Centre (CEOP) also provides further guidance on sexting at <https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/>. Other guidance is available: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sharing-nudes-and-semi-nudes-advice-for-education-settings-working-with-children-and-young-people>

Where there is an issue relating to radicalisation or extremism

- The DSL will be the first point of contact for any issues of concern in relation to extremism.
- If the DSL is not available, staff should speak with a member of the SMT or children's social care. If it is an emergency situation, the member of staff should call 999 or the confidential anti-terror hotline: 0800 789321.
- There is also a dedicated phone line at the Department of Education which offers help and guidance to staff and governors: call 0207 340 7264 or email counter.extremism@education.gov.uk.
- The DSL will assess the level of risk and decide which agency to make a referral to. This could include Channel - the government's programme for identifying and supporting individuals at risk of being drawn into terrorism - or the local authority children's social care team: Newham Safeguarding Children Partnership.

Where a student is identified as being at risk of exploitation, radicalisation, FGM, peer-on-peer sexual abuse, or becoming involved in serious violent crime

Where risk factors (such as a child with a mental health need, a parent in prison, persistent absences from the centre, or a risk of FGM) are present but there is no evidence of abuse or a particular risk, the DSL at TechBloq Learning Centre will advise staff on preventative work that can be done either within the centre or together with partners. This is often referred to as **Early Help**.

The DSL may decide to notify the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) so that a strategic overview can be maintained and any themes or common factors can be recognised. The centre will set timelines, monitor and review the situation, and take appropriate steps or seek advice as required.

The DSL may also seek advice about undertaking an early help assessment and/or making a referral to social services or involving the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership. If, during or after assessment, the concerns about the student turn out to be more significant and meet the additional needs/complex need criteria, the DSL will refer the matter to the MASH.

It may be appropriate to speak with the student's family. The DSL will take this decision and may well be the person who talks to the student's family.

7. ALLEGATIONS AGAINST MEMBERS OF STAFF

Where an allegation of abuse is made against a member of staff (including supply teachers and volunteers) in relation to a student, it must be brought to the attention of the **Centre Manager** immediately. In line with best practice for out-of-school settings, the centre has two levels of allegation management. The first is allegations which meet the threshold, and the second is in relation to low-level concerns.

Where the allegation meets the threshold, the Centre Manager will act as the “case manager”. They will conduct basic enquiries to ascertain whether there is any foundation to the allegation, and will liaise with the LADO and other authorities as appropriate. The case manager will follow relevant LADO guidance and local authority procedures for managing allegations against adults working with children.

In the event the Centre Manager is the subject of the allegation, the DSL will report to the **Chair of the Management/Leadership Team** immediately, and the Chair will assume the role of “case manager”.

The threshold may be met in the following circumstances:

- They have behaved in a way that has harmed a child or may have harmed a child.
- They possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child.
- They have behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children.
- They have behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he/she is unsuitable to work with children.

This includes behaviour outside of the centre that might make the person unsuitable to work with children (known as a transferable risk).

In some cases, allegations may be so serious that they will require immediate intervention by the police and/or children’s social care services. If this is the case, the Centre Manager will ensure that the appropriate action is taken.

Low-level concerns are those which do not meet the threshold for referral to a LADO or the police but, as part of an open culture to safeguarding, should be talked about. Everyone is encouraged to report low-level concerns, even by way of a self-referral, so that inappropriate or concerning behaviours are dealt with early and professional boundaries are maintained.

A low level of concern would be where, for example, a member of staff behaved in a way that is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, but it isn’t considered serious enough to refer to the LADO such as a staff member being over-friendly with children, using inappropriate language, favouring a child or picking on a child, making inappropriate social media posts, making fun of a child’s work, making fun of a child in front of other children, or accompanying a child home from an event alone (albeit with the parent’s consent).

Low-level concerns will be dealt with efficiently and appropriately in line with TechBloq's Behaviour Policy and, where appropriate, any other relevant centre policy - for example, the data protection policy.

In the event of a low-level concern being raised with the Centre Manager, they will:

- Collect evidence from witnesses and from the person concerned.
- Collate the information and advise what actions should be taken – this could range from a conversation with the person to a warning or formal disciplinary proceedings.
- Keep a record of the concerns.

All information will be held in confidence and securely, in line with data protection laws (the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR). Records will be reviewed regularly to identify any patterns or systematic issues within the centre. Patterns of staff behaviour could result in a more serious concern that meets the threshold test or results in disciplinary action for an individual. Records will be maintained in line with TechBloq Learning Centre's Data Retention and Disposal Policy and Procedure.

Suitability of staff and safe recruitment practices

The centre recognises that **safe recruitment practices** are an essential part of creating a safe environment for children and young people. Consequently, we will ensure that staff (including supply teachers) and volunteers working at the centre are suitable to do so and therefore do not pose any kind of risk to our students.

Appropriate members of the Senior Management Team (SMT) and other relevant staff involved in recruitment are required to complete **Safer Recruitment Training** in order to ensure that at least one panel member on every selection panel is trained in 'Safer Recruitment'.

The centre's safer recruitment practices align with best practice for out-of-school settings, including robust checks such as DBS checks, references, and verification of identity and qualifications, as appropriate for the role.

8. COMPLAINTS AND WHISTLEBLOWING

Where a staff member at TechBloq Learning Centre feels unable to raise an issue with the centre, or feels that their genuine concerns are not being addressed, other **whistleblowing channels** may be open to them.

General guidance on whistleblowing can be found on the government website.

The NSPCC's "What You Can Do to Report Abuse" dedicated helpline is available as an alternative route for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally, or have concerns about the way a concern is being handled by their centre. Staff can call 0800 028 0285, which is available from 8:00am to 8:00pm, Monday to Friday, and email help@nspcc.org.uk.

9. TRAINING

TechBloq Learning Centre ensures all staff complete **safeguarding and child protection training** as part of their induction. This includes online safety and whistleblowing procedures and is designed to ensure all staff:

- Understand the centre's safeguarding systems and
- Their responsibilities, and
- Can identify signs of possible abuse or neglect or exploitation,
- Know how to act upon any concerns they have.

All training is integrated, aligned, and considered as part of the **whole-centre safeguarding approach**, including training on the issues and expectations in relation to allegations of peer-on-peer abuse. Training is considered as part of wider staff training and curriculum planning.

All training is in line with expectations and arrangements from our local safeguarding partners.

The centre also has a commitment to updating safeguarding training (including online safety) for all staff annually, and more regularly as required, through e-bulletins, CPD, or using the knowledge base of local partners or staff members.

To achieve this:

- Time will be given to enable this commitment to be met.
- All staff and volunteers (where appropriate) who are new to the centre will be given appropriate safeguarding training as part of their induction programme to the centre.
- Updates will feature regularly in all staff and SMT meetings, as appropriate.
- All centre staff and Management/Leadership Team members will undertake the training.
- Newly recruited staff will complete training as part of their induction and will receive centre-specific training, including being made aware of local risk factors for extremism.
- The DSL will attend Local Authority and other training courses as necessary and other appropriate inter-agency training every year.
- The DSL will attend Prevent training and this will be cascaded to all staff.
- Contractors will receive safeguarding training where required or when otherwise considered necessary.

10. PREVENT DUTY - SAFEGUARDING STUDENTS WHO ARE VULNERABLE TO EXTREMISM

The centre's Prevent strategy

TechBloq Learning Centre follows the **statutory guidance on the centre's responsibility to fulfil our Prevent Duty**. We are aware that there have been occasions, both locally and nationally, in which extremist groups have attempted to radicalise vulnerable children to hold extreme views including those justifying political, religious, sexist, or racist violence, or to steer them into a rigid and narrow ideology that is intolerant of diversity and leaves them vulnerable to future radicalisation.

The **Prevent strategy aims to stop people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism**.

It is rare for children to become involved in terrorist activity. However, some students from an early age can be exposed to terrorist and extremist influences or prejudiced views. Consequently, the centre takes the view that early intervention is always preferable and includes this in its procedures as it does for all safeguarding concerns.

In line with both the fundamental British Values and the Centre Values, the following key principles underpin the community in which the centre is based:

- Inclusion.
- Tolerance.
- Freedom of speech.
- The expression of beliefs and ideology.

Both students and staff have the right to speak freely and voice their opinions. However, freedom comes with responsibility. Free speech that is designed to manipulate the vulnerable or that leads to violence and harm of others goes against the principles in which freedom of speech is valued.

Free speech is subject to treating others with respect, understanding differences, equality, an awareness of human rights, community safety, and community cohesion. The Prevent statutory guidance requires settings to have clear protocols for ensuring that any visiting speakers are suitable, appropriately supervised, and undergo the same checks as other visitors.

The centre is committed to training all staff in connection with the issues arising from our Prevent Duty. We are also committed to working with the Local Authority and other local partners to assess the potential risk of individuals being drawn into terrorism, because families and communities play a key role in ensuring young people and our communities are safe from the threat of terrorism.

The DSL will keep up-to-date with local threats, policies, and procedures relating to Prevent.

Reducing risks of extremism

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will work with partners and the Local Authority's risk assessment to determine the potential risk of individuals being drawn into terrorism.

Actions will include:

- Promoting spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development for students - this includes ensuring that the curriculum promotes fundamental British values.
- Creating an atmosphere of openness and safety so that students feel free and able to discuss sensitive topics, including terrorism and extremism.
- Ensuring students are protected from accessing extremist content online whilst in the centre – appropriate filters are used.

The centre recognises that the Prevent duty does not ask staff to carry out unnecessary intrusions into family life, but, as with any other safeguarding risk, they must take action when they observe behaviour of concern.

Potential signs of radicalisation and extremism

There is no single way of identifying an individual who is likely to be susceptible to a terrorist/radical ideology. As with managing other safeguarding risks, all centre staff will be vigilant to changes in students' behaviour which could indicate that they may be in need of help or protection.

It is commonly recognised that children at risk of radicalisation may display changes in behaviour, show different signs, or seek to hide their views. Staff are advised to use their professional judgement in identifying students who might be at risk of radicalisation and always act proportionately and seek support if they are concerned.

There is no limit to the signs that you might notice – every student is different. However, some of the indicators staff should look out for include:

- Becoming increasingly argumentative.
- Refusing to listen to different points of view.
- Being unwilling to engage with children who are different.
- Becoming abusive to children who are different.
- Embracing conspiracy theories.
- Feeling persecuted.
- Changing friends and appearance.
- Distancing themselves from old friends.
- No longer doing things they used to enjoy.
- Converting to a new religion.
- Being secretive and reluctant to discuss their whereabouts.
- Being sympathetic to extremist ideologies and groups.
- Online, changing their identity, having more than one online identity, spending a lot of time online or on the phone, accessing extremist online content, and joining or trying to join an extremist organisation.

Numerous factors can contribute to and influence the range of behaviours that are defined as violent extremism, but most children or young people do not become involved in extremist action. For this reason, the appropriate interventions in any particular case may

not have any specific connection to the threat of radicalisation. For example, they may address mental health, relationships, or drug/alcohol issues.

11. ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children may be abused by an adult or adults, or by another child or children. In many cases, multiple issues of abuse will overlap.

- **Physical abuse:** abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.
- **Emotional abuse:** the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them, or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may also feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child from participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may also involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone.
- **Sexual abuse:** forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve
 - Physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and touching outside of clothing.
 - Non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse can be perpetrated by men, women, or other children. The sexual abuse of children by other children is a specific safeguarding issue (also known as peer-on-peer abuse) and set out separately in this policy.

- **Neglect:** the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy - for example, as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:
 - Provide adequate food, clothing, and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment), or protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger.
 - Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers).
 - Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

12. SPECIFIC SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS

All staff at TechBloq Learning Centre are aware of safeguarding issues that can put children at increased risk of harm. Behaviours linked to issues such as drug taking, alcohol abuse, deliberately missing education, and sharing nudes or semi-nudes (also known as sexting or youth-produced sexual imagery) can put children at an increased risk of danger.

Warning signs of exploitation

One of the main signs of abuse or exploitation is when a child **goes missing from education**, particularly repeatedly. This can be a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding concerns, but in particular, exploitation - including criminal exploitation and county lines and/or sexual exploitation.

Going missing from education can also indicate mental health problems, risk of substance misuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation, or risk of forced marriage. Early intervention is necessary to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risks and to prevent the risks of a child going missing in future.

All staff should be aware of TechBloq Learning Centre's Unauthorised Absence and Children Missing from Education procedures.

Child exploitation

All staff should be aware that **child criminal exploitation (CCE)** – including county lines and **child sexual exploitation (CSE)** can involve both boys and girls - though boys and girls can be exploited using different methods and may present differently. As with other types of abuse, there is an increasing risk of exploitation taking place or beginning through threats posed online.

Staff should also be aware:

- That children who have been exploited in this way are victims themselves – and that this is sometimes not recognised by professionals.
- That CCE can lead to CSE for both boys and girls.
- Children can be moved from place to place in order to exploit them (trafficked).

- Children who have been involved in this type of abuse may need extra support to stay in education.

Child criminal exploitation

Child criminal exploitation (CCE) is a form of abuse where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate, or deceive a child into criminal activity, in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator, and/or through violence or the threat of violence.

The abuse can be perpetrated by males or females, and children or adults. It can be a one-off occurrence or a series of incidents over time, and range from opportunistic to complex organised abuse. Children can be moved from area to area – this is known as trafficking. Involvement in this type of abuse can be as a direct result of threats of serious violence to the young person or their family.

The victim can be exploited even when the activity appears to be consensual. Further, it does not always involve physical contact but can happen exclusively online.

Examples of CCE include: young people may be forced to work in cannabis factories, coerced into moving drugs, money, or weapons including across the country (county lines), forced to shoplift, pickpocket, or steal vehicles, or forced into violent crime or making threats to other young people.

Indicators of CCE can include a child:

- Appearing with unexplained gifts or new possessions.
- Associating with other young people involved in exploitation.
- Suffering from changes in emotional wellbeing.
- Misusing drugs and alcohol.
- Regularly missing centre sessions or education.
- Not taking part in education.
- Being involved in serious violence, carrying weapons, or vehicle crime.

Indicators for children who might be being exploited through **county lines activity** specifically are those who:

- Go missing and are subsequently found in areas away from their home.
- Have been the victim or perpetrator of serious violence (e.g. knife crime).
- Are involved in receiving requests for drugs via a phone line, moving drugs, and handing over and collecting money for drugs.
- Are exposed to techniques such as 'plugging', where drugs are concealed internally to avoid detection.
- Are found in accommodation that they have no connection with, often called a 'trap house' or somewhere that is being 'cuckooed', or a hotel room where there is drug activity.

- Owe a 'debt bond' to their exploiters.
- Have their bank accounts used to facilitate drug dealing.

Serious violent crime

- Some students may be drawn into serious violent crime. Staff need to be aware of the indicators that this may be happening to a student. These may include:
 - Increased absence from centre sessions.
 - A change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups.
 - A significant decline in performance.
 - Signs of self-harm or a significant change in wellbeing.
 - Signs of assault or unexplained injuries. Unexplained gifts or new possessions could also indicate that children have been approached by, or are involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs, and may be at risk of criminal exploitation.

There are a range of risk factors which increase the likelihood of involvement in serious violence, such as:

- Being male.
- Having been frequently absent or permanently excluded from school/centre.
- Having experienced child maltreatment.
- Having been involved in offending, such as theft or robbery.

Staff who are concerned about any of these issues should, as with any other concern, speak to the DSL. The DSL will trigger the local safeguarding procedures, including a referral to the Local Authority's children's social care team and the police, if appropriate. It may be that, if the concern is raised at an early stage, the student can be supported through the Early Help process. Further information and guidance has been produced by the government and can be found [here](#).

Child sexual exploitation (CSE)

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs when 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:

- in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or
- for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator, and/or
- by threats of serious violence to the victims and their family.

It can be a one-off or part of a series of acts over time, and can be opportunistic or organised abuse. It can be perpetrated by men or women, and peers can be involved.

Victims of this type of abuse can be male or female. The victim may be subject to criminal exploitation and may be trafficked for the purpose of exploitation.

The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Children or young people who are being sexually exploited may not understand that they are being abused. They often trust their abuser and may be tricked into believing they are in a loving, consensual relationship. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology. For example, young people may be persuaded or forced to share sexually explicit images of themselves, have sexual conversations by text, or take part in sexual activities using a webcam. CSE may also occur without the victim's immediate knowledge - for example, through others making copies of recordings or images.

The following list of indicators is not exhaustive or definitive, but it does highlight common signs which can assist professionals in identifying children or young people who may be victims of sexual exploitation.

Signs include:

- Underage sexual activity.
- Inappropriate or risky sexual or sexualised behaviour.
- Repeated sexually transmitted infections.
- In girls, repeated pregnancy, abortions, and miscarriage.
- Receiving unexplained or unaffordable gifts or gifts from unknown sources.
- Going to hotels or other unusual locations to meet friends.
- Moving around the country, appearing in new towns or cities, not knowing where they are.
- Getting in/out of different cars driven by unknown adults.
- Having older boyfriends or girlfriends, or hanging out with groups of older people.
- Being involved in abusive relationships, intimidated, and fearful of certain people or situations.
- Associating with other young people involved in sexual exploitation.
- Recruiting other young people to exploitative situations.
- Truancy, exclusion, disengagement with centre/education, opting out of education altogether.
- Unexplained changes in appearance, behaviour, or personality (chaotic, aggressive, sexual, etc.).
- Self-harming, suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts, overdosing, eating disorders.
- Drug or alcohol misuse.
- Getting involved in crime.
- Police involvement, police records.
- Being involved in gangs, gang fights, gang membership.
- Injuries from physical assault, physical restraint, sexual assault.

Honour-based abuse: Forced Marriage (FM)

This is an entirely separate issue from an arranged marriage. Forced Marriage is a human rights abuse and falls within the Crown Prosecution Service definition of domestic abuse. It is also a criminal offence to force a person to marry in England and Wales.

Young men and women can be at risk in affected ethnic groups. Evidence shows that the issue of forced marriage affects certain sectors of communities, typically girls in the age range of 14 – 16 years old originating from Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh (**approx. 60% of the cases**) together with a percentage of cases of children originating from the Middle-East and African countries. However, it can affect boys and children with SEND.

A signal of FM is the removal of the child from the centre/education and lengthy absence which is often unexplained. Other indicators may be detected by changes in adolescent behaviours. Whistleblowing may come from younger siblings. Any member of staff at TechBloq Learning Centre with any concerns should report this immediately to the DSL, who should raise the concern with the Local Police Safeguarding Unit by email or phone. Never attempt to intervene directly as a centre or through a third party. Whilst the onus of the investigation for criminal offences will remain with the Police, the DSL should cooperate and liaise with the relevant agencies in line with current child protection responsibilities.

Honour-based abuse: Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

There is a specific legal duty on certain professionals regarding FGM. If, during the course of their work, a member of staff discovers that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl under the age of 18 years, then they must report it to the police. All staff at TechBloq Learning Centre will recognise this responsibility.

The 'One Chance' rule. As with Forced Marriage, there is the 'One Chance' rule regarding FGM. This refers to staff potentially only having one chance to speak to a potential victim and thus may only have one chance to save a life. It is essential that the centre takes action without delay.

What is FGM? Female genital mutilation involves procedures that intentionally alter/injure the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.

Why is it carried out? It is often based on a belief that FGM:

- Brings status/respect to the girl – social acceptance for marriage.
- Is part of being a woman/rite of passage.
- Upholds family honour.
- Fulfils a religious requirement.
- Helps girls be clean/hygienic.
- Is cosmetically desirable.
- Makes childbirth easier – this is a mistaken belief.

FGM is a criminal offence.

- All staff at TechBloq Learning Centre will be made aware of FGM practices and the need to look for signs, symptoms, and other indicators of FGM.
- All staff who are designated professionals have a mandatory responsibility to report FGM if they discover, in the course of their professional duties what appears to be FGM to the police. The DSL, who will offer support, should also be informed immediately. Circumstances and occurrences that may point to FGM happening include:
 - The child talking about getting ready for a special ceremony.
 - The child and their family taking a long trip abroad.
 - The child's family being from one of the 'at risk' communities for FGM (Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, Sierra Leon, Egypt, Nigeria, Eritrea as well as non-African communities including Yemen, Afghani, Kurdistan, Indonesia, and Pakistan).
 - Knowledge that the child's sibling has undergone FGM.
 - The child talking about going abroad to be 'cut' or to prepare for marriage.
- Signs that may indicate a child has undergone FGM:
 - Prolonged absence from centre and other activities.
 - Behaviour changes on return from a holiday abroad, such as being withdrawn and appearing subdued.
 - Bladder or menstrual problems.
 - Finding it difficult to sit still and looking uncomfortable.
 - Complaining about pain between the legs.
 - Mentioning something somebody did to them that they are not allowed to talk about.
 - Secretive behaviour, including isolating themselves from the group.
 - Reluctance to take part in physical activity.
 - Repeated urinal tract infections.
 - Disclosure of abuse.

Further guidance and information are available from: NSPCC FGM Helpline Contact days and times: 24 hours Tel: 0800 028 3550 Email: fgmhelp@nspcc.org.uk

Peer-on-peer abuse

All staff at TechBloq Learning Centre must be aware that children can abuse other children (referred to as **peer-on-peer abuse**). This is most likely to include, but may not be limited to:

- Bullying, including cyberbullying, prejudiced-based, and discriminatory bullying.
- Physical abuse, such as hitting, biting, kicking, shaking, hair-pulling, or causing physical harm.
- Sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration, and sexual assault.
- Sexual harassment and online sexual harassment, such as that which takes place on social media or chat rooms, which may be stand-alone 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 nude and semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as sexting or youth-produced sexual imagery).
- Upskirting, which is a form of abuse that has been high on court agendas for a number of years and is a criminal offence in its own right under the Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019. Upskirting occurs when someone takes a picture under a person's clothing, with or without underwear, without permission, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification or cause the victim humiliation, distress, or alarm. It is a common aspect of peer-on-peer abuse and can happen to any gender.
- 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. It may also include an online element.

Identifying peer-on-peer abuse & understanding consent

Every student will react differently, but some recognised indicators of peer-on-peer abuse are:

- Bleeding, bruising, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), or pregnancy.
- Becoming withdrawn or displaying other behaviour changes.
- Being fearful of being in the centre or online.
- Missing education.
- Self-harming.
- Displaying behaviours beyond their stage of development.

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.

Most issues of peer-on-peer abuse can be dealt with through the centre's behaviour policy, but where the behaviour raises a safeguarding concern, it falls within the scope of this child protection and safeguarding children policy. Procedures for dealing with these sorts of concerns, including violent sexual assault by peers, are set out in Appendix 3 of this policy.

The centre recognises that it is important to educate students to understand:

- What constitutes appropriate behaviour – including online.
- Issues around consent.
- Issues around discrimination and misogyny.
- Where the criminal law fits into this type of behaviour.

The centre recognises that peer-on-peer abuse is a problem and is happening, even when the issues are not reported. This sort of abuse has a serious impact on those who are victims, in terms of self-esteem and relationships but also educational outcomes. Consequently, TechBloq Learning Centre has put in place procedures and expectations based on the following:

- This type of abuse takes place in the centre, outside of the centre, and online. It can affect any age of child but is predominantly an issue for secondary and college age groups.
- Staff must maintain an attitude of “it could happen here”.
- Downplaying inappropriate behaviour can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviour and can lead ultimately to normalisation of abuse. It will not be tolerated – we have a zero-tolerance approach to this issue.
- Staff must intervene in “inappropriate” behaviour, which can prevent it from escalating to abusive or violent behaviour.
- It is crucial to have a zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment, and an important part in this is not tolerating or laughing off sexual banter or jokes.
- Victims of this type of abuse are likely to be distressed and there is a likelihood of it affecting their educational attainment – this is more likely where the alleged perpetrators attend the same centre or local educational settings.
- Girls are more likely to be victims and boys are more likely perpetrators – however, any report or suspicion should be taken seriously.
- The abuse can be perpetrated by an individual or a group.
- Sexual violence can happen in intimate relationships between peers.
- There can be links between this type of abuse and sexual and criminal exploitation.
- Some children may face additional barriers in reporting because of vulnerabilities, disabilities, sex, ethnicity, and sexual orientation.
- Procedures that we put in place to deal with issues of sexual violence or harassment must be clear, easily accessible, and well-promoted, so that children feel confident in reporting abuse.
- Staff must be aware of behaviour in children that might indicate there is an issue with sexual harassment or violence and act immediately.
- Responding to each incident well will build a trust in the systems so that victims will feel able to come forward in future.
- It is extremely important to listen and react to the child’s report (listening well and not asking leading questions).

- Whilst victims' wishes and feelings are of paramount importance, a centre should not forget to balance this with its duty to protect other children.
- Where a report is found to be malicious or unfounded, the centre should consider what the most appropriate step should be – it might be that the person has been abused by someone else or the allegation might be a cry for help. If the report was deliberately made up, the centre will consider using disciplinary processes.
- All staff should understand the consequences of sexual violence and be aware of all of the available resources for victims but also for perpetrators – many of which are linked at the end of the section.
- It is important to look for patterns in all reports and identify any broader issues that need to be addressed.

All staff should be familiar with guidance on sexual violence and sexual harassment between children, which contains detailed information on a range of relevant topics (e.g. definitions, contextual issues such as power and coercion, and advice on a whole-centre approach).

Sharing nude/semi-nude images (sexting)

Your responsibilities when responding to an incident If you are made aware of an incident involving the sharing of nude or semi-nude images (also known as sexting and 'youth-produced sexual imagery'), you must report it to the DSL immediately.

You must not:

- View, download, or share the imagery yourself, or ask a student to share or download it. If you have already viewed the imagery by accident, you must report this to the DSL.
- Delete the imagery or ask the student to delete it.
- Ask the student(s) who are involved in the incident to disclose information regarding the imagery (this is the DSL's responsibility).
- Share information about the incident with other members of staff, the student(s) it involves, or their, or other, parents and/or carers.
- Say or do anything to blame or shame any student involved.

You should explain that you need to report the incident, and reassure the student(s) that they will receive support and help from the DSL. Further information can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sharing-nudes-and-semi-nudes-advice-for-education-settings-working-with-children-and-young-people>

Students should be made aware of this information so that they are aware of the processes the centre will follow in the event of an incident.

13. DOMESTIC ABUSE

Domestic abuse (often referred to as domestic violence) refers to any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence, or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality. **Under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, a child is also considered a victim if they see, hear, or experience the effects of domestic abuse.** It can occur in intimate relationships between older children.

Exposure to domestic abuse can have a serious, long-lasting emotional and psychological impact on children.

Operation Encompass

This initiative helps police and settings work together to provide emotional and practical help to children who have been involved in domestic abuse. When the police are called to an incident of domestic abuse, where there are children in the household who have experienced the domestic incident, the police will inform the key adult (usually the DSL) before the child or children arrive at the centre the following day. This ensures that the centre has up to date and relevant information about the child's circumstances and can enable support to be given to the child according to their needs. DSLs should endeavour to alert relevant pastoral support staff as soon as possible where this is appropriate.

14. ONLINE SAFETY

TechBloq Learning Centre's online safety policy and other connected policies and agreements can be found on the centre website or upon request. These are updated annually and as required.

All staff must understand that threats to children from online activity are increasingly a factor in many types of abuse. All staff should be aware that these risks also evolve and change. The **Online Safety Act 2023** reinforces the importance of addressing online harms and ensuring a safer online environment for children.

All staff are trained in online safety in conjunction with their safeguarding training. As these threats are dynamic and evolve, the centre keeps staff awareness up-to-date through regular bulletins and training.

The centre's approach to online safety is based on the four key categories of risk:

- **Content** – being exposed to illegal, inappropriate, or harmful content, such as pornography, fake news, racism, misogyny, self-harm, suicide, anti-Semitism, radicalisation, and extremism.
- **Contact** – being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users, such as peer-to-peer pressure, commercial advertising, and adults posing as children or young adults with the intention to groom or exploit them for sexual, criminal, financial, or other purposes.

- **Conduct** – personal online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm, such as making, sending, and receiving explicit images (e.g. consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes and/or pornography), sharing other explicit images, and online bullying.
- **Commerce** – risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing, and/or financial scams.

Being safe in the online environment is essential for students – it empowers them to keep themselves safe. Online safety is taught where appropriate through our curriculum provision and ensures children are taught about safeguarding, including online safety, through a variety of teaching and learning opportunities.

We teach students a range of topics, including:

- How to recognise threats online.
- How to recognise inappropriate content and how to behave online – for example, we will cover misogynistic content; self-harm, sexual discrimination, cyberbullying, peer-on-peer abuse, the dark web, fake news, false advertising, and phishing.
- How to keep personal data safe.
- How to report issues of concern both for themselves and others.

15. CYBERCRIME

TechBloq Learning Centre recognises that there is a risk to students from being drawn into this type of criminal activity that can only be committed online (i.e. cyber-enabled activity). There are three main types of activity:

- **Unauthorised access (hacking)** - for example, where students access areas of an IT system to change their grades.
- **Denial of service (booting)** - where a network is overrun, or an attempt is made to achieve this.
- **Malicious software (malware)** - activity which introduces viruses into IT systems (or attempts to).

Staff who have concerns about this should report it to the DSL, who can refer the individual to the Cyber Choices programme. This programme aims to intervene when young people are at risk in this way.

16. OPPORTUNITIES TO TEACH SAFEGUARDING

TechBloq Learning Centre will ensure that children are taught about safeguarding, including online safety. This may include covering relevant topics through learning in general but is covered particularly through IT lessons. We recognise that a 'one size fits all' approach may not be appropriate for all children, and a more personalised or

contextualised approach for more vulnerable children, victims of abuse, and some SEND children might be needed.

The centre understands that our responsibility extends to helping students keep themselves safe outside of the centre, and this includes both online and outside of the centre, where dangers such as child abduction and grooming exist.

17. STUDENTS WITH A SOCIAL WORKER

We recognise that children with social workers can need extra support. A child's experiences of adversity and trauma last for many years and can leave them vulnerable to further harm as well as potentially creating barriers to attendance, learning, behaviour, and mental health.

The DSL and all members of staff will work with and support social workers to help protect vulnerable children and will help with any reasonable adjustments individuals in this cohort may need.

Where we are aware that a student has a social worker, the DSL will always consider this fact to ensure any decisions are made in the best interests of the student's safety, welfare, and educational outcomes. For example, it will inform decisions about:

- Responding to unauthorised absence or missing education where there are known safeguarding risks.
- The provision of pastoral and/or academic support.

18. STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS, DISABILITIES, OR HEALTH ISSUES

Children with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) or certain health conditions can face additional safeguarding challenges.

Additional barriers can exist when recognising abuse and neglect in this group of children. These can include:

- Assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood, and injury relate to the child's condition without further exploration.
- The fact that these children being more prone to peer group isolation or bullying (including prejudice-based bullying) than other children.
- The fact that these children are at increased risk of abuse and exploitation whether from peers, those who seek to harm children, or criminal gangs.
- The potential for children with SEND or certain medical conditions to be disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs.
- Communication barriers and difficulties in managing or reporting these challenges.

The centre therefore looks to address this issue through raising awareness amongst staff, offering tailored pastoral support, and ensuring communication with children in these groups is effective. It may also involve referral to CAMHS or supporting any such referral.

Homelessness

Being homeless or being at risk of becoming homeless presents a real risk to a child's welfare and can pose serious safeguarding and child protection risks.

There is also now a Homelessness Duty imposed through the **Homelessness Reduction Act 2017**, which places a duty on local authorities to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness in their areas. This extends to all social services functions, including Early Help, and is intended to increase early identification and intervention.

Earlier intervention can help prevent children and young people becoming homeless. Where a child is – or is at risk of – becoming homeless and has also been harmed or is at risk of harm, the DSL will also make a referral to children's social care.

19. CONFIDENTIALITY AND RECORD KEEPING

Staff at TechBloq Learning Centre have a professional responsibility to share relevant information about the protection of children with the **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** and potentially external investigating agencies, where possible, under the guidance of the DSL.

If a student confides in a member of staff and requests that the information is kept secret, it's important that the staff member sensitively explains to the student that they have a responsibility to refer the matter to the DSL.

Accurate, signed, and dated written notes must be kept of all safeguarding and related incidents and child protection concerns relating to individual students. If any staff member has a child protection concern, they should inform the DSL or Deputy DSL as soon as possible. These records will be kept on the student's child protection file.

Arrangements for child protection documentation must comply with the centre's **Data Protection Policy** together with data protection law and regulation applicable at the time, specifically the **UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)** and the **Data Protection Act 2018**.

The DSL will ensure that all child protection records are held separately from other student records. Child protection files and documents will be stored securely, by encryption and/or password protecting electronic files. All staff are trained to use the systems, which are access-controlled. All paper records are stored in a locked cabinet with restricted access. Information from child protection files will only be shared with relevant staff when it's necessary to do so (following the government's **seven golden rules for data sharing**) and in a manner consistent with data protection law.

If the centre receives a request for direct access to, or copies of, centre documentation held on a child protection file, the **centre leadership** and DSL will be informed and a

decision taken on the appropriate way forward in accordance with the Data Protection Policy. The centre leadership may be consulted or further legal advice sought.

In the event of a student who is being dealt with under the centre's child protection procedures transferring to another educational setting (e.g., a school, college, or another out-of-school setting), the centre will:

- Find out the name of the receiving setting (and, where appropriate, the Local Authority).
- Contact the relevant safeguarding lead at that setting to discuss the transfer.
- Within **5 days of transfer** – or 5 days after the start of term if the transfer is out of term time – securely send all information relating to the student to the receiving setting (and, where relevant, the Local Authority).
- Check with the receiving setting that the student has actually arrived there on the expected day (and inform all relevant agencies of the transfer).
- Consider whether it's appropriate to inform a new setting that a child is involved in a **Channel programme**.
- Ensure that, where a perpetrator transfers, the new setting is made aware of potential risks, protective factors, and any ongoing support the child is receiving.

Any external individual or organisation contracted by the centre to work with students (for example, a child psychologist) must report any child protection incidents or disclosures from students to the **centre leadership** or DSL at the earliest opportunity. Such individuals, organisations, or bodies will, as part of their contractual arrangements with the centre, be required to work in accordance with the centre's child protection and safeguarding policy.

The centre has in place data sharing agreements and complies with all relevant data sharing protocols.

Safeguarding records which contain information about allegations of sexual abuse will be retained in accordance with statutory guidance and best practice for safeguarding children and relevant legal requirements. While the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) has concluded, the principles for retaining records that contain allegations of sexual abuse remain crucial for potential future investigations or support needs.

Where the centre contracts with others to run activities in the centre premises or grounds, appropriate safeguarding arrangements/expectations will form part of the contract.

20. Working with Parents/Individuals with Parental Responsibility

TechBloq Learning Centre recognises the importance of working, where appropriate, in partnership with parents and carers to ensure the welfare and safety of our students.

The centre will therefore:

- Make parents aware of the centre's role in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of students, including the duty to refer students on, where necessary, by making all policies available on the website and on request.
- Work with parents to support the needs of their child, including raising awareness of threats posed online.
- Only notify the parents or carers where there is no increased risk to the child or others by doing so. Wherever necessary, we will discuss this with the Local Authority children's social care team before doing so.
- In the case of allegations of abuse made against other children, we will normally notify the parents or carers of all the children involved if the proviso above is satisfied.
- Ensure a robust complaints system is in place to deal with issues raised by parents and carers.
- Provide advice and signpost parents and carers to other services where students need extra support.

21. HEALTH AND SAFETY

The **centre leadership** of TechBloq Learning Centre will ensure that there is a robust, up-to-date Health and Safety Policy and Procedure to meet the statutory responsibility for the safety of students and staff at the centre. The centre leadership will identify and manage health and safety through the use of **risk assessments**, which are carried out:

- On an annual basis for the centre learning spaces and environment indoors and outdoors.
- For all trips and educational visits.
- For students travelling between locations during their session time.
- For all work-based learning on work experience placements.
- When a student returns following an exclusion due to risky or violent behaviour.
- When there are any changes to the premises or practices.
- Following a serious accident in relation to staff and/or students.
- When there is a high-level risk associated with contact with parents.
- To maintain effective security of the premises, including protection from intruders, trespassers, and/or criminal damage.

The centre takes a **risk-based approach to visitors and contractors on site**. The normal procedure for visitors and contractors not working directly with children is that they will:

- Report to the reception on arrival.
- Provide proof of identity.
- Wear a name badge at all times.
- Receive suitable supervision by centre staff when on site.
- Be made aware of the arrangements for safeguarding and health and safety.

- Comply with the relevant vetting checks specified through the centre's recruitment process.

22. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

TechBloq Learning Centre and its **management team** must take into account the Equality, Diversity, and Values Policy when discharging their duties under this policy.

23. MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THIS POLICY

The **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** at TechBloq Learning Centre will monitor the working of this policy and will report as required to the **centre leadership**. It will be reviewed as required and annually.

24. Appendix 1 - Staff Guidance

A. Procedures in respect of Child Abuse

Early Help

If a child or family would benefit from support from multiple services then social care may request that an Early Help Assessment (EHA) is carried out first. The assessment aims to identify what kind of support the child or family needs in order to resolve the problem.

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

- Is disabled or has certain health conditions and has specific additional needs.
- Has special educational needs (whether or not they have a statutory Education, Health, and Care Plan).
- Has a mental health need.
- Is a young carer.
- Is showing signs of being drawn into anti-social or criminal behaviour, including gang involvement and association with organised crime groups or county lines.
- Is frequently missing/goes missing from care or from home.
- Is at risk of modern slavery, trafficking, or sexual or criminal exploitation.
- Has a family member in prison, or is affected by parental offending.
- Is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as drug and alcohol misuse, adult mental health issues, and domestic abuse.
- Is misusing drugs or alcohol themselves.
- Has returned home to their family from care.
- Is at risk of 'honour'-based abuse such as Female Genital Mutilation or Forced Marriage.
- Is a privately fostered child.
- Is persistently absent from education, including persistent absences for part of the learning centre day.

The Early Help Assessment is a multi-agency assessment, often led by a **lead professional**, who could be a social worker or other professional who already provides support to the child and family. This person may be the centre's Designated Safeguarding Lead.

It also needs to be undertaken with agreement from both the child and their parents or carers and must involve the child, the family, and any other professionals who are working with them.

If the EHA results in the professional suspecting that the child is in need, or likely to suffer significant harm, then a referral should be made to social care straight away.

Once the referral has been accepted by social care, a multi-agency assessment – as detailed under **Section 17 of the Children Act 1989** – is required to determine whether the child is in need, which services are appropriate, and what action to take.

Under the Children Act 1989, local authorities are required to provide services for children in need for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting their welfare.

The purpose of the assessment is to:

- Assess if a child is in need. Section 17 explains that a child is in need when: they are unlikely to achieve or maintain, or have the opportunity of achieving and maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision of services by a local authority; their health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision of such services; or they are disabled.
- Gather important information about a child and family. Section 17 requires a local authority to, as far as possible, promote the upbringing of the child within the family and to ascertain the wishes and feelings of the child whilst balancing this with the child's welfare.
- Analyse their needs and/or the nature and level of any risk and harm being suffered by the child. Decide whether the child is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm. Provide support to address those needs to improve the child's outcomes and make them safe.

The assessment is **child-centred** and all decisions must be made with the child's best interests in mind. This includes focusing on outcomes that address the child's needs, both within their family and the wider community, and seeing decisions from the child's perspective. Hearing the child's voice and opinions is crucial.

The assessment is also a continuous process, not a one-off event, and is regularly reviewed to ensure the child continues to receive the services that they need.

The social worker who carries out the assessment will analyse all information that they have about the child, including the results of any EHA, and clarify the child's needs and level of risk that they may be facing. As someone who works with the child, you may be required to provide further information about the child and family.

If the information gathered from the assessment results in the social worker suspecting that the child is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm, then a multi-agency strategy meeting/discussion must be held to decide what further action is needed. This multi-agency strategy discussion will involve representatives from social care, the police, health services, and any other relevant services or people, such as the person who made the referral.

The discussion may be in person, over a telephone conference, or both, and can take place at any time from the moment of referral right through the assessment process.

Section 47 Enquiries

Section 47 enquiries are necessary when there is a need to safeguard and promote the welfare of a child because they are suspected of suffering **significant harm**.

Section 47 of the Children Act imposes a duty on local authorities to investigate when there is a child in their area who is:

- Subject to an emergency protection order;
- In police protection; or,
- Where the local authority has reasonable cause to suspect that a child who lives, or is found, in their area is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm.

Under the Act, “the authority shall make, or cause to be made, such enquiries as they consider necessary to enable them to decide whether they should take any action to safeguard or promote the child’s welfare”.

The enquiry is a dynamic process but usually involves:

- Speaking to the child who is the subject of concern to ascertain their wishes and feelings.
- Interviewing parents or carers and determining wider factors that may impact on the child and family.
- Systematically gathering information about the child’s and family’s history.
- Analysing the findings of the assessment.
- Undertaking appropriate medical tests, examinations, or observations to determine how the child’s health or development may be being impaired.

Local authority social workers are responsible for deciding what action to take and how to proceed following section 47 enquiries. Where concerns of significant harm are substantiated and the child is believed to be suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm, social care will:

- Convene an **initial Child Protection Conference** within 15 working days of the strategy discussion.
- Consider whether any professionals with specialist knowledge should be invited to participate.

- Help prepare the child and parents if needed.

Social care may ask professionals who have contact with the child to contribute further information or attend the Child Protection Conference to help with the decision-making. These meetings are chaired by **Independent Reviewing Officers** who are employed by the local authority but act independently. The meetings bring together professionals, gather evidence, and determine actions that are required to safeguard the child.

If it is found that the concerns of significant harm are not substantiated, then social care should:

- Discuss the case with the child, their parents, or the professionals involved.
- Determine whether support from services is needed.
- Consider if the child's health and development needs to be re-assessed.

If the local authority considers the child at risk of significant harm, or beyond parental control, then they will start the process of applying to the family courts for a Care Order under section 37 of the Children's Act, or they will seek joint parental control under section 20 of the Children's Act 1989.

Local Authorities assess each case against a threshold to ascertain which level of service, if any, is most suitable.

The following flowcharts are from **Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023** (or the most recent version available at the time of review), which sets out how cases flow through the various systems.

(Note: As I cannot embed images directly, you will need to replace the placeholder images for Flow Charts 1-4 with the updated versions from Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 or the latest available guidance.)

B. Guidance for all Staff on Dealing with Disclosure

I. Dealing with Disclosures of Abuse

- Always listen carefully and quietly. Do not press for any evidence at all.
- Remain calm and reassuring. Do not dismiss the disclosure and do not show distress or concern.
- Do not refute the allegation.
- Show that you care through open and reassuring facial expressions and body language.
- Do not interrogate or ask leading questions (it could later undermine a case).
- Ensure you take a **written verbatim account** of the child's disclosure.
- Staff should be aware that written accounts could become part of a statutory assessment or criminal investigation.
- Where there is an online element, the key consideration is for staff not to view or forward illegal images of a child. Where viewing images is unavoidable, staff should follow the advice provided in the "**Sharing Nudes and Semi-Nudes: advice for**

education settings working with children and young people" guidance. The key is to preserve evidence without further dissemination.

II. At this point, staff should take the following steps:

- Explain to the student that the disclosure must be reported – emphasise your trust in them.
- Do not promise to keep the allegation secret or that 'everything will be alright.'
- Reassure the student by telling them that they have done the right thing in telling you. Do not offer physical reassurance if it could be misinterpreted.
- Never make the child feel that they are wrong for bringing issues to your attention.
- Do not admonish in any way, e.g., 'I wish you had told me sooner.'
- Inform the DSL initially verbally.
- Under no circumstances discuss the matter with any other person. If the allegations prove to be untrue, any such discussion would be deemed defamatory. Information to staff is on a 'need to know' basis at the discretion of the DSL.
- If the child agrees, and it is appropriate, take them with you to the DSL.
- With the DSL, prepare a detailed report itemising:
 - The information revealed by the student. It should not contain any opinion whatsoever.
 - Actions taken by yourself, including when the suspicions were reported, to whom the suspicions were reported, and follow-up action taken within the centre.
 - Date and sign any written record of events and action taken and keep confidential and secure.
- You must keep, in absolute confidence, a copy of the report, as will the DSL.
- The DSL keeps Child Protection records centrally and securely and they are not kept in the child's general file.
- All staff are under a duty to report all suspicions of abuse to the DSL (or as per the instructions in the main policy document where the DSL is not available).
- The DSL is responsible for passing on these concerns to children's social care.
- Accurate records are essential in the event of further investigations.
- Any referral must include as much relevant information as possible. Systems for referral should be in line with local protocols which can be found at the Newham Safeguarding Children Partnership website: <https://www.newhamscp.org.uk>

III. If you see or hear something that is concerning:

- Don't ignore it or assume that it's someone else's responsibility to report it.
- Upload all information to the centre's safeguarding systems and seek advice immediately from your DSL.
- Don't feel silly – if it worries you, someone else needs to know.
- If it is something related to safeguarding, but not a child whose safety is immediately at risk, inform the appropriate **Pastoral Lead** or safeguarding officer in

person and follow up with a one-line email notifying the DSL that there is a safeguarding concern.

- If it is related to a child being at risk, see the DSL or Deputy DSL immediately and definitely before the child goes home that day where possible.
- All staff may raise concerns directly with Children's Services if they feel an incident is not being dealt with appropriately or they are unable to locate relevant staff.
- Concerns about adults in the centre should be made directly to the **centre leadership**.

25. Appendix 2 - Centre's Statutory Duty and Guidance Documents

This policy sets out how TechBlox Learning Centre will meet its duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of our students. It has been developed in accordance with the law and guidance found at <https://www.gov.uk/> that seeks to protect children, and specifically with:

- **Working Together to Safeguard Children (latest version, e.g., 2023)**: Statutory guidance for inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- **The DfE Voluntary Code of Practice for Out-of-School Settings (2019)**: Guidance for out-of-school settings on safeguarding.
- The Children Act 1989 and 2004
- The Education Act 2002 (relevant sections on general welfare, not school-specific duties)
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (as amended by Serious Crime Act 2015)
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Online Safety Act 2023 (while primarily for tech companies, its principles underpin the need for online safety practices)
- The Prevent Duty Guidance: England and Wales (updated as necessary)
- Guidance on sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people
- Multi-agency Statutory Guidance on Female Genital Mutilation
- Protecting Children from Radicalisation: The Prevent Duty
- Preventing Youth Violence and Gang Involvement
- Criminal Exploitation of Children and Vulnerable Adults: County Lines
- Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools: Departmental Advice (principles relevant for all settings)
- Learning Together to Be Safe - a toolkit to help settings contribute to the prevention of violent extremism
- Other relevant guidance from the Department for Education and Home Office.

Further information can be found at:

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/secondary-school-teachers-useful-information> (as general background for staff, though not primary guidance for OOSS)

26. Appendix 3 - Safeguarding and Peer-on-Peer Issues

This appendix provides guidance on procedures for cases involving peer-on-peer sexual violence and sexual harassment. While this centre is not a school, the principles outlined here are crucial for fostering a safe environment and are derived from best practice guidance applicable to all settings working with children, including the **DfE Voluntary Code of Practice for Out-of-School Settings** and **Working Together to Safeguard Children**.

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex. It can occur 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. All staff working with children are advised to maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here'.

Addressing inappropriate behaviour (even if it appears to be relatively innocuous) can be an important intervention that helps prevent problematic, abusive, and/or violent behaviour in the future. Children who are victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment, wherever it happens, will likely find the experience stressful and distressing. This will, in all likelihood, adversely affect their engagement and well-being at the centre and may be exacerbated if the alleged perpetrator(s) attend the same centre. Centres should be aware that safeguarding incidents and/or behaviours can be associated with factors outside the centre, including intimate personal relationships (see also sections on child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation).

While 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. However, it's essential that all victims are reassured that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. A victim should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting sexual violence or sexual harassment. Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report.

Further detailed information on what sexual violence and sexual harassment constitute, important context (including consent, power imbalances, and developmental stages), and harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) is available from recognised safeguarding organisations such as the NSPCC and through guidance like the "Sharing Nudes and Semi-Nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people."

Responding to Reports of Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment

The centre's policy 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. Centres not recognising,

acknowledging, or understanding the scale of harassment and abuse and/or downplaying some behaviours related to abuse 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.

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 the centre with the foundation for a calm, considered, and appropriate response to any reports. The **management team/responsible body** should ensure that the centre contributes to multi-agency working in line with statutory guidance **Working Together to Safeguard Children**.

This guidance provides effective safeguarding practice and principles for the centre to consider in its decision-making process. Ultimately, any decisions are for the centre to make on a case-by-case basis, with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) (or a deputy) taking a leading role and using their professional judgement, supported by other agencies, such as children's social care and the police as required.

There is support available for out-of-school settings. The immediate response to a report:

Responding to the Report

It is important to note 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 centre staff may overhear a conversation that suggests a child has been harmed, or a child's own behaviour might indicate that something is wrong. If staff have any concerns about a child's welfare, they should act on them immediately rather than wait to be told.

The centre's initial response to a report from a child is incredibly important. How the centre responds to a report can encourage or undermine the confidence of future victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment to report or come forward. 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 centre 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 or their experience minimised.

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). However, this might not always be possible.

- Where the report includes an online element, staff should be aware of advice on handling digital devices and imagery, specifically following guidance like "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. In some cases, it may be more appropriate to preserve any devices to hand them to the police for inspection.
- Not promising confidentiality at this initial stage, as it's very likely a concern will have to be shared further (for example, with the Designated Safeguarding Lead or 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 centre 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, so children may not be able to recall all details or the 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-judgmental, 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. Centre staff should be aware that notes of such reports could become part of a statutory assessment by children's social care and/or part of a criminal investigation.
- 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.

Risk Assessment

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 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 centre, especially any actions that are appropriate to protect them from the alleged perpetrator(s), or from future harms.

Risk assessments should be recorded (written or electronic) and should be kept under review. At all times, the centre should be actively considering the risks posed to all their students and put adequate measures in place to protect them and keep them safe. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (or a deputy) should ensure they are engaging with 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 centre's risk assessment is not intended to replace the detailed assessments of expert professionals. Any such professional assessments should be used to inform the centre's approach to supporting and protecting their students and updating their own risk assessment.

Action Following a Report of Sexual Violence and/or Sexual Harassment

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'.

The centre 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 centre. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (or deputy) is likely to have a complete safeguarding picture and be the most appropriate person to advise on the centre's initial response. 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 centre'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 the alleged perpetrator(s) significantly older, more mature, or more confident? 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 peers.
- Are there ongoing risks to the victim, other children, adult students, or centre staff?
- Other related issues and wider context, including any links to child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation.

As always when concerned about the welfare of a child, all staff should act in the best interests of the child. In all cases, the centre should follow general safeguarding principles as set out throughout this policy. 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).

The starting point regarding any report should always be that there is a **zero-tolerance approach** to sexual violence and sexual harassment; it is never acceptable and will not be tolerated. It is especially important not to pass off any sexual violence or sexual harassment as “banter”, “just having a laugh”, “part of growing up”, or “boys being boys” as this can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours and an unsafe environment for children.

Options to Manage the Report

It's important that the centre considers every report on a case-by-case basis. When to inform the alleged perpetrator(s) will be a decision that should be carefully considered. Where a report is going to be made to children's social care and/or the police, then, as a general rule, the centre should speak to the relevant agency and discuss next steps and how the alleged perpetrator(s) will be informed of the allegations. However, following general safeguarding principles, this should not stop the centre from taking immediate action to safeguard their children, where required.

There are four likely scenarios for the centre to consider when managing any reports of sexual violence and/or sexual harassment. It will be important in all scenarios that decisions and actions are regularly reviewed and that relevant policies are updated to reflect lessons learned. It is particularly important to look out for potential patterns of concerning, problematic, or inappropriate behaviour. Where a pattern is identified, the centre should decide on a course of action. Consideration should be given to whether there are wider cultural issues within the centre that enabled the inappropriate behaviour to occur, and where appropriate, extra teaching time and/or staff training could be delivered to minimise the risk of it happening again. The four scenarios are:

1. Manage Internally

- In some cases of sexual harassment, for example, one-off incidents, the centre may take the view that the children concerned are not in need of early help or that referrals need to be made to statutory services, and that it would be appropriate to handle the incident internally, perhaps through utilising their behaviour policy and by providing pastoral support.
- Whatever the response, it should be underpinned by the principle that there is a zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment; it is never acceptable and will not be tolerated.
- All concerns, discussions, decisions, and reasons for decisions should be recorded (written or electronic).

2. Early Help

- In line with point 1 above, the centre may decide that the children involved do not require referral to statutory services but may benefit from early help. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life. Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. Early help can be particularly useful to address non-violent HSB and may prevent escalation of sexual violence. It is particularly important that the Designated Safeguarding Lead (and their deputies) know what the Early Help process is and how and where to access support.
- More information on Early Help is set out in Appendix 1 of this policy, with full details of the early help process in **Chapter 1 of Working Together to Safeguard Children**.
- Multi-agency early help will work best when placed alongside strong centre policies, preventative education, and engagement with parents and carers.
- Early help and the option to manage a report internally do not need to be mutually exclusive: a centre could manage internally and seek early help for both the victim and perpetrator(s).
- Whatever the response, it should be underpinned by the principle that there is zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment; it is never acceptable and will not be tolerated.
- All concerns, discussions, decisions, and reasons for decisions should be recorded (written or electronic).

3. Referrals to Children's Social Care

- Where a child has been harmed, is at risk of harm, or is in immediate danger, the centre should make a referral to local children's social care.
- At the point of referral to children's social care, the centre will generally inform parents or carers, unless there are compelling reasons not to (if informing a parent or carer is going to put the child at additional risk). Any such decision should be made with the support of children's social care.
- If a referral is made, children's social care will then make enquiries to determine whether any of the children involved are in need of protection or other services.

- Where statutory assessments are appropriate, the centre (especially the Designated Safeguarding Lead or a deputy) should be working alongside and cooperating with the relevant lead social worker. Collaborative working will help ensure the best possible package of coordinated support is implemented for the victim and, where appropriate, the alleged perpetrator(s) and any other children that require support.
- The centre should not wait for the outcome (or even the start) of a children's social care investigation before protecting the victim and other children in the centre. It will be important for the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or a deputy) to work closely with children's social care (and other agencies as required) to ensure any actions the centre takes do not jeopardise a statutory investigation. The risk assessment (as outlined previously in this section) will help inform any decision. Consideration of safeguarding the victim, alleged perpetrator(s), any other children directly involved in the safeguarding report, and all children at the centre should be immediate.
- In some cases, children's social care will review the evidence and decide a statutory intervention is not appropriate. The centre (generally led by the Designated Safeguarding Lead or a deputy) should be prepared to refer again if they believe the child remains in immediate danger or at risk of harm. If a statutory assessment is not appropriate, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or a deputy) should consider other support mechanisms such as early help, specialist support, and pastoral support.
- Whatever the response, it should be underpinned by the principle that there is a zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment; it is never acceptable and will not be tolerated.
- All concerns, discussions, decisions, and reasons for decisions should be recorded (written or electronic).

4. Reporting to the Police

- Any report to the police will generally be in parallel with a referral to children's social care (as above).
- It is important that the Designated Safeguarding Lead (and their deputies) are clear about the local process for referrals and follow that process.
- Where a report of rape, assault by penetration, or sexual assault is made, the starting point is that this should be passed on to the police. While the age of criminal responsibility is ten, if the alleged perpetrator(s) is under ten, the starting principle of reporting to the police remains. The police will take a welfare, rather than a criminal justice, approach.
- Where a report has been made to the police, the centre should consult the police and agree what information can be disclosed to staff and others, in particular, the alleged perpetrator(s) and their parents or carers. They should also discuss the best way to protect the victim and their anonymity.
- At this stage, the centre will generally inform parents or carers unless there are compelling reasons not to, for example, if informing a parent or carer is likely to put a child at additional risk. In circumstances where parents or

carers have not been informed, it will be especially important that the centre is supporting the child in any decision they take. This should be with the support of children's social care and any appropriate specialist agencies.

- All police forces in England have specialist units that investigate child abuse. The names and structures of these units are matters for local forces. It will be important that the Designated Safeguarding Lead (and their deputies) are aware of their local arrangements.
- In some cases, it may become clear very quickly that the police (for whatever reason) will not take further action. In such circumstances, it is important that the centre continue to engage with specialist support for the victim and alleged perpetrator(s) as required.
- While protecting children and/or taking any disciplinary measures against the alleged perpetrator(s), it will be important for the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or a deputy) to work closely with the police (and other agencies as required) to ensure any actions the centre takes do not jeopardise the police investigation.
- If the centre has questions about the investigation, they should ask the police. The police will help and support the centre as much as they can (within the constraints of any legal restrictions).
- Whatever the response, it should be underpinned by the principle that there is a zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment; it is never acceptable and will not be tolerated.
- All concerns, discussions, decisions, and reasons for decisions should be recorded (written or electronic).

Considering Bail Conditions

- The police will consider what action to take to manage the assessed risk of harm. This could involve the use of police bail with conditions, prior to a suspect appearing in court, or court bail with or without conditions after the first appearance.
- Alternatively, the person suspected of an offence could be 'released under investigation' (RUI). People released under RUI can have no conditions attached to their release from custody, and it is possible for a person on bail also to have no conditions.
- Whatever arrangements are in place, the centre will need to consider what additional measures may be necessary to manage any assessed risk of harm that may arise within their institution.
- Particular regard should be given to: the additional stress and trauma that might be caused to a victim within the institution; the potential for the suspected person to intimidate the victim or a witness; the need to ensure that any risk management measures strike a balance between management of risk and the rights of an unconnected person (e.g., rights to privacy, family life, etc.).

- Careful liaison with the police investigators should help to develop a balanced set of arrangements.

Managing Any Delays in the Criminal Process

- There may be delays in any case that is being progressed through the criminal justice system. The centre should not wait for the outcome (or even the start) of a police investigation before protecting the victim, alleged perpetrator(s), and other children in the centre. The risk assessment (as outlined previously in this section) will help inform any decision.

The End of the Criminal Process

- If a child is convicted or receives a caution for a sexual offence, the centre should update its risk assessment, ensure relevant protections are in place for all the children at the centre and, if it has not already, consider any suitable action in line with their behaviour policy. This process should include a review of the necessary actions to keep all parties safe and meet their needs. If the perpetrator(s) remains in the same centre as the victim, the centre should be very clear as to their expectations regarding the perpetrator(s) now they have been convicted or cautioned. This could include expectations regarding their behaviour and any restrictions the centre thinks are reasonable and proportionate with regard to the perpetrator(s)' timetable.
- Any conviction (even with legal anonymity reporting restrictions) is potentially going to generate interest among other students in the centre. It will be important that the centre ensures both the victim and perpetrator(s) remain protected, especially from any bullying or harassment (including online).
- Where cases are classified as "no further action" (NFA'd) by the police or Crown Prosecution Service, or where there is a not guilty verdict, the centre should continue to offer support to the victim and the alleged perpetrator(s) for as long as is necessary. A not guilty verdict or a decision not to progress with their case will likely be traumatic for the victim. The fact that an allegation cannot be substantiated or was withdrawn does not necessarily mean that it was unfounded. The centre should discuss any decisions with the victim in this light and continue to offer support. The alleged perpetrator(s) is also likely to require ongoing support for what will have likely been a difficult experience.

Unsubstantiated, Unfounded, False, or Malicious Reports

As set out in paragraph 71 of Part One of this guidance (or equivalent within the centre's full policy), all concerns, discussions, and decisions made, and the reasons for those decisions, should be recorded in writing. Records should be reviewed so that potential patterns of concerning, problematic, or inappropriate behaviour can be identified and addressed. If a report is determined to be unsubstantiated, unfounded, false, or malicious,

the Designated Safeguarding Lead should consider whether the child and/or the person who has made the allegation is in need of help or may have been abused by someone else, and this is a cry for help. In such circumstances, a referral to children's social care may be appropriate.

If a report is shown to be deliberately invented or malicious, the centre should consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the individual who made it as per their own behaviour policy.

Ongoing Response: Safeguarding and Supporting the Victim

The following principles are based on effective safeguarding practice and should help shape any decisions regarding safeguarding and supporting the victim.

- The needs and wishes of the victim should be paramount (along with protecting the child) in any response. It is important they feel in as much control of the process as is reasonably possible. Wherever possible, the victim, if they wish, should be able to continue in their normal routine. Overall, the priority should be to make the victim's daily experience as normal as possible, so that the centre is a safe space for them.
- Consider the age and the developmental stage of the victim, the nature of the allegations, and the potential risk of further abuse. The centre should be aware that, by the very nature of sexual violence and sexual harassment, a power imbalance is likely to have been created between the victim and alleged perpetrator(s).
- The victim should never be made to feel they are the problem for making a report or made to feel ashamed for making a report.
- Consider the proportionality of the response. Support should be tailored on a case-by-case basis. The support required regarding a one-off incident of sexualised name-calling is likely to be vastly different from that for a report of rape.
- Centres should be aware that sexual assault can result in a range of health needs, including physical, mental, and sexual health problems and unwanted pregnancy. Children and young people that have a health need arising from sexual assault or abuse can access specialist NHS support from a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC). SARCs offer confidential and non-judgemental support to victims and survivors of sexual assault and abuse. They provide medical, practical, and emotional care and advice to all children and adults, regardless of when the incident occurred.

Support can include:

- **Early Help and children's social care**, as set out in Appendix 1 of this guidance and **Working Together to Safeguard Children**.
- **Children and Young People's Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ChISVAs)** provide emotional and practical support for victims of sexual violence. They are based within the specialist sexual violence sector and will help the victim understand what their options are and how the criminal justice process works if they have reported or are considering reporting to the police. ChISVAs will work in

partnership with the centre to ensure the best possible outcomes for the victim. Police and social care agencies can signpost to ChISVA services (where available), or referrals can be made directly to the ChISVA service by the young person or centre. Contact details for ChISVAs can be found at **Rape Crisis** and **The Survivors Trust**.

- **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)** is used as a term for all services that work with children who have difficulties with their emotional or behavioural well-being. Services vary depending on local authority. Most CAMHS have their own website, which will have information about access, referrals, and contact numbers.
- The **specialist sexual violence sector** can provide therapeutic support for children who have experienced sexual violence. Contact Rape Crisis (England & Wales) or The Survivors Trust for details of local specialist organisations. The Male Survivors Partnership can provide details of services which specialise in supporting men and boys.
- **NHS services** provide a range of advice, help, and support, including advice about the risk of pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections (STI), reporting to the police, and forensics.
- **Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs)** offer medical, practical, and emotional support. They have specially trained doctors, nurses, and support workers.
- If children, young people, or their families are unsure which service to access, they should contact their GP or call the NHS on **111**.
- **Childline** provides free and confidential advice for children and young people.
- **Internet Watch Foundation (IWF)** works internationally to remove child sexual abuse online images and videos and offers a place for the public to report them anonymously.
- **Childline / IWF: Report Remove** is a free tool that allows children to report nude or sexual images and videos of themselves that they think might have been shared online, to see if they can be removed from the internet.

Victims may not talk about the whole picture immediately. They may be more comfortable providing information on a piecemeal basis. It is essential that dialogue is kept open and encouraged. When it is clear that ongoing support will be required, the centre should ask the victim if they would find it helpful to have a designated trusted adult (for example, their DSL or another key staff member) to talk to about their needs. The choice of any such adult should be the victim's (as far as reasonably possible). The centre should respect and support this choice.

A victim of sexual violence is likely to be traumatised and, in some cases, may struggle in a normal learning environment. While the centre should avoid any action that would have the effect of isolating the victim, in particular from supportive peer groups, there may be times when the victim finds it difficult to maintain a full-time timetable and may express a wish to withdraw from lessons and activities. This should be because the victim wants to,

not because it makes it easier to manage the situation. If required, the centre should provide a physical space for victims to withdraw.

It may be necessary for the centre to maintain arrangements to protect and support the victim for a long time. The centre should be prepared for this and should work with children's social care and other agencies as required. It is therefore important that the Designated Safeguarding Lead knows how and where to seek support.

It is important that the centre does everything it reasonably can to protect the victim from bullying and harassment as a result of any report they have made. While they should be given all the necessary support to remain in the centre, if the trauma results in the victim being unable to do this, alternative provision or a move to another educational setting should be considered to enable them to continue to receive suitable education. This should only be at the request of the victim (and following discussion with their parents or carers).

It is important that if the victim does move to another educational institution (for any reason), that the new educational institution is made aware of any ongoing support needs. The Designated Safeguarding Lead should take responsibility to ensure this happens (and should discuss with the victim and, where appropriate, their parents or carers as to the most suitable way of doing this) as well as transferring the child protection file. Information sharing advice referenced in this policy will help support this process.

Safeguarding and Supporting the Alleged Perpetrator(s) and Children and Young People Who Have Displayed Harmful Sexual Behaviour

The following principles are based on effective safeguarding practice and should help shape any decisions regarding safeguarding and supporting the alleged perpetrator(s):

- The centre will have a difficult balancing act to consider. On one hand, they need to safeguard the victim (and the wider student body), and on the other hand, provide the alleged perpetrator(s) with education, safeguarding support as appropriate, and implement any disciplinary sanctions. Taking disciplinary action and still providing appropriate support are not mutually exclusive actions. They can, and should, occur at the same time if necessary.
- Consider the age and the developmental stage of the alleged perpetrator(s), the nature of the allegations, and frequency of allegations. Any child will likely experience stress as a result of being the subject of allegations and/or negative reactions by their peers to the allegations against them.
- Consider the proportionality of the response. Support (and sanctions) should be considered on a case-by-case basis. The alleged perpetrator(s) may potentially have unmet needs (in some cases these may be considerable) as well as potentially posing a risk of harm to other children. HSB in young children may be (and often are) a symptom of either their own abuse or exposure to abusive practices and/or materials. Advice should be taken, as appropriate, from children's social care, specialist sexual violence services, and the police.

- The NSPCC provides free and independent advice about HSB: **NSPCC Learning: Protecting children from harmful sexual behaviour** and **NSPCC - Harmful sexual behaviour framework**.
- The **Lucy Faithfull Foundation** has developed a HSB toolkit, which among other things, provides support, advice, and information on how to prevent it, links to organisations and helplines, resources about HSB by children, internet safety, sexual development, and preventing child sexual abuse.
- **Contextual Safeguarding Network – Beyond Referrals (Schools)** provides a school self-assessment toolkit and guidance for addressing HSB in schools (principles can be adapted for OOSS).
- **StopItNow** - Preventing harmful sexual behaviour in children - provides a guide for parents, carers, and professionals to help everyone do their part in keeping children safe; they also run a free confidential helpline.
- It is important that the perpetrator(s) is/are also given the correct support to try to stop them re-offending and to address any underlying trauma that may be causing this behaviour. Addressing inappropriate behaviour can be an important intervention that helps prevent problematic, abusive, and/or violent behaviour in the future.
- If the perpetrator(s) is to be excluded, the decision must be lawful, reasonable, and fair, in line with the centre's behaviour policy.
- The centre can be a significant protective factor for children who have displayed HSB, and continued access to the centre, with a comprehensive safeguarding management plan in place, is an important factor to consider before final decisions are made. It is important that if an alleged perpetrator does move to another educational institution (for any reason), that the new educational institution is made aware of any ongoing support needs and where appropriate, potential risks to other children and staff. The Designated Safeguarding Lead should take responsibility to ensure this happens as well as transferring the child protection file. Information sharing advice referenced in this policy will help support this process.