



Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy 2023-2024

Rights Respecting School

We are a Right Respecting School and this policy supports the following articles from the United Nations on the Convention on the Rights of a Child:

Article 3– the best interest of the child must be a top priority in all things that affect children

Article 6 – survival and development. Every child has a right to life. Governments must do all they can to ensure that children survive and develop to their full potential.

Article 12 – freedom of expression. Every child has the right to say what they think in all matters affecting them, and to have their views taken seriously.

Article 19 – protection from all forms of violence. Governments must do all they can to ensure that children are free from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and bad treatment by their parents or anyone else who looks after them.

Article 28 – every child has the right to an education. Discipline in schools must respect children’s dignity.

Article 29 – goals of education. Education must develop every child’s personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child’s respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures and the environment.

Policy Review

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Appendix 1: Virginia Primary School Record of Concern Form (ROC)

Appendix 2: MASH contact Poster

Appendix 3: Tower Hamlets Multi-Agency Referral Form (MARF)

1. RATIONALE AND ETHOS

At Virginia School we believe that all pupils have a fundamental right to be protected from harm and that they cannot learn effectively unless they feel safe. We strive to build a school where pupils feel secure, their viewpoints are valued, they are encouraged to talk and adults listen to them and hear them.

This policy outlines the safeguarding and child protection procedures for all staff, volunteers, visitors and governors; all the procedures have been written in accordance with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 and reflect local safeguarding arrangements including the Tower Hamlets Safeguarding Children Partnership Supplementary Guidance documents on Child Protection Procedures and the Management of Allegations. This Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy is made available and accessible to staff, parents and visitors via the school website, staff induction, staff training, admissions meetings for new parents, on the staff drive and from the school office as requested. The policy is reviewed, approved and endorsed by the Governing Body annually or when legislation changes.

This policy needs to be read alongside the following safeguarding policies:

Anti-bullying		Health
Positive Behaviour	and Safety	
Single Equality		Staff
Inclusion	Handbook	
Physical Activity		Whistle
Staff Code of Conduct and Low Level Concerns	Blowing	

Aims

The aim of our safeguarding and child protection policy is to create a '*safer culture of vigilance*' in our school. We aim to have a school where:

- There is a belief that '*it could happen here*'
- All children, without exception, have the right to protection from abuse regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or beliefs. No child or group of children will be treated any less favourably in being able to access services which meet their needs
- The staff always act in the best interests of the child. A child refers to any individual under 18 years of age
- The staff will not assume that other staff will act in relation to a concern
- All staff should be aware of the process for making referrals to Children's Services and for statutory assessments under the Children Act 1989, especially section 17 (children in need) and section 47 (a child suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm) that may follow a referral, along with the role they might be expected to play in such assessments
- All concerns and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously by staff and volunteers and responded to appropriately - this may require a referral to Children's Services, the independent Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for allegations against staff and other volunteers and, in emergencies, the police
- Key individuals and their specific safeguarding roles are identified and known to the whole school community
- We have a commitment to safer recruitment, selection and vetting
- The policy is shared with children and parents as appropriate
- The Headteacher ensures the policy is followed by all members of staff

Virginia Primary School Child Protection Team

DSL: Amanda Carr – *Deputy Head Teacher*

Tel: 020 7739 6195, 07548 356796

Email: acarr@virginia.towerhamlets.sch.uk

Deputy DSLs: Barbara Lo Giudice – *Head Teacher*, Ruth Coombe – *SENCO (SLT)*,
Emily Casey (*Emotional and Physical Well-being lead*)

Governor for Safeguarding: Kathy Darby

kathdarby@tiscali.co.uk

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO): Melanie Benzie

Tel: 0207 364 0677

Email: LADO@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Secure email: LADO@towerhamlets.gscx.gov.uk

Designated Teacher for Looked After Children (LAC) and Previously Looked After Children: Amanda Carr – *Deputy Head*

Mental Health Lead: Lydia Pendino – *AHT Inclusion*

Virtual School Headteacher: David Cregan

Tel: 0207 364 2307

Email: David.Cregan@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

Tel: 0207 364 3444/5601/5606

Email: MASH@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Children Missing in Education (CME): Sadia Anwer

Tel: 020 7364 3426 / 07562 431 817

Email: Saadia.Anwer@towerhamlets.gov.uk

The Early Help Hub (EH)

(which includes the work of the Social Inclusion Panel)

Tel: 020 7364 5006

Email: EarlyHelp@towerhamlets.gov.uk

The Prevent Education Officer: Iona Karrman-Bailey

Email: Iona.Karrman-Bailey@towerhamlets.gov.uk

2. CORE SAFEGUARDING PRINCIPLES

The following core principles are embedded within the school's safeguarding arrangements; it's safeguarding policies, procedures and systems; and underpins the whole school approach to safeguarding at Virginia.

- The welfare of the child is paramount and underpins all discussions, decision making, and actions taken at the school.
- All concerns disclosed and reported will be taken seriously.
- All children have the right to have a life free from harm, regardless of age, gender, ability, culture, race, language, religion or sexual identity, all have equal rights to protection. This includes children's lives in digital and online environments.
- The child's wishes and feelings will always be considered at the school when determining what action to take and what support to provide.
- All staff including supply staff, contractors and volunteers have an equal responsibility to act immediately on any suspicion or disclosure that may suggest a child is at risk of harm or has been harmed.
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will ensure that all pupils and staff involved in safeguarding and child protection issues will receive appropriate support.

3. PURPOSE OF POLICY

- To provide all staff with key information to enable them to identify safeguarding concerns and know what action to take in response.
- To ensure consistent good practice throughout the school.
- To demonstrate the school's commitment to safeguarding to the whole school community: pupils, parents/carers and other partners.

4. SAFEGUARDING LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

The following safeguarding legislation and government guidance have informed the content of this policy:

- Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 (Local maintained schools only)
- The Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 (as amended)
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Working Together to Safeguarding Children 2018 (Updated July 2022)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (1 September 2023)
- What to do if you're worried a child is being abused 2015
- The Equality Act 2010 and schools: Department advice for school leaders, school staff, governing bodies and local authorities (May 2014)
- Statutory Framework for the early years foundation stage (1 September 2021)
- The Teacher Standards 2012

5. TOWER HAMLETS SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP SUPPLEMENTARY SAFEGUARDING GUIDANCE

The following Pan-London and THSCP safeguarding guidance has informed the content of this policy:

- London Child Protection Procedures revised 7th Edition (London Safeguarding Children Board, 31st March 2023)
- Tower Hamlets SCP Multi-Agency Safeguarding Thresholds Guidance
- Tower Hamlets SCP Supplementary Guidance for Schools and Education Settings on Child Protection Procedures - September 2023
- Tower Hamlets SCP LADO Procedures and Flowchart re Allegations made against staff working in the children's workforce - Information about reporting and managing allegations
- Tower Hamlets SCP Supplementary Guidance for Schools and Education Settings on Managing Allegations of Abuse against Staff – September 2023

6. TOWER HAMLETS SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP

The Children Act 2004 as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017 has brought about the establishment of the Tower Hamlets Safeguarding Children Partnership (THSCP). The Partnership coordinates the work of all agencies and ensures that this work is effective in achieving the best outcomes for Tower Hamlets children. The three statutory safeguarding partners have published arrangements to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of local children, including identifying and responding to their needs. More information about the Tower Hamlets Safeguarding Children Partnership can be found on the website: <http://www.childrenandfamiliestrust.co.uk/the-lscb/>

The school has been named as a 'relevant agency' and as such is under a statutory duty to cooperate with the THSCP arrangements.

The school will engage with the borough's Designated Safeguarding Lead Forums, co-operate with the Rapid Review process and any Local Learning Reviews,¹ participate in the THSCP multi-agency safeguarding training offer, and co-operate with the borough's Section 175/157 School Safeguarding Audit cycle.

7. KEY DEFINITIONS

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is:

- protecting children from maltreatment
- preventing the impairment of a child's physical and mental health or development
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care

¹ For more information on the Rapid Review process, Local Learning Reviews and Child Death Reviews, Working Together 2018 Chapters 4 and 5 should be consulted. Working Together 2018 paragraphs 25-27 provide more information on the expectation of school's role within the safeguarding partnership arrangements.

- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

The phrase 'child protection' refers to the processes followed to protect children who have been identified as suffering or being at risk of suffering significant harm. Child includes everyone under the age of 18. Parent refers to birth parents and other adults who are in a parenting role, for example step-parents, carers, foster carers, and adoptive parents. Staff refers to all those who work for the school or on behalf of the school, full time or part time, temporary or permanent, in either a paid or voluntary capacity.

8. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Governing Body have the strategic leadership responsibility for safeguarding arrangements at the school. As a collective body it must have regard to all relevant statutory guidance issued, including Keeping Children Safe in Education, and ensure that school's safeguarding policies and procedures, including the current Child Protection Policy, are compliant with legislation and statutory guidance, reflect local safeguarding arrangements and are effective.

In accordance with the statutory requirement the named member of the Governing Body who takes leadership responsibility for safeguarding at the school is *Kathy Darby* and they are referred to as the Safeguarding Link Governor.

The Head Teacher is responsible for ensuring that the school's Child Protection Policy and other safeguarding policies are communicated to all staff, understood by all members of staff, and followed by all members of staff.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead takes the ultimate lead responsibility for safeguarding arrangements within the school on a day-to-day basis including online safety and understanding the filtering and monitoring systems and processes in place. Our Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) Amanda Carr (Deputy head teacher) and Deputy DSLs; Barbara Lo Giudice (Headteacher), Emily Casey (Emotional and Physical Well-being lead) and Ruth Coombe (SENDCo) carry out their safeguarding duties and liaise closely with the three safeguarding partners – the Local Authority, Clinical Commissioning Group and Police. Child protection records are kept securely and separate from pupils' academic records. For pupil transition, child protection files are passed on to receiving schools directly to the DSL and sent securely. The DSL and DDSLs are responsible for regularly updating the records of vulnerable pupils. Information and updates from the safeguarding list are passed on to the leadership team regularly and disseminated to staff through face to face conversations where appropriate. Whilst the activities of the DSL can be delegated to the deputies, the ultimate lead responsibility for safeguarding remains with the DSL. This includes out of school hours/term activities.

All staff should recognise that as frontline workers they are in an important position to identify concerns early, provide help and support to children, promote children's welfare, and prevent concerns from escalating.

All staff have a responsibility to provide a safe environment in which children can learn.

All staff have a responsibility to report safeguarding concerns immediately to the DSL or directly to Children's Services and/or the police where there is a risk of serious harm. The DSL and/or deputies should always be available to discuss safeguarding concerns and if in exceptional circumstances they are not available this should not delay appropriate action being taken.

All staff are also aware that they should be prepared to identify children who may benefit from early help and be aware of their role in referring cases requiring early help. In the first instance staff would discuss early help cases with the DSL or DDSs.

Concerns relating to children are recorded using the *Record of Concern*. It is expected that staff and volunteers verbally pass on concerns to the DSL or DDSs without delay. If in doubt about any safeguarding matter, staff should always speak to the DSL or in their absence one of our DDSs.

All staff are expected to keep the school values at the core of their daily conduct and understand that they have a legal duty to safeguard the child. Ultimately, the best interests of the child must be at the centre of all decision making, behaviours and action taken in relation to children.

9. RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

The school upholds the human rights of the child in accordance with the Human Rights Act 1998.² It is unlawful for schools to act in a way that is incompatible with the European Convention on Human Rights. Specifically, the school embeds and upholds the following Convention rights of the child across its safeguarding policies and procedures:

- Article 3: the right to freedom from inhuman and degrading treatment (an absolute right)
- Article 8: the right to respect for private and family life (a qualified right) includes a duty to protect individuals' physical and psychological integrity
- Article 14: requires that all of the rights and freedoms set out in the Act must be protected and applied without discrimination
- Protocol 1, Article 2: protects the right to education.

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, the school must not unlawfully discriminate against pupils because of their sex, race, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, or sexual orientation (protected characteristics). See our Single Equality Objectives Policy for further information. Virginia Primary is committed to supporting and taking positive action towards children with regard to particular protected characteristics - including disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment and race- who may be at a disadvantage and be disproportionately vulnerable.

In fulfilment of the school's Public Sector Equality Duty the school has due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation (and any other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act), to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.

As evident in the Serious Case Review Child Q, the school is aware that children from ethnically diverse groups are at risk of adultification whereby their vulnerability as a child is reduced or set aside because of racial bias and stereotypes impacting professional judgement.³ All staff share in the whole school's commitment to ensure equity, diversity and inclusion remain at the centre of the school's

² <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/human-rights>

³ <https://chscp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Child-Q-PUBLISHED-14-March-22.pdf>

safeguarding culture, so that all children receive the care, support, and protection they have the right to receive.

The school shares the London Borough of Tower Hamlet's commitment to being an anti-racist borough and to tackle and eliminate race discrimination. The council's Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic Inequalities Commission (2021) concluded that racism still exists within institutions and structures in the borough and has developed an action plan to achieve race equality at pace.⁴ The action plan recognises that schools have a powerful and significant role in changing narratives and bringing about social change through education. Here at Virginia, we have sought to implement a whole school approach to anti-racism. Our curriculum endeavours to teach children through diverse representation. Working in partnership with Tower Hamlets Anti-Racist Curriculum (TARC) to ensure that our curriculum enables children a voice in which they can question and challenge racism. Through CPD, our staff are continuously encouraged to develop their understanding of racism, how to talk about racism, how to deal with racist incidents and are aware of unconscious bias and its impact on our children and school community.

10. CHILDREN WHO MAY BE POTENTIALLY MORE AT RISK OF HARM

All staff should recognise that all children are vulnerable but that some children may be more vulnerable than others and at more risk of harm. Children known to a Social Worker, Looked After Children and Care Leavers are likely to have suffered abuse at some point in their childhood and may be more vulnerable to further abuse including exploitation. Staff need to be aware that other children who may be potentially more at risk of harm include

A Child who:

- is disabled or has certain health conditions and has specific additional needs;
- has special educational needs (whether or not they have a statutory Education, Health and Care Plan);
- has a mental health need;
- is a young carer;
- is showing signs of being drawn 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 care or from home;
- is at risk of so-called honour based abuse such as Female Genital Mutilation or Forced Marriage;
- is at risk of modern slavery, trafficking or exploitation;
- is at risk of being radicalised or exploited;
- is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as drug and alcohol misuse, adult mental health issues and domestic abuse
- is misusing drugs or alcohol themselves;
- has returned home to their family from care; and
- is a privately fostered child;
- is persistently absent from education, including persistent absences for part of the school day.

⁴ https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/community_and_living/Inequality-Commission/Black-Asian-and-Minority-Ethnic-Inequalities-Commission.aspx

Staff must be more vigilant in their day-to-day work with children when the above vulnerabilities are known and report all concerns immediately to a member of the safeguarding and child protection team.

11. CHILDREN IN NEED OF A SOCIAL WORKER

Children who have been allocated a social worker may have experienced abuse including neglect and belong to a family that has many complex circumstances. Staff should recognise that these children will have experienced adversity and trauma that can leave them vulnerable to further harm, as well as educationally disadvantaged, and have a negative impact on their attendance, learning, behaviour and mental health.

When making decisions about safeguarding, carrying out risk analysis, making a safeguarding response to concerns such as unauthorised and persistent absence, and providing pastoral and academic support, the school will take seriously the fact that the child in need of a social worker will require enhanced pastoral and academic support alongside that provided by statutory services. School is also committed to providing further pastoral and academic support to children who have had historic contact with a Social Worker, in recognition that the abuse and trauma is likely to have an impact on the child beyond the duration of the involvement of statutory services.

The school will co-operate with the Virtual School, which now has a non-statutory responsibility for the strategic oversight of the educational attendance, attainment, and progress of children known to a social worker.

All staff are required to feed into the support and monitoring of the wellbeing of children known to a social worker. Teaching teams and adults working closely with the child will be requested to provide updates and reports ready to feed into meetings surrounding the child/family. It is important that these requests are worked upon and fed back to the DSL in a timely manner. Any concerns are to be communicated to the DSL and a safeguarding chronology sheet is to be maintained and shared with the DSL on a regular basis. It cannot be assumed that a social worker has full responsibility or is fully aware of the bigger picture for the child/family in which they are the allocated social worker. The DSL must communicate all concerns as they arise, building a relationship with the social worker to provide a teamed up approach and if necessary, take action where they feel concerns are not being addressed.

12. CHILDREN REQUIRING MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

All staff have an important role in supporting the mental well-being of children and to identify behaviour that may suggest a child is experiencing mental health problems. All staff need to recognise that mental health may be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation. Staff should be aware of the trauma and mental health impact on a child who has had adverse childhood experiences including abuse, bereavement and separation of parents. Staff should also be aware that the pandemic has had a negative impact on the mental health of many children, some of whom have never previously experienced difficulties with their mental health. However, all staff should be clear that only appropriately trained professionals should attempt to make a diagnosis of a mental health difficulty.

Children who have been exposed to Adverse Childhood Experiences are identified for intervention from our inclusion team; which is comprised of our Inclusion/Mental Health lead, SENCo and our ELSA

& Emotional and Physical Well-being lead. At the head teachers request the school has for many years outsourced a psychotherapeutic counsellor for a full day a week who works with children to support them through mental health intervention. The head, DSL and inclusion team communicate regularly with the therapist to make decisions about referrals for more formal long-term intervention. This intervention takes place in school, in an allocated therapeutic space. Parental consent and collaboration is sought prior to the children's allocation. For children who do not meet the threshold for the therapist, the SPACE is led by two emotional literacy support assistants, who provide lunchtime 'drop in's' for children to self-refer for support in how they are feeling.

13. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND PREVIOUS LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

The most common reason for children becoming looked after is as a result of abuse including neglect.

Staff need to have the skills, knowledge and understanding to safeguard Looked After Children in recognition of their heightened vulnerability.

The DSL and Designated Teacher will work with relevant agencies and take immediate action to safeguard and provide support to this vulnerable group of children.

The designated teacher works with Tower Hamlets Virtual School to promote the educational achievement and to discuss how funding can be best used to support the progress of looked after children in the school and meet the needs identified in the child's personal education plan.

Staff are made aware of the specific children to whom this refers and they are especially vigilant to recognising individuals learning or emotional needs and sharing concerns with relevant staff members; SENDCo or DSL.

The DSL will work with the local authority's Personal Advisor appointed to guide and support Care Leavers, so that any issues or concerns affecting the care leaver can be explored and effective support put in place.

14. SEND CHILDREN

At Virginia we understand that children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) or physical health issues can face additional safeguarding challenges. Additional barriers can exist when recognising abuse and neglect in this group of children, which can include:

- professionals and other adults making assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's disability without further exploration
- the potential for children with SEN and disabilities or certain medical conditions being vulnerable to experiencing peer exclusion and isolation and being disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying (including prejudice-based bullying), without outwardly showing any signs;
- children not understanding that what is happening to them is abuse; and
- communication barriers when reporting abuse and difficulties in overcoming these barriers.

For some disabled children, their dependency on parents and carers for practical assistance in daily living, including intimate personal care, may increase their risk of exposure to abusive behaviour. Some children may also have an impaired capacity to resist or avoid abuse. Looked After Disabled

Children may be particularly susceptible to possible abuse because of their additional dependency on residential and hospital staff for day to day physical care needs.

Further information on safeguarding SEND children is available in the non-statutory guidance [Safeguarding Disabled Children](#) (2009), but staff should speak with the DSL and SENDCO in the first instance.

All staff are regularly trained to understand and be aware of the additional barriers that exist when safeguarding SEND children. All staff need to be aware that SEND children may be more vulnerable when online and using digital platforms, and it is important that Online Safety lessons and the Relationships and Health Education is tailored to their individual needs.

We understand that in our work when considering adjustments there is not a 'one size fits all' approach as children have a range of needs and abilities. As teachers we need to be informed about the signs of abuse and be open to the children and able to pick up on changes in behaviour.

The NSPCC recommended the following actions for schools to work effectively to protect disabled young people:

- An improved understanding and awareness of the need for all disabled children to be taught sex and relationship education and the need to break the taboo surrounding the sexuality of disabled young people;
- The need to deliver accessible sex and relationship education for disabled pupils which develops appropriately with the children's age and understanding -- access to this could also be included in their EHCPs and monitored as a measurable outcome;
- Schools should work collaboratively with parents and other agencies to ensure that disabled children receive consistent, clear, accessible information on safe touch, choice and control, puberty, sex, relationships and abuse and knowing how to let others know if they feel unsafe;
- All disabled children should have access to communication methods which enable them to have a level of choice and control and access a number of people who understand their communication methods as a safety mechanism – this should be included on EHCP plans;
- EHCPs need to be written holistically to address social and emotional needs including relationships, choices, sexuality and healthy relationships; for disabled children to be helped to understand behaviour that hurts and that they have a right to be safe and have help to learn about who and how to let know if they don't feel safe;
- The development of more accessible resources in multiple formats which address all elements to support disabled children's safety – these resources should be shared with parents and professionals;
- Provide opportunities for parents to discuss these sensitive issues and share ideas in a safe and sensitive environment;
- Better understanding, training and a consistent balanced approach to avoid what is deemed inappropriate behaviour by disabled children leading to unnecessary criminalization or inappropriate investigation;
- Improved training for professionals to spot signs of abuse of disabled children and prioritise the prevention and protection of disabled children and their families.

15. CHILDREN ABSENT FROM EDUCATION & CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION (CME)

The school closely monitors attendance, absence, suspensions, and exclusions. A child absent from education, whether prolonged or on repeat occasions, can be a vital warning sign of a wide range of safeguarding issues and is a potential indicator of abuse and neglect, including child sexual abuse, child sexual exploitation, and child criminal exploitation (county lines.)

In accordance with the DfE's *Working together to improve school attendance*, the school follows up on absences and addresses persistent absence as part of its safeguarding duty. Such an approach prevents the risk of these children becoming children missing education in the future. Staff address daily absence and persistent absence as soon as these problems emerge as part of school's early help response. Staff should be alert to children already known to be vulnerable especially Children known to a Social Worker and Looked After Children, since absence from education may increase known safeguarding risks within the family or in the community. Staff must also be alert to signs of children at risk of travelling to conflict zones, female genital mutilation and forced marriage.

At Virginia we monitor pupils' attendance and absence through our daily registers. We monitor attendance and punctuality closely and address poor or irregular attendance, paying close attention to our vulnerable families. We systematically refer pupils' poor attendance to the Local Authority and investigate any unexplained absences. Children who are going abroad for extended period of time, going to stay elsewhere with relatives in the UK, or who are living in a 'private fostering' arrangement are subject to additional monitoring.

The school follows the procedures as set out by the Attendance and Welfare Service. If a child moves house they remain on our school register until their attendance at another school is verified through the Local Authority (LA). In the case of families moving abroad permanently, the LA will be notified and the school will endeavour to contact the school in the country that the family has moved to.

We always notify our local authority when we remove a pupil's name from the school admission register. When removing a pupil's name, the notification to the local authority will include: *(a) the full name of the pupil, (b) the full name and address of any parent with whom the pupil normally resides, (c) two emergency contacts for children, (d) the pupil's future address and destination school, if applicable, and (e) the grounds, in regulation 8, under which the pupil's name is to be removed from the admission register.* We will make reasonable enquiries to establish the whereabouts of the child jointly with the Local Authority before deleting the pupil's name from the register if the deletion is under regulation.

We will also notify the Local Authority within five days of adding a pupil's name to the admission register at a non-standard transition point. The notification must include all the details contained in the admission register for a new pupil. When adding a pupil's name, the notification to the local authority must include all the details contained in the admission register for the new pupil.

When a pupil does not return to school and the whereabouts of the child and their family are not known, the school will make reasonable enquiries and refer the child to the Attendance & Welfare Advisor to support with those enquiries to ascertain the child's whereabouts, and only after these steps have been taken refer to the Local Authority using a Missing Children referral form.

Children missing education are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. Children missing education are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life.

16. ELECTIVE HOME EDUCATION

The school recognises that parents have a legal right to electively home educate their child at home; however, it is expected that the parents' decision to do this is made with their child's best education and best interests at its heart. Staff should be aware that even though most home educated children have a positive experience, this is not the case for all, and home education can mean some children are less visible to the services that are there to keep them safe and supported in line with their needs.

When a parent informs the head teacher of their intention to electively home educate their child, the school will convene and coordinate a meeting between the LA, relevant school staff, parents and all key professionals currently working with the child and family. In accordance with LBTH Policy this meeting has to occur before any final decision is made by the parents, to ensure that the best interests of the child have been taken fully into account and carefully considered. The occurrence of this meeting is especially important when the children have known vulnerabilities including Children known to a Social Worker and SEND children.

17. WHISTLEBLOWING

Whistleblowing is the term used when a worker passes on information concerning wrongdoing. The wrongdoing will typically (although not necessarily) be something you have witnessed at work. An important aspect of accountability and transparency is a mechanism to enable staff to voice concerns about such wrongdoings in a responsible and effective manner. All staff members have a responsibility to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and potential failures in any aspect of the school's safeguarding arrangements and staff should feel confident that such concerns will be taken seriously by the senior leadership team.

The school has a separate Whistle Blowing Policy designed to enable you to raise concerns at a high level and to disclose information which you believe shows malpractice, impropriety, criminal activity and/or dangers to health and safety. Our Whistle Blowing Policy is intended to cover concerns where you reasonably believe that the disclosure tends to show past, present or likely future wrongdoing falling into one or more of the following categories:

- criminal offences (this may include, for example, types of financial impropriety such as fraud);
- unauthorised use or misuse of public funds;
- failure to comply with an obligation set out in law;
- abuse of position, whether or not for personal gain;

- miscarriages of justice;
- endangering someone's health and safety;
- damage to the environment;
- conduct which may damage the Council's reputation;
- other unethical conduct; and
- covering up wrongdoing in the above categories.

Where a staff member feels unable to raise an issue with their employer, or feels that their genuine concerns are not being addressed, they should consider other channels available including:

The NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line 0800 028 0285 which is free & anonymous, more information can be found at nspcc.org.uk/whistleblowing.

18. REPORTING OF ALLEGATIONS AGAINST STAFF & CONCERNS THAT DO NOT MEET THE HARM THRESHOLD

Allegations of harm may indicate that a person who works with children might pose a risk of harm to children if they continue in that role. When an allegation is made against a member of staff including supply staff and volunteers, the school's Managing Allegations Procedure should be followed, and all action taken needs to be in line with KCSIE 2023 Part 4 and the THSCP Supplementary Guidance - Managing Allegations of Abuse against Staff – September 2023.

An allegation is made against a member of staff including supply staff, volunteers, contractors and governors, when an individual has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child;
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she may pose a 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 staff must report all allegations, irrespective of the source, directly to the Head Teacher and ensure that it is put in writing, signed and dated. If the subject of the allegation is the head teacher then the allegation should be directly reported to the Chair of Governors.

On receipt of a report of an allegation, the head teacher will make immediate contact with the Local Authority Designated Officer for an initial discussion. If the allegation concerns the head teacher, then the Chair of Governors shall make contact with the LADO.

When an allegation is made against a supply member of staff, the head teacher will be the case manager and take the lead in contacting the LADO.

When schools receive a report of an allegation relating to an incident that happened when an individual or external organisation was making use of the school premises for activities involving children, the headteacher should seek the advice of the LADO.

Allegations concerning staff who no longer work at the school, or historical allegations will be reported to the police.

LBTH Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO): Melanie Benzie

Email: Melanie.Benzie@towerhamlets.gov.uk or LADO@towerhamlets.gov.uk
Telephone: 020 7364 0677

In accordance with the Early Years Framework registered Early Years settings must notify Ofsted of serious allegations of harms and the actions taken by the setting as soon as is reasonably practicable but no longer than 14 days. A registered provider who, without reasonable excuse, fails to comply with this requirement, commits an offence.

Concerns about staff that do not initially seem to fulfil the allegation criteria set out above are known as Concerns that do not meet the Harm Threshold, at Virginia, called low-level concerns, not because they are insignificant but because they do not initially seem to meet the harm threshold. Staff should report and self-report such concerns in accordance with the school's procedures, which are found in the school's Staff Code of Conduct and Low Level Concerns policy. Contact will be made with the LADO for advice and guidance when appropriate as part of the Head teacher's or Chair of Governor's response to the report.

The Staff Code of Conduct and Low Level Concerns Policy can be found on the school network, reporting record sheets are printed and available on the safeguarding noticeboard in the staffroom and from the DSL.

All staff should understand their responsibility to report all concerns about staff conduct which has taken place at the school or outside of the school including online environments, no matter how small or insignificant they might be perceived to be.

19. STAFF SAFEGUARDING TRAINING INCLUDING TRAINING FOR GOVERNORS

In addition to School Staff, Governors are required to have compulsory safeguarding training as part of their induction and to maintain their knowledge through regular safeguarding training and updates. The safeguarding training at induction and indeed as part of continuous professional development should include Online Safety covering among other things an understanding of the expectations, applicable roles, and responsibilities in relation to filtering and monitoring systems in place at the school. Through regular safeguarding training and updates staff are given the relevant skills and knowledge to safeguard children effectively and governors will be empowered and equipped to provide strategic challenge and gain assurance that effective safeguarding arrangements in place.

Whole school safeguarding and child protection training is delivered every year and regular updates are shared frequently. This is a rolling training schedule which considers newly recruited staff. Attendance will be recorded and when staff are unable to attend training the DSL is responsible for organising a 'Mop Up' Safeguarding and Child Protection' training. SLT meetings include a standing safeguarding item and regular updates and notices are communicated to staff through weekly '60 Second Safeguarding' briefings.

Every Summer, the updated version of KCSIE Part One is given to all staff to read over the break. In September all staff sign declaration of having read and understood KSCIE Part One. The DSL monitors this, records in the SCR and delivers any specific training coming from feedback.

Safeguarding and Child Protection training will typically make up 2 hours training for all staff. It is built around the content of the KCSIE 2023 and whilst specifically highlights legislation changes it also is an opportunity to teach / remind staff about categories of abuse and forms of risk children and young people can be exposed to. The training is an opportunity to remind staff of the core safeguarding principles linked to the school values, the importance of other safeguarding policies including the Code of Conduct & Low Level Concerns Policy and Positive Behaviour Policy.

It is required that all governors complete safeguarding training. They are directed to and have access to online training materials '*Safeguarding for Governance*' through the Governor Hub. This is 3.5 hours course and must be completed by the course of the year. Governors are also invited to attend the whole staff training at the start of the academic year. This is to provide contextual safeguarding information and is additional to the required Safeguarding for Governance course.

Members of the safeguarding team are trained at 'Designated' level and this training is ongoing. They also receive regular bulletins via email and members of the team attend safeguarding forums three times a year delivered by the local authority. Training requirements and content are updated regularly and are in line with local safeguarding arrangements. All staff are then required to read at least Part 1 of the KCSIE, they declare their understanding and this is recorded in the Single Central Record in September of every year.

Supply staff and visitors are informed of the school's child protection procedures on arrival at the school by the school office and through the VPS Safeguarding leaflet. New staff and volunteers complete safeguarding and child protection awareness training within the initial weeks of their induction at the school.

20. VISITORS

All visitors report to reception and are required to sign in and is given a visitor's lanyard on arrival. It is a requirement for the visitor to wear this for the duration of their visit. Staff are made aware that if they identify an individual who they do not recognise and who is not wearing a visitor's lanyard then they are to politely challenge this individual. The identity of contractors is always checked upon their arrival. When we accept visitors, planned or unplanned, our procedures depend upon their role and the level of vetting checks they have completed. Any contractor or employee of contractors are required to have been subject to appropriate level of DBS checks. Contractors for whom it is necessary to engage in regulated activity require an enhanced DBS with Barred List Check. For those visitors who are not engaging in regulated activity but do have the opportunity for regular contact with children, our expectation is for them to be made subject to an Enhanced DBS but without the Barred List check. The DSL and SBM work together to make decisions about specific and necessary checks for regular visitors who undertake different tasks within the school. Where a visitor has not been subject to the appropriate level of safeguarding checks then and is therefore non-compliant with our

safeguarding requirements, the SBM and DSL would work together to decide on the appropriate level of supervision necessary dependent on the circumstances. This would be communicated to the visitor.

When a Social Worker, Police Officer or another professional visits the school to meet with a child as part of statutory investigations or other work, the ultimate safeguarding responsibility remains with the school. The school is aware of the need for the child to have an appropriate adult when interviewed by the Police in accordance with the [PACE Code C statutory guidance](#).

21. EXTENDED SCHOOL AND OFF-SITE ARRANGEMENTS

Extended and off-site activities are subject to a risk assessment and the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and safeguarding procedures apply where there is direct management and supervision from the school.

When pupils attend off-site activities, including day and residential visits, the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and safeguarding procedures apply to the looking after the children in our care whilst off site. The school will seek assurance that the organisation has effective safeguarding policies and procedures in place and that risk assessments have been carried out and shared with our staff.

Where services or activities are provided separately by another organisation outside of normal school hours, the school will seek assurance that the organisation has effective safeguarding policies and procedures in place. This applies regardless of whether or not the children who attend any of these services or activities are pupils on the school register. The safeguarding standards expected of these external organisations, when they are not currently regulated, are set out in the Department for Education's Keeping Children Safe during community activities, after school-clubs and tuition: non-statutory guidance for providers running out-of-school activities (April 2022). The school will ensure that all safeguarding requirements are set out clearly in the lease or hire agreement with the organisation, as a condition of use and occupation of the school premises; and that failure to comply would lead to the termination of the agreement.

22. IDENTIFYING ABUSE

'Abuse' is a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. All staff are aware that children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children may be abused by an adult or adults or by another child or children.

All staff should be aware that safeguarding incidents and/or behaviours can be associated with factors outside the school and/or can occur between children outside of these environments.

All staff, but especially the designated safeguarding lead and deputies should consider whether children are at risk of abuse or exploitation in situations outside their family home. All staff should therefore apply a Contextual Safeguarding approach when safeguarding children.

23. INDICATORS OF ABUSE

Physical Abuse - may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. *Physical Abuse* is when a child suffers

physical injury as a result of deliberate infliction or knowingly not preventing injury by a parent/carer. Physical abuse is deliberately physically hurting a child. Physical abuse can happen in any family, but children may be more at risk if their parents have problems with drugs, alcohol and/or mental health or if they live in a home where domestic abuse happens. Physical abuse can also occur outside the family environment. Babies and disabled children also have a higher risk of suffering physical abuse. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Some of the following signs may be indicators of physical abuse:

- children with frequent injuries;
- children with unexplained or unusual fractures or broken bones;
- children with unexplained:
 - bruises or cuts;
 - burns or scalds; or
 - bite marks.

Sexual Abuse - involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. It is the involvement of children or young people in sexual activities that they neither comprehend nor are able to give informed consent to. Sexual abuse is any sexual activity with a child. Staff are aware that many children and young people who are victims of sexual abuse do not recognise themselves as such. A child may not understand what is happening and may not even understand that it is wrong. Sexual abuse can have a long-term impact on mental health. This includes failure on the part of a parent/carer to protect their child from exposure to or involvement in sexual activity. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Some of the following signs may be indicators of sexual abuse;

- Children who display knowledge or interest in sexual acts inappropriate to their age.
- Children who use sexual language or have sexual knowledge that you wouldn't expect them to have.
- Children who ask others to behave sexually or play sexual games.
- Children with physical sexual health problems, including soreness in the genital and anal areas, sexually transmitted infections or underage pregnancy.

Emotional Abuse - includes bullying, withdrawal of love and affection, lack of or poor parent/child attachment, lack of positive regard. Exposure to domestic violence in the home environment is also regarded as emotional abuse. Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child. It is also sometimes called psychological abuse and it can have severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's emotional development. Although the effects of emotional abuse might take a long time to be recognisable, practitioners will be in a position to observe it – for example, in the way that a parent interacts with their child. Emotional abuse may involve deliberately telling a child that they are worthless, or unloved and inadequate. It may include not giving a child opportunity to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. Emotional abuse may involve serious bullying – including online bullying through social networks,

online games or mobile phones – by a child’s peers. Some of the following signs may be indicators of emotional abuse:

- children who are excessively withdrawn, fearful, or anxious about doing something wrong;
- parents or carers who withdraw their attention from their child, giving the child the ‘cold shoulder’;
- parents or carers blaming their problems on their child; and
- parents or carers who humiliate their child – for example, by name-calling or making negative comparisons.

Neglect

Neglect can be difficult to define and consequently is under-reported and underestimated. Neglect co-exists with other forms of maltreatment. It is mainly defined as the failure of adults to meet children’s basic human needs (food, warmth, shelter, hygiene) or the abdication of responsibility to provide a safe and secure environment for children. Neglect is a pattern of failing to provide for a child’s basic needs, whether it be adequate food, clothing, hygiene, supervision or shelter. It is likely to result in the serious impairment of a child’s health or development. It is vital that we ensure the child’s voice is heard when working to address or intervene with cases of neglect.

Children who are neglected often also suffer from other types of abuse. It is important that practitioners remain alert and do not miss opportunities to take timely action. However, while you may be concerned about a child, neglect is not always straightforward to identify. Neglect may occur if a parent becomes physically or mentally unable to care for a child. A parent may also have an addiction to alcohol or drugs, which could impair their ability to keep a child safe or result in them prioritising buying drugs or alcohol over food, clothing or warmth for the child. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal drug or alcohol abuse.

Some of the following signs may be indicators of neglect;

- children who are living in a home that is indisputably dirty or unsafe;
- children who are left hungry or dirty;
- children who are left without adequate clothing, e.g. not having a winter coat;
- children who are living in dangerous conditions, i.e., around drugs, alcohol or violence;
- children who are often angry, aggressive or self-harm;
- children who fail to receive basic health care; and
- parents who fail to seek medical treatment when their children are ill or are injured.

Level 3 and Level 4 cases of neglect can be distinguished in the following way;

- Level 3; Child needs are secondary to the adults. Carers are not clear about how to meet child’s needs and do not always accept advice or act on it. They need help to understand the likely impact on the child and why change is necessary. In this case the child presents with complex and multiple needs and a referral to Children’s Services is necessary to ensure access to statutory services.
- Level 4; Child’s needs are not considered. Carers do not meet child’s needs, are hostile to advice, do not recognise the impact of the circumstances on the child’s well-being and do not accept the need for action or change. In this case immediate referral to Children’s Services is required.

The school is aware of the borough’s [LBTH Neglect Guidance](#) toolkit and all staff should understand their important frontline role in identifying children who may be suffering from Neglect.

24. VOICE OF THE CHILD

All those with a responsibility to safeguard children need to recognise that it takes great courage for a child to share a concern and speak up about any form of abuse especially child sexual abuse.

There are many reasons why children are not able to articulate what they are experiencing. Children may feel embarrassed, humiliated, or are currently being threatened by the perpetrator of abuse. Also, children may not feel ready or know how to tell a trusted adult that they are being abused, exploited, or neglected. They may not even realise that their experiences are harmful.

The barriers preventing a child communicating their concerns may be connected to their vulnerability, disability, sexual orientation, or language. The child's behaviour including misbehaviour may be the first sign that a child has experienced harm. Staff will therefore exhibit professional curiosity and understand that a child may be communicating a concern through their actions and behaviours and take a safeguarding approach when responding to behaviours.

Staff need to be aware of and promote the systems in place at the school which enable children to share their concerns and report abuse confidently. Children need to be assured that their concerns will be taken seriously by staff and action will be taken to safeguard and protect them. It is also important that staff determine how best to build safe and trusted relationships with children and young people which facilitates communication and the sharing of concerns.

Staff need to be aware of and promote the systems in place at the school which enable children to share their concerns and report abuse confidently, because they know that their concerns will be taken seriously by staff and action will be taken to safeguard and protect them.

At Virginia we work to a set of values. These values which inform the way we interact and educate. The school values permeate through all areas of school life. They are woven into the curriculum where possible, explicitly and implicitly taught. They are systematically made the theme for assemblies for all children and the language of our values are heard in every interaction throughout the school. Staff model them and children are taught them. They are used as tools alongside Rights Respecting which support their social and emotional growth and are part of how we keep them safe, and how they keep themselves and each other safe. Having high expectations of everyone means we build a culture of safeguarding within the school amongst both staff and children alike. Children know we are there to keep them safe and if they are at any point they feel less than safe they are taught how to respond, who to share it with and equally what an appropriate response would be.

A series of teaching tools and systems are in place across the school which are promoted to facilitate children voicing their concerns and reporting abuse such as but not limited to:

- UNCRC Rights Respecting Bronze school
- Zones of Regulation required to be taught and engaged with across Nursery to Year 6.
- Daily Zones of Regulation check ins as part of register and teaching teams to circle back to children wanting/needing support and time to talk.
- Restorative chats are part of any behaviour incident.
- Worry boxes in classrooms where children can communicate to their teaching teams.
- The Space - lunch time child self-referral support group/safe space.
- Targeted check in's for vulnerable children.
- 2 trained ELSA support staff who run weekly interventions where children can communicate concerns.

SAFEGUARDING ISSUES

25. CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Child Sexual Exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. CSE occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child 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. Apart from age other factors that could make a child more vulnerable to exploitation, include gender, sexual identity, cognitive ability, learning difficulties, communication ability, physical strength, status, and access to economic or other resources.

CSE can include both contact (penetrative and non-penetrative acts) and non-contact sexual activity such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse including via the internet. CSE can occur over time or be a one-off occurrence and may occur without the child or young person's immediate knowledge (e.g. through others copying videos or images they have created and posted on social media).

CSE can affect any child or young person (male or female) under the age of 18 years, including 16 and 17 year olds who can legally consent to have sex. Some children may not realise they are being exploited, as they may believe they are in a genuine romantic relationship. Children may also be exploited by other children, who themselves may be experiencing exploitation – where this is the case, it is important that the child perpetrator is also recognised as a victim.

Staff should be vigilant and be aware of the following indicators of CSE, which is by no means an exhaustive list, and reports all concerns immediately to the DSL:

- children who are in possession of multiple phones and overly anxious to check their phones
- children who experience sudden changes in behaviour e.g. looking agitated, children who want to leave the school premises at lunchtime
- children who have older boyfriends or girlfriends;
- children who suffer from sexually transmitted infections or become pregnant.
- children who appear with unexplained gifts or new possessions;
- children who associate with other young people involved in exploitation;
- children who suffer from changes in emotional well-being;
- children who misuse drugs and alcohol;
- children who go missing for periods of time or regularly come home late; and
- children who regularly miss school or education or do not take part in education.

Child sexual exploitation is a complex form of abuse and it can be difficult for those working with children to identify and assess. The indicators for child sexual exploitation can sometimes be mistaken for 'normal adolescent behaviours'. It requires knowledge, skills, professional curiosity and an assessment which analyses the risk factors and personal circumstances of individual children to ensure that the signs and symptoms are interpreted correctly and appropriate support is given. Even where a young person is old enough to legally consent to sexual activity, *'the law states that consent is only valid where they make a choice and have the freedom and capacity to make that choice'*. If a child feels they have no other meaningful choice, are under the influence of harmful substances or fearful of

what might happen if they don't comply (all of which are common features in cases of child sexual exploitation), consent cannot legally be given whatever the age of the child.

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

One of the key factors found in most cases of child sexual exploitation is the presence of some form of exchange (sexual activity in return for something) for the victim and/or perpetrator or facilitator. Where it is the victim who is offered, promised or given something they need or want, the exchange can include both tangible (such as money, drugs or alcohol) and intangible rewards (such as status, protection or perceived receipt of love or affection). It is critical to remember the unequal power dynamic within which this exchange occurs and to remember that the receipt of something by a child/young person does not make them any less of a victim.

It is also important to note that the prevention of something negative can also fulfil the requirement for exchange: for example a child who engages in sexual activity to stop someone carrying out a threat to harm his/her family. While there can be gifts or treats involved in other forms of sexual abuse (e.g., a father who sexually abuses but also buys the child toys) it is most likely referred to as child sexual exploitation if the 'exchange', as the core dynamic at play, results in financial gain for or enhanced status of, the perpetrator. Where the gain is only for the perpetrator/facilitator, there is most likely a financial gain (money, discharge of a debt or free/discounted goods or services) or increased status as a result of the abuse. If sexual gratification, or exercise of power and control, is the only gain for the perpetrator (and there is no gain for the child/young person) this would not normally constitute child sexual exploitation, but should be responded to as a different form of child sexual abuse (*Child Sexual Exploitation, February 2017*).

For further information staff can read the [Home Office Statutory Guidance](#) on Child Sexual Exploitation as well as speaking to the DSL.

At Virginia we understand that our children are growing up in an increasingly complex world which presents opportunities, on and offline, but also challenges and risks. Our aim is for our PSHE curriculum to teach our children how to be critical thinkers and how to keep themselves healthy, but also how to successfully manage their personal and social lives in a positive way. We want our children to develop positive personal attributes which are embedded in our school values: *the ability to care for each other and keep each other safe, be kind, be effective communicators and to work together, celebrating and respecting difference*. PSHE is taught sensitively and inclusively with an understanding that this subject is key in enabling our children to cultivate healthy respectful relationships in all contexts. We value teaching children about their own mental wellbeing: we believe it is a priority to ensure their happiness. We want to empower children to face life's challenges, with a knowledge and the capability to take care of themselves and keep themselves healthy. By fostering pupil wellbeing, nurturing self-belief and enabling them to develop resilience we aim to help them become successful and productive members of society who believe they can achieve their goals.

26. CHILD CRIMINAL EXPLOITATION INCLUDING COUNTY LINES

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

CCE can include children being forced to work in cannabis factories, being coerced into moving drugs or money across the country through County Lines, forced to shoplift or pickpocket, or to threaten other young people. They can also be forced or manipulated into committing vehicle crime or threatening/committing serious violence to others.

Children can become trapped by this type of exploitation as perpetrators can threaten victims (and their families) with violence, or entrap and coerce them into debt. They may be coerced into carrying weapons such as knives or begin to carry a knife for a sense of protection from harm from others. As children involved in criminal exploitation often commit crimes themselves, their vulnerability as victims is not always recognised by adults and professionals, (particularly older children), and they are not treated as victims despite the harm they have experienced. They may still have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears to be something they have agreed or consented to.

All staff should be aware that girls as well as boys can be risk of CCE. It is important for staff to note that boys or girls being criminally exploited are at higher risk of being sexually exploited.

- Staff need to be aware of some of the indicators of CCE:
- Children who are in possession of multiple phones and overly anxious to check their phones
- Children who experience sudden changes in behaviour e.g. looking agitated, children who want to leave the school premises at lunchtime
- children who appear with unexplained gifts or new possessions;
- children who associate with other young people involved in exploitation;
- children who suffer from changes in emotional well-being;
- children who misuse drugs and alcohol;
- children who go missing for periods of time or regularly come home late; and
- children who regularly miss school or education or do not take part in education.

County Lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of “deal line”. This activity can happen locally as well as across the UK - no specified distance of travel is required. Children and vulnerable adults are exploited to move, store and sell 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 (mainstream and special), further and higher educational institutions, pupil referral units, children’s homes and care homes.

Children are also increasingly being targeted and recruited online using social media. Children can easily become trapped by this type of exploitation as county lines gangs can manufacture drug debts which need to be worked off or threaten serious violence and kidnap towards victims (and their families) if they attempt to leave the county lines network.

Many of the indicators of children involved in County Lines are as described above under CCE. However, in addition they can include children who:

- go missing from education and/or home and subsequently found in areas away from their home;
- have been the victim or perpetrator of serious violence (e.g. knife crime);
- are involved in receiving requests for drugs via a phone line, moving drugs, handing over and collecting money for drugs;
- are exposed to techniques such as ‘plugging’, where drugs are concealed internally to avoid detection;

- are found in accommodation that they have no connection with, often called a ‘traphouse or cuckooing’ or hotel room where there is drug activity;
- owe a ‘debt bond’ to their exploiters;
- have their bank accounts used to facilitate drug dealing

Our staff at Virginia Primary are alert to the increase vulnerability of children ***under 10 years old*** being exploited because they are under the age of criminal responsibility.

Further information on the signs of a child’s involvement in county lines is available in guidance published by the Home Office and The Children’s Society [County Lines Toolkit For Professionals](#).

27. SERIOUS YOUTH VIOLENCE

All staff are aware of indicators, which may signal that children are at risk from, or are involved with serious violent crime. These may include increased absence from school, a change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups, a significant decline in performance, signs of self-harm or a significant change in wellbeing, or signs of assault or unexplained injuries. Unexplained gifts or new possessions could also indicate that children have been approached by, or are involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs.

28. ONLINE HARMS

Children should have the right to explore the digital environment but also the right to be safe when on it. However, technology often provides the platform that facilitates harm, and the use of technology has become a significant component of many safeguarding issues. Examples of which include child sexual exploitation; child criminal exploitation; radicalisation; sexual predation/grooming; and forms of child-on-child abuse such as cyberbullying and nudes and semi-nudes.

In many cases abuse will take place concurrently via online channels and in daily life. Children can also abuse other children online, which can take the form of abusive, harassing, and misogynistic messages, the non-consensual sharing of indecent images, especially around chat groups, and the sharing of abusive images and pornography, to those who do not want to receive such content. In accordance with Behaviour in Schools. Advice for headteachers and school staff (September 2022), the school promotes as part of its culture of excellent standards of behaviour that the same standards of behaviour are expected online as apply offline, and that every pupil should be treated with kindness, respect and dignity.

An effective approach to online safety empowers a school to protect and educate the whole school community in their use of technology and establishes mechanisms to identify, intervene in, and escalate any incident where appropriate.

The breadth of issues classified within online safety is considerable, but can be categorised into four areas of risk:

- Content: being exposed to illegal, inappropriate or harmful material; for example, pornography, fake news, racism, prejudice-based content, misogyny, self-harm, suicide, anti-Semitism, radicalisation and extremism;

- Contact: being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users; for example peer to peer pressure, commercial advertising as well as adults posing as children or young adults with the intention of grooming or exploiting them for sexual, criminal; financial or other purposes;
- Conduct: personal online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm; for example, making, sending and receiving explicit images (e.g. consensual or non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes), and/or pornography, sharing other explicit images and online bullying.
- Commerce: risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing and or financial scams. When pupils are at risk of phishing, school can reports concerns to the Anti-Phishing Working Group (<https://apwg.org/>).

Cybercrime is criminal activity committed using computers and/or the internet. It is broadly categorised as either 'cyber-enabled' (crimes that can happen off-line but are enabled at scale and at speed on-line) or 'cyber dependent' (crimes that can be committed only by using a computer).

When there are concerns about a child in this area, staff should notify the DSL, who will consider referring the child into the Cyber Choices programme (cyberchoices.uk). It aims to intervene where young people are at risk of committing, or being drawn into, low level cyber-dependent offences and divert them to a more positive use of their skills and interests.

We understand that Keeping Children Safe in Education obliges schools to ensure appropriate filters and appropriate monitoring systems are in place and children cannot gain access harmful or inappropriate material but at the same time be careful that over blocking does not lead to unreasonable restrictions as to what children can be taught with regards to online teaching and safeguarding. We understand that pupils who had 'managed' systems had a better knowledge and understanding of how to stay safe than those in schools with 'locked down' systems. Pupils were more vulnerable overall when schools used locked down systems because they were not given enough opportunities to learn how to assess and manage risk for themselves. The school subscribes to LGfL, which uses a sophisticated content filter to ensure that as far as possible, only appropriate content from the Internet finds its way into school. Whilst this filtering technology is robust and generally effective at blocking unsuitable material, it is still possible for unsuitable material to occasionally get past the filter.

- *All pupils and staff have been issued with clear guidelines on what to do if this happens, and parents will be informed where necessary.*
- *Pupils or staff who deliberately try and access unsuitable materials will be dealt with according to the rules outlined elsewhere in this document.*

Classroom and user management

The school uses **SENSO**, a network management and monitoring tool that reports any misuse or violation of the school's filtering strategy to the ICTCo

- *Key words will trigger a report, and categories include Terrorism, Bullying, Gambling etc.*
- *The report is sent directly to the ICTCo and Technician*
- *Issues arising from this monitoring will be reported to the relevant SLT/Safeguarding staff member*

Security and virus protection

The school subscribes to the LA/LGfL Antivirus software program, which uses Sophos and Norton Antivirus software. The software is monitored and updated regularly by the school technical support staff

- *Any software messages or pop-up screens reporting evidence of viral infection should always be reported immediately to the ICTCO/ICT technician.*

Filtering systems are only ever a tool in helping to safeguard children when online and schools have an obligation to “consider how children may be taught about safeguarding, including online, through teaching and learning opportunities, as part of providing a broad and balanced curriculum”.

In accordance with the Prevent Duty the school has appropriate filtering and monitoring systems in place when children access the internet via school devices and when using the school network. The school meets the Department for Education’s Filtering and Monitoring Standards through:

- identifying and assigning roles and responsibilities to manage filtering and monitoring systems.
- reviewing filtering and monitoring provision at least annually.
- blocking harmful and inappropriate content without unreasonably impacting teaching and learning.
- having effective monitoring strategies in place that meet their safeguarding needs.

We are committed to ensuring that Online Safety is a running and interrelated theme throughout its safeguarding arrangements including policy and procedure, the curriculum, staff training and induction, the role of the DSL, and parental engagement. This includes promoting an understanding of the expectations, applicable roles and responsibilities in relation to filtering and monitoring systems in place when children access the internet via school devices and the school network.

As part of a whole school approach the school is committed to ensure that all parents have the opportunity to be empowered and upskilled in keeping children safe online through the sharing of Online Safety information, advice and guidance including the offer of workshops to support parents for example in installing safeguards on to their children’s digital devices.

At Virginia, we commit to undertaking an annual online safety risk assessment, assessing our online safety provision that would include filtering (and monitoring) provision. We engage with a self-review system; www.360safe.org.uk that supports us in assessing our wider online safety policy and practice. The risk assessment should consider the risks that both children and staff may encounter online, together with associated mitigating actions and activities.

However, it is the role of all staff to identify opportunities to thread online safety through all school activities, both outside the classroom and within the curriculum, supporting curriculum/stage/subject leads, and making the most of unexpected learning opportunities as they arise (which have a unique value for pupils).

Whenever overseeing the use of technology (devices, the internet, new technology such as augmented reality, etc) in school or setting as homework tasks, all staff should encourage sensible use, monitor what pupils are doing and consider potential dangers and the age appropriateness of websites (ask your DSL what appropriate filtering and monitoring policies are in place).

Equally, all staff should carefully supervise and guide pupils when engaged in learning activities involving online technology (including, extra-curricular, extended school activities if relevant and remote teaching), supporting them with search skills, critical thinking (e.g. fake news), age appropriate materials and signposting, and legal issues such as copyright and data law. saferesources.lgfl.net has regularly updated theme-based resources, materials and signposting for teachers and parents.

Remote Teaching

Staff receive training on how to keep themselves and the children safe whilst delivering online lessons if ever necessary. This includes specific training on how the teacher had the greatest amount of

control in relation to managing and interacting with students and the safest settings which should be consistently adopted by all staff.

Acceptable Use Agreements for Staff and Children

Our Rules for Responsible ICT Use: *Keep Safe – Keep Smart* help children apply our school values whilst being online. Children are taught, in the context of our school values, how to keep themselves and each other safe and happy at school and/or at home. We have created a multi-point contract which focus' on learning in school and at home and maintain positive relationships. The contract draws children's attention to the positive power of the internet and empowers children to use it for good. It also references what children can do to recognise and assess risk and what action to take when they don't feel safe.

Parents also required to read, understand and sign the User Agreements which complement our schools Remote Classroom Charters.

Further information can be found in our Online Safety Policy.

Reporting Concerns re Online Safety

Staff should report Online Safety concerns about pupils to the Designated Safeguarding Lead as with all other safeguarding concerns. When it comes to the safety and well-being of the child, the response to the risks and harms that children may experience in the online or digital environment should be no different than the offline, face to face world. For most children there is little distinction between the online and face to face interactions as the two environments often intersect with one another in their daily lives. Staff should recognise that children's experience of abuse in the digital environment may be even more pronounced, where the identity of the abuser is unknown and the abuse can continue 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Staff are also aware that children with known vulnerabilities such as SEND, LAC and PLAC children and Children known to a Social Worker, may be more vulnerable to harm and exploitation in the online and digital environments.

It is vital that all staff recognise that online-safety is a part of child protection and safeguarding procedure. Children Protection or Safeguarding concerns must be handled in the same way as any other safeguarding concern; safeguarding is often referred to as a jigsaw puzzle, so all stakeholders should err on the side of talking to the online-safety lead / designated safeguarding lead or DDSL to contribute to the overall picture or highlight what might not yet be a problem.

Support staff will often have a unique insight and opportunity to find out about issues first in the playground, corridors, toilets and other communal areas outside the classroom (particularly relating to bullying and sexual harassment and violence).

School procedures for dealing with online-safety will be mostly detailed in the following policies:

- Child Protection Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Prevent Risk Assessment
- Data Protection Policy, agreements and other documentation (e.g. privacy statement and consent forms for data sharing, image use etc)

Virginia commits to take all reasonable precautions to ensure online safety, but recognises that incidents will occur both inside school and outside school (and that those from outside school will continue to impact on pupils when they come into school or during extended periods away from

school). All members of the school are encouraged to report issues swiftly to allow us to deal with them quickly and sensitively through the school's escalation processes.

The school will actively seek support from other agencies as needed (i.e. the local authority, LGfL, UK Safer Internet Centre's Professionals' Online Safety Helpline, NCA CEOP, Prevent Officer, Police, Internet Watch Foundation). We will inform parents/carers of online-safety incidents involving their children, and the Police where staff or pupils engage in or are subject to behaviour which we consider is particularly disturbing or breaks the law.

29. DOMESTIC ABUSE

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recognises the impact of domestic abuse on children as victims in their own right, if they see, hear or experience the effects of abuse. The statutory definition of domestic abuse recognises that domestic abuse may occur in different types of relationships, including ex-partners and family members and is not restricted to the family home. According to the definition the person perpetrating the abuse and the person to whom the abusive behaviour is directed towards must be aged 16 or over and be "personally connected". Domestic Abuse may involve a range of abusive behaviours, which may be a single incident or a pattern of abuse, including physical, sexual, emotional and economic abuse, and coercive and controlling behaviour.

Staff should be aware that all children can witness and be adversely affected by domestic abuse in the context of their home life where domestic abuse occurs between family members. Experiencing domestic abuse and/or violence can have a serious, long lasting emotional and psychological impact on children and have a detrimental and long-term impact on their health, well-being, development, and ability to learn. In some cases, a child may blame themselves for the abuse or may have had to leave the family home because of the abuse. Children can also experience domestic abuse within their own intimate relationships. This form of child-on-child abuse is sometimes referred to as 'teenage relationship abuse'.

In response to safeguarding reports received about children involving Domestic Abuse, the school will make contact with Children's Social Care for advice and guidance. Where appropriate we will complete a DASH Risk Assessment with the individual reporting as a victim of Domestic Abuse.

Virginia has signed up to the Metropolitan Police's Operation Encompass project. Operation Encompass ensures that when police are called to an incident of domestic abuse, and where there are children in the household, the police will notify the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead before the child arrives at school the following day, so that the school can provide 'silent support' to the child and follow up with Children's Social Care where appropriate.

30. SO-CALLED HONOUR-BASED ABUSE

So-called 'honour'-based abuse (HBA) encompasses incidents or crimes which have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or the community, including female genital

mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, and practices such as breast ironing. Abuse committed in the context of preserving 'honour' often involves a wider network of family or community pressure and can include multiple perpetrators. All forms of so-called Honour Based Abuse are abuse (regardless of the motivation) and should be handled and escalated as such. Professionals in all agencies, and individuals and groups in relevant communities, need to be alert to the possibility of a child being at risk of Honoured Based Abuse, or already having suffered Honour Based Abuse.

If staff have a concern regarding a child who might be at risk of Honour Based Abuse or who has suffered from Honour Based Abuse, they should speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, who will follow local safeguarding procedures.

Female Genital Mutilation

FMG is also known as female circumcision or cutting and by other terms such as sunna, gudniin, halalays, tahur, megrez and khitan, among others. FGM is usually carried out on young girls between infancy and the age of 15, most commonly before puberty starts. It's illegal in the UK and is child abuse. It's very painful and can seriously harm the health of women and girls. It can also cause long-term problems with sex, childbirth and mental health.

FGM is often performed by traditional circumcisers or cutters who do not have any medical training. But in some countries, it may be done by a medical professional. Anaesthetics and antiseptics are not generally used, and FGM is often carried out using knives, scissors, scalpels, pieces of glass or razor blades. FGM often happens against a girl's will without her consent, and girls may have to be forcibly restrained. FGM is carried out for various cultural, religious and social reasons within families and communities in the mistaken belief that it'll benefit the girl in some way (for example, as a preparation for marriage or to preserve her virginity). But there are no acceptable reasons that justify FGM. It's a harmful practice that has no health benefits.

Communities at particular risk of FGM in the UK originate from: Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Indonesia, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Liberia, Malaysia, Mali, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Yemen.

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, FGM is a criminal offence under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003. [See also the HM Government Multi-Agency Statutory Guidance on FGM, Updated 30th July 2020]

It is an offence to;

- Perform FGM (including taking a child abroad for FGM)
- Help a girl perform FGM on herself in or outside the UK
- Help anyone perform FGM in the UK
- Help anyone perform FGM outside the UK on a UK national or resident
- Fail to protect a girl for whom you're responsible from FGM

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**, along with regulated health and social care professionals in England and Wales, to report to the police where they discover (either through disclosure by the victim or visual evidence) that FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl under 18. Those failing to report such cases may face disciplinary sanctions. It will be rare for teachers to see visual evidence, and they should **not** be examining pupils or students. Teachers **must** personally report

to the police cases where they discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out. However, teachers should notify the DSL or DDSL of this action as well as reporting the disclosure of FGM in line with school's safeguarding procedures.

The duty on teachers to report to the police does not apply in relation to at risk or suspected cases (i.e. where the teacher does not discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out, either through disclosure by the victim or visual evidence) or in cases where the woman is 18 or over. In these cases, teachers should follow local safeguarding procedures and report concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. If in doubt, staff should speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Forced Marriage

Forced marriage is when a person faces physical pressure to marry (for example, threats, physical violence or sexual violence) or emotional and psychological pressure (eg if they're made to feel like they're bringing shame on their family).

In England and Wales, the practice of Forced Marriage is a criminal offence under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. Since February 2023 it has also been a crime to carry out any conduct whose purpose is to cause a child to marry before their eighteenth birthday, even if violence, threats or another form of coercion are not used. As with the existing forced marriage law, this applies to non-binding, unofficial 'marriages' as well as legal marriages. Schools and colleges can play an important role in safeguarding children from forced marriage. Forced marriage includes:

taking someone overseas to force them to marry (whether or not the forced marriage takes place)
marrying someone who lacks the mental capacity to consent to the marriage (whether they're pressured to or not)

Staff should contact the Forced Marriage Unit if they need advice or information:

Contact: 020 7008 0151 or email fmv@fcdo.gov.uk

Further guidance can be sought through the Forced Marriage Unit's Statutory Guidance and Multi Agency Guidelines [The Right to Choose](#) Updated June 2022]

Virginity Testing and Hymenoplasty

The government has made it illegal to carry out, offer or aid and abet virginity testing or hymenoplasty in any part of the UK, as part of the Health and Care Act 2022.

It is also illegal for UK nationals and residents to do these things outside the UK.

In response to any reports of a child/young person being subject to or at risk of virginity testing or hymenoplasty, the DSL will take action in accordance with the government's non-statutory guidance [Virginity testing and hymenoplasty: multi-agency guidance](#) (July 2022).

Breast Ironing or Breast Flattening

Breast Ironing is the process during which young pubescent girls' breasts are ironed, massaged, flattened and/or pounded down over a period of time (sometimes years) in order for the breasts to disappear or delay the development of the breasts entirely.

Breast flattening usually starts with the first signs of puberty, which can be as young as nine years old and is usually carried out by female relatives. It should also be acknowledged that some adolescent girls and boys may choose to bind their breast using constrictive material due to gender transformation or identity, and this may also cause health problems. Breast Flattening can happen anywhere in the world. What the health consequences of breast flattening or breast ironing? Due to the type of instruments that may be used, the type of force and the lack of aftercare, significant health and developmental issues may occur.

There may also be an impact on the child's social and psychological well-being. In many cases, the abuser thinks they are doing something good for the child by delaying the effects of puberty and the practice is designed to:

- make teenage girls look less “womanly”
- prevent pregnancy and rape
- enable the girl to continue her education
- prevent dishonour being brought upon the family if the girl begins sexual relations outside of marriage
- deter unwanted attention

Staff are aware although there is no specific law within the UK around breast flattening or breast ironing, it is a form of physical abuse and if they are concerned that a girl is at risk of breast flattening, a referral must be made to the DSL or a DDSL.

All forms of so-called Honour Based Abuse are abuse (regardless of the motivation) and should be handled and escalated as such. Professionals in all agencies, and individuals and groups in relevant communities, need to be alert to the possibility of a child being at risk of Honoured Based Abuse, or already having suffered Honour Based Abuse. If staff have a concern regarding a child who might be at risk of Honour Based Abuse or who has suffered from Honour Based Abuse, they should speak to the DSL or DDSL, who will follow local safeguarding procedures.

31. RADICALISATION AND EXTREMISM

Children are vulnerable to extremist ideology and radicalisation. Similar to protecting children from other forms of harms and abuse, protecting children from this risk is part of the school's safeguarding approach.

- **Extremism** is the vocal or active opposition to our fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. This also includes calling for the death of members of the armed forces.
- **Radicalisation** refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and extremist ideologies associated with terrorist groups.
- **Terrorism** is an action that endangers or causes serious violence to a person/people; causes serious damage to property; or seriously interferes or disrupts an electronic system. The use or threat must be designed to influence the government or to intimidate the public and is made for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause.

There is no single way of identifying whether a child is likely to be susceptible to an extremist ideology. Background factors combined with specific influences such as family and friends may contribute to a child's vulnerability. Similarly, radicalisation can occur through many different methods (such as social media or the internet) and settings (such as within the home).

Since July 2015, schools have a legal responsibility to ‘*have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism*’. Children and young people can be influenced by beliefs and opinions held by members of their family and/or community. Children who show sympathy for extremist causes, who glorify violence and/or who advocate messages held by extremist groups may be vulnerable to being drawn into extremism or radicalisation.

We recognise that protecting children from the risks of extremism is part of our school’s wider safeguarding duties. The DSL will ensure they remain up to date with the *Counter Terrorism Local Profile* (CTLP) and receive WRAP training (Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent). The school also takes steps to ensure that appropriate filtering is in place to protect pupils from accessing extremist materials on-line.

We undertake further actions to minimise the risk of children being influenced by extremism. We complete the *Prevent Duty - Risk Assessment* written with reference to The Prevent Duty Guidance. All staff receive Prevent training and are as with other safeguarding risks, alert to changes in children’s behaviour, which could indicate that they may be in need of help or protection. Staff are aware of the potential signs of a child being drawn into radicalization, such as:

- isolating themselves from family and friends;
- talking as if from a scripted speech;
- unwillingness or inability to discuss their views;
- a sudden disrespectful attitude towards others;
- increased levels of anger;
- increased secretiveness around use of the internet.

Children who are at risk of radicalisation may have low self-esteem or be victims of bullying or discrimination. This makes them vulnerable to potentially becoming targets of others with extremist views.

Pupils who cause concern for their extremist views should be referred to child protection agencies using a (MASH) form and emailing to the following addresses:

Prevent.referral@towerhamlets.gov.uk AND MASH@towerhamlets.gov.uk

As a school we complete the Prevent Risk Assessment and Prevent Checklists as part of our Prevent Duty. We ensure that staff training opportunities are built into staff CPD and the curriculum enables pupils to discuss issues of religion, ethnicity and culture, promoting fundamental British Values as part of our broader SMCS content.

In LBTH the Prevent Education Officer is Iona Karrman-Bailey
Iona.Karrman-Bailey@towerhamlets.gov.uk.

In LBTH all Prevent referrals related to children should be made through the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub.

32. CHILD-ON-CHILD ABUSE

Staff must be aware that children may be harmed by other children. Child-on-child abuse can happen both inside and outside of school including online. It is important that all staff recognise the indicators and signs of child-on-child abuse.

Staff should treat all reports of child-on-child abuse very seriously and make it clear that all forms are unacceptable. As with all forms of abuse the occurrence of child-on-child abuse is an infringement of a child's human rights. Abuse is abuse and will never be dismissed as 'banter' or 'part of growing up'. The school adopts a Zero Tolerance Approach to child-on-child abuse.

All staff should recognise that even though there are no reported cases of child-on-child abuse among pupils, such abuse may still be taking place and that it is simply not being reported.

Staff should be aware that it is more likely that boys will be perpetrators of child-on-child abuse and girls will be victims of child-on-child abuse. However, all forms of child-on-child abuse are unacceptable and will not be tolerated at the school.

Staff should recognise that child-on-child abuse can take many forms and may be facilitated by technology, including:

- bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying)
- physical abuse such as biting, hitting, kicking or hair pulling
- sexually harmful behaviour and sexual abuse including inappropriate sexual language, touching, sexual assault or rape
- causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party
- consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes images and/or videos
- teenage relationship abuse – where there is a pattern of actual or threatened acts of physical, sexual or emotional abuse, perpetrated against a current or former partner
- upskirting – taking a picture under a person's clothing without their knowledge and/or permission with the intention of viewing their buttocks or genitals (with or without underwear) to obtain sexual gratification. It is a criminal offence.
- initiation/hazing - used to introduce newcomers into an organisation or group by subjecting them to a series of trials and challenges, which are potentially humiliating, embarrassing or abusive.
- prejudice and discrimination - behaviours which cause a person to feel powerless, worthless or excluded originating from prejudices around belonging, identity and equality, for example, prejudices linked to disabilities, special educational needs, ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds, gender and sexual identity.

Different gender issues can be prevalent when dealing with child-on-child abuse, for example girls being sexually touched/assaulted or boys being subject to initiation/hazing type violence.

Although a child identifying as LGBTQ+ is not in itself a safeguarding concern, such children may be more vulnerable to forms of child-on-child abuse. This includes children who are perceived to be LGBTQ+ even though they do not identify as such. The school is committed to providing a safe space

for LGBTQ+ children to share any concerns they may have and in ensuring an inclusive culture is maintained.

At Virginia our safeguarding procedures which are in place to minimise the risk of Peer on Peer Abuse include the emphasis on Respect as a core values. Staff understand that it is part of their duty to model these values and actively teach them to the children either explicitly or implicitly in our everyday practice. Teachers spend time listening to children when they have concerns, no matter how small, and in these conversations staff model how our values keep us safe. Children understand the importance of keeping ourselves and each other safe and can expect a consistent response from all adults. Staff know the expectation for responding to concerns from children is to record behaviours on a restorative chat form (formally Think It Through sheet) which is passed on to the AHT for Inclusion who records incidents for analysis so patterns of behaviour can be identified and support directed to the right place. Where concerns are greater, the behaviour is recorded on a Serious Incident form and reported to the head teacher, DSL and/or DDSL will respond in a timely manner, prioritising the concern and working to repair the relationship between the children where possible. Children are taught that these situations are sometimes opportunities for emotional growth, acknowledging mistakes, not being shamed but realising there is a value in making amends. Staff are also expected to schedule follow ups with all children involved. We see these situations as opportunities to make sure the children feel successful – even if that takes several attempts and several follow ups. We give immediate consideration to how best to support and protect the victim and the alleged perpetrator (and any other children involved/impacted). We consider the following.

- We consider the wishes of the victim in terms of how they want to proceed.
- We consider the nature of the alleged incident(s)
- We consider the ages and the developmental stages of the children involved;
- We consider any power imbalance between the children. For example, is the alleged perpetrator significantly older, more mature or more confident? Does the victim have a disability or learning difficulty?
- We consider whether the alleged incident is a one-off or a sustained pattern of abuse.
- We consider whether there are ongoing risks to the victim, other children, adult students or school or college staff.

We consider every report on a case-by-case basis. When to inform the alleged perpetrator will be a decision that should be carefully considered. We consider the proportionality of the response. Support and consequences are considered side by side.

33. CHILD-ON-CHILD SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT

All staff must be aware that sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex and it can happen in any environment including schools, the family home as part of intra-familial abuse and via online platforms. It can also occur when a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or a group of children. The abuse may be perpetrated by a younger child towards an older child because of an imbalance of power caused by factors such as height difference or cognitive ability.

As part of school's wider safeguarding culture, staff should maintain an **'it could happen here'** approach in regard to child-on-child sexual violence and sexual harassment and understand that children in the school and the local community may be experiencing such forms of child-on-child abuse, including that facilitated by technology, regardless of the number of reports the DSL receives.

In response to reports of child-on-child abuse school will reassure all victims that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. A victim will never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting sexual violence or sexual harassment. Nor will a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report. As part of the reassurance to children, it will be made clear to children that the law is in place to protect them from abuse rather than to criminalise them.

Staff should be aware that some groups of children are potentially more at risk. Evidence shows girls, children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and LGBTQ+ children are at greater risk.

Staff should be aware of the importance of:

- challenging inappropriate behaviours;
- making clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up;
- not tolerating or dismissing sexual violence or sexual harassment as "banter", "part of growing up", "just having a laugh" or "boys being boys"; and
- challenging physical behaviours (potentially criminal in nature), such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia, pulling down trousers, flicking bras and lifting up skirts. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours will help to normalise them.

Sexual violence offences are defined under the Sexual Offences Act 2003

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

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

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

Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent: A person (A) commits an offence if: s/he intentionally causes another person (B) to engage in an activity, the activity is sexual, B does not

consent to engaging in the activity, and A does not reasonably believe that B consents. (This could include forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party.)

Consent is about having the freedom and capacity to choose. Consent to sexual activity may be given to one sort of sexual activity but not another, e.g. to vaginal but not anal sex or penetration with conditions, such as wearing a condom. Consent can be withdrawn at any time during sexual activity and each time activity occurs.

All Staff need to be aware of the following:

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

Where a report of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault is made, this will be referred to the police. Whilst the age of criminal responsibility is ten, if the alleged perpetrator is under ten, the starting principle of referring to the police remains. In parallel to this the school will make a referral to Children's Services via the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual Harassment is 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature' that can occur online and offline and both inside and outside of school. Sexual harassment is likely to: violate a child's dignity, and/or make them feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated and/or create a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment.

Sexual Harassment may include the following:

- sexual comments, such as: telling sexual stories, making lewd comments, making sexual remarks about clothes and appearance and calling someone sexualised names;
- sexual "jokes" or taunting;
- physical behaviour, such as: deliberately brushing against someone, interfering with someone's clothes (schools and colleges should be considering when any of this crosses a line into sexual violence - it is important to talk to and consider the experience of the victim) and displaying pictures, photos or drawings of a sexual nature; and
- online sexual harassment. This may be standalone, or part of a wider pattern of sexual harassment and/or sexual violence such as:
 - consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes images and/or videos.
 - sharing of unwanted explicit content;
 - upskirting
 - sexualised online bullying
 - unwanted sexual comments and messages, including, on social media
 - sexual exploitation, coercion and threats

On a case-by-case basis the school will liaise with Children's Services and the Police as well as specialist services as part of the immediate response to child-on-child sexual harassment and the ongoing support for all the children involved.

Harmful Sexual Behaviours

Children's sexual behaviour exists on a wide continuum, ranging from normal and developmentally expected to inappropriate, problematic, abusive and violent. Virginia recognises that Harmful Sexual Behaviours can, in some cases, progress on a continuum. It is therefore important for all staff to address inappropriate behaviours to help prevent problematic, abusive and/or violent behaviour in the future. Children displaying harmful sexual behaviours have often experienced their own abuse and trauma.

Virginia Primary School takes seriously its duty to respond appropriately to all reports and concerns about children's sexual behaviours both online and offline, in and outside of the school, including reports of sexual violence and/or sexual harassment. The DSL has completed relevant training in responding to and managing harmful sexual behaviours and will draw upon appropriate resources such as the AIM Checklists and Assessment Tools. The DSL will liaise where appropriate with Children's Services, the Police and other specialist services.

At Virginia we consider Harmful Sexual Behaviours in broad terms. HSB (as set out above) creates an atmosphere that, if not challenged, can normalise inappropriate behaviours and provide an environment that may lead to sexual violence. It is not tolerated in Virginia Primary School.

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

We would carefully consider any report of sexual violence and/or sexual harassment. The DSL (or deputy) will create a complete safeguarding picture and be the most appropriate person to advise on our initial response. As always when concerned about the welfare of a child, we act in the best interests of the child. In all cases, we should follow general safeguarding principles as set out throughout this policy and other guidance and statutes. We give immediate consideration to how best to support and protect the victim and the alleged perpetrator (and any other children involved/impacted). We consider the following.

- We consider the wishes of the victim in terms of how they want to proceed. This is especially important in the context of sexual violence and sexual harassment. Victims should be given as much control as is reasonably possible over decisions regarding how any investigation will be progressed and any support that they will be offered.
- We consider the nature of the alleged incident(s), including whether a crime may have been committed and consideration of harmful sexual behaviour.
- We consider the ages and the developmental stages of the children involved;
- We consider any power imbalance between the children. For example, is the alleged perpetrator significantly older, more mature or more confident? Does the victim have a disability or learning difficulty?

- We consider whether the alleged incident is a one-off or a sustained pattern of abuse.
- We consider whether there are ongoing risks to the victim, other children, adult students or school or college staff.

Reports of rape and assault by penetration are likely to be especially difficult with regard to the victim, and close proximity with the alleged perpetrator is likely to be especially distressing. While we establish the facts of the case and start the process of liaising with Children's Services and the police, the alleged perpetrator would be removed from any classes they share with the victim. We would also consider how best to keep the victim and alleged perpetrator a reasonable distance apart on school premises and on transport to and from the school, where appropriate. These actions are in the best interests of both children and should not be perceived to be a judgment on the guilt of the alleged perpetrator.

For reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment, the proximity of the victim and alleged perpetrator and issues regarding shared classes, sharing school premises and school or college transport should be considered immediately. In all cases, the initial report should be carefully evaluated, reflecting the considerations set out therein. The wishes of the victim, the nature of the allegations and the protection of all children in the school or college will be especially important when considering any immediate actions.

Options to manage the report

We consider every report on a case-by-case basis. When to inform the alleged perpetrator will be a decision that should be carefully considered. Where a report is going to be made to Children's Services and/or the police, then, as a general rule, we would speak to the relevant agency and discuss the next steps and how the alleged perpetrator will be informed of the allegations. However, as per general safeguarding principles, this would not stop us taking immediate action to safeguard children where required. There are four likely scenarios for schools to consider when managing any reports of sexual violence and/or sexual harassment.

1. Manage internally
2. Early help
3. Referrals to Children's Services
4. Reporting to the Police. This will always be the course of action where a physical assault has been alleged, even if the alleged perpetrator is under 10 years of age.

Ongoing response - *Safeguarding and supporting the victim*

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

- Consider the age and the developmental stage of the victim, the nature of the allegations and the potential risk of further abuse. The AIM guidance makes us aware that, by the very nature of sexual violence and sexual harassment, a power imbalance is likely to have been created between the victim and alleged perpetrator.
- The needs and wishes of the victim should be paramount (along with protecting the child) in any response. It is important they feel in as much control of the process as is reasonably possible. Wherever possible, the victim, if they wish, should be able to continue in their normal routine. Overall, the priority should be to make the victim's daily experience as normal as possible, so that school is a safe space for them.

A victim of sexual violence is likely to be traumatised and, in some cases, may struggle in a normal classroom environment. While we should avoid any action that would have the effect of isolating the

victim, in particular from supportive peer groups, there may be times when the victim finds it difficult to maintain a full-time timetable and may express a wish to withdraw from lessons and activities. This should be because the victim wants to, not because it makes it easier to manage the situation. If required, we would provide a physical space for victims to withdraw.

It may be necessary for us to maintain arrangements to protect and support the victim for a long time. We would be prepared for this and should work with Children's Services and other agencies as required.

We would ensure that we do everything we reasonably can to protect the victim from bullying and harassment as a result of any report they have made.

While they should be given all the necessary support to remain in their school, if the trauma results in the victim being unable to do this, alternative provision or a move to another school should be considered to enable them to continue to receive suitable education. This should only be at the request of the victim (and following discussion with their parents or carers).

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

Safeguarding and supporting the alleged perpetrator

The following principles are based on effective safeguarding practice and will help shape any decisions regarding safeguarding and supporting the alleged perpetrator.

- We acknowledge we will have a difficult balancing act to consider. On one hand, we need to safeguard the victim (and the wider pupil/student body) and on the other hand provide the alleged perpetrator with an education, safeguarding support as appropriate and implement any disciplinary sanctions.
- We would consider the age and the developmental stage of the alleged perpetrator and nature of the allegations. Any child is likely to experience stress as a result of being the subject of allegations and/or negative reactions by their peers to the allegations against them.
- Consider the proportionality of the response. Support (and sanctions) should be considered on a case-by-case basis. An alleged perpetrator may potentially have unmet needs (in some cases these may be considerable) as well as potentially posing a risk of harm to other children. Harmful sexual behaviours in young children may be (and often are) a symptom of either their own abuse or exposure to abusive practices and or materials. We would seek advice as appropriate, from Children's Services, specialist sexual violence services and the police.
- It is important that if the alleged perpetrator does move to another educational institution (for any reason), that the new educational institution is made aware of any ongoing support needs and where appropriate, potential risks to other children and staff. The DSL will take responsibility to ensure this happens as well as transferring the child protection file.

34. YOUTH PRODUCED SEXUAL IMAGERY

Youth Produced Sexual Imagery is one of the terms professionals use to describe the sending or posting of nude or semi-nude images, videos or live streams by children and young people under the age of 18 online. The term 'nudes' is used by young people and covers all types of image sharing incidents. Alternative terms used by children include 'dick pics' or 'pics'.

The sharing of nudes and semi-nudes can happen publicly online, in 1:1 messaging or via group chats and closed social media accounts. It could also involve sharing between devices via services like Apple's AirDrop which works offline. Nude or semi-nude images, videos or live streams may include more than one child or young person.

Incidents may also occur where:

- children and young people find nudes and semi-nudes online and share them claiming to be from a peer
- children and young people digitally manipulate an image of a young person into an existing nude online
- images created or shared are used to abuse peers e.g. by selling images online or obtaining images to share more widely without consent to publicly shame. Such images can be shared via web pages and social media accounts called 'Bait Out' pages/accounts.

Creating and sharing nudes and semi-nudes of under-18s (including those created and shared with consent) is illegal.

When handling disclosures of Youth Produced Sexual Imagery, **staff must be aware that it is illegal for staff to view or share such imagery**. Staff should immediately report the disclosure to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Staff understand the following actions are necessary;

- Never view, copy, print, share, store or save the imagery yourself, or ask a child to share or download – **this is illegal**.
- If you have already viewed the imagery by accident (e.g. if a young person has showed it to you before you could ask them not to), report this to the DSL (or equivalent) and seek support.
- Do not delete the imagery or ask the young person to delete it.
- Do not ask the child/children or young person(s) who are involved in the incident to disclose information regarding the imagery. This is the responsibility of the DSL (or equivalent).
- Do not share information about the incident with other members of staff, the young person(s) it involves or their, or other, parents and/or carers.
- Do not say or do anything to blame or shame any young people involved.
- Do explain to them that you need to report it and reassure them that they will receive support and help from the DSL (or equivalent).

The following response is in accordance with UKCIS's non-statutory guidance, *Sharing Nudes and Semi-Nudes. Advice for Education Settings working with Children and Young People 2020*:

Initial response

- The incident should be referred to the DSL as soon as possible
- The DSL should hold an initial review meeting with appropriate school staff.
- There should be subsequent interviews with the young people involved (if appropriate).

- Parents 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 Services and/or the police immediately.

Initial review meeting

The initial review meeting should consider the initial evidence and aim to establish:

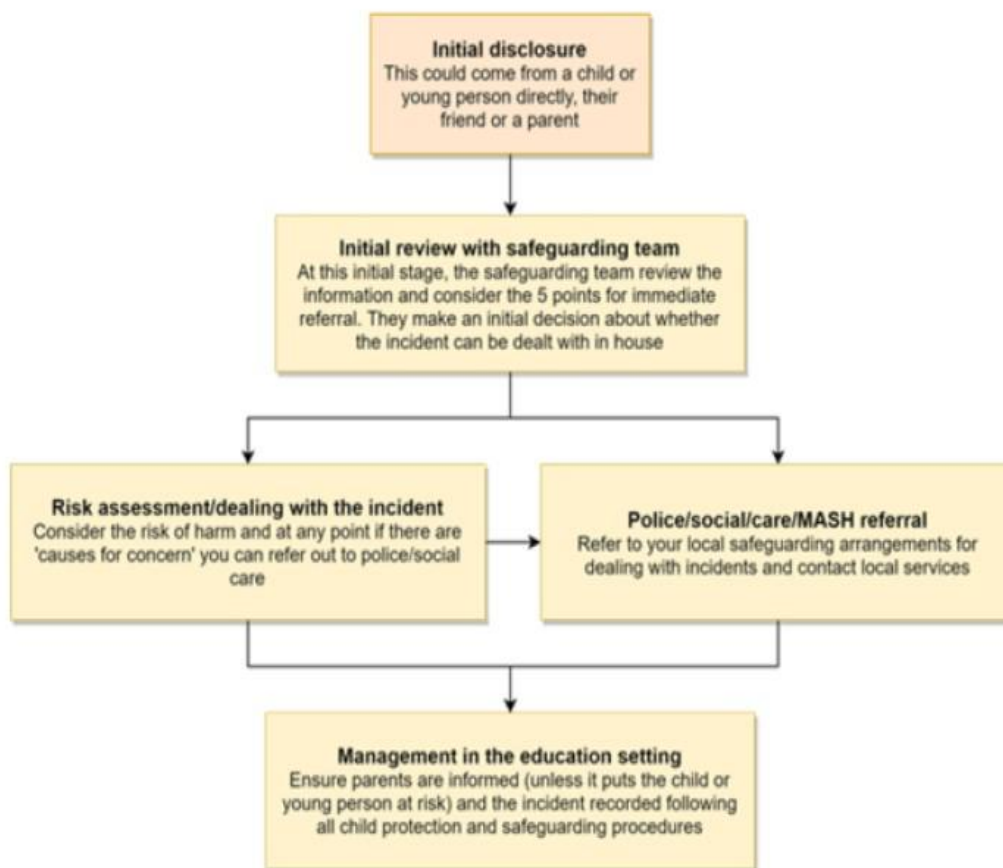
- whether there is an immediate risk to a young person or young people;
- whether a referral should be made to the police and/or Children's Services;
- whether it is necessary to view the imagery in order to safeguard the young person – in most cases, imagery should not be viewed;
- what further information is required to decide on the best response;
- whether the imagery has been shared widely and via what services and/or platforms (this may be unknown);
- whether immediate action should be taken to delete or remove images from devices or online services;
- any relevant facts about the young people involved which would influence risk assessment;
- whether there is a need to contact another setting or individual;
- whether to contact parents or carers of the pupils involved -- in most cases parents should be involved.

An immediate referral to police and/or Children's Services would be made if at this initial stage:

1. the incident involves an adult;
2. there is reason to believe that a young person has been coerced, blackmailed or groomed, or if there are concerns about their capacity to consent (for example, owing to special educational needs);
3. what you know about the imagery suggests the content depicts sexual acts which are unusual for the young person's developmental stage, or are violent;
4. the imagery involves sexual acts and any pupil in the imagery is under 18;
5. you have reason to believe a pupil is or pupils are at immediate risk of harm owing to the sharing of the imagery -- for example, the young person is presenting as suicidal or self-harming.

If none of the above applies, a school may decide to respond to the incident without involving the police or Children's Services (a school can choose to escalate the incident at any time if further information/concerns come to light).

Figure summarises the approach education settings should take when responding to an incident:



35. BULLYING (INCLUDING CYBERBULLYING)

Bullying is a very serious issue that can cause anxiety and distress. All incidences of bullying, including cyber-bullying and prejudice-based bullying should be reported with our Serious Incident form and will be managed through our Anti-Bullying Policy, Positive Behaviour Policy and this Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, in accordance with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 and Behaviour in Schools, Advice for Head teacher and School Staff (September 2022).

36. HOMELESSNESS

Being homeless or being at risk of becoming homeless presents a real risk to a child's welfare. Indicators that a family may be at risk of homelessness include household debt, rent arrears, domestic abuse and anti-social behaviour, as well as the family being asked to leave a property. We understand that while referrals and or discussion with the Local Housing Authority should be progressed as appropriate, and in accordance with local procedures, this does not, and should not, replace a referral into Children's Services where a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 places a new legal duty on English councils so that everyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness will have access to meaningful help including an assessment of their needs and circumstances, the development of a personalised housing plan, and work to help them retain their accommodation or find a new place to live. The duties shift focus to early intervention and encourage those at risk to seek support as soon as possible, before they are

facing a homelessness crisis. Children's Services are the lead agency for these young people and the DSL (or a deputy) will raise concerns at the earliest opportunity about a family at risk of homelessness through the [Tower Hamlets Homeless and Housing Options service](#).

For general enquiries about support for young people who might be at risk of or experiencing homelessness in the borough, please contact Tower Hamlets Housing Options: Host@towerhamlets.gov.uk

37. CHILDREN AND THE COURT SYSTEM

Children are sometimes required to give evidence in criminal courts, either for crimes committed against them or for crimes they have witnessed. The DSL will ensure that the children concerned are supported and where appropriate make use of the guide provided by the HM Courts & Tribunals Service for [children 5-11-year olds](#). The guide explains each step of the process, support and special measures that are available. There are diagrams illustrating the courtroom structure and the use of video links is explained. Making child arrangements via the family courts following separation can be stressful and entrench conflict in families. This can be stressful for children. Where appropriate parents can be signposted to the Department of Justice's [information toolkit](#) for families on making child arrangements which sets out each party's responsibility including the importance of putting the needs of the children first in the process.

38. CHILDREN WITH FAMILY MEMBERS IN PRISON

An estimated 310,000 children every year have a parent in prison in England and Wales and 10,000 visits are made by children to our public prisons every week. These children are at risk of poor outcomes including poverty, stigma, isolation and poor mental health.

The DSL will draw upon the resources and guidance offered through The National Information Centre on Children of Offenders (NICCO) to support the children involved and mitigate negative consequences for those children.

39. PRIVATE FOSTERING

Privately fostered children remain a diverse and potentially vulnerable group and as a school we understand that we have a mandatory duty to report this to the Local Authority.

A private fostering arrangement is one that is made privately, that is to say without the involvement of the Local Authority, for the care of a child under the age of 16 (or 18 if disabled) by someone other than a parent (or other person with parental responsibility) or a relative with the intention that it should last for 28 days or more. The private foster carer becomes responsible for providing the day to day care of the child. The parent will continue to hold parental responsibility for the child.

Staff should be vigilant about children who are in private fostering arrangements and report concerns to the DSL, who will notify the Local Authority through a MASH referral, as set out in the THSCP Multi-Agency Private Fostering Guidance (January 2022). The Local Authority will check the arrangement is suitable and safe for the child in accordance with the Private Fostering statutory guidance.

40. YOUNG CARERS

A young carer is a person aged 18 or under who cares, unpaid, for a friend or family member. This can include, but is not limited to a person with:

- a long-term illness or condition
- a physical or learning disability
- a substance misuse problem
- a mental health problem

The support provided by a child can vary based on the condition of the person they are caring for, but typically young carers provide a combination of personal (such as helping to dress or bath them), practical (such as cooking, cleaning and shopping) and emotional care (such as talking through their concerns with them).

It is estimated by the Children's Society that 1 in 5 children are young carers and many are hidden and unidentified. School recognises that young carers have the right to an assessment by the Local Authority to identify needs and support and the person they are caring for can have a reassessment of their needs.

The DSL will follow the LBTH guidance for schools, 'Young Carers in School: A guide for education practitioners to identify and support young carers in schools' (January 2023) and refer to the Young Carers program accordingly: Young.Carers@towerhamlets.gov.uk

41. CHILD ABDUCTION AND COMMUNITY SAFETY INCIDENTS

Child abduction is the unauthorised removal or retention of a child from a parent or anyone with legal responsibility for the child. Child abduction can be committed by parents or other family members; by people known but not related to the victim (such as neighbours, friends and acquaintances); and by strangers.

All incidents of Child Abduction should be reported immediately to the Police and Children's Social Care.

Other community safety incidents in the vicinity of a school can raise concerns amongst staff, children and parents, for example, people loitering nearby or unknown adults engaging children in conversation. All incidents that occur during the school day should be immediately reported to the DSL, and steps taken to ensure the safety and well-being of the children involved.

42. MODERN SLAVERY

Modern slavery encompasses human trafficking and slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour. Exploitation can take many forms, including: sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery, servitude, forced criminality and the removal of organs.

Further information on the signs that someone may be a victim of modern slavery, the support available to victims and how to refer them to the National Referral Mechanism is available in the [Modern Slavery Statutory Guidance](#).

The DSL will refer all potential child victims of modern slavery to the Local Authority via MASH.

43. TAKING SAFEGUARDING ACTION

Any child, in any family in any school could become a victim of abuse. Staff should always maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here'. Key points for staff to remember are:

- in an emergency take the action necessary to help the child (including calling 999)
- report your concern as soon as possible to the DSL, no later than the end of the day.
- concerns should be shared verbally asap and to a DDSL if you can't locate the DSL.
- do not start your own investigation
- share information on a need-to-know basis only – do not discuss the issue with colleagues, friends or family
- complete a record of concern – these are also known as ROCs and can be printed from the safeguarding folder on the drive or in wallets posted on the main reception and staffroom notice boards.
- seek support for yourself if you are distressed

44. EARLY HELP

At Virginia all staff are trained and prepared to identify children who may benefit from Early Help, which is providing support as soon as a problem emerges at any point in a child's life. This can be support provided through school's internal pastoral system and resources and/or Local Authority services and other external agencies.

The Tower Hamlets Early Help Strategy recognises the important role schools have in identifying children and families who are at risk of poor outcomes without early intervention.

All staff need to recognise that all children may benefit from Early Help at any point in their childhood, but some children may benefit from Early Help more than others. These are children with known vulnerabilities, which are listed in this policy. We are able to make referrals and work alongside other agencies, often taking the place as the Lead Professional for TAC / TAF meetings and supporting families who are experiencing challenging situations. At the heart of this work, like all safeguarding work, is the drive to cultivate positive and trusting relationships with our families – in line with our school values.

LBTH Early Help Hub:

0207 364 5006 (option 2)

Alternatively, the DSL will complete an Early Help Enquiry form which can be accessed via <https://bit.ly/2AA2WNY>

Social Inclusion Panel

When an EHA has been completed and a Team Around the Family is in process, the school can refer to the borough's Social Inclusion Panel in support of a co-ordinated and targeted plan to bring about improvement in the child's outcomes.

The DSL will apply the LBTH Thresholds Guidance to decide what level of safeguarding response is required as part of the Early Help response. If in doubt about the level of need the DSL will telephone the LBTH Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) for a discussion.

MASH:

020 7364 5006 (Option 3) 020 7364 5601/5606

Child Protection Advice Line

020 7364 3444

If a child has been receiving Early Help support from the school and other agencies and there is no improvement in the child's outcomes, then the DSL must refer the child to Children's Social Care.

45. HANDLING THE REPORTING OR SHARING OF CONCERNS

When a child discloses that they have been or are being abused including exploitation and neglect, they may feel ashamed, especially if the abuse is sexual, and feel frightened lest their abuser finds out they have made a disclosure. The child may have been threatened, they may have lost all trust in adults; or may believe that they are to blame for the abuse. Sometimes the child may not understand that what is happening is abusive.

All staff should reassure victims that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. A victim should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting abuse, sexual violence or sexual harassment. Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report.

As a staff our first step is to remain alert to signs of abuse and neglect. We question behaviours. The signs of child abuse might not always be obvious and a child might not tell anyone what is happening to them. You should therefore question behaviours if something seems unusual and try to speak to the child, if appropriate, to seek further information

Listening and Talking to Children

We expect staff to remember when listening to a disclosure they will:

- allow the child to speak freely
- never promise a child that they will not tell anyone about a report of abuse, as this may ultimately not be in the best interests of the child
- remain calm
- allow silences
- refrain from asking leading questions

- tell the pupil what will happen next
- inform the DSL as soon as possible
- seek support from their line manager if they feel distressed.

There are several reasons why you might listen to/talk with a child about something which causes you concern and/or might indicate possible abuse. It may be because of a comment they make, or a drawing, or some play activity, or something you notice. It might also be because a child tells you something directly. It is very important that you know what NOT to say or do as well as what kind of things to say or do.

What NOT to say or do

It is very important that you do not do the following.

- Make any assumptions or leap to any conclusions. If you do either of these, you will not really hear what the person is saying: you will ask the wrong questions and generally react inappropriately.
- Ask the child leading, closed or directed questions. Do not try to find out exactly what happened so it makes sense to you. You are meant to be listening – not interrogating. Be quiet and let it come out as it may. Cases which have later gone to Court have been dismissed because somebody has questioned the child inappropriately – do not let it be you. This leaves the child in a more vulnerable position than ever.
- Make promises you cannot keep. You cannot offer complete confidentiality on anything that is potentially abusive. Do not pretend that you will and then have to betray the child later: be honest. Say that you would need to tell.
- Dismiss what they say or contradict their understanding or experience, e.g., ‘Your Mum? She wouldn’t do a thing like that, it must have been an accident.’ ‘Oh, I’m sure he doesn’t mean it, he was probably joking.’
- Indicate that the child is to blame. E.g., ‘My dad really belted me on Sunday.’ ‘You must have made him very angry, what had you done?’
- Let your own emotions get in the way. This is not about you – it is about the child. Whatever your emotions might be – scepticism, outrage, disgust, general upset, etc. – deal with them later. Do not let them be part of your communication with the child: remember you are the adult. Do not say Oh how dreadful/I can’t believe it/you poor thing/are you sure?

What to do and say

You need to listen and say very little. It sounds easy, but in general we do not do this very well. Instead of listening we:

- interrupt;
- finish other’s sentences;
- ask leading, closed or directed questions;
- make assumptions about their feelings and react accordingly;
- do not allow the speaker to pause for more than three seconds before jumping in;
- speak about ourselves and how we feel about what they are saying;
- give advice/tell them what to do;
- tell them our opinions of the subject and other people involved;

- do not allow the speaker to be upset/cry – but tell them everything will be all right/it's not that bad/and, basically, please stop crying.

Instead, we should:

- pay total attention to the speaker;
- be very calm and patient;
- look at the speaker directly/good eye contact;
- allow silences and long pauses;
- pay total attention to the speaker;
- your whole attitude is 'you are my only priority right now'.

Questions you can use

- Do you want to/can you say what happened next?
- Is there anything else you want to say? Are you sure?

Things you could/would say after a disclosure

- I'm glad you have told me this.
- Thank you for telling me this.
- I take what you have told me very seriously.
- You've been very brave to talk about this.
- It isn't your fault you know.
- I will help you as much as I can.

Remember

- that the child may fear reprisals from having told;
- stay with the child if at all possible;
- It has been an act of courage, as well as desperation, for them to have spoken

Record of Concern (ROC Form)

Any member of staff or volunteer who has concerns about the safety or potential abuse of a child must report their concerns orally to a member of the safeguarding team without delay. It is expected that a written account of the concern or disclosure follow as soon as possible. The member of staff is also aware of their duty to communicate with the Local Authority if necessary.

- A written account of the disclosure must be made on the school's Record of Concern (ROC).
- The ROC must be given to the DSL or deputy immediately. If, in exceptional circumstances, the DSL or Deputies are not available, this should not delay appropriate action being taken. All staff are aware of how to report concerns to the local authority's statutory services or police.
- It must include as much information as possible – including time, date, exact words used in a disclosure, specific description to visible marks and their location, or a general description of how a child's behaviour and/or demeanour has changed, giving a sense of concern for the child's experience outside school.

- The DSL will act on the information and report the outcomes back to the member of staff. Options include;
 - managing any support for the child internally via the school or college's own pastoral support processes;
 - an early help assessment or
 - a referral for statutory services, for example as the child is in need or suffering or likely to suffer harm
 - If a child is in danger the referral will be made to the police
 - If the pupil has committed a crime a referral will be made to the police
- When making referrals to Children's Services the DSL will always consider wider environmental factors that pose a threat to their safety or welfare. The DSL will gather as much contextual information as possible to support the referral.
- 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 should be kept under constant review and consideration given to a referral to Children's Services for assessment for statutory services if the child's situation does not appear to be improving or is getting worse.

When the DSL makes a referral to Children's Services or to other external agencies, the information will be shared in line with confidentiality requirements (see The Seven Golden Rules). The DSL will work alongside external agencies -- maintaining close liaison and taking advice and support, as well as offering challenge to decisions where necessary. The DSL is committed to keep constant communication with pupils and parents. Staff are aware that that they need to follow up their referrals, support social workers if they carry out a statutory assessment and consider following local escalation procedures to ensure their concerns are addressed and that the pupil's situation improves. The DSL is responsible for ensuring all concerns, discussions and decisions made and the reasons for those decisions are recorded in writing.

Communicating concerns to parents

Staff reporting concerns will not be at a detriment from doing this, and parent/carers will not be made aware of who reported the concern within the school. The DSL will make a decision, often in collaboration with the HT or DDSLs, regarding the best time to speak to parents.

In some circumstances the parents may not be immediately informed due to the nature of the disclosure for example, section 47 threshold has been met and risk of immediate danger is posed. This is most likely upon the advice from the MASH team.

Supporting the child

Where there is a safeguarding concern, we take steps to take the pupil's needs, wishes and feelings into account. We recognise that children who experience or witness abuse or violence may experience difficulties that impact on their sense of self-worth. They may experience emotional, behavioural or social difficulties and may blame themselves for their situation. They may become challenging, disruptive, attention-seeking or withdrawn. Children who have experienced abuse, neglect, exposure to domestic violence, hidden harm or are failing to thrive emotionally and socially are prioritised for additional support, intervention or provision.

Next steps might involve undertaking an Early Help Assessment or making a referral directly to Children's Services/the police in accordance with DfE guidance.

Staff understand that any child may benefit from early help or an inter-agency assessment where a family could benefit from co-ordinated support from more than one agency, but we are particularly alert to the potential need for early help for a child who:

- is disabled and has specific additional needs;
- has special educational needs (whether or not they have a statutory education, health and care plan);
- is a young carer;
- is frequently missing/goes missing from care or home;
- is misusing drugs or alcohol;
- is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as substance abuse, adult mental health problems or domestic abuse; and/or
- has returned home to their family from care.
- It is important for children to receive '*the right help at the right time*' to address risks and prevent issues escalating. Failing to take effective action is a disciplinary offence. Poor practice includes: *failing to act on and refer the early signs of abuse and neglect, poor record keeping, failing to listen to the views of the child (UNCRC)⁵, failing to re-assess concerns when situations do not improve, sharing information too slowly, and a lack of challenge to those who appear not to be taking action.*

Escalation Procedures

Staff know that if they have concerns about the safety or welfare of a child and feel they are not being acted upon by the DSL, it is their responsibility to take action. All staff must understand that in exceptional circumstances they are also able to discuss concerns directly with the MASH team.

MASH

Tel: 0207 364 3444

Email: MASH@towerhamlets.gov.uk

46. CONFIDENTIALITY AND SHARING INFORMATION

Staff should not assume a colleague or another professional will take action and share information that might be critical in keeping children safe. They should be mindful that early information sharing is vital for effective identification, assessment and allocation of appropriate service provision. Serious Case Reviews have highlighted failures in safeguarding systems in which people did not share information at the earliest opportunity or did not share at all. If in any doubt about sharing information, staff should speak to the designated safeguarding lead or a deputy. Fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of the need to promote the welfare and protect the safety of children.

All staff should understand that safeguarding requires a high level of confidentiality. Staff should only discuss concerns with the DSL, Deputy DSL or the headteacher.

⁵ The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)⁷. This is an international agreement that protects the rights of children and provides a child-centred framework for the development of services to children. The UK Government ratified the UNCRC in 1991 and, by doing so, recognises children's rights to expression and receiving information.

Any member of staff can contact children's social care if they are concerned about a child but should inform the DSL as soon as possible that they have done so.

At Virginia we ensure that relevant staff have due regard to the relevant data protection principles, which allow them to share (and withhold) personal information, as provided for in the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK GDPR. This includes:

- understanding that 'safeguarding of children and individuals at risk' is a processing condition that allows practitioners to share special category personal data.
- allowing practitioners to share information without consent where there is good reason to do so, and that the sharing of information will enhance the safeguarding of a child in a timely manner, but it is not possible to gain consent, it cannot be reasonably expected that a practitioner gains consent, or if to gain consent would place a child at risk.

Information sharing decisions will be recorded, whether or not the decision to share has been taken. Child protection information will be stored securely separate from the pupil's school file. Child protection information is stored and handled in line with the school's Retention and Destruction Policy. Where safeguarding information is stored electronically and online, the school has cybersecurity measures in place, which meets the Department for Education's [Cybersecurity Standards](#), to ensure the data is safe and not vulnerable to evolving cyber-crime.

Confidentiality and Information Sharing – *The seven golden rules*

When sharing confidential information, we follow the 7 golden rules.

1. Remember that the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), Data Protection Act 2018 and human rights law are not barriers to justified information sharing but provide a framework to ensure that personal information about living individuals is shared appropriately.
2. Be open and honest with the individual (and/or their family where appropriate) from the outset about why, what, how and with whom information will, or could be shared, and seek their agreement, unless it is unsafe or inappropriate to do so.
3. Seek advice from other practitioners, or your information governance lead, if you are in any doubt about sharing the information concerned, without disclosing the identity of the individual where possible. Fears concerning information sharing cannot be allowed to prevent the need to promote the welfare and protect the safety of children.
4. Where possible, share information with consent, and where possible, respect the wishes of those who do not consent to having their information shared. Under the GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 you may share information without consent if, in your judgement, there is a lawful basis to do so, such as where safety may be at risk. You will need to base your judgement on the facts of the case. When you are sharing or requesting personal information from someone, be clear of the basis upon which you are doing so. Where you do not have consent, be mindful that an individual might not expect information to be shared.
5. Consider safety and well-being: base your information sharing decisions on considerations of the safety and well-being of the individual and others who may be affected by their actions.
6. Necessary, proportionate, relevant, adequate, accurate, timely and secure: ensure that the information you share is necessary for the purpose for which you are sharing it, is shared only with those individuals who need to have it, is accurate and up to-date, is shared in a timely fashion, and is shared securely (see principles).

7. Keep a record of your decision and the reasons for it – whether it is to share information or not. If you decide to share, then record what you have shared, with whom and for what purpose.

47. REFERRING TO CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

The DSL or DDSL will make a referral to children's social care applying the LBTH Threshold Guidance if it is believed that a pupil is suffering or is at risk of suffering significant harm, or the child is considered to be in need, that is 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.

LBTH Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub:
020 7364 5006 (Option 3) 020 7364 5601/5606

Child Protection Advice Line:
020 7364 3444

The DSL will contact MASH in the first instance to seek advice and guidance. When the DSL completes a TH multi-agency referral form (MARF) and sends it securely to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, the referral form will be accurate and sufficiently detailed to enable the MASH Assessment and Intervention Team to make a decision on the level of statutory response required in accordance with the LBTH Thresholds Guidance.

In some instances, where a child lives outside of Tower Hamlets and in Hackney, the DSL will need to seek advice from Hackney Children and Families Services Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) on 020 8356 5500, email MASH@hackney.gov.uk Urgent concerns outside of office hours can be made to the Emergency Duty Team on 020 8356 2710

Referrals are made online using the [\(London Borough of Hackney\) Request for Support Form](#) This form will automatically download when you activate the link.

If the child is already known to Children's Social Care, then the DSL will communicate safeguarding concerns with the allocated Social Worker.

Virginia Primary Procedures Safeguarding Flowchart:

Safeguarding concern arises from information which indicates that a child has or may have been affected by:

- Behaviour that has harmed (or may have harmed) a child(ren)
- Been exposed to criminal activities that could or have caused harm to a child(ren)



Explain to the child that you will **share this information** with a senior member of staff in order to **help** them

Listen carefully to and **take seriously** what the child is saying

Reassure the child who has made the disclosure to you and say that they have done the right thing and **assure them that you believe them**

Give the child **time to talk**, but **do not probe or ask leading questions**. Investigation is not your responsibility

Do not promise to keep secrets. All allegations of harm or potential harm **must be** acted upon.

Record what has been said as soon as possible after the conversation and ensure that a

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is notified immediately.

Do not confront the person subject to the allegation



As soon as you can, complete a cause for concern form (located in the staff room on the safeguarding board).

If you are noting bruising or marks, be sure to include the size, quantity and colour of the bruising or marks.

Hand the cause for concern form to a member of the safeguarding team

If a member of the safeguarding team is unavailable, hand the form to your Year Group Lead or teacher



The DSL will proceed with the matter and should inform you of any appropriate next steps. If you do not hear from a DSL within 24 hours, please make contact with them.

48. ESCALATION PROCEDURES

If, after a referral to Children's Social Care, the child's situation does not appear to be improving, the DSL will consider following local escalation procedures to ensure their concerns have been addressed and that the child's situation improves.

In accordance with the Tower Hamlets Threshold Guidance Appendix D the DSL will first contact the team manager followed by the service manager followed by the divisional director. At every level of escalation there should be discussion and concerted effort to resolve any professional difference. It is important that the DSL at each point of escalation puts the concerns in writing.

Appendix 1: Virginia Primary School Record of Concern Form (ROC)

Appendix 2: MASH Poster

Appendix 3: Tower Hamlets Multi-Agency Referral Form (MARF)



Record of Concern Form

Please complete this form if you have any concerns about a pupil



MULTI – AGENCY SAFEGUARDING HUB (MASH)

**0207 364 3444
/ 5601 / 5606**

direct line 9.00am – 5.00pm weekdays
(not including public holidays)

Designated
Safeguarding
Lead:.....

Date:.....

Appendix 3: Tower Hamlets Multi-Agency Referral Form (MARF)

INTER-AGENCY REFERRAL FORM

This form is to be used by all agencies referring child/children to London Borough of Tower Hamlets CSC for assessment as a child in need, including in need of protection.

All urgent referrals should be initiated by phone/fax and with completion of as much of this form as possible or an updated CAF or a Signs of Safety Mapping tool. If information is incomplete, a MASH worker will work through the form to ensure the information is accurate and good quality. If you are a service provider in Tower Hamlets, as part of the Family Wellbeing Model, you may be asked to provide a CAF as well as this form. You should get feedback within 24 hours on this referral and we will proactively work with you and other services to ensure a service is provided to the child, even if it does not meet the thresholds for a statutory response as outlined in the Family Wellbeing Model.

A. CHILD/ YOUNG PERSON

Family Name					Forename/s			
DOB/EDD		M		F		*Ethnicity code	Religion	
Child's first language					Is an interpreter or signer required?			
Address								
Postcode					Tel.			
Current address if different from above								
Postcode					Tel.:			

***ONS Ethnicity Codes:** White British 1a; White Irish 1b; White other 1c; White & Black Caribbean 2a; White & Black African 2b; White & Asian 2c; Other Mixed 2d; Indian 3a; Pakistani 3b; Bangladeshi 3c; Other Asian 3d; Caribbean 4a; African 4b; Other Black 4c; Chinese 5a; Other ethnic group 5b

B. CHILD/YOUNG PERSON'S PRINCIPAL CARERS

FULL NAME	DOB If known	Relationship to child	Ethnicity code	Parental responsibility

First language of carers: Is an interpreter or signer required: Y / N

C. OTHER HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS

FULL NAME	DOB If known	Relationship to child/ young person	Ethnicity code	Tick if also referred

D. OTHER SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE IN THE CHILD/YOUNG PERSON'S LIFE, INCLUDING OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS

FULL NAME	Relationship to child/young person	Address	Tel No

Referrals will be shared with the family and should not be made without their knowledge/agreement unless this would jeopardise the child/young person's safety

	Y / N	If no, state reason
The child/young person knows about the referral		

The parent/carer knows about the referral		
The parent/carer has given consent to the referral.		

F. INFORMATION ON STATUTORY STATUS

	Y/ N	Please give details of name of child/young person, dates, category (if known)
Any child in family is/has been on the disability register?		
Any child in family is/has been on the child protection register (CPR)?		
Any child or other family member has been looked after by a local authority?		

G. KEY AGENCIES INVOLVED

Insert name of professional if involved	Tel	Insert Name of professional if involved	Tel
H.V.		G.P.	
Nursery		EWO	
School		Police	
YOT		Dentist	
Community mental health		Community Paediatrician	
School Nurse		Midwife	
Hospital Consultant		Other	

H. INFORMATION SUPPORTING THIS REFERRAL

The purpose of this section is to assist the inter-agency assessment. Where you have no information about a particular area, please write N/K (not known). Please record strengths as well as areas of need or risk so that resources can be directed appropriately.

REASON FOR REFERRAL/REQUEST FOR SERVICES

What are your concerns? (If an allegation of possible physical abuse, please give specific details of any injury including dates and explanations given)

Scale how safe you think the child is:

With 0 being I am certain the abuse will happen again if something is n't done immediately and 10 being the case needs action but I don't think the child is in immediate danger, what rating would you give?

Comments on Score: Please tell us how you reached this score.

What existing safety is there for the child(ren) – are there safe people around the child?

What are you most worried will happen to the child(ren) if the situation doesn't change?

What convinced you to take action now and contact us?

Have you done anything to address this problem (apart from making this referral)? For example has your agency used a CAF or a TAC to focus professional efforts on addressing the concerns? Has the Social Inclusion Panel been consulted for support?

What do you see as the cause of the problem?

What do you expect to happen as a result of this notification?

I. DETAILS OF REFERRER AND SOCIAL WORKER TAKING REFERRAL

Name of worker completing this referral (please print)			
Agency			
Address			
Ward/Consultant			
Telephone number			
Signature		Date	

Name of social worker taking referral			
Team		Date	
Social work context scale (for social worker to complete): <i>On a scale of 0 to 10 with 0 being this is the worst case that the agency has ever worked with and 10 indicates that this is a case the agency would take no further action with, where would you rate yourself?</i>			