SAFEGUARDING & CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

HOWARD HOUSE SCHOOL

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This policy has been updated with changes to Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026

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Section 1

1.1 Purpose
The purpose of this safeguarding policy is to ensure we:

- **Are committed** to developing a robust safeguarding culture of vigilance and challenge.
- **Build resilience** by raising awareness of safeguarding and child protection issues, and equipping children with the language and skills to keep themselves safe.
- **Establish a safe environment** in which children can learn and develop within an ethos of openness and where children are taught to treat each other with respect, to feel safe, to have a voice and know that they will be listened to.
- **Support vulnerable pupils** who have been abused, have witnessed violence towards others or may be vulnerable to abuse.
- **Prevent unsuitable people** from working with children by ensuring we practice safe recruitment in checking the suitability of **all** school staff, supply staff and volunteers to work with our children and maintain an active, ongoing vigilance in line with the safeguarding culture.

1.2: Legislation and statutory guidance
This policy is based on the Department for Education's statutory guidance Keeping children safe in education 2026 (comes into force from 1 September 2026) (updated 2026) and Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018), and the Governance Handbook. We comply with this guidance and the arrangements agreed and published by our 3 local safeguarding partners.

This policy is also based on the following legislation:
Part 3 of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, which places a duty on academies and independent schools to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school.

The Children Act 1989 (and 2004 amendment), which provides a framework for the care and protection of children

Section 5B(11) of the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003, as inserted by section 74 of the Serious Crime Act 2015, which places a statutory duty on teachers to report to the police where they discover that female genital mutilation (FGM) appears to have been carried out on a girl under 18
Statutory guidance on FGM, which sets out responsibilities with regards to safeguarding and supporting girls affected by FGM

The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, which outlines when people with criminal convictions can work with children
Schedule 4 of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, which defines what 'regulated activity' is in relation to children

1.3: Introduction

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The policy reflects Staffordshire local safeguarding partnership arrangements and in line with:

- Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board Policies and Procedures which are available on www.Staffordshire-safeguarding.co.uk
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (updated 2026)
- Information Sharing Agreement (2015)
- What to do if a child is being abused (2015)
- Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004
- Education Act 2002
- Teaching Standards (March 2013)
- Guidance for Safer Working Practice for those working with Children and Pupils in Education Settings (SWP Consortium May 2019)
- Sexting in Schools and Colleges, Responding to incidents and Safeguarding Pupils (UK Council for Child Internet Safety – UKCCIS 2016)
- Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between Children in Schools and Colleges (May 2018)

Safeguarding is defined as:

- Protecting children from maltreatment.
- Preventing impairment of children's health or development.
- Ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)

The term "Child" or "Children" refers to as anyone under the age of 18 years

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We know that:

- Schools play a key role in the prevention of abuse.
- All children have the right to be protected from harm.
- Children need support which matches their individual needs, including those who may have experienced adversity and abuse.

1.4: School Commitment

This policy applies to all adults, including volunteers, working in or on behalf of the school.

The purpose of this policy is:

- To inform staff, parents, caregivers, volunteers and Board of Governors about the school's responsibility for safeguarding children and to develop awareness and identification of abuse
- To establish and maintain an environment where children are and feel safe, can learn, and are encouraged to talk and are listened to.
- Everyone working in or for our school shares an objective to help keep children and Pupils safe by:

a) reading and understanding Part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education

b) providing a safe environment for children and Pupils to learn and develop in our school setting, and

c) identifying children and Pupils who are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm at the earliest opportunity, and taking appropriate action with the aim of making sure they are kept safe both at home and in our school setting

Howard House School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the well being of all of its Pupils. Each child's welfare is of paramount importance. We recognise that some children *may* be especially vulnerable to abuse.

Our aim is to follow the procedures set out by Staffordshire Safeguarding Children's Board, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 and Keeping children safe in education 2026 (comes into force from 1 September 2026) by **knowing** and **understanding** that:

- Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is **everyone's** responsibility and the **voice of the child** is evident.
- **Everyone** who comes into contact with children and their families has a role to play.

- **Everyone** should ensure that their approach is **child-centred** considering, at all times, what is in the **best interests** of the child.
- By establishing a safe environment, we enable our children to learn and develop within an ethos of openness.
- **No single practitioner** can have the full picture of a child's needs and circumstances.
- If children and families are to receive the **right help at the right time**, **everyone** who comes into contact with children and their families has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action.
- The importance of providing children with a balanced curriculum including PHSE, healthy relationship education, online safety, sexting, child-on-child abuse as well as 'abuse outside the home'
  (County Lines, Child Criminal Exploitation incl Child Sexual Exploitation and other contextualised safeguarding issues). Also supporting this with online activities, enabling children to enhance their safeguarding skills and knowledge whilst understanding the risks.
- Undertaking the role to enable children and young people at our school to have **best outcomes**.
- Ensuring that we have awareness of our staff's knowledge and understanding, as well as embedding safeguarding through clear systems of communication and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) so that safeguarding is a **robust element** of our practice.

We recognise that children who are abused or neglected may find it difficult to develop a sense of trust and self-worth and may not view the world in a positive way. Whilst at school, we recognise that behaviour might be difficult for staff and other children to understand, and we aim to ensure that behaviour is recognised as a sign of distress and emotional dysregulation to be worked with and learnt from, in the context of teaching and learning.

We recognise that some children who have experienced abuse may harm others as an indication of their unmet need. We will always take a considered and sensitive approach in order that we can support all of our Pupils as individuals.

The school ensures that all policies are cross-referenced and reviewed annually. All policies are available to staff, and a record is kept and signed by staff as evidence to that they have read, understood and thus agreed to adhere to all policies and procedures within the school.

We work closely with safeguarding partners and share the same goals, learn with and from each other, have what we need to help families, acknowledge and appreciate difference as well as challenging each other.

We acknowledge the four principles that as professionals we should follow when working with parents and carers:

- effective partnership and the importance of building strong, positive, trusting and co-operative relationships
- respectful, non-blaming, clear and inclusive verbal and non-verbal communication that is adapted to the needs of parents and carers

- empowering parents and carers to participate in decision making by equipping them with information, keeping them updated and directing them to further resources
- involving parents and carers in the design of processes and services that affect them.

Section 2 Providing a Safe and Supportive Environment

The school fully complies with the Department for Education's statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026. We ensure that all appropriate safer recruitment measures are applied to every individual who works in, or provides services within, the school. This includes staff, supply staff, contractors, clinicians, volunteers, and any adults who may reasonably be perceived by pupils as safe and trustworthy.

In line with KCSIE 2026 (Part 3), our recruitment processes include robust scrutiny of application forms, employment history, references, identity checks, and the appropriate level of Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks. We follow the DfE's statutory guidance on regulated activity and supervision to determine the correct level of vetting required for each role.
The school maintains an up-to-date Single Central Record (SCR) which includes the following groups:

- All staff employed directly by the school
- All supply staff
- All individuals who work regularly with children, including clinicians, volunteers, and members of the Board of Governors
- As an Independent School, all required Proprietor checks

The SCR records each safer recruitment check, the date it was completed, evidence of the check, and the name of the person who verified it.
Where staff are engaged through a supply agency or third-party organisation, the school obtains written confirmation that all required safer recruitment checks have been completed in accordance with KCSIE 2026. We also verify the identity of the individual presenting for work to ensure they are the same person on whom the checks were undertaken.

Charlotte de Oliveira (Head Teacher), Letasha Merrin (DHT).

The above individuals have completed Safer Recruitment Training within the last three years. At least one trained member of staff will be involved in all recruitment and appointment processes, including those relating to volunteers and contracted services.

In line with strengthened expectations in KCSIE 2026, Howard House Senior Leadership Team ensures that shortlisted candidates are informed that online searches will be undertaken as part of the school's due

diligence process. These searches are used to identify any publicly available information that may be relevant to safeguarding or suitability for employment.

2.2 Safe Working Practice

The Teaching Standards (March 2013) state that teachers, including head teachers should safeguard children's wellbeing and maintain public trust in the teaching profession as part of their professional duties. All staff who work within our school are responsible for their own actions and behaviour and should avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions.

In accordance with the Safer Working Practice Consortium's 'Guidance for Safer Working Practice for those with Children and Pupils in Education Settings' (May 2019) and linked to our Staff Behaviour Policy (Code of Conduct) and Whistle Blowing Policy; safe working practices in our school ensure that Pupils are safe and that all staff:

- work in an open and transparent way.
- discuss and/or take advice from school management over any incident which may give rise to concern.
- record any incidents or decisions made.
- apply the same professional standards regardless of gender, sexuality or disability
- comply and are aware of the confidentiality policy
- are aware that breaches of the law and other professional guidelines could result in criminal or disciplinary action being taken against them, and they could be referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

At Howard House School we provide a secure site which is controlled by precise management directives, but the site is only as secure as the people who use it. All people on our site must adhere to the rules which govern it. Laxity can cause potential problems with safeguarding, therefore:

- Visitors gain access through the main front door.
- Visitors, volunteers, and students must sign in and will be issued with a school lanyard or visitor's pass. School has a clear system of ensuring staff are accompanied / supervised by regulated staff member. Any visitor on site who is not identifiable by a visitor's pass will be challenged by any staff member and this will be reported to a member of the Senior Leadership Team.
- Children will only be allowed home with adults with parental responsibility or confirmed permission. All taxi drivers have the relevant checks completed by the Local Authority.
- Empty classrooms should have closed windows and doors. All 1st floor windows are fitted with window restrictors.

- Children should never be allowed to leave school alone during school hours unless collected by an adult such as a parent who is doing so for a valid reason. School staff should always be notified in writing beforehand.
- A minimum number of 10 members of staff are always on duty at lunch and break times.
- A health and safety audit are completed annually with risk assessment/safety planning and forms part of the Governors annual report. This will include a fire evacuation and Prevent risk assessment.
- The risk management of site security is managed by senior leaders/governance, and we have a clear system of risk assessments and review timescales of these.

2.3 Risk Assessments

Risk assessments are used to good effect to promote safety. Risk assessments are available for all aspects of the school's work, (such as premises and equipment, on-site activities, off-site activities, venues used, transport etc) . Risk assessments are carried out for all individual Pupils, and supported by action plans identifying how potential risks would be managed.

Individual risk assessments are also used when deciding a response to a child demonstrating potentially harmful behaviour such as sexually harmful behaviour or when identifying whether a child who may be particularly vulnerable, such as a child at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation.

2.4 Safeguarding Information for Pupils

All Pupils in our school are aware of a number of staff who they can talk to. The school is committed to ensuring that Pupils are aware of behaviour towards them that is not acceptable and how they can keep themselves safe. We aim for all Pupils to know that we have a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), who is a senior member of staff with responsibility for child protection.

Likewise, Pupils are informed that there are Deputy DSLs who they would talk to if the DSL was not in school, we inform Pupils of whom they might talk to, both in and out of school, their right to be listened to and heard and what steps can be taken to protect them from harm.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is Hazel Redford
The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads are Justin McComb, Letasha Merrin, Charlotte de Oliveira and Abby Bell.

Pupils in our school are treated with dignity and respect and their views are listened to. School's arrangements for consulting with and listening to Pupils are through Student Council sessions, once per month, through 1:1 tutorial sessions and through EHCP reviews, PEP reviews and meetings with social care.

We make Pupils aware of these arrangements by consulting with them.

Safeguarding is a priority which is reflected in the curriculum, which is used to promote safeguarding and is tailored to local concerns.

The DSL/DDSLs understand the importance and need for attendance at Child Protection Case Conferences (both Initial and Review) and core group meetings as well as Child in Need meetings. The DSL/DDSL will represent education at these meetings and prior to conference, whether attending or not, will submit an Education Report prior to the Conference.

2.5 Partnership with Parents

The school shares a purpose with parents and caregivers to educate and keep children safe from harm. Caregivers and parents are made aware of the school's designated safeguarding lead/s and how to contact them.

We are committed to working with caregivers and parents positively, openly and honestly. We ensure that all caregivers and parents are treated with respect, dignity and courtesy. We respect parents' rights to privacy and confidentiality and will not share sensitive information unless we have permission to do so, or it is necessary to do so, in order to protect a child.

Howard House School will share with caregivers and parents any concerns we may have about their child unless to do so may place a child at increased risk of harm

We encourage caregivers and parents to discuss any concerns they may have with the Head Teacher or class teacher and welcome any opportunity for feedback to the school. We make parents and caregivers aware of our policy by ensuring caregivers and parents know that this policy and others are accessible at all times via the school website. Posters and displays also ensure that Safeguarding has a high profile within the whole school community.

2.6 Partnerships with others

Our school recognises that it is essential to establish positive and effective working relationships with other agencies. e.g. Local Authorities, Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), CAMHS, Police, etc.) There is a joint responsibility on all these agencies to share information to ensure the safeguarding of all children. Contact details for these agencies can be found in Annex A of this policy and is displayed on the Safeguarding Board.

As a school we will cooperate with Social Care where they are conducting child protection enquiries. Furthermore, school will endeavour to attend appropriate multi-agency meetings such as Early Intervention Panels, Early Intervention Single Assessment (EISA), Child In Need Reviews and Initial and Review Child Protection Case Conferences, and Looked After Children (LAC) Reviews We will provide written reports as required for these meetings and, wherever possible, these reports will be shared with parents prior to the meetings. We appreciate that attendance and contribution to these meetings may require key members of

staff to be contactable and available during school holidays.

2.7 School Training and Staff Induction

The school's Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead undertake refresher training every 2 years. The DSL team also attends other opportunities such as: Northumberland LA DSL briefings, network meetings, training in RSE and FGM etc, to ensure that they are up to date with current practices and procedures and in order to further their continuous professional development.

All staff undertake appropriate induction training to equip them to carry out their responsibilities for child protection effectively, which is kept up to date by refresher training in Safeguarding Awareness on at least an annual basis. Howard House School ensure that this takes place by keeping a training matrix which identifies when refreshers are due. We then provide this by online training or whole school face to face training with our local safeguarding partner.

All staff (including temporary staff and volunteers) are provided with the school's safeguarding policy and child protection procedures and are informed of school's child protection arrangements on induction. All staff sign a induction to say that they have received, read and understood the policy.

2.8 Support, Guidance and Supervision for Staff

Staff will be supported by the Head Teacher of Howard House school and the schools' wider partners.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead for Safeguarding and Child Protection will be supervised and supported internally by the Education Director, Lynette Edwards. Additional advice is available via the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

Letasha Merrin, DDSL, is the school's mental health lead and offers support and wellbeing sessions to all the staff. The school is also part of Young Foundations Mental Health network which is supported by a clinical psychologist for an extra layer of support.

Young Foundations are also part of the Employee Assistance Programme which offer all staff free and confidential support for mental health and well being externally.

Safeguarding is an agenda item for all staff supervision and staff meetings. This is an opportunity for discussion and practice reflection, and to identify any further training requirements on a monthly basis. The DSL team also meet fortnightly to ensure robust practices, training and communication are key in driving forward a strong safeguarding culture.

2.9 Alternative Provision Including Work Placements

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This school is committed to safeguarding our children if they are accessing alternative provision for a period of time within the school day or week. We gain written reassurance that any Alternative Provision provider has acceptable safeguarding practices in place including their response to concerns about a child; safer recruitment processes; attendance and child missing education procedures; and appropriate information sharing procedures. The school will also obtain a written statement from the provider that they have completed all the vetting and barring checks that are necessary.

When organising work placements the school will ensure that the placement provider has the relevant policies and procedures in place to Safeguard Pupils.

2.10 Online Safety and the use of Mobile Phones and Other Smart Technology.

The UK Safer Internet Centre (2023) and Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026 state that governing bodies and proprietors must regularly review the effectiveness of their filtering and monitoring systems. Howard House School ensures that the leadership team and relevant staff understand:

- the filtering and monitoring systems in place and manage these systems effectively
- know how to escalate concerns when identified
- receive appropriate training so they can recognise online risks, including those linked to AI, social media, harmful content, and emerging technologies.

Howard House endeavours to ensure communication with parents and carers to reinforce the importance of children being safe online. This includes sharing information about:

- the school's filtering and monitoring systems
- what pupils are being asked to do online, including websites and platforms they will access
- who from the school (if anyone) pupils will interact with online.

Howard House School recognises its duty to ensure that every pupil is safe in the digital world. Pupils use technology both inside and outside school, and while this provides significant opportunities for learning, it also presents risks such as bullying, harassment, grooming, identity theft, exposure to harmful content, misinformation, and unsafe use of social media.

We therefore:

- provide a safe online environment within school
- teach pupils about online risks, digital resilience, and responsible behaviour
- embed online safety across the curriculum, including PSHE, IT, and wider pastoral work
- ensure pupils understand issues such as bullying, plagiarism, digital imagery, privacy, and social media use
- use real-life reflection opportunities (form time, tutor time, informal conversations) to reinforce safe online behaviour.

Staff Responsibilities

- All teaching and support staff must:
- maintain an up-to-date awareness of online safety matters and the school's e-safety policy
- read and understand the Staff Behaviour Policy
- promote safe online practice in lessons and during research activities

- report any suspected misuse, online safety concerns, or incidents to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) immediately
- Staff should also be aware that online harms can be linked to wider safeguarding concerns, including mental health, peer-on-peer abuse, exploitation, and exposure to harmful online communities.

Pupil Responsibilities

- Pupils must use school digital systems in accordance with the Young Person's e-Safety Agreement, which they must read, understand, and sign. Pupils are taught how to:
- recognise online risks
- protect personal information
- behave respectfully online
- understand the consequences of bullying, harassment, or misuse of digital imagery
- navigate social media safely.

Mobile Phones and Personal Devices

- In line with strengthened expectations in KCSIE 2026, Howard House School has a strict mobile phone and personal device policy to reduce online risks, distractions, and opportunities for misuse.
- Pupils are not permitted to have personal mobile phones or internet-enabled devices during the school day, unless approved by the Head Teacher for preparation in Adulthood amongst our sixth form pupils.
- All such devices must be handed in at the school gate each morning, turned off and stored securely.
- Devices are returned only when pupils leave the premises at the end of the day.
- No pupil may retain a phone or internet-enabled device on their person at any time.
- Pupils refusing to hand in their mobile phone will be in breach of school policy and staff will follow the behaviour and regulation policy
- If a pupil is found with a device during the school day, parents/carers will be contacted and pupils will be asked not to travel with their phones into school on subsequent days. Persistent breach of school policy will lead to consequences outlined in the behaviour and self-regulation policy.

This policy supports safeguarding by reducing opportunities for cyberbullying, inappropriate content sharing, online grooming, and exposure to harmful online influences.

Filtering and Monitoring Systems

- Howard House School uses robust filtering and monitoring systems provided through Young Foundations' IT support company, IT Brains. All internet traffic is routed through a Fortigate firewall with DNS, application and web filtering in place, supported by the Fortianalysis toolkit.
- The Safeguarding Team conducts regular filtering checks using www.testfiltering.com to ensure systems remain effective and responsive to emerging risks.

Use of DfE Technology Guidance and AI Safety

In line with KCSIE 2026, the school uses the Department for Education's "Plan technology for your school" service to inform decisions about filtering, monitoring, and digital infrastructure.

We also refer to the DfE's guidance on Generative AI: Product Safety Expectations to ensure emerging technologies are used safely, ethically, and appropriately. This includes protecting pupils from:

- harmful or misleading AI-generated content
- misinformation, disinformation, and conspiracy theories
- unsafe interactions with AI tools
- privacy risks associated with digital platforms
- Howard House remains committed to promoting safe, responsible, and empowering use of technology for all pupils.

2.11 Visitors to the School

For educational visitors who are attending our setting in a professional capacity we will check ID and assure ourselves, if appropriate, that the visitor has had the appropriate DBS check. (or the visitor's employers have confirmed that their staff have appropriate checks).
We recognise that external organisations can provide a varied and useful range of information, resources and speakers that can help schools and colleges enrich children's education, we will carefully consider the suitability of any external organisations.
We will ensure that where individuals come onto our premises that we consider the following: -

- assessing the education value
- the age appropriateness of what is going to be delivered and
- whether relevant checks will be required.

This will form part of the risk assessment including our professional judgement and we will consider whether to seek an enhanced DBS for any volunteer not engaging in regulated activity. In doing so, we will consider:

- What we know about the individual/company, including formal and informal information offered by staff, parents, other establishments, or volunteers.
- Whether the individual/company has other employment or undertakes voluntary activities where references can be advised, and suitability recorded.
- Whether the role is eligible for an enhanced DBS check.
- We will clearly have decided the level of supervision required through risk assessment – the supervision will be "reasonable in all the circumstances to ensure the protection of children" as stated in KCSIE 2025.
- We have clear visitor's procedure that enables us to offer pupil experiences of meeting other professionals to extend knowledge and curriculum. This clearly states whether they are supervised or unsupervised within the school.

All visitors to the school are emailed a Visitor's code of conduct and asked to read ahead of their visit. During signing in, visitors will use an electronic sign in which will recap safeguarding procedures and asked to acknowledged they understand and have read them. This code of conduct outlines:

- Safeguarding
- Responsibilities as a Visitor
- Signing in and out procedures
- The procedure for raising a concern
- The procedure for dealing with disclosures from pupils
- The signs of abuse and neglect
- The procedure to follow if an allegation is made against a member of staff
- Appropriate behaviour
- The fire evacuation procedure
- Health and Safety

All visitors are asked for up-to-date photographic proof of identity on arrival.

Section 3 Ensuring that Children are Safe at School and at Home

3.1 Child Protection Procedures

Teachers and other adults in school are well placed to observe any physical, emotional or behavioural signs which indicate that a child may be suffering significant harm. The relationships between staff, Pupils, parents and the public which foster respect, confidence and trust can lead to disclosures of abuse, and/or school staff being alerted to concerns.

Definitions:
Working Together to Safeguard Children and Keeping Children Safe in Education

A child: any person under the age of 18 years.

Harm means ill-treatment or impairment of health and development, including, for example, impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another.

Development means physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development.

Health includes physical and mental health; maltreatment includes sexual abuse and other forms of ill-treatment which are not physical.

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

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

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

Sexual abuse: 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.

Neglect: the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy 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 caregivers); or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

All staff follow the schools Child Protection Procedures which are consistent with Working Together to Safeguard Children and the Northumberland Children and Adults Safeguarding Partnership (NCASP) guidance.

Safeguarding Duties

It is ***not*** the responsibility of the school staff to investigate welfare concerns or determine the truth of any disclosure or allegation. All members of staff, however, have a duty to recognise concerns and maintain an open mind. Accordingly all concerns regarding the welfare of Pupils will be recorded and discussed with

the designated safeguarding lead with responsibility for child protection (or the deputy DSL in the absence of the designated person) prior to any discussion with parents.

The guidance for Northumberland includes:
Emergency cases: If a child is in immediate danger or left alone, you should contact the police or call an ambulance on 999.

Non-emergency cases: If you think that you or someone you know has been the victim of abuse, please tell someone. For non-emergencies, contact us using the following details:

- 24/7 Onecall telephone: 01670 536400.
- To report abuse or neglect of a child, click this link and fill in the form.
- To report a concern about an adult, click this link.
- To report a concern about hate crime, domestic abuse, or antisocial behaviour, click this link.

If you are concerned about a child and know that they already have a social worker, then please dial the direct contact number of the social worker. If you do not know the social worker's direct contact details, please call Onecall: 01670 536400.

Disclosure

The updated guidance includes a new paragraph setting out that children may not feel ready or know how to tell someone they are being abused.

The words “victim” and “alleged perpetrator have been used because they are widely used and recognised but are probably not appropriate to use in front of children, as “not everyone who has subjected to abuse consider themselves a victim or would want to be described in this way” and “because in some cases the abusive behaviour will have been harmful to the perpetrator as well”

Where a member of staff is recognising signs or indicators that a child may have unmet needs or welfare concerns these will always be passed on to the Designated Safeguarding Lead to ensure that any appropriate interventions and/or referrals can be actioned. The DSL will use Northumberland’s Threshold of Need framework to determine the threshold of concern and then will determine whether this can be dealt with within school or whether this may require an Early Intervention
Single Assessment, Referral into the Early Help Assessment or a referral into the Northumberland Family Hub Services. If the child may be at the threshold of Child in Need(S17) or there is concern that the child is at risk of significant harm and thus Child Protection Enquires (S47) may be needed a referral is made to children Social Care. These signs of indicators may be of one of the main four types of abuse or neglect or may be of other specific safeguarding issues, the most relevant to our setting are detailed below:

All types of abuse are relevant to our setting. We see children suffering from Neglect, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and physical abuse.
NACSP thresholds please see Annex B. Escalation processes are available separately, located in the safeguarding file - please ask DSL team should you need access.

3.2 Supporting the child and partnership with parents and caregivers

School recognises that the child's welfare is paramount, however good child protection practice and outcomes rely on a positive, open and honest working partnership with parents and caregivers.

Whilst we may, on occasion, need to make referrals without consultation with parents, we will make every effort to maintain a positive working relationship with them whilst fulfilling our duties to protect any child

We will provide a secure, caring, supportive and protective relationship for the child

Children will be given a proper explanation (appropriate to age and understanding) of what action is being taken on their behalf and why

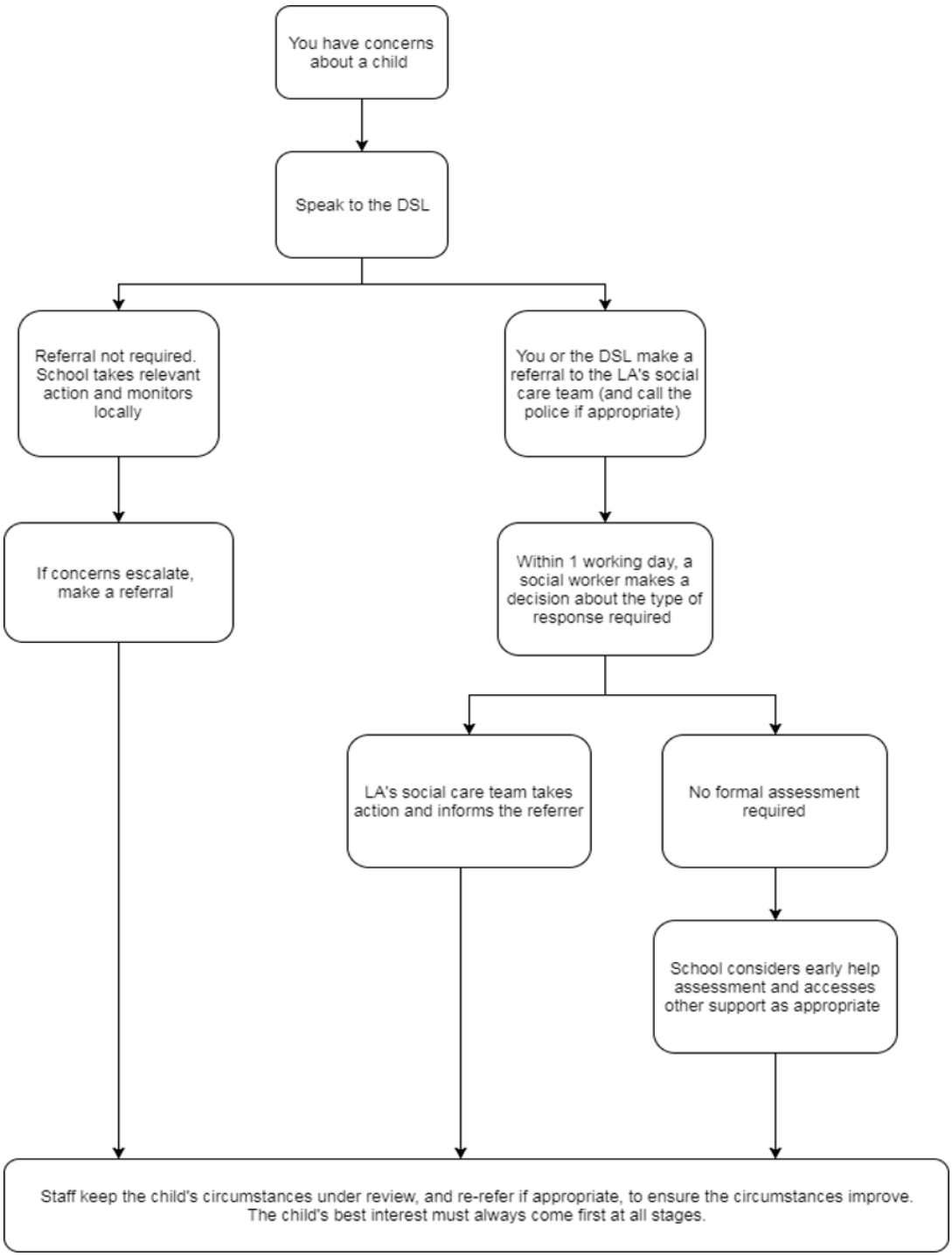
We will endeavour always to preserve the privacy, dignity and right to confidentiality of the child and parents. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will determine which members of staff "need to know" personal information and what they "need to know" for the purpose of supporting and protecting the child.

In line with **KCSIE 2026**, staff are also alert to the needs of **young carers**, who may be particularly vulnerable due to the responsibilities they carry at home. Young carers may experience additional stress, fatigue, emotional strain, or barriers to attendance and engagement. Staff will:

- recognise indicators that a child may be a young carer
- ensure young carers are offered appropriate pastoral support
- consider whether their caring role creates or contributes to safeguarding concerns
- work sensitively with parents/carers while ensuring the child's welfare remains central

We will always seek to preserve the **privacy, dignity and confidentiality** of the child and their family. Information will only be shared with staff on a **strict "need-to-know" basis**, determined by the **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)**. Staff will be told only what they need to know in order to safeguard, support and protect the child effectively.

Figure 1: procedure if you have concerns about a child's welfare (as opposed to believing a child is suffering or likely to suffer from harm, or in immediate danger)



3.3 Preventing Violent Extremism: The Prevent Duty

Under section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, Howard House School is aware that we must have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism, and that this is known as the Prevent Duty.

In order to fulfil the Prevent Duty, staff have received online training, annually, from The Home Office to help them to identify children who may be vulnerable to radicalisation, and the school is committed to accessing further training to ensure that all staff are up to date and aware of this duty. If staff do identify children for whom this may be a concern, they should apply the usual referral process and Child Protection procedures and pass this information to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will contact the Northumbria Police Prevent Team should there be concerns about a child or family linked to potential radicalisation or extremism. The Prevent Team will then assist the DSL regarding whether a referral is appropriate and whether this child or family will need to be referred to the Channel Panel.

The Prevent Team can be contacted as follows: prevent@northumbria.pnn.police.uk

Howard House School will also incorporate the promotion of fundamental British Values into the School Curriculum and PSHE in order to help build pupils' resilience and enable them to challenge extremist views. School will provide a safe space in which children and staff can understand the risks associated with terrorism and develop the knowledge and skills to be able to challenge extremist arguments

Radicalisation will also be considered within current Online Safety policies, procedures and curriculum in terms of having suitable filtering and monitoring in place and also raising awareness with staff, parents and children about the increased risk of online radicalisation, through the use of the internet, social media and Gaming.

3.4 Child Sexual Exploitation

Howard House School is aware that; Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) 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: Definition and a guide for practitioners, local leaders and decision makers working to protect children from child sexual exploitation (2017)

Staff, through their training, are aware of key indicators of CSE. In addition Howard House School appreciates that it has a role to play in the prevention of CSE within its Safeguarding curriculum eg. Healthy Relationships, PSHE and throughout the school.

If staff do identify children for whom CSE may be a concern, they will follow normal safeguarding process and Child Protection procedures. Staff must pass this information to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

immediately. The DSL will then assess the level of concern and consider referring cases where relevant to Staffordshire Families Integrated Front Door.

Howard House school also appreciates that they have a role to play in sharing intelligence relevant to perpetrators of CSE and therefore if such information should come to light within school the DSL will share this appropriately with the police.

3.5 Female Genital Mutilation

Howard House School understands that Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, and know that FGM is illegal in the UK, is a form of child abuse and has long-lasting harmful consequences. Howard House School is aware that Section 5B of the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (as inserted by section 74 of the Serious Crime Act 2015) places a statutory duty upon teachers to report to the police where they discover that FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl under 18 years of age. This mandatory duty commenced in October 2015.

Staff are trained in the awareness of the indicators of FGM. If they were to directly observe (if involved in intimate care) or a girl makes a direct discloses the staff member must report directly to the police as per their mandatory duty. If staff are suspicious or deem a risk this must be reported to the DSL team and follow procedure. indirectly become aware of other potential indicators, they must follow the normal safeguarding process and Child Protection procedures passing this information to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) immediately. The DSL will then assess the information and make appropriate referrals to the Staffordshire multiagency safeguarding team.

3.6 Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse has been added to the list of safeguarding issues that all staff should be aware of. The guidance makes it clear that domestic abuse:

- can be psychological, physical, sexual, financial, or emotional
- can impact on children through seeing, hearing or experiencing the effects of domestic abuse and/or experiencing it through their own intimate relationships

Howard House School understands that the cross-government definition of domestic violence and abuse is any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional harm.

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

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

If staff do identify children for whom Domestic Abuse may be a concern, they must follow the safeguarding process and Child Protection procedures passing this information to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) immediately. The DSL will then refer cases where relevant to Early Help or Northumberland Families Families Hub and share information where necessary with the Northumberland Domestic Abuse Services within the context of the daily MARAC meetings. Where DV Notifications are received from the Domestic Abuse Hub, this information will be added to a child's chronology and child protection record to ensure that appropriate support can be provided where necessary.

3.7 Operation Encompass (Supporting children and young people exposed to domestic abuse)

Operation Encompass operates in the majority of police forces across England. It helps police and schools work together to provide emotional and practical help to children. The system ensures that when police are called to an incident of domestic abuse, where there are children in the household who have experienced the domestic incident, the police will inform the key adult (usually the designated safeguarding lead) in school before the child or children arrive at school the following day. This ensures that the school has up to date relevant information about the child's circumstances and can enable support to be given to the child according to their needs. Police forces not signed up to operation encompass will have their own arrangements in place.

Families and carers are made aware when pupils start at Howard House School through the admissions and consent pack, we are a Operations Encompass school. The logo is also on our email signatures and website for full transparency.

3.8 Forced Marriage

A forced marriage is where one or both people do not (or in cases of people with learning disabilities, cannot) consent to the marriage and pressure or abuse is used. It is an appalling and indefensible practice and is recognised in the UK as a form of violence against women and men, domestic/child abuse and a serious abuse of human rights.

Staff at Howard House School understand that likewise this is a potential Safeguarding issue, and they must follow the normal safeguarding process and Child Protection procedures passing this information to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) immediately. The DSL will then assess this information and where necessary make appropriate referrals to Early Help.

All staff at Howard House School are aware of the February 2023 law change surrounding the marital age of consent rising to 18. Parents are no longer able to give consent for their children to marry at the age of 16.

3.9 Child on Child Abuse

SAFEGUARDING & CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

HOWARD HOUSE SCHOOL

The DfE's advice *Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges (2021)* has now been fully merged into **Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026**. As part of this merger, the term **"child-on-child abuse"** is used throughout the guidance instead of "peer-on-peer abuse".

KCSIE 2026 highlights:

- the importance of explaining to children that **the law exists to protect them, not criminalise them**
- the need to understand **intra-familial harms**, including the impact on siblings and the support they may require
- the expectation that schools take a **zero-tolerance approach** to all forms of child-on-child abuse
- the requirement for schools to consider how **online behaviour, mobile phones, social media and digital communication** may contribute to or facilitate abuse.

Staff Awareness and Responsibilities

- All staff must understand that **children can and do abuse other children**. Child-on-child abuse may include, but is not limited to:
- bullying (including cyberbullying)
- gender-based violence
- serious violence
- sexual abuse
- sexual violence
- sexual harassment
- physical abuse
- initiation/hazing violence and rituals
- upskirting
- sharing of sexualised content, including sexting
- harmful sexual behaviour
- online abuse facilitated through mobile phones or digital devices
- All forms of child-on-child abuse are **unacceptable**, will **not be tolerated**, and will **never** be dismissed as "banter", "part of growing up", or "boys being boys". Minimising or normalising abusive behaviour creates an unsafe culture and prevents children from feeling able to report concerns.
- Staff must remain vigilant even when no incidents have been reported, as abuse may still be occurring.

Gender and Vulnerability

- While statistics show that girls are more likely to be victims and boys more likely to be perpetrators, **any child can be affected**, and **all forms of child-on-child abuse are unacceptable**. Staff must avoid assumptions and respond to each case individually, considering the needs of all children involved.

Reporting and Responding to Child-on-Child Abuse

- All allegations or concerns relating to child-on-child abuse must be reported through the school's safeguarding procedures. Staff must:
- follow the school's concern and incident reporting process
- complete the appropriate Safeguarding Procedure Forms (Annex B)
- pass information to the **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** immediately
- The DSL will assess the information and, where necessary, make referrals to Children Social Care and the **Police**. Responses will follow statutory guidance and will include support for:
- the victim
- the child responsible for the harm
- any other children affected
- Behaviour Management Support may be used alongside safeguarding procedures, but **never instead of them**.

Upskirting

- "Upskirting" involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their knowledge, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification or cause humiliation, distress or alarm. It is a **criminal offence** and may also constitute **sexual harassment**. Staff must treat any incident as a safeguarding concern and report it immediately.

Online and Mobile Phone-Related Child-on-Child Abuse

KCSIE 2026 emphasises that mobile phones and digital devices can facilitate child-on-child abuse through:

- sharing sexualised images
- online harassment
- coercion or threats
- exposure to harmful content
- group chats used to target or exclude peers
- Howard House School's strict mobile phone policy significantly reduces these risks. Any breach of the mobile phone rules will be treated as a safeguarding concern where appropriate.

Reporting Abuse and Seeking Help

Howard House School has robust systems in place to ensure pupils can confidently report concerns. These include:

- strong, trusting relationships with staff
- daily access to their key teacher
- weekly individual sessions with pastoral lead
- a wellbeing box for confidential disclosures
- the head teacher has an open door policy to encourages pupils to feel safe and able to talk to her
- clear, visible information on how to seek help around the school building
- strong personal development and well-being curriculum, bespoke to the needs of individual pupils which is planned but can also adapt to being reactive to teenagers

- a strong safeguarding culture promoted to pupils, encouraging the voice of the child through student council and similar forums
- Children are regularly reminded that they will be listened to, taken seriously, and supported.

3.10 Youth Produced Sexual Imagery (Sexting)

Where there is a disclosure or the school becomes aware that a child may have been involved in sending 'youth produced sexual imagery' which is sometimes referred to as 'sexting' it will refer to the guidance in the document 'Sexting in Schools and Colleges, Responding to incidents and Safeguarding Pupils ' published by the UK Council for Child Internet Safety (2016). Staff understand that when an incident involving youth produced sexual imagery comes to their attention:

• The incident must be referred to the DSL immediately
• The DSL should hold an initial review meeting with appropriate school staff
• There should be subsequent interviews with the Pupils involved (if appropriate)
• Parents and caregivers should be informed at an early stage and involved in the process unless there is good reason to believe that involving parents would put the young person at risk of harm
• At any point in the process if there is a concern a young person has been harmed or is at risk of harm a referral should be made to children's social care and/or the police immediately.

3.11 Attendance and Children Missing and Absent from Education

All professionals working with children, as well as the wider community can help by remaining vigilant to children's safety. The law states every child should be receiving an education, and we stand a better chance of ensuring a child's safety if we know where and how they are receiving this. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a duty on local authorities in England and Wales to make arrangements to identify children and young people of compulsory school age missing education in their area; we work closely to ensure we put appropriate safeguarding responses in place for children who go missing from education. Please see school's Attendance Policy.

Howard House School understands that poor attendance can be an indicator of concern for children with welfare and safeguarding concerns, and thus ensures that information is shared between School and DSL. Likewise school understands that a parent failing to inform the school that a child has an authorised absence could be a cause for concern and thus will follow the school's Welfare Calling procedure in these circumstances in order to try and locate the child and ensure that they are safe. This includes a daily phone call to parents or guardians after the register closes at 9.15am whose child is absent without reason.

Our school holds **at least 2** emergency contact numbers for each pupil. If a child goes missing from our school and we are unable to locate them, we will inform parents/carers and we will also contact the Police to report them missing. This will ensure that the Police and other partners have a true picture of missing episodes, which are indicators of risk for some children.

Howard House school appreciates that the Local Authority has a Statutory Duty to ensure that all children and pupils of compulsory school age receive suitable and appropriate education. Howard House school will support the Authority in ensuring that this duty is carried out effectively. There are specific duties in respect of Children Missing Education (CME) and Children Absent from Education (CAE) and there are strict guidelines in respect of both the definition of CME/ CAE and the legalities of deleting a young person from a school roll.

Children who are absent from education

Children being absent from education for prolonged periods and/or on repeated occasions can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues, including neglect, child sexual and child criminal exploitation - particularly county lines. It is important the school or college's response to persistently absent pupils and children missing education supports identifying such abuse, and in the case of absent pupils, helps prevent the risk of them becoming a child missing education in the future.

This includes when problems are first emerging but also where children are already known to local authority children's social care and need a social worker (such as a child who is a child in need or who has a child protection plan, or is a looked after child), where being absent from education may increase known safeguarding risks within the family or in the community.

Howard House school understands that it is essential that contact is made with the Education Welfare Service educationwelfare@northumberland.gov.uk soon as a child or young person is believed to have left the school without suitable education provision being provided. In addition Howard House school will contact the Local Authority to inform them where any pupil has been absent for 10 consecutive days without a reason being provided for the absence.

3.12 Child Criminal Exploitation: County Lines

Howard House School recognise that criminal exploitation of children is a geographically widespread form of harm that is a typical feature of county lines criminal activity: drug networks or gangs groom and exploit children and Pupils to carry drugs and money from urban areas to suburban and rural areas, market and seaside towns. Key to identifying potential involvement in county lines are missing episodes, when the victim may have been trafficked for the purpose of transporting drugs. School will consider whether a referral to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) should be undertaken in order to safeguard that child and/or other children.

County lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs (primarily crack cocaine and heroin) into one or more importing areas [within the UK], using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of "deal line".

Exploitation is an integral part of the county lines offending model with children and vulnerable adults exploited to move [and store] drugs and money. Offenders will often use coercion, intimidation, violence

(including sexual violence) and weapons to ensure compliance of victims. Children can be targeted and recruited into county lines in a number of locations including schools, further and higher educational institutions, pupil referral units, special educational needs schools, children's homes and care homes. Children are often recruited to move drugs and money between locations and are known to be exposed to techniques such as 'plugging', where drugs are concealed internally to avoid detection. Children can easily become trapped by this type of exploitation as county lines gangs create drug debts and can threaten serious violence and kidnap towards victims (and their families) if they attempt to leave the county lines network.

One of the ways of identifying potential involvement in county lines are missing episodes (both from home and school), when the victim may have been trafficked for the purpose of transporting drugs and a referral to the National Referral Mechanism should be considered. If a child is suspected to be at risk of or involved in county lines, a safeguarding referral should be considered alongside consideration of availability of local services/third sector providers who offer support to victims of county lines exploitation.

Further information on the signs of a child's involvement in county lines is available in guidance published by the Home Office.

3.13 Contextual Safeguarding

School recognises that safeguarding incidents and/or behaviours can be associated with factors outside the school and/or can occur between children outside the school. All staff, but especially the designated safeguarding lead will consider the context within which such incidents and/or behaviours occur. This is known as contextual safeguarding, which simply means assessments of children should consider whether wider environmental factors are present in a child's life that are a threat to their safety and/or welfare. The school will provide as much information as possible to children's social care as part of any referral undertaken.

3.14 Children with Family Members in Prison

School understands that children who have members of their family in prison are more likely to underachieve and fail to reach their potential than their child and may require specific services and support. Families and children of people in prison will be seen as families first and school will work to ensure their needs are appropriately met. This will include providing support to ensure the voice of the child is considered when seeking contact with a family member in prison.

3.15 Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between children

- Sexual violence and sexual harassment involving children at Howard House School are forms of **child-on-child abuse**. These behaviours are never acceptable, will not be tolerated, and will always be treated as safeguarding concerns.
- **Sexual violence** refers to offences defined in the **Sexual Offences Act 2003**, including rape, assault by penetration, and sexual assault. **Sexual harassment** refers to **unwanted conduct of a sexual nature**,

which may occur offline or online. It includes sexualised comments, unwanted touching, sexualised jokes, sharing sexual images, coercive behaviour, and online harassment.

KCSIE 2026 emphasises that:

- children must understand that **the law exists to protect them, not criminalise them**
- schools must consider **intra-familial harms**, including the impact on siblings and the support they may require
- online behaviour—including through mobile phones, messaging apps, social media, and digital platforms—can play a significant role in sexual harassment and harmful sexual behaviour.

Zero-Tolerance Approach

- Howard House School adopts a **zero-tolerance approach** to sexual violence, sexual harassment, and all forms of child-on-child abuse. Staff must never dismiss or minimise concerns as "banter", "part of growing up", or "boys being boys". Such attitudes create an unsafe culture and prevent children from feeling able to report abuse.
- Staff remain vigilant at all times, even when no incidents have been reported.

Immediate Safeguarding Response

All reports of sexual violence or sexual harassment will be managed by the **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)**. Every report is taken seriously and receives the same high standard of care as any other safeguarding concern.

The school will:

- take **immediate action** to protect children, regardless of the actions of other agencies
- conduct an **initial risk assessment** to identify and address risks to the victim, alleged perpetrator, and any other children
- ensure risk assessments remain **dynamic and responsive**, updated as circumstances change
- follow statutory guidance and local safeguarding procedures
- involve other agencies (SFIFD,Police, health professionals) as appropriate

Online and Mobile Phone-Related Sexual Harassment

KCSIE 2026 highlights that sexual harassment increasingly occurs online, including through:

- sharing sexualised images
- coercive or threatening messages
- sexualised comments in group chats
- unwanted contact via social media
- misuse of mobile phones or internet-enabled devices

Howard House School's **strict mobile phone policy** significantly reduces opportunities for online sexual harassment. Any breach of this policy may be treated as a safeguarding concern.

Management Options and Outcomes

Each case will receive a **bespoke response** once all relevant information is known. Options may include:

- safeguarding support for the victim
- interventions or support for the child responsible for the harm
- adjustments to timetables, supervision, or classroom arrangements
- temporary separation of pupils
- behaviour or pastoral support plans
- referrals to external agencies
- consideration of alternative provision or a managed move where necessary

Regardless of any criminal investigation or outcome, the school must safeguard all children involved. Decisions may be made on a **balance of probabilities** when determining appropriate school-based outcomes.

Where a child moves to another school as part of the outcome, full and timely **information sharing** will take place between DSLs to ensure continuity of safeguarding support.

3.16 Homelessness

The school are aware that being homeless or being at risk of becoming homeless presents a real risk to the welfare of a child. Indicators that a family may be at risk of becoming homeless include household debt, rent arrears, Domestic Abuse and Anti-Social Behaviour. The school recognise that referrals to Staffordshire Council Housing Advice and Homelessness Service may be necessary. Concerns around homelessness may also require an accompanying referral to Children's Social Care where welfare concerns are identified, or a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm. In some cases children over the age of 16 could be living independently of their parents or carers for example through exclusion from the family home. Where this situation is identified Children's, Social Care will be the lead agency and the Designated Safeguarding Lead at school will ensure that an appropriate referral has been made to the Staffordshire Families Integrated Front Door in the first instance.

The Homeless Reduction Act 2017 places a legal duty on councils to provide advice and support

3.17 Mental Health

All staff should be aware that **mental health difficulties can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has experienced, or is at risk of experiencing, abuse, neglect, exploitation, or other forms of harm**. Staff are not expected to diagnose mental health conditions; only appropriately trained clinical professionals should undertake diagnosis or treatment.

However, staff are well placed to observe children on a daily basis and to identify changes in presentation, behaviour, engagement, or emotional regulation that may suggest a child is experiencing a mental health problem or is at risk of developing one.

Children who have experienced **abuse, neglect, trauma, or other adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)** may be particularly vulnerable to mental health difficulties. These experiences can have a significant and lasting impact throughout childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Staff must understand how trauma can influence a child's mental health, behaviour, relationships, attendance, and ability to learn, and should respond in a way that is sensitive, supportive, and aligned with safeguarding procedures.

In line with **KCSIE 2026**, staff should also be aware that:

- Mental health concerns may emerge alongside **online harms**, including exposure to harmful content, coercion, bullying, or exploitation.
- Children may present with mental health difficulties linked to **peer-on-peer abuse**, including sexual harassment, sexual violence, or harmful sexual behaviour.
- Vulnerable children, including those with SEND, may be disproportionately affected by mental health challenges and may require additional support or monitoring.

If a member of staff has a mental health concern about a child **that also raises a safeguarding concern**, they must take **immediate action** by following the school's child protection procedures and speaking with the **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** or a deputy without delay.

The Department for Education provides guidance including **Preventing and Tackling Bullying** Preventing bullying - GOV.UK and **Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools** **Mental health and behaviour in schools - GOV.UK**, which supports schools in recognising and responding to mental health needs. Public Health England (now part of the UK Health Security Agency and Office for Health Improvement and Disparities) continues to provide resources to help schools promote positive emotional wellbeing, resilience, and healthy relationships. These include materials on social media, forming positive relationships, smoking, alcohol, and other risk-related behaviours.

3.18 Special Educational Needs, Disabilities and Health Issues.

The school recognises that additional barriers exist that can lead to abuse and neglect in relation to children with special educational needs, disabilities and certain health conditions. The school responds to these needs through differentiated teaching, resources and specialist staff.

3.19 Human rights legislation

The updated guidance makes it clear that being subjected to harassment, violence and or abuse, may breach children's rights, as set out in the Human Rights Act.

3.20 Equality legislation

The guidance sets out the significance of the Equality Act 2010 to school safeguarding, including that schools and colleges:

- must not unlawfully discriminate against pupils because of their protected characteristics
- must consider how they are supporting pupils with protected characteristics
- must take positive action, where proportionate, to deal with the disadvantages these pupils face.

For example, by making reasonable adjustments for disabled children and supporting girls if there is evidence they are being disproportionately subjected to sexual violence or harassment.
It also looks at the implications of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) for education settings. This includes a need to be conscious that pupils with protected characteristics may be more at risk of harm and integrate this into safeguarding policies and procedures.

3.21 LGBTQ+ Pupils

KCSIE 2026 emphasises that **LGBTQ+ children can be particularly vulnerable**, and may face additional barriers when seeking help. Staff should ensure that all LGBTQ+ pupils are provided with **safe, calm and trusted spaces** where they feel able to speak openly, share concerns, and access support without fear of judgement or discrimination.

The guidance highlights that LGBTQ+ children may be at increased risk of:

- Bullying (including online and prejudice-based bullying)
- Isolation or exclusion
- Mental health difficulties
- Abuse or exploitation linked to their identity or perceived identity.

Staff must be alert to these risks and respond in a way that is **sensitive, respectful, and safeguarding-led**.

The Department for Education is currently finalising national guidance for **gender-questioning children**, following the 2023 consultation. Howard House will review and update its policies promptly once the new statutory guidance is published.

All staff should ensure that:

- LGBTQ+ pupils are listened to and taken seriously
- Their concerns are responded to promptly and appropriately
- Safeguarding decisions are made on a case-by-case basis, considering the child's wishes, feelings, and best interests
- Any safeguarding concerns are reported immediately to the **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** or a deputy

3.21 **Benedict's Law – Allergies and Anaphylaxis**

Our setting is committed to protecting the health, safety, and wellbeing of all children, recognising that severe allergic reactions and anaphylaxis are critical safeguarding issues. In alignment with Benedict's Law and statutory guidance on supporting medical conditions, we maintain a proactive, whole setting approach to allergy management. Every child with a known severe allergy must have an up to date Individual Healthcare Plan (IHP) outlining their specific triggers, warning signs, and required medical responses. All staff undergo mandatory training to recognise the symptoms of anaphylaxis, manage preventative measures during daily routines and off-site visits, and ensure that no child is excluded or marginalised due to a dietary or environmental allergy.

To ensure rapid intervention during a medical emergency, all prescribed Adrenaline Auto Injectors (AAIs) are clearly labelled, regularly audited for expiry, and stored in known, easily accessible locations that are never locked away. In accordance with Benedict's Law protocols, staff are trained to act without delay at the first signs of a severe reaction, maintaining emergency response procedures designed to administer an AAI and contact emergency services immediately. Any allergic incident or near-miss is formally documented, investigated by senior leadership, and reviewed to continuously strengthen our risk assessments, environmental controls, and safeguarding practices.

Section 4 Allegations regarding Person(s) Working in or on behalf of School (including Volunteers)

4.1 Managing Allegations Procedures

Where an allegation is made against any person working in or on behalf of the school the procedures detailed in Keeping Children Safe in Education (Part 4) and the Staffordshire Managing Allegations procedures will be followed. Whilst we acknowledge such allegations may be false, malicious or misplaced, we also acknowledge that they may be founded and shall therefore be treated with respectful uncertainty, investigated properly and in line with agreed procedures of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for Staffordshire.

The needs of the child or children will remain at the centre of all action taken. With this in mind, any referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer should also be accompanied by consultation with Staffordshire Families Integrated Front Door (SFIFD). This is to establish from the outset whether the concerns identified meet the threshold for a Section 47 child protection investigation and/or the police in respect of any criminal investigation.

Keeping Children Safe in Education considers an allegation to be any concern,complaint or disclosure that indicates a member of staff, agency staff or volunteer;

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child or may have harmed a child
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or relate to a child
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she may posea

risk of harm to children; or
- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.

All allegations must be treated seriously. Staff must maintain an open mind and suspend all judgement. Allegations must never be dismissed. When managing allegations, it is important that staff maintain a level of professional curiosity. Staff have a responsibility to look after themselves and not to place themselves into situations which could present as unsafe. Staff must report any concerns to the DSL or, if the allegation is about the DSL, staff must report to the Director of Edcaution.

When a child makes an allegation about a member of staff, the member of staff receiving the complaint must write everything down and document it on the recording system used by the school. The member of staff must immediately report the allegation to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or deputy. The Designated Safeguarding Lead has a responsibility to take all allegations seriously regardless of whether a child or young person has made previous allegations.

The Designated Safeguarding Officer may wish to speak with the LADO and seek advice about next steps on the same day. Allegations must be reported to the Local Authority Designated Officer within one working day. The Designated Safeguarding Lead must ensure that they follow the school's procedure for Managing Allegations.

Part four of Keeping Children Safe in Education outlines the importance of retaining oversight of any concerns or allegations about agency or supply staff, volunteers or any member of staff employed by a third party working in the school setting. Whilst the individual may not be employed by Howard House School, the school must ensure that allegations are managed properly.

KCSIE, 2025, states 'In no circumstances should a school or college decide to cease to use a supply teacher due to safeguarding concerns, without finding out the facts and liaising withthe Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) to determine a suitable outcome. Governing bodies should discuss with the agency whether it is appropriate to suspend the supply teacher or redeploy them to another part of the school whilst they carry out their investigation.'

All allegations made against staff must be reported to the Head Teacher who will inform the Director of Education and the HR Manager. Howard House School recognises that managing allegations can be challenging and the Head Teacher will be supported with the process.

It is the responsibility of the Head Teacher (DSL) to ensure that allallegations are managed in line with local safeguarding partnership procedures.

4.2 Working with the Local Authority Designated Officer

In all referrals, the Designated Safeguarding Lead is the lead professional within theschool for ensuring that a timely response is received from the local authority or LADO. If a response is received which the Designated Safeguarding Lead believes is not just and does not prioritise the child or young person's safety, this must be escalated to the Director of Education of the school to agree further action.

All staff have a responsibility to report any suspicions or concerns that a child has or may be mistreated or harmed.

4.3 Allegations Management: Preventative Strategies

The school will take all appropriate action to ensure that children and young people learn about appropriate relationships with adults, keeping safe, online safety as well as sex and healthy relationships. PSHE lessons, Relationships Education, and Relationships and Sex Education will focus on important age-appropriate issues in line with Government guidance. Staff must ensure that children and young people have opportunity to learn about safe relationships between children as well as who they can talk to if they have any concerns.

Children should be supported by staff to understand what abuse is. Children must be listened to and enabled to report any abuse or neglect at the earliest opportunity. They should be given information about how to report abuse or any concerns about possible abuse. This should include being able to access in private, relevant websites or help lines such as Childline to seek advice and help.

The school recognises that some children and young people are more vulnerable by virtue of their complex health or behavioural needs, or disabilities. In these instances, all staff have a responsibility to be the 'eyes and ears' and report all concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

For further information, refer to Part 5 of Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2025, 'Child on Child Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment'.

Partnership working and sharing of information

Partnership working and the sharing of information is key in keeping children safe. Everyone who has a role to play in caring for children has a duty to share goodquality information with the relevant professionals in a timely manner.

4.4 General Data Protection Regulations

All schools must ensure that they comply with the Young Foundations Data Protection policy which incorporates the GDPR requirements. The GDPR works around the principles of consent and assumes the automatic right of privacy to all individuals. This applies to children and young people's personal information, as well as that of staff and parents/carers.

I. **All staff must complete GDPR training.**
II. **All staff have a responsibility to ensure that they comply with GDPR requirements.**
III. Schools must ensure that they inform pupils, parents and carers of how their personal information will be stored and used.
IV. **GDPR is not a barrier to sharing safeguarding information.**
V. **Safeguarding concerns must always be passed on.**

Schools must ensure that they hold emergency contact details of the parents/carers of pupils. This is to be done with the agreement of the parents/caregivers. In line with KCSIE schools must hold at least 2 contact details for pupils parents/caregivers.

Data breaches must be reported immediately to the Data Protection Manager as setout in the Data Protection Policy.

Staff are responsible for:

i. Compliance with all school policies, statutory guidance and legislation including Keeping Children Safe in Education (updated 2026) and Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026).
ii. Understanding the role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
iii. Helping to develop and deliver a curriculum which helps children and young people to understand about abuse, appropriate and safe relationships with adults and children, and keeping safe both online and offline.
iv. Helping to provide an environment where children and young people feel safe and valued.
v. Attending training and meetings.
vi. Ensuring that they fully understand how to report concerns and if not, asking for further training and support.
vii. Understand the safeguarding response to children who go missing from education.
If a child does not attend school, then a welfare call will be made at 9.15am when registers close. If there is no response three phone calls will be made and messages left for the parents/carers. A welfare visit will be made if unable to make contact with the family home about the child. Social workers and police will also be notified and ask for support, welfare visits, if unable to access the child.
A welfare visit will be made a maximum every 10 days by school to physically see the pupil.
If a child goes missing from the premises and staff are unable to physically see them or keep

pace with them the police must be informed immediately by phoning 999.

viii. Listening actively to children and young people.
ix. Supporting children and young people if they disclose safeguarding information.
x. Ensuring that they are alert to signs of abuse by children or adults.
xi. Ensuring that they are aware of indicators or possible signs of neglect.
xii. Ensuring that they closely monitor any possible signs of abuse or harm for those children who are unable to communicate verbally or who have complex health and care needs.
xiii. Keeping sensitive information confidential and sharing it only with those professionalsfor whom it is relevant.
xiv. Helping to identify those children or young people who may benefit from Early Help.
xv. Helping to implement Child Protection Plans.

Staff are in a close position to children and young people within schools, and they often know the children and young people well. They have regular contact with them and so are in the best position to know if a child or young person is behaving in a way whichcould possibly indicate that they are being hurt or harmed.

Any concerns, whether these are nagging doubts, worries, concerns or based on information shared with staff, must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead both verbally and in writing. It is the staff member's responsibility to ensure that this information is acted upon. They have a duty to follow up with the Designated Safeguarding Lead to ensure that action has been taken.

4.5 Earliest and Early Help

A Child In Need is defined under the Children Act 1989 as a child who is unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable level of health or development, or whose health and development is likely to be significantly or further impaired, without the provision of services; or a child who is disabled. Local authorities are required to provide services for children in need for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting their welfare. Children in need may be assessed under section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

If Early Help is appropriate, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or deputy) will generally lead on liaising with other agencies and setting up an inter-agency assessment as appropriate. Staff may be required to support other agencies and professionals in an early help assessment, in some cases acting as the lead practitioner. Any such cases should be kept under constant review and consideration given to a referral to children's social care for assessment for statutory services, if the child's situation does not appear to be improving or is getting worse.

It is important that staff take swift and effective action to safeguard children andyoung people and to stop concerns from escalating. It may be that some childrenand young people will benefit from Early Help.

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

- is disabled or has certain health conditions and has specific additional needs;
- has special educational needs (whether or not they have a statutory Education, Health and Care Plan); See KCSiE 2026 re additional information/guidance for children with SEND
- has a mental health need;
- is a young carer;
- is showing signs of being drawn in to anti-social or criminal behaviour, including gang involvement and association with organised crime groups or county lines;
- is frequently missing/goes missing from education, home or care.
- has experienced multiple suspensions, is at risk of being permanently excluded from schools, colleges and in Alternative Provision or a Pupil Referral Unit.
- is at risk of modern slavery, trafficking, sexual and/or criminal exploitation;
- is at risk of being radicalised or exploited;
- has a parent or carer in custody, or is affected by parental offending;
- is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as drug or alcohol misuse, adult mental health issues and domestic abuse;
- is misusing alcohol or other drugs themselves;
- has returned home to their family from care;
- is at risk of 'honour'-based abuse such as Female Genital Mutilation or Forced Marriage;
- is a privately fostered child; and
- is persistently absent from education, including persistent absences for part of the school day.

The DSL ensures that **all** staff are aware of the early help process and understand their role in it. This includes identifying emerging problems, liaising with the DSL/DDSL, sharing information with other professionals to support early identification and assessment and, in some cases, acting as the **lead professional** in undertaking an early help assessment.

The DSL/DDSL will consider how the needs of different family members impact each other. This includes needs relating to education, mental and physical health, financial stability, housing, substance use and crime. We will also consider specific needs such as disabilities, those whose first language is not English, fathers or male carers, and parents who identify as LGBTQ.

Guidance documents can be accessed at the following links:

Northumberland-threshold-of-need-document-2022.pdf
Supporting families (Early Help) | Northumberland County Council

When a child or young person has been referred for Early Help, it is the responsibilityof the Designated Safeguarding Lead to set up an inter-agency assessment as appropriate. Staff may be required to support other agencies and professionals in an early help assessment, in some cases acting as the lead professional. Any such cases are under constant review and consideration must be given to a referral to children's social care for assessment for statutory services, if the child's

situation does not appear to be improving or is getting worse.

Statutory Assessments

Where a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer from harm, it is important that a referral to children's social care (and if appropriate the police) is made immediately. Referrals should follow the local referral process.

4.6 Bullying

Howard House School has a zero-tolerance approach to bullying. All staff have a responsibility to challenge bullying even at a low level. Staff must help children and young people to understand what bullying is and how to report it. Bullying must be dealt with as a safeguarding matter. Staff must report any bullying concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead on the same day. The concerns must be documented appropriately.

Schools have a responsibility to ensure that those children and young people whobully, are supported and helped to understand the impact of their actions. See Anti-Bullying Policy.

4.7 Crisis Response

In the event that's the school has to respond to a national crisis, for example the COVID-19 pandemic. Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) remains in force throughout the response to the pandemic. The guidance outlines essential measures that the school will need to have in place when operating differently to 'business as usual.'

The school will ensure that there are robust systems in place to safeguard and protect allpupils whether they are in attendance at school or not.

- There will always be at least one Designated Safeguarding Lead on site or available to contact at all times
- Daily safeguarding calls will be in place to households where children are not attending school
- Staff visits and welfare packs will be made available for families in need
- Detailed risk assessments will be conducted to ensure the safe operation of school
- Individual pupil risk assessments will be in place to identify the most vulnerable and ensure an appropriate supporting plan is in place
- Risks identified will be reported on swiftly in accordance with school's procedures
- The school will provide educational support via an online learning portal.
- A separatepolicy is available to outline these measures. All sessions are recorded, and parents provide consent for pupils to access the digital platform

4.8 Whistleblowing

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Howard House School recognises that on occasion staff may feel that they are unable to tell someone within their immediate place of work about any safeguarding concerns that they may have. As a school we also recognise that children will be unable to voice their concerns if they are in an environment where staff also fail to voice their concerns.

All staff have a duty first and foremost to the children in our school. Any concerns, regardless of how small they may seem, must be reported. Designated Safeguarding Leads and Head Teachers have a responsibility to ensure that they create an environment where staff feel safe to openly voice any concerns and that they feel listened to. It is also important that staff feel supported if concerns are raised about them. If staff see or hear about other colleagues practice which they are concerned about, which potentially may cause emotional or physical harm to a pupil, or if the standard of care being provided falls short of expectations, they must report this as above.

Annex A
Useful Contacts within the local authority

Authority:	Northumberland
Children Services:	01670 536400
Early Help:	01670 536400
Safeguarding Manager:	Carol Leckie: 01670 622720
LADO:	Louise Prudhoe: 01670 624888

Authority:	North Tyneside
Children Services:	0345 2000 109
Early Help:	0191 643 8178
Safeguarding Manager:	Victoria McLeod: 0191 6435914
LADO:	Hayley Muir: 0345 2000 109

Authority:	Gateshead
Children Services:	0191 433 2653
Early Help:	0191 433 3319
Safeguarding Manager:	Steve Day: 0191 4333989
LADO:	Designated officer: 0191 4333554

SAFEGUARDING & CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

HOWARD HOUSE SCHOOL

Authority:	Newcastle upon Tyne
Children Services:	0191 277 2500
Early Help:	Central: 0191 214 2460 East: 0191275 9636 West: 0191 277 3742
Safeguarding Manager:	0191 277 2500
LADO:	Melanie Scott 0191 2774636

Authority:	South Tyneside
Children Services:	0191 424 5010
Early Help:	0191 424 6210
Safeguarding Manager:	Russ Saunders: 0191 424 6332
LADO:	Angela Nolan: 0191 424 4701

Authority:	Co. Durham
Children Services:	03000 267 979
Early Help:	03000 267 979
Safeguarding Manager:	Chris Ring: 03000 261265
LADO:	Designated officer: 03000 268835

Authority:	Sunderland
Children Services:	0191 520 5560
Early Help:	0191 561 4084
Safeguarding Manager:	Deanna Lagun: 0191 512 8475
LADO:	Designated officer: 0191 561 3901

Abuse or Safeguarding Issue	Link to Guidance/Advice	Source
Abuse	What to do if you're worried a child is being abused	DfE Advice
	Domestic abuse: Various Information/Guidance	Home Office
	Faith based abuse: National Action Plan	DfE Advice
	Relationship Abuse: Disrespect Nobody	Home Office Website
Bullying	Preventing bullying, including cyberbullying	DfE Advice

Children and the courts	Advice for 5-11 year olds witnesses in criminal courts	MoJ Advice

SAFEGUARDING & CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

HOWARD HOUSE SCHOOL

	Advice for 12-17 year olds witnesses in criminal courts	MoJ Advice
Children absent from education, home or care	Children absent education	DfE Statutory Guidance
	Child absent from home or care	DfE Statutory Guidance
	Children and adults absent strategy	Home Office Strategy
Children with family members in prison	National information centre on Children of Offenders	Barnardo's in partnership with Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) Advice
Child Exploitation	County Lines: Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults	Home Office Guidance
	Child sexual exploitation: Guide for practitioners	DfE Guidance
	Trafficking: Safeguarding children	DfE & HO Guidance
Drugs	Drugs: Advice for schools	DfE & ACPO Advice
	Drug strategy 2017	Home Office Strategy
	Information and advice on drugs	Talk to Frank Website
	ADEPIS platform sharing information and resources for schools: Covering drug (& alcohol) prevention	Website developed by Mentor UK
'Honour Based Violence' (so called)	Female genital mutilation: Information and resources	Home Office
	Female genital mutilation: Multi agency statutory guidance	DfE, DH and HO Statutory Guidance
	Forced marriage: Information and practice guidelines	Foreign Commonwealth Office and Home Office
Health and Wellbeing	Fabricated or induced illness: Safeguarding children	DfE, DH and Home Office
	Rise Above: Free PSHE resources on health, wellbeing and resilience	Public Health England Resources
	Medical conditions: Supporting students at school	DfE Statutory Guidance
	Mental health and behaviour	DfE Advice
Homelessness	Homelessness: How local authorities should exercise their functions	HCLG
Online	Sexting: Responding to incidents and safeguarding children	UK Council for Child Internet Safety
Private Fostering	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-act-1989-private-fostering	DfE Statutory Guidance
Radicalisation	Prevent duty guidance	Home Office Guidance

	Prevent duty advice for schools	DfE Advice
	Educate against hate website	DfE & Home Office
Violence	Gangs and youth violence: For schools and colleges	Home Office Advice
	Ending violence against women and girls 2016-2020 strategy	Home Office Strategy
	Violence against women and girls: National statement of expectations for victims	Home Office Guidance
	Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges	DfE Advice
	Serious violence strategy	Home Office Strategy