



Homeless Link

Safeguarding children and young people

Guidance for staff working with children and young people experiencing homelessness

Safeguarding children and young people:

Guidance for staff working with children and young people experiencing, homelessness

Contents

Introduction	3
Legislation and systems that guide safeguarding practice	5
Understanding abuse, violence and harm	10
Understanding and responding to the impact of abuse on children and young people	14
Organisational infrastructure to support, recognise and reporting of harm to children	19
Appendix A: Types of abuse, violence and harm	25
Appendix B: Resources and further information	33

Produced by

Professor Jenny Pearce and the National Practice Development Team.

Acknowledgements

With thanks to Professor Jenny Pearce, OBE, who is Professor of Young People and Public Policy at the University of Bedfordshire and visiting Professor at Goldsmiths College, London. Founder and member of the Safer Young Lives Research Centre (www.beds.ac.uk/sylrc), her work focuses on preventing sexual violence against children.

Published

August 2022

Introduction

About this guidance

This guidance has been developed to provide professionals working in the homelessness sector with a working understanding of their roles and responsibilities in keeping children and young people safe.

Children and young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness may be vulnerable to abuse, violence and exploitation. They may be vulnerable because of previous experiences that have contributed to them becoming homeless and/or they may be vulnerable because they are homeless: homelessness is recognised as a risk factor for vulnerability to abuse.

We have divided this guidance into the following sections

- Information on the legislation and systems that guide safeguarding practice in England
- Information on the types of abuse, and how they affect young people, their peers and their families
- Information for practitioners on what they should do if they are concerned about a child they are working with
- Information for organisations on the policies and processes they should have in place in order to effectively safeguarding children and support their staff

This guidance advocates for a holistic approach to understanding harm so that all staff, irrespective of role or seniority, are able to identify harm to a child or young person and know how to respond. It should be read in total so that staff and others understand their full responsibilities and entitlements to training, support and supervision about child safeguarding concerns.

Who is the guidance about?

Throughout this guidance we refer to both children and young people. A child is any person under the age of 18, as defined by the Children Act 1989.¹ The legislation and guidance we refer to throughout this document primarily refers to children.

We define young people as those who are aged between 18 and 25. Young people who are vulnerable to or who are experiencing abuse or harm are not protected by the same legislation and guidance as those under 18. They may be owed an adult safeguarding duty. Please see our guidance on supporting vulnerable adults for further information.²

¹ Children Act (1989), <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/schedule/1/paragraph/16>

² Homeless Link (2021), *Safeguarding Adults at Risk*. Available at: www.homelesslink-1b54.kxcdn.com/media/documents/Safeguarding_guidance_2021.pdf

A child may become 'looked after' by their local authority which may affect the support they are entitled to from the local authority before and after they turn 18. For details of the legal frameworks and different types of care orders, see the NSPCC website.³

The transition into adult services can be a particularly challenging and vulnerable time for young people who often describe the difficulties they face around the 'cliff-edge' or 'drop' in support.⁴ [Research in Practice](#) have developed multiple resources that provide information on the challenges young people face, and transitional safeguarding approaches to safeguarding adolescents and young adults fluidly across developmental stages. It builds on the best available evidence, learns from both children's and adult safeguarding practice focussing on preparing young people for their adult lives.⁵

In this guidance we outline the safeguarding duties all staff should be aware of to protect the children they support. We also provide practical guidance that organisations and individuals can adopt to create safe, supportive relationships and services. The principles behind these activities can be applied to supporting young people (over 18) within services who are at risk of or experiencing violence and abuse.

³ NSPCC (2022), *Child protection system in England*. Available at: <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-protection-system/england>

⁴ Homeless Link (2020), *We have a voice follow our lead*. Available at: https://homelesslink-1b54.kxcdn.com/media/documents/Young_and_Homeless_2020.pdf

⁵ Research in Practice (2018), *Transitional safeguarding – adolescence to adulthood: Strategic Briefing*. Available at: <https://www.researchinpractice.org.uk/all/publications/2018/august/transitional-safeguarding-adolescence-to-adulthood-strategic-briefing-2018/>

Legislation and systems that guide safeguarding practice

What is Safeguarding?

[Working Together to Safeguard Children \(2018\)](#) is government produced statutory guidance. It defines safeguarding as:

- protecting children from maltreatment
- preventing impairment of children's health or development
- ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes⁶

Appropriate, informed and thoughtful responses to harm can make substantial improvements to the long-term impact on the child and young person.

Relevant legislation and guidance

The Children Act 1989

The Children Act 1989⁷ is a United Kingdom Act of Parliament which allocates duties to local authorities, courts, parents and other agencies to ensure children are safeguarded and their welfare is promoted.

The Children Act 2004

The Children Act 2004⁸ is an expansion of the 1989 Children Act. The 2004 Act reinforces that all people and organisations working with children have a duty to help safeguard children and protect their welfare. It followed Lord Lamming's inquiry into the murder of Victoria Climbié and made a number of key changes to the child protection framework.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017

The Children and Social Work Act 2017⁹ intends to improve support for looked after children and care leavers, and promote the welfare and safeguarding of children, and make provisions about the regulation of social workers.

⁶ Department for Education (2018), *Working Together to Safeguard Children*. Available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2

⁷ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents

⁸ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/31/contents>

⁹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/16/contents/enacted

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018¹⁰ is statutory guidance on inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. It covers the legislative requirements placed on individual services and provides a framework for [local safeguarding partners](#) to make arrangements to safeguard children normally resident in their local area. Two additional versions have been created for young people,¹¹ and for young children.¹²

The Ofsted Safeguarding Policy

The Ofsted Safeguarding Policy¹³ sets out the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) approach to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and vulnerable adults. It applies to all aspects of Ofsted's work and everyone working for Ofsted, including permanent and temporary employees, contractors and self-employed contracted inspectors.

Local and national safeguarding children arrangements

Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships

Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships (LSCPs, previously Local Safeguarding Children's Boards) hold leadership responsibility for safeguarding and protecting the welfare of children in their local area. Partners are:

"the Local Authority, a clinical commissioning group for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area and the chief officer of police for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area." (WT2018: p 75)¹⁴

Local authorities

Under the Children Act 1989 and 2004 local authorities have responsibility to promote the welfare of children in their locality and to promote inter-agency co-operation to improve the welfare of all children. Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 outlines local authority responsibilities to protect children from 'significant harm'.¹⁵

¹⁰ Department for Education (2018), *Working Together to Safeguard Children*, Available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2

¹¹ Office of Children's Rights (2014), *Young person's guide to working together to safeguard children*. Available at: <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Working-together-to-safeguard-children.pdf>

¹² Office of Children's Rights (2014), *Young person's guide to keeping children safe*. Available at: https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/GUIDE_Young_Persons_Guide_to_Keeping_Children_Safe.pdf

¹³ Ofsted (2021), *Ofsted Safeguarding Policy*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-safeguarding-policy/ofsted-safeguarding-policy>

¹⁴ Department for Education (2018), *Working Together to Safeguard Children*, Available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2

¹⁵ Children Act (1989) Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents>

*"Where a local authority... have reasonable cause to suspect that a child who lives, or is found, in the area and is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, 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 enquiries shall be commenced as soon as practicable and, in any event, within 48 hours of the authority receiving the information."*¹⁶

Harm is defined under Section 31(9) of the Children Act 1989, amended by the Adoption and Children Act 2002 as:

- *"ill-treatment or the impairment of health or development including, for example, impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another;*
- *"development" means physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development;*
- *"health" means physical or mental health; and*
- *"ill-treatment" includes sexual abuse and forms of ill-treatment which are not physical"*

Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel

The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel (CSPRP) is an independent panel that commissions national reviews of serious child safeguarding cases.¹⁷ It receives reports of serious incidents from the relevant LSCP. The CSPRP notes that serious child safeguarding cases are ones in which:

"(a) abuse or neglect to a child is known or suspected by a local authority or another person exercising functions in relation to children and

(b) the child has died or been seriously harmed"

And defines serious harm as including:

"... serious or long-term impairment of mental health or intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development".¹⁸

¹⁶ Children Act (1989), Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents>

¹⁷ Children Act (1989), Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents>

¹⁷ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents>

¹⁸ Children Act (2004), Available at <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/31/section/16B>

Multi Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH)

As defined by the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE)

“Multi-agency safeguarding hubs are structures designed to facilitate information-sharing and decision-making on a multi-agency basis often, though not always, through co-locating staff from the local authority, health agencies and the police.”¹⁹

LSCPs have a MASH (or similarly termed multi agency group) to whom referrals of suspected harm or abuse are made, functioning as a ‘front door’ for practitioners to refer cases of concern. The MASH will, with its multi-agency perspective, review the case of suspected concern and make decisions about follow up activity.

The role of homelessness services in safeguarding

Housing practitioners, and all others associated with providing services for children who are homeless have safeguarding responsibilities including preventing, identifying and responding to the various forms of abuse, harm and exploitation that may impact on children and young people’s wellbeing. Specific roles of housing and homelessness services are outlined in the following.

Section 11 of the Children Act 2004

“places duties on a range of organisations, agencies and individuals, to ensure their functions, and any services that they contract out to others, have regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.”²⁰

A number of organisations and agencies are listed including local authorities and district councils social care services, housing and homelessness services, NHS organisations, and the police. Section 11 essentially sets out the arrangements that organisations should have in place in order to reflect the importance of safeguarding in their work. For further information on these duties, see chapter 2, of Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018.²¹

Working Together to Safeguard Children

The role of housing and homelessness services is directly mentioned in this statutory guidance:

“Housing and homelessness services in local authorities and others such as environmental health organisations are subject to the section 11 duties set out in this chapter. Practitioners working in these services may become aware of conditions that could have or are having an

¹⁹ <https://www.scie.org.uk/care-act-2014/safeguarding-adults/safeguarding-adults-boards-checklist-and-resources/collaborative-working-and-partnership/multi-agency-safeguarding-hubs.asp>

²⁰ Department for Education (2018), *Working Together to Safeguard Children*, Available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2

²¹ Ibid

*adverse impact on children [...] Housing authorities also have an important role to play in safeguarding vulnerable young people, including young people who are pregnant, leaving care or a secure establishment*²² Chapter 2, para 33, page 67

Key messages

- As set out in the Children Act 1989 and 2004, safeguarding is relevant to everyone. Housing and homelessness services are explicitly mentioned agencies that hold safeguarding responsibilities.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 is statutory guidance that provides specific information on local safeguarding arrangements and roles and responsibilities. It focuses on how inter-agency working should operate in order to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships hold strategic leadership responsibility for safeguarding and protecting the welfare of children in their local area.
- Specific roles of housing and homelessness services are outline are outlined in Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018

²² Department for Education (2018), *Working Together to Safeguard Children*, Available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2

Understanding abuse, violence and harm

Types of abuse, violence and harm

[Working Together to Safeguard Children](#) defines abuse as:

“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. Harm can include ill treatment that is not physical as well as the impact of witnessing ill treatment of others.”²³

An overview of the different types of harm and abuse is provided in [Appendix A](#), which should be read in total. Definitions are drawn, in the main, from Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 and from relevant legislation protecting children. We also outline other forms of harm that affect children and young people. Further information about child abuse can be found on the NSPCC website.²⁴

Children and young people may experience one or multiple forms of abuse as one-off incidents or as ongoing life experiences. The majority of abuse is perpetrated by those known to the victim including those who hold positions of trust such as family members, friends, teachers, care practitioners or established members of the community.^{25,26}

It is also important to be sensitive to a child or young persons’ own description of harm as experienced by themselves. Children and young people may not use the definitions outlined in the text to describe what has happened to them.

Perpetration of abuse

Abuse may take place through face-to-face contact, online or a combination of both. It may be perpetrated by one person on their own, by a group of peers, those assumed to be friends or by those affiliated to an organised group or gang where the abuse may be linked to other criminal activity such as drug or human trafficking. It may take place in a private or public space. The perpetrator(s) may be younger, the same, similar or older age to the victim, and may use a variety of means of coercion and control that hide the abuse and/or lead the victim to feel responsible. Child perpetrators may themselves be victims of child abuse (see [Victims and Perpetrators](#) below).

Methods used to perpetrate abuse include the creation of false feelings of trust and allegiance to the perpetrator, threats or realities of violence, and subtle or overt

²³ Research in Practice (2018), *Transitional safeguarding – adolescence to adulthood: Strategic Briefing*. Available at: <https://www.researchinpractice.org.uk/all/publications/2018/august/transitional-safeguarding-adolescence-to-adulthood-strategic-briefing-2018/>

²⁴ www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/

²⁵ www.iicsa.org.uk;

²⁶ www.nspcc.org.uk

manipulation. Perpetrators may reinforce feelings of shame experienced by the victim. They may increase a victim's fear that they will be stigmatised or that they will be accused of being responsible for the abuse. It is important to remember and reinforce that no child can be held responsible for their abuse: it is not their fault.

Disclosing abuse

Practitioners should not assume that a child or young person will report abuse or will have reported previous experiences of abuse. Children and young people, and their families or peer groups may not recognise that what they are experiencing is abuse or harm, or they may be fearful of the consequences of disclosing. Perpetrators of abuse may coerce young people into thinking that what they are experiencing is normal, or that they are being punished for something they did or didn't do, or that they owe money or other 'goods' to someone. They may make threats against the child or young person, or their wider network including family and other peers. The child or young person may be genuinely frightened for their life or wellbeing, receiving verbal and physical threats, or actual violence.

Children and young people may have tried to disclose before and felt ignored, disbelieved or rejected. They may have had difficult or unsupportive experiences with previous services they have engaged with and be mistrustful, scared or resentful towards staff.

If they have experienced harm, children and young people may respond with one or more of the three F responses: fight, flight and/or freeze. This may present as hyperactivity, withdrawal and/or aggressive defence. These are behaviours that many attribute to 'normal' adolescence and can be overlooked as signs of abuse.

Victims and perpetrators

Any child or young person may be impacted by harm either as victims, as perpetrators or as both.

When perpetrators are under the age of 18, they too are children. Although the age of criminal responsibility is 10 years old in England, child perpetrators may themselves be a victim of current or previous abuse. This does not excuse or reduce the seriousness of harm they have perpetrated, but means that it is important to challenge a simplistic understanding of perpetration and victimhood and have an awareness of the complex relationship between perpetration and victimhood. The Contextual Safeguarding²⁷ website provides a range of information and resources about this topic.²⁸

²⁷ Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It recognises that the different relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. Parents and carers have little influence over these contexts, and young people's experiences of extra-familial abuse can undermine parent-child relationships.

²⁸ <https://contextualsafeguarding.org.uk/>

Discrimination and disproportionality

Much has been written about the intersections between forms of discrimination, disadvantage and power. Young people's experiences of abuse and harm will be impacted by their own and other people's reactions to their economic situation, educational and social achievements and connections, ability and disability, racial origin and ethnicity, sex and gender identity, sexual orientation, experiences of war and displacement and movement across geographical locations within and across country boundaries.

There have been recent important discussions of disproportionality and the impact of racism on both the lives of children and on those who work to support them.²⁹ It is essential that service providers assess how they are proactive in challenging racism and its impact on their provision and their service users.³⁰

Children with disabilities are, according to research data, more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. It should not be assumed that all children and young people are non-disabled or have capacity expected of their age. Some may have diagnosed or undiagnosed learning difficulties or disabilities. Not all disabilities are visible.

Girls and young women are more vulnerable and disproportionately affected by certain forms of abuse, referred to as gender-based violence. Gender-based violence refers to the violence inflicted on a person due to stereotypes and roles attributed to, or expected of them, according to their sex or gender identity. Examples of gender-based violence are domestic abuse, female genital mutilation, 'honour' killings and trafficking for sexual exploitation. This does not mean that boys and young men are not or cannot be victims to these forms of violence.

Children and young people who go missing from home or care or from a homelessness provider can be particularly vulnerable to abuse and harm.³¹

Key messages

- There are different forms of abuse and harm that may affect children and young people. It is important that staff listen to young people's accounts of abuse and are able to recognise different forms of abuse and harm. They need to be able to identify where a child is at risk and respond appropriately and sensitively.
- Young people's experiences of harm and responses to harm will intersect with their experiences of oppression, disadvantage, access to social capital and opportunity.

²⁹ <https://blacklivesmatter.com/>

³⁰ www.barnet.gov.uk/children-and-families/support-parents-and-carers/black-lives-matter-information-and-guidance

³¹ See the missing people website <https://www.missingpeople.org.uk/> and our guidance on homelessness and missing: Homeless Link (2019) *Missing people and homelessness*. Available at: <https://homeless.org.uk/knowledge-hub/missing-and-homelessness/>

- Abuse may take place through face-to-face contact, online or a combination of both. It may be perpetrated by one person on their own or by a group of people including a peer group. Perpetrators may be younger, the same age, or an older age than the child or young person.
- Children and young people may respond to abuse through hyperactivity, withdrawal and/or aggressive defence. These are behaviours that many attribute to 'normal' adolescence, resulting in abuse being overlooked
- It is important to remember and reinforce that no child can be held responsible for their abuse: it is not their fault.

Understanding and responding to the impact of abuse on children and young people

This section focuses on how staff working with children and young people who are homeless can improve their ability to identify and respond to the signs of abuse and harm, respond to disclosures and support young people.

Training and development on signs of abuse

Staff need to be aware of and be able to identify the different forms of abuse, how and where it may be perpetrated and who by, in order to recognise when a child or young person is being harmed. It is important staff recognise how abuse may impact a young person's behaviour.

Alongside offering generic safeguarding training many [Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships](#) will run in depth training on different forms of abuse. In addition to attending training required by their organisation, practitioners should be active in their development and identify their own training needs. Training resources and further information can be found in [Appendix B](#).

Responding to a disclosure

Reassuring a child or young person

If a child or young person discloses that they are being harmed or abused, or if a member of staff is worried or has proof that this is happening, the first step should always be to ensure that the child or young person knows that their safety is of paramount importance. If there is evidence of immediate serious harm, the police should be called.³²

If a child discloses any form of abuse, the member of staff working with them needs to take this seriously, provide time to listen, and reassure the child that they are not to blame. Staff should assure the child or young person that they will work with them to assess what needs to be done. This also applies if the staff member is concerned that the child or young person maybe perpetrating harm or abusing themselves or another.

Active listening

It is important that as well as listening, staff actually hear what the child or young person is saying. The NSPCC have developed resources including an animated video for professionals on skills that can be utilised when responding to a child's disclosure, that are part of active listening.³³ These include showing a young person you care through giving them your full attention, slowing down and allowing young people to

³² Children Act (1989), Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents>

³³ NSPCC, *Let children know you're listening*, Accessed August 2022:

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/2019/let-children-know-you-re-listening>

recount their story at their own pace, and showing you understand through intermittently (not frequently) reflecting back what they have told you.

Explaining the next steps

Where a safeguarding concern is identified, staff should explain to the child or young person what actions they, the staff member, will take. It is important to discuss with the child or young person how the staff will need to take concerns of abuse seriously and explain to the child or young person that they will be involved and informed of the full safeguarding process. Staff should explain who they will raise the concern with, how they will do so, and what the child or young person can expect to happen once the safeguarding alert has been raised.

Staff will need to ensure that they are aware of the child's capacity to understand. They can look to adapting their way of communicating with the child if there are any communication difficulties. This is best accompanied by looking for assurance that every child, despite age, ability or capacity is comfortable with how to report abuse.

Raising a safeguarding concern

Every organisation should have a safeguarding procedure outlining what staff can do if they become aware a child is experiencing abuse, or are concerned they might be.

Speaking to the designated Safeguarding Lead

It is recommended that organisations have a designated safeguarding lead or safeguarding champion who offers advice on managing safeguarding concerns.

It is important staff are aware of who this person(s) is within their organisation. This person and, dependent on an organisation's safeguarding policy, a staff member's line manager, will be the first point of contact when someone is concerned about the safety of a child or young person they are working with.

Organisations should also have accessible safeguarding policies, enabling staff to continually check they are following the correct procedures as they go through the stages of raising a safeguarding concern.

If the staff member and their line manager and/or designated safeguarding lead agree that there is risk of harm to the child, or that the child or young person might be causing harm to another, the case should be reported to the relevant LSCP Multi-agency Safeguarding Children hub (MASH), following the procedure set out by their organisation.

The local MASH will have a referral process with guidance of how the referral will be dealt with and what the next steps could be. Knowing about and understanding how to refer into the MASH and knowing what might result from making a referral is important so it can be explained to the child or young person.

Informing and supporting children and young people

Wherever possible it is important to tell the child the referral is being made and work with them, so they are informed and involved in each step of the process.

The child or young person should be offered support while this process is ongoing, through one-to-one support sessions provided by the organisation making the referral, and/or through access to group support through a local specialist project. LSCP(s) should have a list of relevant local support agencies available to children and young people, or have advice about how provide follow up support to the child or young person concerned.

Further practice considerations

Creating safe environments

It is always important to think with the child or young person about where and how they might find it most comfortable and safe to talk about or report abuse, in their own way. This might mean being alert to recognising any signs of abuse or the child's attempts to talk about it, allowing time for the child or young person to talk at their own pace and over an extended period of time, and suggesting that the child or young person choose where to be if they are ready for a conversation.

As discussed, young people's experiences of abuse and harm will be impacted by their own and other people's reactions to their intersecting identities. It is important to recognise how this may affect their ability and willingness to disclose abuse and tailor support accordingly. [Active listening](#), [reassuring a young person](#) and showing [professional curiosity](#) can help in building feelings of safety.

Staff should also be aware of their organisation's lone working policy and how their own safety will be maintained and managed.

Showing professional curiosity

Professional curiosity is the capacity and ability of staff to explore and understand what is happening to or around an individual, rather than making, and relying upon, assumptions.³⁴ It is a concept which has been recognised as important in the area of child safeguarding for many years. More recently, Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs)

³⁴ Walsall Safeguarding Partnership, *7 Minute Briefing: Professional Curiosity*, Access August 2022: <https://go.walsall.gov.uk/walsall-safeguarding-partnership/Arrangements#154731989-publications>

have highlighted a similar need for professional curiosity in safeguarding adults with care and support needs^{35, 36}

As discussed, many behaviours children and young people adopt as a way to manage harm being perpetrated against them, may be characterised or seen as ‘normal’ adolescence. Similarly, certain behaviours, such as substance use, might be seen as “lifestyle choices”, and not questioned.

Few children and young people easily disclose the experiences of abuse.³⁷ Children and young people need to feel that they are safe with staff and that they will be protected if they are harmed. They may want to be relieved of the responsibility and pressure to talk about the abuse and /or harm they are experiencing if they are not ready to disclose. Showing curiosity about a child or young person’s lives and not accepting things at face value facilitates a holistic understanding of what is happening around a child or young person and provide a fuller assessment of potential risks.

Finally, children and young people may have been harmed or may be being harmed by an adult in a position of power and/or trust, and this is something for staff to be aware of.

Disclosing abuse to friends or peers

Children and young people might try to, or actually disclose experiences of harm and abuse to friends or peers. Staff should not automatically assume that the friend or peer has the best interest of their friend at heart. They may be at risk of abuse themselves, fearful of being identified as a ‘snitch’, or be part of an abusive network.

If a friend or peer does disclose abuse or harm experienced by others to a staff member, they should be reassured that the information they give will be taken seriously. The staff member, alongside the peer or friend, should assess the level of risk to all involved and, wherever possible, the person who disclosed to the friend or peer should be engaged in this process.

The peer or friend also needs to be supported; they may be impacted by hearing about this abuse.

Confidentiality and information sharing

It is important that children and young people are never promised full confidentiality when abuse and harm to children is being discussed or considered. Children and

³⁵ Research in Practice (2020), *Professional curiosity in safeguarding adults*, <https://www.researchinpractice.org.uk/adults/news-views/2020/december/the-importance-of-professional-curiosity-in-safeguarding-adults/>

³⁶ Homeless Link (2021), *Adult Safeguarding and Homelessness: Learning from Safeguarding Adult Reviews*. Available at: https://homelesslink-1b54.kxcdn.com/media/documents/Learning_from_Safeguarding_Adult_Reviews_2021.docx.pdf

³⁷ Allnock, D. and Miller, P. (2013), *No one noticed, no one heard*. Available at:

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/2013/no-one-noticed-no-one-heard>

young people should know about the information and confidentiality policies in place within an organisation. Staff can revisit these at different time points; to ensure the child or young person remembers and understand them.

If a child discloses abuse, staff can reassure them that only those who need to know will be informed and that they, as original owners of their information, will be fully engaged and informed through any follow up processes.

Key messages

- Understanding the different forms of harm, violence and abuse will help staff identify if a child is experiencing or at risk of abuse. It is also important to be sensitive to a child or young persons' own description of harm as experienced by themselves.
- Supportive engagement with children and young people can make a difference to their current and future safety and wellbeing.
- Creating safe environments helps children feel confident in talking about the abuse or harm they have experienced. Some ways staff can create safe environments are: showing and holding onto professional curiosity, reassuring a child or young person and actively listening to what they are saying and keeping children and young people informed of what will happen next, their rights and what supports are in place.
- It is important for staff to think about how they are communicating with children and young people and adapt their way of communicating to meet the child/young person's needs and capacity to understand.
- Local Safeguarding Partnerships hold leadership responsibility for safeguarding and protecting the welfare of children in their local area. They will have details of their early help services, and how referrals can be made to the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) on their website. These procedures should be followed alongside organisational safeguarding policies.

Organisational infrastructure to support the identification and reporting of harm to children

This section focuses on building protective factors into agency structures, recognising that harm and abuse to children can be prevented through both structural/institutional processes as well through individual staff practices. It explores some of the systems and practices that services can put in place to create a supportive infrastructure for staff, children and young people to identify and manage harm and abuse. While targeted to those responsible for managing a service it is also applicable to all related staff so that they know their rights and responsibilities within the organisation.

Develop internal protocols on safeguarding for staff

Each agency should develop their own safeguarding children and young people policy with associated procedures for staff to follow. The NSPCC has created comprehensive guidance on writing safeguarding policies and procedures.³⁸ Organisations can also create a version that is accessible to children and young people accessing or using their service.

Designated Safeguarding Children Lead, or Safeguarding Children Champions

Managers of homelessness agencies should identify one or more members of senior staff to become designated safeguarding leads or safeguarding children champions. Designated safeguarding officers should be trained to 'level 3' Safeguarding Children³⁹ and be the designated representatives for the homelessness service on the relevant [Local Safeguarding Children Partnership\(s\)](#).

LSCPs often provide training for their relevant agencies on safeguarding legislation and how the LSCP can support agencies and staff working to protect children from abuse and harm. This can usually be found on their website. If training is not provided there are a number of Children's organisations that deliver specialist training on safeguarding, and forms of abuse and violence.

It is important staff are able and empowered to raise safeguarding alerts, and the name of the designated safeguarding lead(s) or safeguarding children champion(s) should be made widely available to all staff who can consult and lead on any safeguarding concerns across the service. Safeguarding leads can also keep the organisation or service abreast of any new learning and any revised legislative changes, new reports or learning reviews from the Child Safeguarding Practice Review

³⁸ NSPCC (2022), *Writing safeguarding policies and procedures*. Available at: <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/writing-a-safeguarding-policy-statement>

³⁹ <https://www.virtual-college.co.uk/resources/how-to-become-a-safeguarding-officer>

Panel.⁴⁰ They can be responsible for staffs' awareness of and ability to use, internal safeguarding children policies and procedures.

The designated lead(s) or safeguarding champions can also hold responsibility for ensuring that the agency is aware of and engaged with the relevant LSCP (s) [Section 11](#) audit cycle⁴¹ and that staff and children and young people are given feedback on results of Section 11 audits and other audits relating to child and young person's safety.

Every organisation working with under 18's should ensure that there is always someone present to act in this capacity if the usual nominated person is on leave or otherwise absent.

Raising a safeguarding alert

Each organisation should have a safeguarding policy which outlines the processes to be followed if staff are concerned about the safety of a child. If a staff member or another person associated with the organisation understands a child or young person to be at immediate risk of [significant serious harm](#),⁴² they should phone 999 and request police intervention.

The policy should outline clear accountability structures within the organisation, so that staff are aware of who to raise safeguarding concerns with. This will usually be their line manager or the designated safeguarding lead. It should outline what will happen once their concern has been raised. This should include when and how a safeguarding concern will be reported to the relevant LSCP Multi agency Safeguarding Children hub (MASH). The local MASH will have a clear referral process with guidance of how the referral will be dealt with and what the next steps could be. All staff members should be aware of how to refer into the MASH and know what might result from making a referral.

The policy should also outline how children and young people will be kept informed and involved when a safeguarding alert has been raised should also be part of this policy.

Information sharing and confidentiality

Practitioners may feel concerned children will only share information about abuse if they are promised full confidentiality. No child or young person should ever be offered full confidentiality when abuse and harm to children is being discussed or considered.

⁴⁰ Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel, Accessed August 2022:

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/child-safeguarding-practice-review-panel/about

⁴¹ Section 11 Audits ensure that agencies placed under a Section 11 duty are fulfilling their responsibilities to safeguard children and promote their welfare. This includes services commissioned by statutory agencies e.g. the local authority or NHS Trusts. There is no statutory duty placed on services not commissioned on behalf of statutory agencies, however it is good practice for these organisations to still complete Section 11 audits.

⁴² Children Act (1989), Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents>

Instead, they should be reassured that only those who need to know will be informed and that they, as original owners of their information, will be fully engaged and informed through any follow up processes.

Internal safeguarding policies should be explicit about information sharing policies, confidentiality and when information should be shared. Organisations should develop tools to support employees to have these conversations with young people.

Staff training and support

Safeguarding

Safeguarding children and young people from harm is a process that should be embedded in practitioners' day to day work. Staff should be responsive to children and young people's needs, interests and circumstances and listen to children and young people about their views of their own safety and wellbeing. A holistic approach to safeguarding children and young people suggests that all staff, irrespective of role or status, need basic safeguarding training.

Safeguarding training for all staff within an agency supporting children and young people who are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless, needs to take place at two levels:

- a) Staff should understand the forms of harm that can be caused to children and young people, the core requirements to safeguard children as set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018, and how to access additional safeguarding children resources to enhance their knowledge and expertise. This includes knowing which LSCP(s) the agency is a part of and how to access and use resources identified by the LSCP(s) of which they are a part.
- b) Staff need to know how to access and follow the specific agency/employer safeguarding children policies and procedures.

Developing a culture of professional curiosity

Research has argued that the onus should be on the practitioner to identify any worrying signs of abuse and harm and respond to these concerns in an honest and transparent way.⁴³ To support this, organisations should promote a culture of professional curiosity. An environment where staff are able to reflect and challenge their own assumptions facilitates a holistic view and understand of what is happening for a young person, making it more likely that abuse will be identified when occurring.

The structure and service values of an organisation has an impact on the likelihood that curiosity will thrive. Alongside the essential provision of training for all staff on safeguarding children, organisations should promote opportunities for staff learning and development, particularly on legal literacy and safeguarding; provide supervision

⁴³ NSPCC (2019), *No one noticed, no one heard*. Available at:

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/2013/no-one-noticed-no-one-heard>

which offers opportunities for reflection, critical analysis and respectful challenge; and support structures and working practices that maximise opportunities for contact between managers and staff through informal discussions.⁴⁴ Reflective practice is central principle of many relationship-based approaches to support⁴⁵ including Psychologically Informed Environments (PIE),⁴⁶ Strengths-based practice⁴⁷ and Trauma Informed Care (TIC).^{48, 49}

Encouraging professional curiosity can empower staff through encouraging feelings of professional competence. It can encourage staff to consider the changing nature of harm and abuse, and their own training, development and support needs.⁵⁰

Staff support

A holistic approach to safeguarding also takes into consideration the effects that responding to safeguarding issues has on staff. Listening to accounts of abuse and harm can be challenging and it is important to have an understanding of vicarious trauma.

Organisations should ensure staff know where to access support; it is important to ensure that practitioners have space for themselves to talk through any impact that listening to accounts of abuse and harm have had on them personally and professionally. This is best provided outside of managerial supervision and explored outside of routine day to day work task analysis.

Organisations should commit to embedding policies and practices that ensure staff feel supported and able to manage risk. Staff should have access to safeguarding training and supervision processes should be in place to support staff to manage safeguarding processes and procedures.

⁴⁴ Research in Practice (2020), *Professional curiosity in safeguarding adults*, <https://www.researchinpractice.org.uk/adults/news-views/2020/december/the-importance-of-professional-curiosity-in-safeguarding-adults/>

⁴⁵ Homeless Link (2018), *Positive approaches: an introduction*. Available at: https://homelesslink-1b54.kxcdn.com/media/documents/Positive_approaches_2018_0.pdf

⁴⁶ Homeless Link (2017), *An introduction to Psychologically Informed Environments and Trauma Informed Care*. Available at: https://homelesslink-1b54.kxcdn.com/media/documents/TIC_PIE_briefing_March_2017_0.pdf

⁴⁷ Homeless Link, *Being Strengths-based: collected resources*, Accessed August 2022: www.homeless.org.uk/knowledge-hub/being-strengths-based/#:~:text=Strengths%20meetings&text=It%20involves%20re%2Dframing%20the,organisations%20and%20those%20accessing%20them.

⁴⁸ Homeless Link (2015), *Webinar: An introduction to trauma informed care*. Available at: <https://homeless.org.uk/knowledge-hub/a-basic-introduction-to-trauma-informed-care/>

⁴⁹ Homeless Link (2017), *An introduction to Psychologically Informed Environments and Trauma Informed Care*. Available at: https://homelesslink-1b54.kxcdn.com/media/documents/TIC_PIE_briefing_March_2017_0.pdf

⁵⁰ Leeds Safeguarding Children's Partnership, *Professional curiosity*, Accessed August 2022 <https://www.leedsscp.org.uk/practitioners/improving-practice/professional-curiosity>

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

It is important that due attention is placed on ensuring that data collection and control is compliant with GDPR. This is sometimes misunderstood to mean that information cannot be shared about children or young people at risk of or experiencing harm. This is a dangerous misunderstanding. [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018](#) provides a helpful 'myth busting' overview that explains that GDPR is not a reason for preventing sharing important concerns about potential or actual harm to a child or young person.⁵¹

While homelessness agencies need to ensure that staff understand GDPR and are compliant, they should also ensure that it is not seen as a reason for holding information that could be shared to prevent or respond to current or potential abuse.

Recruitment process

Organisations can develop safer recruitment procedures by always ensuring that a full DBS check is carried out on eligible candidates, that interviews include questions about the candidates experience of safeguarding children and that interviewees are asked to comment on certain vignettes that include consideration of harm and abuse to children and young people. Organisations should consider including children and young people in the recruitment process if safe and possible, with due consideration given to the support children and young people will need throughout this process.

Whistleblowing

Organisations should have a whistleblowing policy or guidance document that clearly encourages staff to report incidents of abuse that they might see, hear, or be worried about. This may involve expressing worry about the actions or attitudes of other members of staff or children attached to the homelessness service, or of staff or other adults or children from a different service or provision.

Talking about a worry or concern to a senior staff member or designated safeguarding lead can also prevent a practitioner from feeling, or being, associated with the abuse or harm.

A whistleblowing policy or guidance document should include

- An overview of the purpose of the policy and how it can prevent harm and abuse being caused
- Details of when a practitioner may need to use the whistleblowing policy
- Details on when a practitioner might be able to tell the person or people concerned that they feel the need to report, and to understand the circumstances when sharing this information might not be possible.

⁵¹ Department for Education (2018), *Working Together to Safeguard Children*, Available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2

- Details of who practitioners should report to, be it a line manager or the designated safeguarding children lead (or safeguarding champion).
- A statement that talking about concerns is important as it might prevent abuse or harm being caused.

In essence, staff need to feel safe and supported in talking about any worries associated with harm that could be caused to a child.

Key messages

- Every organisation should ensure that all children and young people know that they can approach any staff member to discuss concerns about potential or actual abuse or harm.
- Organisations should have safeguarding policies and procedures, that outline clear lines of accountability and make these easily available to staff and partners.
- Staff should be encouraged to hold onto their professional curiosity and be empowered to actively safeguard children and young people. Some ways to empower staff are through providing access to information for example, through training, ensuring they are aware of their professional responsibility, creating an environment where staff are able to challenge their own assumptions, and through providing supervision which offers opportunities for reflection.
- A holistic approach to safeguarding also takes into consideration the effects that responding to safeguarding issues have on staff. It is important staff feel supported and know how and where to get help if they feel overwhelmed.

Appendix A: Types of abuse, violence and harm

Physical abuse of a child

The physical abuse of children includes:

“hitting with hands or objects; slapping and punching, kicking; shaking; throwing; poisoning; burning and scalding; biting and scratching; breaking bones and drowning. They also note that physical abuse is any way of intentionally causing physical harm to a child or young person. It also includes making up the symptoms of an illness or causing a child to become unwell.”⁵²

Child Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse:

“Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.”⁵³

The Sexual Offences Act 2003 provides a full breakdown of the age of consent to sexual activity, the revised definition of rape and the circumstances under which consent is presumed not to have been given, shifting the burden of proof from the complainant to the defendant.⁵⁴ The Serious Crime Act 2015 created a new crime of sexual communication with a child.⁵⁵ Further legislation to protect children from online abuse is underway.⁵⁶ The Crown Prosecution Service provides a full explanation of the context and implications of legislation protecting children from abuse.⁵⁷

⁵² Department for Education (2018) *Working Together to Safeguard Children*, Available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2

⁵³ Department for Education (2018) *Working Together to Safeguard Children*, Available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2

⁵⁴ Sexual Offences Act (2003) Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/42>

⁵⁵ Serious Crim Act (2015) Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/9/section/67>

⁵⁶ NSPCC (2022) *Child sexual abuse crimes reach record levels*. Available at <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/about-us/news-opinion/2022/child-sexual-abuse-crimes-reach-record-levels/>

⁵⁷ CPS, *Sexual offences*, Accessed August 2022: www.cps.gov.uk/crime-info/sexual-offences

Child sexual exploitation (CSE)

Child sexual exploitation is:

“a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.”⁵⁸

Further information about CSE including its different forms and impact is available in The Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse,⁵⁹ the Independent inquiry into child sexual abuse,⁶⁰ the National Working Group Network⁶¹ and the Safer Young Lives Research Centre⁶² A helpful extended guide for practitioners on the meaning of child sexual exploitation has been developed by Beckett et al.⁶³

Emotional abuse of a child

Emotional abuse of a child is:

“the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child’s emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or ‘making fun’ of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child’s developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.”⁶⁴

⁵⁸ Department for Education (2018) *Working Together to Safeguard Children*, Available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2

⁵⁹ www.csacentre.org.uk;

⁶⁰ www.iicsa.org.uk;

⁶¹ <https://nwgnetwork.org>

⁶² www.beds.ac.uk/sylrc

⁶³ Beckett, H. (lead author), Holmes, D. and Walker, J. (2017), *Child sexual exploitation Definition & Guide for Professionals*. Available at: <https://www.beds.ac.uk/media/86735/uob-rip-cse-guidancefeb2017.pdf>

⁶⁴ Department for Education (2018) *Working Together to Safeguard Children*, Available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2

Child neglect

Child neglect is:

“The persistent failure to meet a child’s basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child’s health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse.

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

- a. *provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)*
- b. *protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger*
- c. *ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers)*
- d. *ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child’s basic emotional needs.”⁶⁵*

Child criminal exploitation (CCE)

The government has created a Serious Violence Factsheet that includes information about child criminal exploitation.⁶⁶ The Serious Violence Strategy,⁶⁷ describes CCE as:

“where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into any criminal activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or (c) through violence or the threat of violence. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child criminal exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.”⁶⁸

There is a range of work being undertaken into Criminal Exploitation through the Tackling Child Exploitation Support programme,⁶⁹ and the Local Government Association has a resource bank of materials for those working with children and young people impacted by child exploitation.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Department for Education (2018) *Working Together to Safeguard Children*, Available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2

⁶⁶ Home Office (2022) *Serious violence duty: Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 factsheet*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/police-crime-sentencing-and-courts-bill-2021-factsheets/police-crime-sentencing-and-courts-bill-2021-serious-violence-duty-factsheet>

⁶⁷ Home Office (2018) *Serious Violence Strategy*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/serious-violence-strategy>

⁶⁸ Department for Education (2018) *Working Together to Safeguard Children*, Available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2

⁶⁹ <https://www.beds.ac.uk/sylrc/current-programmes-and-projects/tce/>

⁷⁰ Local Government Association (2021) *Tackling child exploitation: resources pack*. Available at: <https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/tackling-child-exploitation-resources-pack>

Domestic abuse including coercive control, so called honour-based violence and economic abuse

Domestic abuse can:

“encompass a wide range of behaviours and may be a single incident or a pattern of incidents. Domestic abuse is not limited to physical acts of violence or threatening behaviour, and can include emotional, psychological, controlling or coercive behaviour, sexual and/or economic abuse. Types of domestic abuse include intimate partner violence, abuse by family members, teenage relationship abuse and adolescent to parent violence. Anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse, regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexuality or background and domestic abuse can take place inside or outside of the home. Domestic abuse continues to be a prevalent risk factor identified through children social care assessments for children in need. Domestic abuse has a significant impact on children and young people. Children may experience domestic abuse directly, as victims in their own right, or indirectly due to the impact the abuse has on others such as the non-abusive parent.”⁷¹

Coercive control

Coercive control is a form of domestic abuse and became a criminal offence in 2015. It forms part of the definition of domestic abuse in section 1(3)(c) of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. It is:

“a form of abuse that involves multiple behaviours and tactics which reinforce each other and are used to isolate, manipulate and regulate the victim. This pattern of abuse creates high levels of anxiety and fear. This has a significant impact on children and young people, both directly, as victims in their own right, and indirectly due to the impact the abuse has on the non-abusive parent. Children may also be forced to participate in controlling or coercive behaviour towards the parent who is being abused.”⁷²

Government guidance issued under section 77 of the Serious Crime Act 2015 defines coercive control as the following:

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

Coercive behaviour is: an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim. Coercive control is a form of abuse that involves multiple behaviours and tactics which reinforce each other and are used to isolate, manipulate and regulate the victim. This pattern of abuse

⁷¹ Department for Education (2018) *Working Together to Safeguard Children*, Available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2

⁷² Ibid

creates high levels of anxiety and fear. This has a significant impact on children and young people, both directly, as victims in their own right, and indirectly due to the impact the abuse has on the non-abusive parent. Children may also be forced to participate in controlling or coercive behaviour towards the parent who is being abused.”

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 included significant changes to the way that responses to domestic abuse should be overseen, including reference to responses to child victims and perpetrators aged 16 and 17.⁷³ At the time of writing statutory government guidance on controlling and coercive behaviour was being drafted.⁷⁴

So-called honour-based violence, female genital mutilation, forced marriage

So-called honour-based violence is a form of domestic abuse where someone, usually but not always a girl or woman, is disowned, abused, attacked and sometimes killed as a result of supposedly discrediting the ‘honour’ of the family or community. It is described by Karma Nirvana as including many forms of abuse including *“child marriage, forced virginity testing, forced abortion, forced marriage, female genital mutilation including physical, sexual and economic abuse and coercive control.”*⁷⁵ Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) provided an inspection report in 2021 of police responses to violence against women and girls,⁷⁶ addressing the Government Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2021.⁷⁷ Both these documents describe the nature of so-called honour-based violence, female genital mutilation and other forms of violence that is predominately perpetrated against girls and women.

⁷³ Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Available at: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/17/contents/enacted

⁷⁴ www.gov.uk/government/consultations/controlling-or-coercive-behaviour-statutory-guidance

⁷⁵ <https://karmanirvana.org.uk/get-help/what-is-honour-based-abuse/>

⁷⁶ www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/police-response-to-violence-against-women-and-girls/

⁷⁷ Home Office (2021) *Tackling violence against women and girls strategy*. Available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-violence-against-women-and-girls-strategy

Economic and financial abuse

Economic abuse is a legally recognised form of domestic abuse and is defined in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. It:

“often occurs in the context of intimate partner violence, and involves the control of a partner, or ex-partners’ money and finances as well as things that money can buy”⁷⁸

It is a form of coercive control and can impact on children and young people as witnesses, victims or as perpetrators.

Financial abuse is also defined in the Care Act 2014. Section 42(3) states:

“Abuse’ includes financial abuse; and for that purpose ‘financial abuse’ includes—

(a) having money or other property stolen,

(b) being defrauded,

(c) being put under pressure in relation to money or other property, and

(d) having money or other property misused.”⁷⁹

The Care and Support Statutory Guidance, which supports the Care Act 2014, cites examples of financial or material abuse as: *“theft, fraud, internet scamming, coercion in relation to an adult’s financial affairs or arrangements, including in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.”⁸⁰*

It also highlights that financial abuse is the main form of abuse investigated by the Office of the Public Guardian among both adults and children at risk, and that it rarely occurs in isolation from other forms of abuse.⁸¹

Ritualised abuse

Ritualised abuse occurs through seemingly organised systematic sexual, physical, emotional and psychological abuse commonly assumed to be promoted by belief systems or traditions although ritualised abuse can take place without a dominant faith or belief system. Ritualised abuse is invariably comprised of three main components: it is organised, involves rituals of some sort and is abusive⁸²

⁷⁸ <https://survivingeconomicabuse.org/what-is-economic-abuse/?gclid=CjwKCAjwp7eUBhBeEiwAZbHwkTYdcExzPxECumG00xp6IfwlQ22I4jhM-bERmnT4uddUQzVKzVCx5xoCzawQAvD BwE>

⁷⁹ Care Act 2014

⁸⁰ Department for Health & Social Care (2022) *Care and support statutory guidance*. Available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-act-statutory-guidance/care-and-support-statutory-guidance

⁸¹ Ibid

⁸² <https://www.firstpersonplural.org.uk/ritual-abuse/definition-of-ritual-abuse/>

Modern-day slavery and trafficking of children and young people

The Modern Day Slavery Act 2015⁸³ has been accompanied by a collection of papers, first published by the UK Government in 2014 and updated in 2022 that describe the meaning of modern day slavery, of the trafficking of children and young people and the use of the National Referral Mechanism (NRM)⁸⁴. Modern day slavery encompasses all forms of exploitation for criminal gain. Victims may appear to give consent, but this is usually extorted under coercion, fear or false information. It can include labour exploitation, domestic servitude, sexual exploitation and the removal and trafficking of human organs.

Trafficking typically involves the movement of an individual for the purpose of exploitation. This movement can be within country borders, often referred to as domestic trafficking, or across country borders, often referred to as international trafficking. The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is a recording process that is used to identify and respond to cases of trafficking of children and adults. The Local Safeguarding Children Partnership can give guidance to agencies, including homelessness agencies about how to access and use the NRM.

Radicalisation of children and young people

The NSPCC note that children can be exposed to and influenced by extreme views and opinions, many of which can result in a child being drawn into terrorist activities placing them and others in danger. All agencies have a responsibility to protect children from harm including exposure to extreme values and beliefs.⁸⁵ The government's revised 'Prevent duty' 2021 outlines actions developed to support agencies.⁸⁶

Extremism

Working Together to Safeguard children 2018 notes:

"Extremism goes beyond terrorism and includes people who target the vulnerable – including the young – by seeking to sow division between communities on the basis of race, faith or denomination; justify discrimination towards women and girls; persuade others that minorities are inferior; or argue against the primacy of democracy and the rule of law in our society. Extremism is defined in the Counter Extremism Strategy 2015 as the vocal or active

⁸³ Modern Day Slavery Act, 2015 www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/30/contents/enacted

⁸⁴ Home Office (2022) *Modern Slavery*. Available at www.gov.uk/government/collections/modern-slavery

⁸⁵ NSPCC (2021) *Radicalisation*. Available at: <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/radicalisation>

⁸⁶ Home Office (2021) *Revised Prevent duty guidance: for England and Wales*. Available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance/revised-prevent-duty-guidance-for-england-and-wales

opposition to our fundamental values, including the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also regard calls for the death of members of our armed forces as extremist.”⁸⁷

Missing children

There is not one multi-agency definition for what it means for a child to go missing, however for definition used by police is “anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established will be considered as missing until located, and their well-being or otherwise confirmed.”⁸⁸ The main reasons children go missing is due to family conflict and poor relationships, which can be related to structural and interpersonal factors, experiences of abuse, domestic violence or child sexual exploitation and mental health issues including risks of suicide or self-harm.⁸⁹

Conversion therapy

The British Psychological Society (BPS) describe conversion therapy - sometimes called "reparative therapy" or "gay cure therapy" – as a practice that tries to change someone's sexual orientation or gender identity.⁹⁰ In practice, it means trying to stop or suppress someone from being gay, or from living as a different gender to their sex recorded at birth.

The UK council for Psychotherapy note that *“Conversion therapy is an umbrella term for a therapeutic approach, model or individual viewpoint that demonstrates an assumption that any sexual orientation or gender identity is inherently preferable to any other, and which attempts to bring about a change of sexual orientation or gender identity, or seeks to suppress an individual's expression of sexual orientation or gender identity on that basis.”⁹¹*

Amnesty international have recognised this as an “abhorrent practice”.⁹² Psychological and therapeutic organisations in the UK, including the British Psychological Society, NHS England, Royal College of Psychiatrists and Mind have signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Conversion Therapy in the UK that states takes the position that the practice of conversion therapy, whether in relation to sexual orientation or gender identity, is unethical and potentially harmful. Further information on this MOU can be found through the BPS website.⁹³

⁸⁷ Department for Education (2018) *Working Together to Safeguard Children*, Available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2

⁸⁸ www.missingpeople.org.uk/for-professionals/information-and-policy/information-and-research/key-information

⁸⁹ Homeless Link (2020) *Missing and Homelessness Guidance*, Available at: https://homelesslink-1b54.kxcdn.com/media/documents/Missing_and_Homelessness_guidance_Aug2020.pdf

⁹⁰ www.bbc.co.uk/news/explainers-56496423

⁹¹ www.psychology.org.uk/policy-and-research/public-policy/conversion-therapy/

⁹² www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/uk-conversion-therapy-ban-without-trans-and-non-binary-people-not-real-ban

⁹³ www.bps.org.uk/guideline/memorandum-understanding-conversion-therapy-uk

Appendix B: Resources and further information

Further resources on safeguarding and child protection

NSPCC

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/>

NCVO: National Council for voluntary organisations

<https://knowhow.ncvo.org.uk/safeguarding/>

The Association of Safeguarding Partners

www.theasp.org.uk

Government Guidance

Safeguarding children in schools

www.gov.uk/topic/schools-colleges-childrens-services/safeguarding-children;

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/942454/Working_together_to_safeguard_children_inter_agency_guidance.pdf

The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel: resources and learning from the panel

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/child-safeguarding-practice-review-panel

Guidance on developing policies

NSPCC: Writing a safeguarding statement

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/writing-a-safeguarding-policy-statement>

NSPCC: tool for organisations to audit their safeguarding and child protection arrangements

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-self-assessment-tool>

UK Youth: interactive frameworks, that provide, information and guidance to benchmark organisations policy and practice.

www.ukyouth.org/what-we-do/quality-marks/

Discrimination and disproportionality research and resources

NSPCC: Safeguarding LGBTQ+ children and young people

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/lgbtq-children-young-people>

NSPCC: Safeguarding children who come from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic communities

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/children-from-black-asian-minoritised-ethnic-communities>

Listen Up: Amplifying lesser heard voices in child safeguarding
<https://listenupresearch.org/what-we-do/research-publications/>

Research on child abuse

The Child Sexual Abuse Centre of expertise
www.csacentre.org.uk

The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse
www.iicsa.org.uk

The Safer Young Lives Research Centre
www.beds.ac.uk/sylrc

The Contextual Safeguarding Network
<https://contextualsafeguarding.org.uk>

Research In Practice
www.researchinpractice.org.uk

What We Do

Homeless Link is the national membership charity for frontline homelessness services. We work to improve services through research, guidance and learning, and campaign for policy change that will ensure everyone has a place to call home and the support they need to keep it.

Homeless Link

Minorities House

2-5 Minorities

London

EC3N 1BJ

www.homeless.org.uk

@HomelessLink

**Let's End Homelessness
Together**

