



HERTSMERE MENCAP HOLIDAY CLUB SAFEGUARDING/CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

We will endeavour to safeguard children and young people by:

- Valuing them, listening to respecting them
- Adopting Child Protection guidelines through procedures and a Code of Conduct for staff and volunteers
- Recruiting staff and volunteers safely ensuring all necessary checks are made
- Sharing information about child protection and good practice with children, parents, staff and volunteers
- Sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents and children appropriately
- Providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training.
- Reviewing our policy and good practice annually.

Hertsmere Mencap’s Holiday Club will endeavour to safeguard the children who are members or who attend activities we organise or facilitate by following the procedure if a concern is raised about a child’s welfare.

The definition of a child for the purpose of this document is anyone under the age of 18 years. *(Please note: the national definition of domestic abuse is set in context of 16 years plus, taking into account how this may impact, or dictate response).*

It is important that everyone in the organisation is aware that the person who first encounters a case of alleged or suspected abuse is not responsible for deciding whether or not the abuse has occurred. That is a task for the professional Child Protection agencies e.g. Children’s Services following a referral to them about a child.

6. Important Contacts

Under this section you should reflect the structures of your organisation and add additional useful contacts

[Name of organisation] has an appointed individual who is responsible for dealing with any safeguarding concerns. In their absence, a deputy will always be available for workers to consult with.

The named person for child protection within the Hertsmere Mencap Holiday Club are:

Named/designated safeguarding person/lead	Susannah Shackleton
Work telephone number	07727 339066
Mobile number	As above

6.1. Other key contacts

Children's Services	0300 123 4043 (including out of hours)
Police (Child Abuse Investigation Unit CAIU)	0845 33 00 222 (or in an emergency 999)
NSPCC	0808 800 5000

Further useful contacts are listed in Appendix 5

7. Responsibilities of individuals in implementing this policy and procedure

This section is not a requirement. However, you may wish to spell out the responsibilities of certain individuals as well as all staff.

All members of Hertsmere Mencap Holiday Club are to:

- Understand and apply this policy and procedure in their activities
- Identify opportunities and undertake appropriate training to support them in their role
- Act appropriately at all times and be able to challenge inappropriate behaviour in others
- Be able to recognise harm
- Know how to report any concerns in a timely and appropriate way.

In addition, senior members of the organisation are to:

- Encourage all staff and volunteers to understand this policy and procedure
- Offer opportunities to undertake appropriate safeguarding training and refresher training
- Ensure that the policy and procedure is adhered to and to undertake regular compliance audits
- Ensure that a whistle blowing policy is developed, agreed and communicated with all staff and volunteers

The role and responsibilities of the named person(s) is:

- To ensure that all staff are aware of what they should do and who they should go to if they are concerned that a child/young person maybe subject to abuse or neglect.
- Ensure that any concerns about a child/young person are acted on, clearly recorded, referred on where necessary and, followed up to ensure the issues are addressed.
- The named person(s) will record any reported incidents in relation to a child/young person or breach of Safeguarding policies and procedures. This will be kept in a secure place and its contents will be confidential.

Link to [Report concerns about a child or request support.](#)

8. Outcomes for children and their families

In developing this policy Hertsmere Mencap Holiday Club intends that it will promote the welfare of children and young people attending and taking part in activities.

Children and young people and their parents / carers can be assured that Hertsmere Mencap Holiday Club takes their welfare seriously and wants them to enjoy the activities in a safe and secure environment.

Every adult who works with or on behalf of Hertsmere Mencap Holiday Club is aware of the contents of this policy and understands what the reporting procedures are if there are any activities that may be unsafe or may present a risk of harm, or if the child or young person (or their parent(s) / carer(s)) makes a disclosure of abuse or an allegation against an adult working with them. Such disclosures or allegations will be taken very seriously to ensure that the child is protected.

All adults working for or with Hertsmere Mencap Holiday Club will have been appropriately recruited and DBSs or Enhanced DBSs will be applied for and references taken up. Their induction into the organisation will include basic child protection training and a briefing on this policy.

9. Policy statement

This section may be amended, as appropriate. However, it is suggested that these are the key responsibilities.

Hertsmere Mencap Holiday Club

It is imperative that groups are equipped with the knowledge and awareness that will enable them to detect any abuse or ill treatment of children. This policy document therefore aims to be a reference for all members of staff and volunteers involved

In implementing this Child Protection/Safeguarding Policy Hertsmere Mencap Holiday Club will:

- Ensure that all workers understand their legal and moral responsibility to protect children and young people from harm, abuse and exploitation by including training on child protection in their induction and in subsequent training that is undertaken.
- Ensure that all workers understand their responsibility to work to the standards that are detailed in the organisation's Child Protection Procedures and work at all times towards maintaining high standards of practice.
- Ensure that all workers are aware of the HSCP Procedures and are confident in how to work within these guidelines by ensuring their attendance at training and at subsequent refresher training organised by the HSCP (as required).
- Ensure that all workers understand their duty to report concerns that arise about a child or young person, or a worker's conduct towards a child/young person, to the organisation's named person for child protection.
- Ensure that a named person responsible for child protection is appointed and that they understand their responsibility to refer any child protection concerns to the statutory child protection agencies (i.e. police and/or Children's Services).
- Ensure that any procedures relating to the conduct of workers are implemented in a consistent and equitable manner.

- Provide opportunities for all workers to develop their skills and knowledge, particularly in relation to the welfare and protection of children and young people.
- Ensure that children and young people are enabled to express their ideas and views on a wide range of issues and will have access to the organisation's complaints procedure.
- Ensure that parents/carers are encouraged to be involved in the work of the organisation and, when requested, have access to all guidelines and procedures.
- Endeavour to keep up to date with national developments relating to the welfare and protection of children and young people.
- Ensure that appropriate background checks are undertaken when anyone joins the organisation and before they start working directly with children and young people.
- Ensure that all people working directly with children and young people have at least a basic understanding of child protection and as part of their training have at the very least undertaken an online, certificated child protection course.

10. Legal framework

The Children Act 1989 sets out that the child's welfare is paramount and safeguarding and promoting it is the priority.

The Children Act 2004 set out a duty on local authorities to work closely with those providing services to children and young people.

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 sets out how organisations and individuals should work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in accordance with the Children Act 1989 and the Children Act 2004. It is important that all practitioners working to safeguard children and young people understand fully their responsibilities and duties as set out in primary legislation and associated regulations and guidance.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) sets out key principles which are enshrined within these acts and the statutory guidance. From 15 January 1992, when the treaty came into force, every child in the UK has been entitled to over 54 specific rights, some of which are:

- The right to life, survival, identity and development
- Freedom of thought, belief and religion
- Protection from violence, abuse and neglect
- The right to have their views respected, and to have their best interests considered at all times
- The right to a name and nationality, freedom of expression, and access to information concerning them
- The right to live in a family environment or alternative care, and to have contact with both parents wherever possible
- Health and welfare rights, including rights for disabled children, the right to health and health care, and social security
- The right to education, leisure, culture and the arts
- Special protection for refugee children, children in the juvenile justice system, children deprived of their liberty and children suffering economic, sexual or other forms of exploitation.

The rights included in the convention apply to all children and young people, with no

exceptions. UNCRC [website](#)

11. Recognising abuse and neglect

11.1 Definition of abuse

Abuse and neglect are forms 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, by a stranger or via the internet. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

An abused child is any boy or girl, under 18 years of age, who has experienced, or is believed likely to be at risk of, significant risk of neglect, and / or physical, emotional or sexual abuse.

11.1.1. Physical abuse

(including when masqueraded as discipline and chastisement)

The following definition is taken from Working Together (Working Together 2018)

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

Physical abuse often arises from a wish to chastise. Smacking is illegal in England but has a legal defence of “reasonable chastisement” under Section 58 of the Children Act 2004 but only in a charge of common assault. Whether a 'smack' amounts to reasonable chastisement will depend on the circumstances of each case, taking into consideration factors e.g. age of the child and the nature of the smack.

The introduction of section 54 of the Children Act 2004 changed the law, to remove the reasonable chastisement defence for actual bodily harm. Actual bodily harm includes minor visible injuries such as a graze, a scratch, an abrasion or bruising around the eye. Common assault implies a transient trifling injury such as reddening of the skin or no injury at all. The use of an implement to hit a child though not specifically prohibited is more likely to leave a mark. Thus, the law allows a parent to smack a child where doing so leaves no mark upon the skin, so only light smacks are permitted. “Over chastisement” which implies at least actual bodily harm would be against the law and the reasonable chastisement defence would not apply. This means, for example, that a parent can no longer justify beating a child on the grounds that the child is difficult to raise.

Although the reasonable chastisement defence only applies to the criminal law the concept influences decisions taken in the family courts. The defence applies only to parents and adults acting in loco parentis (teacher or other adult responsible for the children) with the parent’s permission. Physical chastisement, i.e. corporal punishment, of any form has been prohibited in state schools since 1986, private since 1998 and by child minders since 2003.

It is important that all professionals treat injuries caused to children by their parents as an assault and do not condone or excuse this because their intention was to discipline the child. Professionals should be cautious about referring to such assaults as “over-chastisement” as this can have the effect of minimising the impact on the child of the injuries or implying the child’s behaviour was a contributory cause.

There is evidence that even smacking allowed within the law is harmful to children. For example, minor forms of regular smacking of pre-school children is associated with an increased risk of antisocial behaviour after 2-3 years even when allowing for other parenting risk factors and the presence of such behaviour at study entry 6, 7 Maternal depression and violence between adult partners are associated with a greater risk of smacking children than either factor present alone regardless of child behaviour.⁸ Parents who experience physical punishment in their childhood are more likely to smack their own children.

Signs

Although these signs do not necessarily indicate that a child has been physically abused, they may help adults recognise that something is wrong. The possibility of physical abuse should be investigated if a child shows a number of these symptoms, or any of them to a marked degree:

- Unexplained recurrent injuries or burns
- Improbable excuses or refusal to explain injuries
- Wearing clothes to cover injuries, even in hot weather
- Refusal to undress for gym
- Bald patches
- Multiple missing episodes
- Fear of medical help or examination
- Self-harming tendencies
- Aggression towards others
- Fear of physical contact - shrinking back if touched
- Admitting that they are punished, but the punishment is excessive (such as a child being beaten every night to 'make him study')
- Fear of suspected abuser being contacted

11.1.2. Emotional Abuse

The following definition is taken from Working Together (Working Together 2018)

*Emotional abuse is a form of **Significant Harm** which involves the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development.*

It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or "making fun" of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children.

These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child

participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying) causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children.

Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Signs

Although these signs do not necessarily indicate that a child has been emotionally abused, they may help adults recognise that something is wrong. The possibility of emotional abuse should be investigated if a child shows a number of these symptoms, or any of them to a marked degree:

- Physical, mental and emotional development delay
- Sudden speech disorders
- Continual self-depreciation ('I'm stupid, ugly, worthless, etc')
- Overreaction to mistakes
- Extreme fear of any new situation
- Inappropriate response to pain ('I deserve this')
- Neurotic behaviour (rocking, hair twisting, self-mutilation)
- Extremes of passivity or aggression
- Inability to cope with praise
- An unwillingness or inability to play

11.1.3. Sexual Abuse

The following definition is taken from Working Together (Working Together 2018)

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

Signs

Although these signs do not necessarily indicate that a child has been sexually abused, they may help adults recognise that something is wrong. The possibility of sexual abuse should be investigated if a child shows a number of these symptoms, or any of them to a marked degree:

- Being overly affectionate or knowledgeable in a sexual way inappropriate to the child's age
- Medical problems such as chronic itching, pain in the genitals, venereal diseases
- Other extreme reactions, such as depression, self-mutilation, suicide attempts, running away, overdoses, anorexia
- Personality changes such as becoming insecure or clinging

- Regressing to younger behaviour patterns such as thumb sucking or bringing out discarded cuddly toys
- Sudden loss of appetite or compulsive eating
- Being isolated or withdrawn
- Inability to concentrate
- Lack of trust or fear of someone they know well, such as not wanting to be alone with a babysitter or child minder
- Starting to wet again, day or night/nightmares
- Become worried about clothing being removed
- Suddenly drawing sexually explicit pictures
- Trying to be 'ultra-good' or perfect; overreacting to criticism

11.1.4. Neglect

The following definition is taken from Working Together (Working Together 2018)

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

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

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

Signs

Although these signs do not necessarily indicate that a child has experienced neglect, they may help adults recognise that something is wrong. The possibility of neglect should be investigated if a child shows a number of these symptoms, or any of them to a marked degree:

- Constant hunger
- Poor personal hygiene
- Constant tiredness
- Poor state of clothing/lacks sufficient clothing for the weather
- Emaciation
- Untreated medical problems
- No social relationships
- Compulsive scavenging
- Destructive tendencies
- Learning disabilities due to poor brain development

Note: A child may be subjected to a combination of different kinds of abuse. It is also possible that a child may show no outward signs and hide what is happening from everyone.

11.1.5. Child Sexual Exploitation

The following definition is taken from DfE: Child Sexual Exploitation, February 2017

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. Sexual abuse 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 clothing. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet).

The definition of child sexual exploitation is as follows:

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.

Child sexual exploitation is never the victim's fault, even if there is some form of exchange: all children and young people under the age of 18 have a right to be safe and should be protected from harm.

Sexual exploitation can have links to other types of crime. These include:

- Child trafficking
- Domestic abuse
- Sexual violence in intimate relationships
- Grooming (including online grooming)
- Abusive images of children and their distribution
- Drugs-related offences
- Gang-related activity
- Immigration-related offences
- Domestic servitude

The following vulnerabilities are examples of the types of things children can experience that might make them more susceptible to child sexual exploitation:

- Having a prior experience of neglect, physical and/or sexual abuse
- Lack of a safe/stable home environment, now or in the past (domestic abuse or parental substance misuse, mental health issues or criminality, for example)
- Recent bereavement or loss
- Social isolation or social difficulties
- Absence of a safe environment to explore sexuality
- Economic vulnerability
- Homelessness or insecure accommodation status
- Connections with other children and young people who are being sexually exploited

- Family members or other connections involved in adult sex work
- Having a physical or learning disability
- Being in care (particularly those in residential care and those with interrupted care histories)
- Sexual identity

Children rarely self-report child sexual exploitation so it is important that practitioners are aware of potential indicators of risk, including:

- Acquisition of money, clothes, mobile phones etc. without plausible explanation; • Gang-association and/or isolation from peers/social networks;
- Exclusion or unexplained absences from school, college or work;
- Leaving home/care without explanation and persistently going missing or returning late;
- Excessive receipt of texts/phone calls;
- Returning home under the influence of drugs/alcohol;
- Inappropriate sexualised behaviour for age/sexually transmitted infections;
- Evidence of/suspicions of physical or sexual assault;
- Relationships with controlling or significantly older individuals or groups;
- Multiple callers (unknown adults or peers);
- Frequenting areas known for sex work;
- Concerning use of internet or other social media;
- Increasing secretiveness around behaviours; and
- Self-harm or significant changes in emotional well-being.

Children can be perpetrators as well as victims

Children can be both experiencing child sexual exploitation and perpetrating it at the same time. Examples might include a child who is forced to take part in the exploitation of another child under duress, or a child who is forced to introduce other children to their abuser under threats to their family's safety. These situations require a nuanced approach that recognises and engages with the young person's perpetration within the context of their own victimisation.

Children who perpetrate child sexual exploitation require a different response to adult perpetrators. Responses may involve criminal justice pathways at times, however every child who displays harmful sexual behaviour should also have their safeguarding and welfare needs actively considered in line with *Working Together*.

Safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility. All practitioners should assume that in the course of their work with children they will encounter children at risk of sexual exploitation. All practitioners working with children and families need to **know where to get help**: Local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements will set out the process for referring concerns about the welfare of children to local authority children's social care. Anyone can make a referral and ask for advice. If a child is considered to be in immediate danger the police should be contacted

11.1.6. Child Criminal Exploitation

The following definition is taken from the Government website: [Guidance exploitation and vulnerable adults: county lines, February 2020](#)

What is child criminal exploitation?

Child criminal exploitation is increasingly used to describe this type of exploitation where children are involved, and is defined as:

“Child criminal exploitation is common in county lines and occurs 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. 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.”

Criminal exploitation of children is broader than just county lines and includes for instance children forced to work on cannabis farms or to commit theft.

Dangers of criminal exploitation (as define on NSPCC website)

It’s important to be aware of the risks of criminal exploitation or being involved with a criminal gang. They can use different tactics to recruit and exploit children and young people, including bribing them with rewards, befriending them, and threatening them, or coercing them.

Dangers of criminal exploitation include:

- being subject to threats, blackmail and violence
- being exploited and forced to commit crimes
- being arrested, including for crimes committed by the gang that they have not directly committed under the law of joint enterprise
- not being able to leave or cut off ties with the gang
- having their safety or the safety of friends and family threatened
- risk of physical harm, rape and sexual abuse
- risk of emotional abuse
- risk of severe injury or being killed
- abusing drugs, alcohol and other substances
- long term impact on education and employment options.

Exploiting a child into committing crimes is abusive. Children who are targeted can also be groomed, physically abused, emotionally abused, sexually exploited or trafficked. However, as children involved in gangs often commit crimes themselves, sometimes they are not seen as victims by adults and professionals, despite the harm they have experienced. It’s important to spot the signs and act quickly if you think a child is being groomed or is becoming involved with a gang.

Please visit the [NSPCC website](#) for further guidance on Child Criminal Exploitation

11.1.7. Effects of Domestic Abuse

Please see the [NSPCC website](#) for guidance on advice for professionals on how to support children exposed to domestic abuse.

Effects of domestic abuse (NSPCC website)

Living in a home where domestic abuse happens can have a serious impact on a child or young person's mental and physical wellbeing, as well as their behaviour. And this can last into adulthood.

What's important is to make sure the abuse stops and that children have a safe and stable environment to grow up in.

Our [services](#) can support children and young people who have experienced domestic abuse to help them move on and receive the care they need.

11.1.8. Extremism

The following definition is taken from Working Together (Working Together 2018)

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 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.

11.1.9. Bullying and Cyberbullying

Bullying affects everyone at some point in their lives. It may be at school, at college, in an activity group or club, in the workplace or even at home.

Parents, carers, teachers and others working with children have a duty to take action if they suspect or discover that child(ren) are being bullied.

Bullying includes:

- People calling you names
- Making things up to get another person into trouble
- Hitting, pinching, biting, pushing and shoving
- Taking things away from someone
- Damaging another person's belongings
- Stealing someone's money
- Taking friends away from them
- [Cyberbullying](#)
- Spreading rumours
- Upskirting - this is a criminal offence and must be reported to the Police.
- Threats and intimidation
- Making silent or abusive phone calls
- Bullies can also frighten the victim so that they don't want to go to school or take part in other activities.
- The victim may pretend to be ill to avoid the bully

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place online. Unlike bullying in the real world, online bullying can follow the child wherever they go, via social networks, gaming and mobile phone. Types of cyberbullying can include:

- Sending threatening or abusive text messages

- Creating and sharing embarrassing images or videos
- Trolling – the sending of menacing or upsetting messages on social networks, chat rooms or online games
- Excluding children from online games, activities or friendship groups
- Shaming someone online
- Setting up hate sites or groups about a particular child
- Encouraging young people to self-harm
- Voting for or against someone in an abusive poll
- Creating fake accounts, hijacking or stealing online identities to embarrass a young person or cause trouble using their name
- Sending explicit messages, also known as sexting
- Pressuring children into sending sexual images or engaging in sexual conversations.

Developing a 'Code of Conduct' with children and young people can assist with minimising the opportunity for bullying and encourage their participation in the activities of the group.

12. Steps to follow if you are worried about a child or if a child confides in you

This section is intended to cover the processes for staff in an easily understandable format. You may choose to include a flow chart with the process in your appendices or at the end of this section.

Hertsmere Mencap Holiday Club recognises that it has a duty to act on reports or suspicions of abuse and believes that the safety of the child should override any doubts, hesitations, or other considerations (such as the potential to have a negative impact on professional relationships with a family). When worrying changes are observed in a child's or young person's behaviour, physical condition or appearance, staff will follow the steps set out below.

If a child confides in you:

- Stay calm, approachable and open to what they have to say
- Listen to them carefully without interrupting
- Make it clear that you are taking what they are telling you seriously
- Acknowledge that you understand how difficult this might be for them to say what they are saying
- Reassure them that they have done the right thing by telling someone
- Let them know that you will do everything you can to help them
- Do not show any shock or disgust
- Do not probe further
- Do not ask leading questions that might suggest the answer
- Do not make assumptions
- Do not make any comments about the alleged abuser
- Do not make promises you cannot keep, particularly about keeping the information 'secret', but explain that you may need to share it with an appropriate person
- Do not discuss with colleagues apart from the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or their deputy); and

Follow the steps set out below

Step 1

- Initially talk to a child/young person about what you are observing. It is okay to ask questions, for example: "I've noticed that you don't appear yourself today, is everything okay? But never use leading questions
- Listen carefully to what the young person has to say and take it seriously
- Never investigate or take sole responsibility for a situation where a child/young person talks about matters that may be indicative of abuse
- Always explain to children and young people that any information they have given will have to be shared with others, if this indicates they and or other children are at risk of harm
- Notify the organisation's Named Person for Child Protection / Safeguarding
- Record what was said as soon as possible after any disclosure on the form attached at Appendix 1 and send to the Named Person for Child Protection / Safeguarding
- Respect confidentiality and file documents securely

Step 2

- The Named person(s) will take immediate action if there is a suspicion that a child has been abused or likely to be abused. In this situation the Named Person will contact the Police and/or Children Services. If a referral is made direct to Children's Services, this must be followed up in writing within 24 hrs.

NB Parents / carers will need to be informed about any referral to Children, Schools and Families unless to do so would place the child at an increased risk of harm.

- The named person can also seek advice and clarity about a situation that is beginning to raise concern through **Children's Services 0300 123 4043** or from the **NSPCC 0808 800 5000**, [website](#).

Professionals, employees, managers, helpers, carers and volunteers in all agencies must make contact Children's Services:

- If it is believed or suspected that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer **Significant Harm**, or
- Where a professional has identified unmet need in relation to a **Child in Need**

A referral must be made as soon as possible when any concern of significant harm becomes known - the greater the level of perceived risk, the more urgent the action should be.

IF YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT A CHILD YOU HAVE A DUTY TO REFER

The belief or suspicion about significant harm may be based on information which comes from different sources. It may come from a member of the public, the child concerned, another child, a family member or other professional staff. It may relate to a single incident or an accumulation of lower level concerns.

The information may also relate to harm caused by another child, in which case both children, i.e. the suspected perpetrator and victim, must be referred.

The suspicion or allegation may relate to a parent or professional or volunteer caring for or working with the child – see Section 15 below Managing Allegations against an Adult who works with children or young people.

A referral must be made even if it is known that Children's Services Social Care are already involved with the child/family.

Advice and consultation may be sought about the appropriateness of the referral by contacting the local Children's Services or, if the case is open, from the allocated social worker. Alternatively, advice may be sought from the Police or the Named Person for Safeguarding.

13. Safer Staffing and DBS checks

This section covers the organisations' responsibility in relation to safer staffing and recruitment. You may wish to refer to your own processes if you have them in place.

Every organisation has its own processes for recruiting to paid and unpaid work.

Key points to consider including are DBS checks or Enhanced DBS checks for staff or volunteers working directly with children or who have frequent contact with children through your organisation. Ideally, references should be taken up in advance of them commencing with the organisation and these should be checked. Any staff or volunteers who have not been vetted prior to working with children should be closely supervised and never be left alone with a child in a one to one situation.

For more information, please visit the Government website [link](#)

14. Managing allegations against an adult who works with children or young people

It is important within your procedures that you state how allegations against your own staff and volunteers will be handled. Please visit the HSCP website for guidance: [Section 4.1](#). In Hertfordshire, allegations against a member of staff or a volunteer organisation working with children and young people must be referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

Whenever it is alleged a person who works with children has in any activity connected with her/his employment or voluntary activity:

- Behaved in a way that has, or may have harmed a child
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against / related to a child
- Behaved toward a child in a way which indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children

The procedures apply to situations when:

- There are suspicions or allegations of abuse by a person who works with children in either a paid or unpaid capacity - as a permanent, temporary or agency staff member, contract worker, consultant, volunteer, approved foster carer, child minder or approved adopter
- It is discovered that an individual known to have been involved previously in child abuse, is or has been working with children

If concerns arise about the person's behaviour to her/his own children, Police and/or Children's Services must consider informing her/his employer in order to assess whether there may be implications for children with whom the person has contact at work. A decision as to whether the person's employer should be approached, either for further information and/or whether it is appropriate to invite the employer to a future Strategy Meeting when decisions are to be made about managing the possible risk, should be made at the initial Strategy Meeting when all agencies can contribute. The risk that someone presents needs to be properly considered and a decision made whether the risk outweighs the employee's right to confidentiality before an employer is approached.

If an allegation relating to a child is made about a person undertaking paid or unpaid care of vulnerable adults, consideration must also be given to the need to alert those who manage her/him in that role.

15.1. Procedure

The person to whom an allegation is first reported should take the matter seriously and keep an open mind. S/he should not investigate or ask leading questions if seeking clarification, it is important not to make assumptions. Confidentiality should not be promised, and the person should be advised that the concern will be shared on a 'need to know' basis only.

Actions to be taken include making a written record of the allegation using the informant's words - including time, date and place where the alleged incident took place, what was said and anyone else present. This record should be signed and dated and immediately passed on to the Designated Safeguarding Lead without delay.

The recipient of an allegation must **not** unilaterally determine its validity, and failure to report it in accordance with procedures is a potential disciplinary matter.

If there is an immediate or imminent risk of significant harm to a child or young person, you should contact Children's Services or the Police and then speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead to inform them of the actions you have taken and follow this up in writing on the form attached at Appendix 1.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead must take steps to ensure that the person against whom the allegation is removed from the situation immediately. This may be done by either agreement or suspension from the organisation until the matter has been fully investigated.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will follow the HSCP Procedures Managing Allegations against Adults who work with Children and Young People by referring the issue to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). [Link](#)

Any member of staff who believes that allegations or suspicions, which have been reported to the appropriate manager, are not being investigated properly has a responsibility to report it to a higher level in her/his agency or directly to the LADO.

The LADO must be told, within one working day, of all allegations that come to the employer's attention and appear to meet the criteria so that s/he can consult or refer to the Police and Children's Services, as appropriate.

If, for any reason, there are difficulties with following the above procedure, the Whistle Blowing Procedure should be considered, or a referral made directly to Children's Services and/or the Police.

The need for consultation must not delay a referral, which should be in accordance with the referral procedure.

The employer should keep the subject of allegations informed of progress in the case and arrange to provide appropriate support (via Occupational Health or equivalent). If the person is suspended, s/he should be kept informed of development in the workplace and if a member of a Trades Union or professional association, advised at the outset to contact that body.

15. Confidentiality

Information about a referral about a child or an allegation against a member of staff or volunteer must be restricted to those who have a need to know in order to:

- Protect children
- Facilitate enquiries
- Avoid victimisation
- Safeguard the rights of the person about whom the allegation has been made and others who might be affected
- Manage disciplinary / complaints aspects

The Named Person for Safeguarding may ask you for further information in order to make any referrals. You should not discuss or share this information with anyone else within the organisation. Any paperwork you have generated should be stored in a locked filing cabinet or stored on a computer securely.

16. Managing activities involving children and young people

When managing an activity involving children and young people, it is important to consider a risk assessment, both in terms of the health and safety of the participants, but also of the potential child protection issues.

Each activity should have a risk assessment undertaken to consider what level and impact of risk there may be to the children and to the staff or volunteers.

16.1. Record keeping

Whilst record keeping may seem overly bureaucratic from time to time, it is important to keep good and clear records of the work of your organisation. It is particularly important to keep a register of attendance and a fire register and emergency contact details for all children and adults working with you.

Any details must be kept securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018. You should also store copies of your risk assessments for activities (see the next section).

Good record keeping promotes confidence in the organisation and in the safety of children who are participating in the activities.

16.2. Off Site Visits

Guidance for Learning Outside of Classroom (LOtC) and Offsite Visits

Hertfordshire has adopted the OEAP's [National Guidance \(NG\)](#). This should be read in conjunction with Hertfordshire's Policy Statement for the Management of Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) and Offsite Visits ([link](#)).

16.3 Taking photographs or videos of children

Please see link to The Children's Society Guidance on Social Media and Photo Consent ([link](#))

Please see link to the NSPCC Guidance, outlining risk of sharing images online, a model photography policy statement, sharing images, storing images and CCTV & surveillance cameras ([link](#))

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Sample Reporting a Concern Form

This is a model form that we use within our organisation;

Strictly Confidential

Please print clearly

Full name of the Child:				DOB	
Address:					
Name(s) of parent(s) / carer(s)					
About the Incident					
Time	Date	Location	People involved	What role did they play (affected person/participate/witness)	
Describe the incident as fully as you can in your own words. If a child made a disclosure or allegation to you record in their words where possible. Attach additional sheets where necessary					
About the person filling out this form:					
Name			Role		
Address			Contact No:		
If you referred this directly to Children School and Families or the Police please state why, include the name of the worker / officer you spoke to and the date / time					
Date you sent this form to your Named person for Safeguarding					

Appendix 2 –Code of Conduct for all Staff and Volunteers

WE DO NOT:

- Use any kind of physical punishment or chastisement such as smacking or hitting
- Smoke in front of any child
- Use non-prescribed drugs or be under the influence of alcohol.
- Behave in a way that frightens or demeans any child.
- Use any racist, sexist, homophobic, discriminatory or offensive language
- Invite a child to your home or arrange to see them outside the set activity times
- Engage in any sexual activity (this would include using sexualised language) with a child you meet through your duties or start a personal relationship with them, this would be an abuse of trust.
- Engage in rough or physical games, including horseplay
- Let allegations a child makes go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon
- Rely upon good nature to protect you or believe 'it could never happen to me'
- Give children presents or personal items *

*Exceptions to this could be a custom such as: buying children a small birthday token or leaving present, help to a family in need such as equipment to enable them to participate in an activity. Both types of gift should come from the organisation and from a professional capacity and be agreed with the named person for safeguarding children and the child's parent/carer. Similarly, do not accept gifts yourself other than small tokens for appropriate celebrations, which you should mention to the activity leader.

DO:

- Exercise caution about being alone with a child. In situations where this is unavoidable, ensure another worker or volunteer knows what you are doing and where you are.
- Ensure that any physical contact is open and initiated by the child's needs, e.g. for a hug when upset. Always prompt children to carry out personal care themselves and if they cannot manage ask if they would like help.
- Talk explicitly to children about their right to be kept safe from harm
- Listen to children and take every opportunity to raise their self-esteem.
- Work as a team with your co-workers/volunteers. Agree with them what behaviour you expect from children and be consistent in enforcing it
- Remember if you have to speak to a child about their behaviour you are challenging 'what they did', not 'who they are'.
- Make sure you have read the Safeguarding Children Procedure and policy statement and that you feel confident that you know how to recognise when a child may be suffering harm, how to handle any disclosure and how to report any concerns.
- Seek advice and support from your colleagues and your designated champion for safeguarding children
- Be clear with anyone disclosing any matter that could concern the safety and wellbeing of a child that you cannot guarantee to keep this information to yourself.
- Seek opportunities for training

- Where possible encourage parents to take responsibility for their own children.
- Make sure we are familiar with our organisation's Confidentiality Policy.

Advice for professionals who work with children, when using any form of ICT, including the Internet

For our own protection we follow this advice:

- Ensure all electronic communication with children, parents, carers, staff and others is compatible with your professional role and in line with the policies of the organisation.
- Do not talk about your professional role in any capacity when using social media such as Facebook and YouTube.
- Do not put online any text, image, sound or video that could upset or offend anyone connected to your setting, member of the community or be incompatible with your professional role.
- Use your organisation's or setting's ICT systems and resources for all official business. This includes your business email address, business mobile phone or photography equipment.
- Do not give out your own personal details, such as mobile phone number, personal e-mail address or social network details to children, parents, carers and others.
- Do not disclose any passwords and ensure that personal data is kept secure and used appropriately.
- Only take images of children and/or staff for professional purposes, in accordance with business policy. Ensure that the parent/carer of any child under 18 has given written consent. See Appendix 3
- Ensure that any images are represented only in a positive context and are removed from your websites when they expire.
- Do not browse, download, upload or distribute any material that could be considered offensive, illegal or discriminatory.
- Ensure that your online activity, both in work and outside, will not bring your organisation or professional role into disrepute.
- You have a duty to report any e-Safety incident which may impact on you, your professionalism or your organisation.

USING THE INTERNET RESPONSIBLY

For Online Safety guidance please visit the NSPCC [website](#)

Appendix 3 –Image consent form for use by staff and volunteers

This form can be used for consent to take and use images of children. We adapt it for our organisation and all parents/carers receive a copy of the form which they are asked for consent.

We sometimes take photographs or video footage for publicity purposes. These images may appear in our printed publications and publicity materials, on our website, or both.

We may also send the images to the news media, who may use them in printed publications and on their website and store them in their archive. They may also syndicate the photos to other media for possible use, either in printed publications, or on websites, or both. When we submit photographs and information to the media, we have no control on when, where, if or how they will be used.

The images we take will be of activities that show the children / organisation in a positive light. The images will not be associated with negative, distressing or sensitive issues to do with an individual's welfare or that may cause offence or embarrassment. It is the responsibility of the senior staff to ensure that consent is obtained from parents/guardians/social workers, and that children who are at risk or cannot have their photograph taken for legal or social reasons, are not in the photograph.

Please note that websites can be viewed throughout the world, not just in the United Kingdom where UK law applies. In giving your consent, you understand that the photos may be used in both printed and electronic form.

Please see below for sample Image Consent Form:

We will take all reasonable measures to ensure the images are used solely for the purposes for which they are intended. However, we cannot guarantee this and take no responsibility for the way images are used by other websites or publishers, or for any consequences arising from publication.

Sample Image Consent Form			
To give your consent, please answer the questions below, then sign and date the form where shown and fill in any relevant information			
May we use your image(s), or those of your child(ren) if under 18, in our publicity material, including printed publications, video recordings and on our website (delete if this does not apply)? <i>Please tick</i>	Yes		No
We sometimes send publicity material about our services, including photographs where appropriate, to the news media and partner organisations, who may use the image in printed and/ or electronic form and then store it in their archive. Can we use your photograph, or your child's, in this way? <i>Please tick</i>	Yes		No
Signed		Job Title <i>If applicable</i>	
Print name		Date	
Please print your child/ren's names:			
1			
2			
3			
FOR EXTERNAL USE			
Event & Location			
Photographer's name			
Contact details for person photographed <i>(if needed)</i>			

Appendix 4 – Additional Specific Guidance for those working in or with Faith Communities

This guidance can be inserted into your policies or removed as applicable:

The HSCP has a duty under the Children Act 2004 to protect children and to give advice and guidance to those working with children and young people. This also includes faith settings including places of worship, activity groups and learning environments.

In most religions there is a fundamental principle to love children, nurture them and protect them from harm. This same principle is included in the legal framework of the Children Act 1989, Adoption and Children Act 2002, Children Act 2004, Children and Young Persons Act 2008 and also applies to other legislation including the Forced Marriage(Civil Protection) Act 2007, Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 , and the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003

In addition to the guidance from the Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership, further guidance on some of these issues is available from the Churches Child Protection Advisory Services (CCPAS), the NSPCC, from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and from the Muslim Parliament of Great Britain, to name but a few.

The key to remember is to be able to recognise significant harm and to be able to report it appropriately in a timely way in order to protect children

Forced Marriage

The Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 amended the Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007 and the Family Law Act 1996. This Act criminalised Forced Marriage and introduced Forced Marriage Orders. Forced Marriage is illegal in the UK, or in attempting abroad where a child/person is a UK national/resident.

What forced marriage is (Gov.uk website)

You have the right to choose who you marry, when you marry or if you marry at all.

Forced marriage is when you face physical pressure to marry (for example, threats, physical violence or sexual violence) or emotional and psychological pressure (e.g. if you're made to feel like you're bringing shame on your family).

Whilst the majority of extended visits to family overseas are for valid reasons, in 2017 there were more than 1,000 UK residents forced into a marriage against their will, often by violence, coercion or emotional blackmail. It is important to note that Forced Marriage occurs in the UK too; it is not solely an overseas issue. Unlike arranged marriages, where the bride and groom both freely consent to the marriage with a 'suitor' of their choice that has been introduced to them by the family, forced marriages involve duress and do not give the bride or groom the freedom of choice. Forced marriage is illegal under UK legislation and a violation of human rights.

Children may be at risk of violence, harassment from family / community members, and 'home policing' where it is deemed their behaviour has/may have 'shamed' the family.

The types of behaviour which can precipitate this and may also be key motives for forcing the child into marriage are:

- To control unwanted behaviour and sexuality, and prevent ‘unsuitable’ relationships, i.e. with people outside their ethnic, cultural, caste or religious group
- To protect perceived cultural or religious ideals
- Family ‘honour’ or long-standing family commitments
- Peer group or family pressure
- To ensure land, property and wealth remain in the family
- To strengthen family links
- To assist claims for residence and citizenship
- To provide a carer for a disabled family member / reduce the ‘stigma’ of disability
- Do not approve of their child being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender

Who is at risk of forced marriage?

Commonly, males and females from as young as 13yrs may be at risk of being forced into marriage by parents. However, children as young as 2yrs old can be at risk of forced marriage. They may be pressurised and then agree to marry one of the prospective candidates without time for reflection, without full and explicit consent, and with some form or degree of duress. Younger children may be betrothed with the expectation that they will enter full married state at a later stage of their lives.

It is different to an Arranged Marriage

Arranged marriage: is a cultural tradition and you have a choice, give their full and free consent without **any** pressure, duress or coercion.

Forced marriage: is an abuse of human rights and you do not have a choice. Both or one party does not give, or does not have the capacity to give, full and free consent and there is some form of pressure, duress or coercion.

How can you help?

All organisations that may come into contact with potential victims have a statutory responsibility for forced marriages. The Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007 states that all organisations should have “a lead person with overall responsibility for safeguarding children, vulnerable adults or victims of domestic abuse – the same person should lead on forced marriage”.

Where there is a suspicion that a child is to be taken out of the country for the purposes of entering into a forced marriage extreme caution should be taken in sharing information, especially if honour-based abuse is also a possibility. This also applies to risk of, or plans for, being forced into marriage in the UK.

If you are concerned that a young person is at risk, you should follow the Child Protection guidance set out in Section 13.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

[Please see Government Guidance on Mandatory Report of Female Genital Mutilation](#)

[Please see Hertfordshire Multi-Agency FGM Pathways](#)

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines female genital mutilation (FGM) as “comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons” (WHO, 2020)

It is illegal in the UK to subject a child to FGM or to take a child abroad to undergo FGM. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland all forms of FGM are illegal under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 and in Scotland it is illegal under the Prohibition of FGM (Scotland) Act 2005.

A child for whom FGM is planned is at risk of **significant harm** through physical abuse and emotional abuse, which is categorised by some also as sexual abuse. See [Neglect Strategy on the HSCP website.](#)

Significant harm is defined as a situation where a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, a degree of physical, sexual and / or emotional harm (through abuse or neglect) which is so harmful that there needs to be compulsory intervention by child protection agencies into the life of the child and their family.

The **Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003** extends the existing legislation criminalising FGM in the UK, by making it an offence for UK nationals or permanent UK residents to take a girl abroad, or to help others to take a girl abroad, to carry out female genital mutilation, even in countries where the practice is legal.

(NSPCC) *Girls living in communities that practise FGM are most at risk. It can happen in the UK or abroad. In the UK, the Home Office has identified girls and women from certain communities as being more at risk:*

- *Somali*
- *Kenyan*
- *Ethiopian*
- *Sierra Leonean*
- *Sudanese*
- *Egyptian*
- *Nigerian*
- *Eritrean*
- *Yemeni*
- *Kurdish*
- *Indonesian.*

(NSPCC) **FGM is a form of child abuse.** *It is dangerous and a criminal offence in the UK. We know:*

- *there are no medical reasons to carry out FGM*
- *it's often performed by someone with no medical training, using instruments such as knives, scalpels, scissors, glass or razor blades*
- *children are rarely given anaesthetic or antiseptic treatment and are often forcibly restrained*
- *it's used to control female sexuality and can cause long-lasting damage to physical and emotional health.*

FGM can happen at different times in a girl or woman's life, including:

- *when a baby is new-born*

- *during childhood or as a teenager*
- *just before marriage*
- *during pregnancy.*

FGM can also be know by other terms, such as:

- Female circumcision or cutting
- Sunna
- Gudniin
- Halalys
- Tahur
- Megrez
- Khitan

FGM is carried out for a number of cultural, religious and social perceptions and justifications, which are distorted. Some families and communities believe that FGM will benefit the girl in some way, such as preparing them for marriage or childbirth. FGM is a harmful practice that is not required by any religion and there are no health benefits of FGM. FGM is illegal in the UK.

The age at which girls are subjected to FGM varies greatly, from shortly after birth to any time up to adulthood. The average age is 10 to 12 years, and commonly takes place before puberty.

Girls are at particular risk of FGM during school summer holidays. This is the time when families may take their children abroad for the procedure, as this is the time of least visibility for a number of weeks. In recent years there has been an increase UK-based activity. Many girls may not be aware that they may be at risk of undergoing FGM.

If you suspect that someone you know is at risk of being subjected to any form of FGM, you should take action to report it immediately. Time counts so please act as soon as you suspect that a girl may be at risk of FGM.

FGM – The facts

- FGM includes procedures that intentionally alter or injure female genital organs for non-medical reasons.
- The procedure has no health benefits for girls and women.
- Procedures can cause severe bleeding and problems urinating, and later, potential childbirth complications and new-born deaths.
- An estimated 100 to 140 million girls and women worldwide are currently living with the consequences of FGM.
- It is mostly carried out on young girls sometime between infancy and age 15 years.
- In Africa an estimated 92 million girls from 10 years of age and above have undergone FGM.
- FGM is internationally recognized as a violation of the human rights of girls and women.
- It is illegal to practice FGM in the UK

The Law

The Female Genital Mutilation Act was introduced in 2003 and came into effect in March 2004.

The Act

- Makes it illegal to practice FGM in the UK;
- Makes it illegal to take girls who are British nationals or permanent residents of the UK abroad for FGM whether or not it is lawful in that country;
- Makes it illegal to aid, abet, counsel or procure the carrying out of FGM abroad;
- Has a penalty of up to 14 years in prison and/or a fine

If you are concerned that a British citizen may be taken overseas for the purpose of FGM please call the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 0207 008 1500, overseas +44(0)20 7008 1500 or visit their [website](#).

You should also call the Joint Child Protection Investigation Team (joint team with Children's Services and Police) on 01707 354000

Male Circumcision

Male circumcision is the surgical removal of the foreskin of the penis. The procedure is usually requested for social, cultural or religious reasons (e.g. by families who practice Judaism or Islam). There are parents who request circumcision for assumed medical benefits.

There is no requirement in law for professionals undertaking male circumcision to be medically trained or to have proven expertise. Traditionally, religious leaders or respected elders may conduct this practice.

Circumcision for Therapeutic/Medical Purposes

The British Association of Paediatric Surgeons advises that there is rarely a clinical indication for circumcision. Doctors should be aware of this and reassure parents accordingly.

Where parents request circumcision for their son for assumed medical reasons, it is recommended that circumcision should be performed by or under the supervision of doctors trained in children's surgery in premises suitable for surgical procedures.

The risks / benefits to the child must be fully explained to the parents and to the young man himself, if [Fraser](#) Competent. The medical harms or benefits have not been unequivocally proven except to the extent that there are clear risks of harm if the procedure is done inexpertly.

Non-therapeutic Circumcision

Male circumcision that is performed for any reason other than physical clinical need is termed non-therapeutic circumcision.

Legal Position

The legal position on male circumcision is untested and therefore remains unclear.

Nevertheless, professionals may assume that the procedure is lawful provided that:

- It is performed competently, in a suitable environment, reducing risks of infection, cross infection and contamination;
- It is believed to be in the child's best interests;
- There is valid consent from family/parents and the child, if old enough, is Fraser Competent

If doctors or other professionals are in any doubt about the legality of their actions, they should seek legal advice.

Principles of Good Practice

The welfare of the child should be paramount, and all professionals must act in the child's best interests. Children who are able to express views about circumcision should always be involved in the decision-making process:

- Even where they do not decide for themselves, the views that children express are important in determining what is in their best interests;
- Parental preference alone does not constitute sufficient grounds for performing a surgical procedure on a child unable to express his own view. Parental preference must be weighed in terms of the child's interests.
- When the courts have confirmed that the child's lifestyle and likely upbringing are relevant factors to take into account. Each individual case needs to be considered on its own merits.

An assessment of best interests in relation to non-therapeutic circumcision should include consideration of:

- The child's own ascertainable wishes, feelings and values;
- The child's ability to understand what is proposed and weigh up the alternatives;
- The child's potential to participate in the decision, if provided with additional support or explanations;
- The child's physical and emotional needs;
- The risk of harm or suffering for the child;
- The views of parents and family;
- The implications for the child and family of performing, and not performing, the procedure;
- Relevant information about the child and family's religious or cultural background

Consent for circumcision is valid only where the people (or person) giving consent have the authority to do so and understand the implications (including that it is non-reversible procedure) and risks. Where people with Parental Responsibility for a child disagree about whether he should be circumcised, the child should not be circumcised without the leave of the court.

Doctors' Response

Doctors are under no obligation to comply with a request to circumcise a child and circumcision is not a service which is provided free of charge. Nevertheless, some doctors and hospitals are willing to provide circumcision without charge rather than risk the procedure being carried out in unhygienic conditions.

Poorly performed circumcisions have legal implications for the doctor responsible. In responding to requests to perform male circumcision, doctors should follow any guidance issued by the:

- General Medical Council
- British Medical Association in respect of responding to requests to perform male circumcision
- Royal College of Surgeons

Recognition of Harm

Circumcision may constitute **Significant Harm** to a child if the procedure was undertaken in such a way that he:

- Acquires an infection as a result of neglect;
- Sustains physical functional or cosmetic damage;
- Suffers emotional, physical or sexual harm from the way in which the procedure was carried out;
- Suffers emotional harm from not having been sufficiently informed and consulted, or not having his wishes taken into account

Significant Harm is defined as a situation where a child is likely to suffer a degree of neglect, physical, sexual and/or emotional abuse so harmful there needs to be compulsory intervention by child protection agencies in the life of the child and their family.

Harm may stem from the fact that clinical practice was incompetent (including lack of anaesthesia) and/or that clinical equipment and facilities are inadequate, not hygienic etc.

The professionals most likely to become aware that a boy is at risk of, or has already suffered, harm from circumcision are health professionals (GP's, health visitors, A&E staff or school nurses) and childminding, day care and teaching staff.

Multi-agency Response

Should a professional in any agency becomes aware through something a child discloses or another means, that the child has been or may be harmed through male circumcision, a referral must be made to Children's Services under the referral process. Children's Services should assess the risk of harm to other male children in the same family, including unborn children.

Role of Community/Religious Leaders

Community and religious leaders should take a lead in the absence of approved professionals and develop safeguards in practice. This could include setting standards around hygiene, advocating and promoting the practice in a medically controlled environment and outlining best practice if complications arise during the procedures.

Spirit Possession

The belief in "possession or "witchcraft" is widespread; it is not confined to particular countries, cultures or religions, nor is it confined to immigrant communities in this country.

The definition which is commonly accepted across faith -based organisations, non-governmental organisations and the public sector is the term 'possession by evil spirits' or 'witchcraft'. The term '**possession**' means that an evil force has entered a child and is controlling him or her. The term '**witch**' means a child who is able to use evil forces to harm others. In either case, these are genuine beliefs held by families and often the children themselves. When families hold this belief about a child, they may feel terrified and that everything is under threat.

In some faiths these terms may be used to indicate good spirits as well, 'possession' can be understood to include being taken over by 'the Holy Spirit' for example.

The three common terms for getting rid of the 'evil spirits' are '**praying for children**', '**deliverance**' and '**exorcism**'. There is a range of behaviour associated with 'exorcism' from praying for a child while he or she is not present through to 'beating the devil out of the child'.

The Child

The number of known cases of child abuse linked to accusations of "possession" or "witchcraft" is small, but children involved can suffer damage to their physical and mental health, capacity to learn, ability to form relationships and self-esteem. Such abuse generally occurs when a carer accuses the child of being evil and views a child as being "different", attributes this difference to the child being "possessed" or involved in "witchcraft", and attempts to exorcise him or her.

A child could be viewed as "different" for a variety of reasons such as, disobedience; independence; bedwetting; nightmares; illness; or disability. There is often a weak bond of affection between the carer and the child.

There are various social reasons that make a child more vulnerable to an accusation of 'possession' or 'witchcraft'. These include family stress and /or a change in the family structure, both of which are common in communities with immigrant and migratory families.

The attempt to "exorcise" may involve severe beating, burning, starvation, cutting or stabbing and/or isolation, and usually occurs in the household where the child lives. Any siblings or other children in the household may be well cared for with all their needs met by the parents and carers. The other children may have been drawn in by the adults to view the child as "different" and may have been encouraged to participate in the adult activities.

Indicators reported in the cases known from research usually involve children aged between 2 and 14, both boys and girls, and have generally been reported through schools or non-governmental organisations.

Referrals usually take place at a point when the situation has escalated and become 'visible' outside the family. This means that the child may have been subjected to serious harm for a period of time already.

Although the research has found a number of parents and carers to have some form of mental health problem, this must not distract from the child's situation nor be seen

as a factor to explain away the potential risks to the child.

Indicators leading to referrals have included:

- Issues of neglect such as not being fed properly or being 'fasted', not being clothed, washed properly etc. but left to fend for themselves especially compared to the other children in the household
- Often the carer is not the natural parent and the family structure can be complex
- Children often appear isolated, sad, distressed and withdrawn
- The child is seen as the scapegoat for a change in family circumstances for the worst
- In a group of children, it may be the child who is relatively powerless vis-a-vis the parents/carers; maybe a child with no essential role in the family
- The child is seen as someone who violates the family norms by being physically different perhaps because of illness, disability or a suspicion of adultery by the mother

This list is not exhaustive, and any sign of abuse or neglect may indicate the existence of child abuse linked to possession or witchcraft or in other ways related to religious or spiritual belief.

Referrals and Assessments

All agencies should be alert to the indicators above and should be able to identify children at risk of this type of abuse and intervene to prevent it by using the procedures for referral.

Any evidence that the parent or carers will take the child out of the country/abandon the child must be taken seriously.

Further contacts for advice can be found from the local representatives for some faiths from organisations such as the Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS) who provide information about exorcism; the African Caribbean Evangelical Alliance; Churches Together in England and the Muslim Parliament, all of whom are consulting about and developing guidance.

“The most widely acceptable terms across faith-based organisations, nongovernmental organisations and the public sector are “possession by evil spirits” or “witchcraft”. For the purposes of this report, the term “possession” means an evil force has entered a child and is controlling him or her and the term “witch” means a child who is able to use evil forces to harm others. In either case, these are genuine beliefs held by families and often the children themselves. When families hold this belief about a child they are terrified of him or her, they feel that everything is under threat - even their lives. Although these terms are not entirely satisfactory, they are the least misleading and the most widely understood.

It is recognised that these are very specific and disputed uses of these terms. “Possession” can be understood to include being taken over by a force for good (e.g. the Holy Spirit). Equally, for both practitioners of “Wicca” and “witchdoctors” the term “witch” can mean a person who is able to use good or evil forces for good or evil purposes.

Publication: Child Abuse Linked to Accusations of “Possession” and “Witchcraft”

DfE, Stobart, E - quote

We came across three common terms for getting rid of the “evil spirit” – these were “praying for children”, “deliverance” and “exorcism”. Colloquially “exorcism” was the most all-encompassing term understood by most people we spoke to during our research. The Collins English Dictionary defines exorcism as “expelling, or attempting to expel, one or more evil spirits from a person or place believed to be possessed or haunted, by prayers, adjurations and religious rites”. There is a range of behaviour associated with “exorcism” from praying for a child while he or she is not present through to “beating the devil out of the child”.

[Link](#))

Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking

Victims of modern slavery and human trafficking should be given protection, provided with the help they need to recover from their experiences and gain access to the justice they deserve. This model child protection policy sets out guidance on national and international definitions of child slavery and trafficking, national legislation, how to identify potential victims, safeguarding and reporting possible cases in Hertfordshire, and additional resources/contacts.

Context

Modern slavery and human trafficking are forms of serious organised crime in which individuals including children and young people are treated as commodities and exploited for criminal gain. Year on year, the UK is seeing an increase in the number of children of both UK and other nationalities that are being enslaved and/or trafficked internally within the UK. In fact, in the UK 43% of victims of modern slavery/trafficking are children.¹ These crime types are identified as child abuse which require a child protection response. It is also an abuse of human rights, and all children, irrespective of their immigration status, are entitled to protection under the law. The organised crime of child trafficking into and/or around the UK is an issue of considerable concern to all professionals with responsibility for the care and protection of children.

All children, including UK born children, are vulnerable to slavery and/or trafficking. Through use of deception, coercion and/or force, children are recruited, moved or transported and then exploited, forced to work and/or sold. Victims often face more than one type of abuse and slavery, for example they may be sold to another trafficker and then forced into another form of exploitation. Grooming methods are used to gain the trust of a child and their parents e.g. the promise of a better life or education. Children and young people may also be exploited by parents, carers or family members. Often the child or young person will not realise that family members are involved in the exploitation. Trafficked and enslaved children are victims of serious crime and this will impact on their health and welfare. In order to coerce and control, they are commonly subject to physical abuse including use of drugs and alcohol, emotional and psychological abuse, sexual abuse and neglect as a result of a lack of care about their welfare and the need for secrecy surrounding their circumstances.

Definition

Boys and girls of all ages are affected and can be enslaved and/or trafficked into, within ('internal trafficking'), and out of the UK for many reasons and for the purpose of many

¹ Home Office, *National Referral Mechanism Statistics UK, End of Year Summary, 2019*
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/876646/national-referral-mechanism-statistics-uk-end-of-year-summary-2019.pdf

types of exploitation. These include:

- **Labour Exploitation:** *Forced to work very long hours in often hazardous conditions and hand over the majority or all of their wages to their traffickers or exploiters. Violence and threats may be used against victims or against their families if they fail to comply.*
- **Sexual Exploitation:** *Actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another. (See also Children Abused through Sexual Exploitation Procedure)*
- **Criminal Exploitation:** *Victims are often deceived or coerced into helping their exploiters acquire financial gains. They may be involved in fraud e.g. benefit or credit card, cannabis cultivation, drug trafficking, petty theft, begging.*
- **Domestic Servitude:** *Victims live and work in households where they are forced [or expected] to work beyond reasonable expectations. Domestic servitude is often reinforced through threats of destitution, serious harm or other retribution, and victims may be subjected to physical and sexual assaults. There is often restriction of liberty and movement and victims may not be able to leave their accommodation.*
- **Organ Harvesting:** *Illegal removal of internal organs for transplant with or without the donor's consent.*
- **Illegal Adoption:** *Adoption of a child for the purpose of exploitation.*
- **Baby Farming:** *Birth of a child for the purpose of exploitation.*
- **Sham Marriage:** *One or both people don't consent to a marriage and pressure and/or abuse from family is used, linked to changing immigration status, for example.*
- **Forced Marriage:** *One or both people don't consent to a marriage and pressure and/or abuse from family is used. It is important to note the distinction between forced marriage and legitimately 'arranged marriage', although the two can be difficult to distinguish and may require further investigation.*

Legislation

Modern Slavery Act 2015

The Modern Slavery Act consolidated and simplified existing human trafficking and modern slavery offences into a single act in 2015. Under the Modern Slavery Act 2015, modern slavery occurs in a situation where a child being held in slavery² or servitude³ or required to perform forced or compulsory labour. In most situations, slavery is very

² Slavery refers to the condition in which a child is owned as property by another and is under the owner's control, especially in involuntary servitude.

³ Servitude refers to a condition in which a child lacks liberty, especially to determine one's course of action or way of life.

unlikely to have occurred in isolation of trafficking taking place, but it is possible. For any case, where slavery and/or trafficking is identified, an NRM referral must be submitted to the Home Office, informing them of the identification of a potential child victim of trafficking and/or slavery.

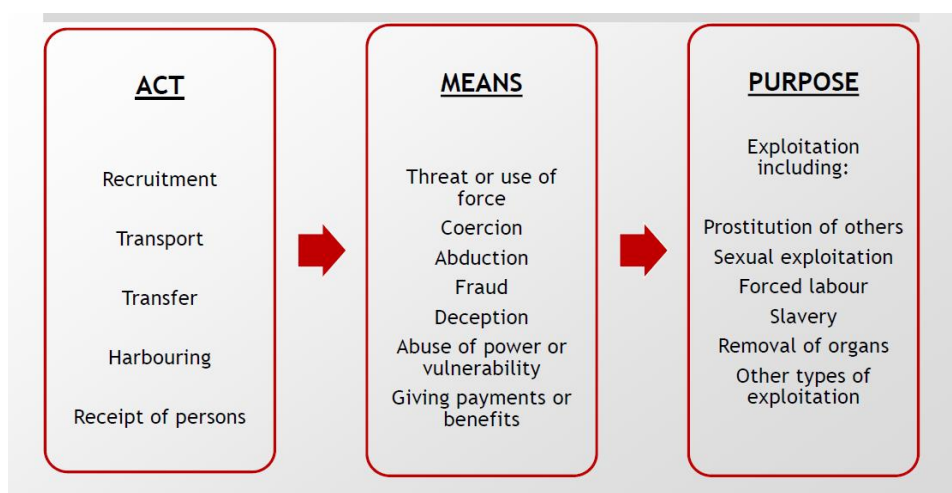
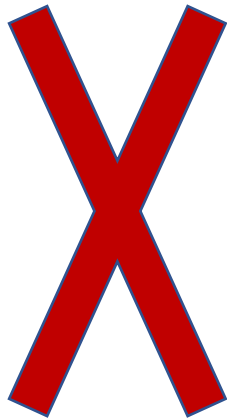
United Nations Palermo Protocol 2006

Under the United Nations 'Palermo Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children' (ratified by the UK in 2006), a child that has been exploited is also deemed to have been trafficked if the following considerations are met:

1. **ACT:** *Recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of the child(ren)*
2. **MEANS:** *By means of 1) the threat or use of force or 2) other forms of coercion, 3) of abduction, 4) of fraud, 5) of deception, 6) of the abuse of power or 7) of a position of vulnerability or 8) of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of control over the child(ren) in question.*
3. **PURPOSE:** *For the purpose of exploitation (i.e. sexual/labour/criminal exploitation etc)*

Children cannot consent to their own exploitation. Where a victim of exploitation is under 18, the 'means' used by exploiters – whether coercion, force, deception or other – is irrelevant. As a result, the perceived consent of a child to such activities is irrelevant where any of the means provided above have been used by the perpetrator(s), which is emphasised in the below diagram. Even when a child understands what has happened, they may still appear to submit willingly to what they believe to be the will of their parents or accompanying adults. It is important that these children are protected also.

Diagram:



In addition, the 'travel' aspect does not need to be over large distances to constitute an offence. For example, a child forced to carry drugs from one house to another on the same street should be considered equally to a young person transported across international borders to work in a cannabis factory. Equally, it is also not necessary for an actual act of sexual abuse or criminality to take place; just evidencing the intent of the exploiter is sufficient.

Grooming

Children and young people can be groomed online or in the real world, by a stranger or by someone they know - for example a family member, friend or professional. Groomers may be male or female. They could be any age. Many children and young people don't understand that they have been groomed, or that what has happened is abuse. As with sexual exploitation and abuse, the grooming process often includes a number of stages, relating to the conditions outlined in the Palermo definition – including deception, manipulation, coercion and control. See below for further information on the grooming cycle:

Grooming Process: Exploitation of Young and Vulnerable People

The grooming process is essential to the success of the county lines business model. Young or vulnerable people are lured in with false promises and then become trapped into a dire, exploitative situation. There are four main recruitment stages that a gang will use when trying to exploit someone:



1. Targeting Stage:

This is when an exploiter targets a young person who is vulnerable, reducing their chances of getting caught. Exploiters pick their targets based on things like age, strength or situation.



2. Experience Stage: This stage is where an exploiter might try to get a young person used to their lifestyle, or train them up in what they're doing.



3. Hooked Stage:

This is the stage where an exploiter will make a young person feel like they're a member of their gang, even though they're just exploiting them.



4. Trapped Stage:

Now a young person feels dependent on the group, their relationship with their exploiter may start to become unpleasant, as their exploiter's true intents or character is revealed. (Taken from [Children's Society \(2018\) Criminal Exploitation: Stages of Recruitment report](#))

Indicators

Modern slavery is often hidden in nature, and goes unnoticed in our communities, with under-reporting a major concern. Identification of trafficked and/or enslaved children may be difficult as they might not show obvious signs of distress or abuse, or children may show signs of multiple forms of abuse and neglect. Some children are even unaware that they have been trafficked and/or enslaved, even appearing to consent to activities linked to their exploitation, while others may actively participate in hiding that they have been trafficked. The following indicators are not a definitive list and are intended as a guide to be included in a wider assessment of the child's circumstances:

1) Physical Appearance:

- e.g. Signs of physical or psychological abuse, looking malnourished or unkempt, few personal possessions or expensive clothing; and/or appearing withdrawn and/or tired.

2) Behaviour (including psychological indicators)

- e.g. Hyper alert or nervous; depression, self-harm or low self-esteem; withdrawal from school, family, friends and/or activities; and/or unusual behaviour for their age e.g. use of oversexualised language

3) Dependency on Traffickers/Exploiter:

- e.g. Reluctant to seek help; unwilling to disclose details or experience; information gaps and discrepancies; and/or seemingly willing participant in their exploitation.

4) **Familial Relationship Concerns**

- e.g. Poor and/or unusually close relationship with guardian and/or parents; child with no relation to accompanying adults; living with multiple unrelated children; and/or without family.

5) **Missing Concerns**

- e.g. Missing from care, home or school; pattern of registration and de-registration from different schools; missing episodes are frequent, historical and/or long; found in location far from home address and/or refusing to disclose where they have been.

6) **Other Indicators:**

- Rarely leaving their home, with no freedom of movement and no time for playing, only household chores.
- Poor living and working conditions i.e. dirty, cramped or overcrowded accommodation.
- Does not appear to have money but does have a mobile phone.
- Unexplained/unidentified phone calls or letters being received by the child from adults outside the usual range of contacts and/or whilst in placement/temporary accommodation.
- Moving and/or selling drugs within and across county
- Unaccompanied on trains/in cities far from home
- Working at cannabis farms/factories or in cuckooed properties
- Working in construction sites, factories, barber shops etc.
- Fake documents and/or fake name
- Sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy and/or UTIs
- Associating with known or suspected gang members or be close to siblings or adults in the family who are gang members.
- Possessing large amounts of money (including being seen with large sums of cash and/or large numbers of bank cards; acquiring expensive clothes/mobile phones without plausible explanation.

Safeguarding: Action to be Taken and Reporting

Any agency or individual practitioner or volunteer who has a concern regarding the possible enslavement and/or **trafficking** of a child should immediately follow 3 steps in line with the **HMSP Child Victim Referral Pathway**:

- **Step 1: Assess for Immediate Risk**
- **Step 2: Initial Contact**
- **Step 3: Recording and Reporting**

IF YOU SUSPECT THAT EXPLOITATION IS BEING CARRIED OUT BY THE FAMILY MEMBERS/CARE GIVERS, DO NOT RAISE YOUR TRAFFICKING/ SLAVERY CONCERNS WITH, OR TRANSLATE THROUGH THEM OR ANYONE ACCOMPANYING THE CHILD UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES.

Specific Protocols:

- If the child is 1) in imminent danger or 2) at significant risk of harm or 3) in danger

- of going missing, call 999 and request for police to attend.
- Ensure that the safety of the child is the first priority. If the child is at immediate risk of harm, then keep them in the setting where they have been identified, whilst in conversation with children's services and the police, who will provide further direction.
 - Follow your organisation's child protection and safeguarding procedures.
 - Consider the safety and comfort of the child before asking any questions.
 - Be aware that it may be more appropriate for someone else/a different agency to speak to the child.
 - Notify Hertfordshire County Council Children's Services within 24 hours:
<https://eservices.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/child-protection-referral>.

For 24/7 advice and translation support, call the national Modern Slavery Helpline – 08000 121700 or the Independent Child Trafficking Guardian Service advice line: 0800 043 4303

National Referral Mechanism

The National Referral Mechanism is the UK's framework for identifying and reporting victims of modern slavery, including specific support provision for adults and children.

All suspected and identified child victims of modern slavery and human trafficking in line with the definitions provided in the Modern Slavery Act and the United Nations Palermo Protocol must be referred to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). Only First Responder designated organisations can report and refer potential victims to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). Locally, only Local Authority and Police are classified as First Responder designated organisations.

Following referral to Children's Services, a multi-agency meeting will be organised by HCC (STRAT or MARM) to discuss possible NRM submission, the lead First Responder organisation will then submit the NRM form online with input from the other relevant organisations involved in the child's case. If there is disagreement between practitioners as to whether an NRM should be submitted for a child, the case will be escalated in line with the agreed escalation process.

Please Note: The NRM does not supersede child protection procedures, so existing safeguarding processes will still be followed in tandem with the notifications to the NRM. Support to children is provided through local authority children's services rather than NRM subcontractors.

If a child receives a negative NRM decision, any organisation may submit a reconsideration request. Practitioners should follow these steps:

- 1) Contact the Single Competent Authority (SCA) directly either via email to inbox NRMEngland@homeoffice.gov.uk or via the Duty Line on 0207 035 5689.
- 2) If further information comes to light, which is relevant to an original submission, the practitioner should email the information directly to the SCA on the following email address: nationalreferralmechanism@homeoffice.gov.uk.

For further information, see [SCA Home Office Guidance \(p.65\)](#) and the [reconsideration policy amendment statement](#).

Contacts and Resources

1. Hertfordshire County Council Children's Services

- Website: <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/childrens-social-care/child-protection/report-child-protection-concern.aspx>.
- Email: protectedreferrals.cs@hertfordshire.gov.uk
- Phone: 0300 123 4043
- Referral Form: <https://eservices.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/child-protection-referral>.

2. Modern Slavery Helpline

The 24/7 national Modern Slavery Helpline is run by the charity, Unseen, and is independent, specialist and confidential, providing access to free and immediate help, support, and advice in over 200 languages. Victims can also self-refer.

- Website: www.modernslaveryhelpline.org
- Email: www.modernslaveryhelpline.org/report
- Phone: 08000 121 700

3. Independent Child Trafficking Guardian (ICTG) Service

Run by Barnardo's, the ICTG Service provides direct, specialist practical and emotional support to trafficked children, facilitating their interactions with social care services, police and immigration in Wales/Cymru, East Midlands, West Midlands Combined Authorities, Croydon, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight and Greater Manchester. They also operate a 24/7 helpline, which is open for advice to all practitioners across the UK.

- Website: www.barnardos.org.uk/what-we-do/protecting-children/trafficked-children
- Phone: 0800 043 4303

4. Beacon

Independent from the National Referral Mechanism, UK Government and the police, Beacon is a free and impartial service that can provide emotional and practical support around the impact and effects of exploitation to clients in Hertfordshire. Run by the charity, Catch 22, Beacon supports their clients through allocation of a specially trained case manager. Victims can also self-refer.

- Website: www.hertfordshirebeacon.org
- Email: info@hertfordshirebeacon.org
- Phone: 03000 11 55 55 (option 3)

5. ATLEU

ATLEU is a charity, which provides legal representation to victims of trafficking and labour exploitation, helping victims to obtain safety, recovery and redress. They offer numerous services to help practitioners support victims:

- Advice Line: Any practitioner can request for free support via phone (0207 700 7311) or email: advice@atleu.org.uk. (See <https://atleu.org.uk/adviceline> for further information on what to include in the email).
- Refer victims for legal support: <https://atleu.org.uk/referrals>.
- Subscribe to gain free access to the ATHUB:12F⁴ <https://athub.org.uk/>.

Resources

⁴ ATHUB is an online information resource for professionals working with victims of trafficking. It contains information for support providers and legal practitioners on advising and representing victims of trafficking across different areas of law.

- 1) Hertfordshire Modern Slavery Partnership: www.stopexploitationherts.org.uk (Free resources and training package available)
- 2) The Children's Society : Victim Support and NPCC: Capturing and Reporting Intelligence on CSE and CCE - [Guidance for Families, Professionals and the Community](#)
- 3) The Children's Society, Victim Support and NPCC (2 Mar 2018): **Children and Young People Trafficked for the Purpose of Criminal Exploitation in Relation to County Lines** – A Toolkit for Professionals.
- 4) The Children's Society : **Criminal exploitation and County Lines: A toolkit for working with children and young people.**
- 5) London Safeguarding Children Partnership: [Trafficked Children Toolkit \(2011\)](#)
- 6) [ECPAT: UK Briefing Paper on Child Trafficking - Begging and Organised Crime \(2010\)](#)

E-Learning

The Salvation Army: free online e-learning module on human trafficking awareness.

[Access training here.](#)

Home Office (MSOIC): free online e-learning module. [Access training here.](#)

ECPAT UK/West Yorkshire Police: 2 to 3 hours in depth e-learning package. The package can be accessed for a fee at [Virtual College](#).

Private Fostering

A Private Fostering arrangement is essentially one that is made, without the involvement of a Local Authority, for a child under the age of 16 (under 18 if disabled) to be cared for by someone other than a parent or close relative for 28 days or more. Privately fostered children are a diverse and sometimes vulnerable group and reasons for such arrangements may include:

- Family or relationship breakdown
- Young people who move to live with boyfriend/girlfriend or “sofa surfers”
- Parental illness or the death of parent
- Parents living, working or studying overseas
- Children sent to UK for education or health purposes whilst parents remain overseas
- Children whose parents are in hospital or prison
- Migrant children/unaccompanied asylum-seeking children
- Children brought to the UK with a view to adoption
- Children who may have been trafficked
- Foreign language students or exchange students staying with host families
- Children attending sports academies and living away from parents with host families

Under the Children Act 1989, private foster carers and/or parents are required to notify the Local Authority of any private fostering arrangement and ideally this should be done in writing six weeks before the arrangement commences or as soon as the arrangement starts if it is an emergency.

For further information and details see the Hertfordshire County Council leaflet “A Guide to Private Fostering” available on the website [\[link\]](#).

Teachers, health and other professionals must notify Children's Services (Social Care) of a private fostering arrangement that comes to their attention, particularly if concerned that the arrangement has not been or will not be notified.

Following notification of a private fostering arrangement, it is the duty of the Local Authority to satisfy itself that the welfare of the children, who are privately fostered

within their area, is being satisfactorily safeguarded and promoted. This includes an initial visit to the child and private foster carers within seven days of receipt of notification of the arrangement and an assessment under the [Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families will be completed](#). The private foster carers will be separately assessed and this will include an enhanced [Disclosure and Barring Service \(DBS\)](#) check.

The Local Authority has a statutory duty to visit privately fostered children at regular intervals - at a minimum:

- every six weeks in the first year of the arrangement;
- every twelve weeks in the second or subsequent years, and
- additionally, if reasonably requested to do so by the child, private foster carer or parent.

Children should be given the contact details of the social worker who will be visiting them while they are being privately fostered.

All arrangements and regulations in relation to private fostering are set out in the [Children \(Private Arrangements for Fostering\) Regulations 2005](#).

Childrens Services (Social Care) have their own detailed procedures for carrying out their responsibilities on this issue.

When there are concerns about **significant harm** to a child who is privately fostered the Local Authority and all the other agencies have the same duties to make enquiries as they do with any other child. The concerns must be reported to the Local Authority where the private foster placement is located in accordance with the [Referrals Procedure](#) and the Safeguarding Children Procedures will be applied.

Appendix 5 – Useful Contacts/Support Organisations

This section gives useful contacts. with.

If we have concern that a child is being harmed as a result of abuse or neglect, we must not keep these concerns to ourselves.. Keeping children safe is everyone's responsibility. We need to ensure that we speak to the appropriate organisations who can listen to and record our concern, and then take appropriate action. In Hertfordshire, these are the numbers that we can ring for advice and to make a referral:

Children's Services (including out of hours): 0300 123 4043

The Joint Child Protection Team (JCPIT): 0845 33 00 222. This is a specialist team that is a department within the police with countywide responsibility for undertaking child protection investigations.

The Police: 999 (in an emergency)

Families First

Families First is a whole system, countywide multi-agency response to supporting family outcomes at a local level. It brings together organisations that provide early help services under one umbrella of consistent practice and clear processes.

Where a case is already open to Children Services, contact should be made with the allocated social worker. If you have information that suggests an urgent child protection matter, please speak to the allocated social worker or their Team Manager without delay.

[Website](#)

Hertfordshire Domestic Abuse Help Line

A confidential, free, support and signposting service for anyone affected by Domestic Abuse. Our aim is to improve the lives of those affected by domestic abuse including those seeking help to change their behaviour.

[Website](#)

Herts Sunflower

Free and confidential support for anyone affected by domestic abuse.

[Website](#)

Other useful contact information

To contact the **Forced Marriage Unit** and be directed to agencies in your area that can help you NOW call Forced Marriage Unit on 020 7008 0151 or email:

fm@fco.gov.uk

The Forced Marriage Unit was set up in 2005 and provides support to victims as well as expert training and guidance to professionals. It is jointly run by the Home Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office. In 2011 they dealt with over 1400 calls in relation to forced marriages. [Link](#)

If the situation is urgent always call 999

NSPCC Child Protection Helpline

The NSPCC Child Protection Helpline is a free 24-hour service that provides counselling, information and advice to anyone concerned about a child at risk of abuse. Telephone: 0808 800 5000 - [website](#)

Online Safety

NSPCC [Online Safety](#)

It can be hard to know how to talk to your child about online safety. From setting up parental controls to advice on sexting, online games and video apps, we can help you to understand the risks and keep your child safe.

[UK Safer Internet Centre](#) provides online safety tips, advice and resource to help children and young people stay safe online.

Bullying and Cyberbullying

[NSPCC website](#) gives guidance and advice on the signs of bullying and cyberbullying, the effects and prevention.

Additional resources

[NSPCC Learning Voluntary and Community Groups](#)

We all have a responsibility to help keep children safe. Organisations working with children and young people must have safeguarding policies and procedures in place and be able to respond to child protection concerns. But we understand that it's not always easy to know exactly what you need to do. That's why we've produced a range of resources for voluntary and community groups.

WHEN IN DOUBT, CONCERNS MUST BE SHARED APPROPRIATELY.