

The Space Safeguarding Policy April 2025



1. Introduction

The Space is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and young people. We believe that all children have the right to be safe, happy and healthy. This policy outlines our approach to safeguarding and the measures we take to protect children from harm.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Ensure the safety and well-being of children and young people who participate in our therapeutic programmes and activities.
- Provide staff, volunteers, and partners with clear guidelines on safeguarding practices.
- Promote a culture of vigilance and responsibility within our organisation.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, trustees, and partners involved in The Space's activities.

4. Definitions

- **Child:** Any young person under the age of 18.
- **Safeguarding:** Safeguarding children is defined in [Working together to safeguard children](#) as protecting children from maltreatment, preventing impairment of children's health or development, ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

- The Space operates under that principle that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and all individuals play a crucial role in protecting children from harm. Some people hold roles with specific responsibilities as follows:
- **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):** The DSL is responsible for overseeing safeguarding practices, providing support and guidance to staff and volunteers, and ensuring compliance with this policy.

- **Staff and Volunteers:** All staff and volunteers are responsible for understanding and implementing safeguarding practices, reporting concerns, and promoting a safe environment for children.

6. Safeguarding Practices

- **Recruitment and Training:** All staff and volunteers will undergo rigorous safer recruitment processes, including DBS background checks and safeguarding training.
- **Code of Conduct:** Staff and volunteers must adhere to a code of conduct that promotes respectful and safe interactions with children.
- **Reporting Concerns:** Any concerns about a child's welfare must be reported immediately to the DSL. Confidentiality will be maintained, and appropriate action will be taken.
- **Risk Assessment:** Regular risk assessments will be conducted to identify and mitigate potential risks to children.

7. Responding to Allegations

- **Procedure:** In the event of an allegation of abuse, the DSL will follow established procedures to investigate and address the concern. This may involve liaising with external agencies and authorities.
- **Support:** The Space will provide support to children, families and staff affected by safeguarding issues.

8. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains effective and up-to-date. Feedback from staff, volunteers and stakeholders will be considered in the review process.

9. Contact Information

For any safeguarding concerns, please contact:

- **Designated Safeguarding Lead:** Katharine Thompson
- **Email:** kthompson@thespacesomerset.org.uk
- **Phone:** 07940 177 399
- Or
- **Trustee Safeguarding Lead:** Suzi Smith
- **Email:** SSmith@cheddarfirstschool.co.uk

Part 1: The Policy

1. Definitions

At The Space, safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, as defined by working together to safeguard children 2023 involves:

- Addressing their needs promptly to prevent problems from escalating.
- Protecting them from maltreatment in all environments, including online.
- Ensuring their mental and physical health and development are not impaired.
- Providing safe and effective care that allows children to thrive and achieve the best outcomes.

Child protection, as defined under relevant legislation (e.g. Children Act 1989 section 47, Children Act 2004 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023) is a critical part of safeguarding and focuses on action when a child is suffering or is at risk of significant harm.

Effective safeguarding also considers the diverse contexts and factors impacting children's lives, such as socioeconomic conditions and cultural backgrounds.

2. Introduction

At The Space, safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, and we are committed to:

- Providing a safe and nurturing environment for children to learn and grow.
- Taking immediate action when concerns about a child's welfare arise.
- Recognising that safeguarding concerns can happen anywhere and acting accordingly.

Professionals working with children must adopt a child-centred approach that prioritises the best interests of the child. Victims of harm must be supported without any impression of blame or shame for reporting issues.

3. Equalities Statement

We actively promote anti-discriminatory practices and ensure equal protection for all children, regardless of race, gender, religion, disability, economic background, or other factors.

The Space adheres to the principles of the Equality Act 2010 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child to foster good relations and eliminate discrimination.

Special consideration is given to children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) to address barriers to recognising abuse or neglect.

4. Overall Aims

This policy aims to:

- Create a culture of respect, dignity, and safety for all children and young people.
- Provide information and guidance for staff, parents, and carers to recognise and respond to safeguarding concerns effectively.
- Ensure early identification of vulnerability and timely interventions.
- Partner with local authorities and agencies to promote children's welfare.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

The Space is recognised as a relevant agency by the Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership (SSCP). This policy outlines our statutory duty to cooperate, adhere to, and comply with the arrangements set forth by the respective Safeguarding Partnership.

5.1 Roles and Responsibilities of All Staff:

- Understanding Key Documents including the Safeguarding Recording Sheet in Appendix A.
- Comprehensive Reading: All staff, volunteers, trustees and partners must have read this policy document in full as well as KCSIE 2024 Part 1. DSL will have read both documents in full.
- Awareness of Systems: Staff should be familiar with the systems supporting safeguarding, including this Safeguarding/Child Protection Policy and The Space Code of Conduct. They should also understand the safeguarding response for children they have a concern about and the role of the DSL.
- Contact Information: Staff must know how to contact the DSL, any deputies, and the safeguarding representative from the Local Partnership Board.
- Recording Concerns: Staff must record concerns promptly and appropriately using The Space's safeguarding recording systems (Appendix A and CRM).
- Raising Concerns: Staff should raise any concerns about safeguarding practices within The Space to the DSL and CEO.

5.2 Role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):

- Visibility and Accessibility: Contact details for The Space CEO and DSL must be readily available.
- Leadership and Responsibility: The DSL has lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection within The Space's activities.

- **Collaboration:** The DSL works with the relevant programme leads e.g. Youth Club and Holiday Activities taking lead responsibility for understanding the welfare, safeguarding, and child protection issues affecting children and young people in our services. They identify the impact of these issues on attendance, engagement, and wellbeing.
- **Management of Deputy DSLs:** The DSL oversees the work of any Deputy DSLs.
- **Referrals:** The DSL manages referrals to Local Authority safeguarding partners for clients with additional needs, including those:
 - Needing a social worker and possibly experiencing abuse or neglect
 - Requiring mental health support
 - Benefiting from early help
 - With radicalization concerns
 - Involved in a crime

5.3 Additional Responsibilities of the DSL:

- **Agency Contact:** The DSL serves as a key point of contact for outside agencies regarding safeguarding.
- **Support and Advice:** The DSL supports and advises other staff in making referrals to other agencies.
- **Liaison:** When necessary, the DSL liaises with the case manager and the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) concerning child protection cases involving staff members.
- **Training and Awareness:** The DSL coordinates regular safeguarding training and raises awareness within the organisation about policies and practices related to safeguarding.
- **Filtering and Monitoring:** The DSL takes lead responsibility for understanding the filtering and monitoring systems and processes in place.
- **Supervision:** DSL receives regular clinical supervision for the role

6. Safeguarding Training for Staff and Volunteers

6.1 Safeguarding Training for All Staff and Volunteers:

- **Induction Training:** The Space will ensure that all staff and volunteers members undergo safeguarding and child protection (including online safety) training during their induction.
- **Code of Conduct:** At induction, staff and volunteers will read and sign the Code of Conduct be reminded not to have their personal mobile phones available when in contact with children or never to take photographs of them.
- **Annual Refresher Training:** Staff and volunteers will receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection (including online safety) refresher training at least annually through formal training, email bulletins, and staff meetings.
- **FGM Awareness:** All staff and volunteers must receive Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) awareness training and understand their legal duty under the Mandatory Reporting Duty.
- **PREVENT Training:** All staff and volunteers must complete PREVENT awareness training to comply with legal expectations under the PREVENT duty.
- **Cyber Training:** All staff must complete Cyber Training.

6.2 Internal Policies:

- **Whistleblowing and Escalation:** Staff training will include clear reference to the internal whistleblowing policy and guidance for escalating concerns.

6.3 Training for Designated Safeguarding Leads and Deputies:

- **Formal Training:** In addition to the all-staff training, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and deputies will undergo formal training provided by the Somerset Safeguarding Children's Partnership (SSCP). This training will equip them with the knowledge and skills (including online safety) required for their roles and will be updated every two years. Deputy DSLs will be trained to the same level as the DSL.
- **Continuous Learning:** The DSL and deputies will liaise with their relevant Safeguarding Children's Partnership to ensure their knowledge and skills are updated through e-bulletins, DSL network meetings, and safeguarding bulletins.

6.4 Other Training Considerations:

- **Safer Recruitment:** The Space will ensure that at least one person on any appointment panel has undertaken safer recruitment training. Staff responsible for recruitment administration will also be trained to the same level.
- **Integrated Safeguarding Training:** Training on safeguarding issues in Annex B (including online safety) will be integrated into the overall safeguarding approach.

- **Reasonable Force and Positive Handling:** Appropriate colleagues will receive training on the use of reasonable force and positive handling.
- **Board and Trustee Training:** Trustees will receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection training.

7. Safer Recruitment and Safer Working Practice

7.1 Safer Recruitment:

The Space will adhere to the safer recruitment practices outlined in NSPCC Safer Recruitment guidance, which include:

- **Applicant Scrutiny:** Scrutinising applicants, verifying identity and academic or vocational qualifications, obtaining professional and character references, checking previous employment history, and ensuring that candidates have the health and physical capacity for the job. References are always obtained, scrutinised, and concerns resolved satisfactorily before appointment is confirmed.
- **Single Central Record:** Maintaining an accurate Single Central Record.
- **Appropriate Checks:** Undertaking appropriate checks through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), barred list checks, prohibition checks, and overseas checks if applicable, depending on the role and duties performed, including regulated and non-regulated activity.
- **Online Searches:** Conducting online searches as part of due diligence checks on shortlisted candidates.
- **Contractor Assurances:** Seeking assurances for contractors required on site, including identification checks upon arrival.

7.2 Visitors to The Space activities:

- **Signing In/Out Process:** All visitors to The Space Youth Club must complete a signing in/out process, wear a charity ID badge, and receive key safeguarding information, including contact details of safeguarding personnel.
- **Scheduled Visitors:** Scheduled visitors in a professional role (e.g., fire officer, police) must provide evidence of their role and employment details (usually an identity badge) upon arrival. Careful consideration is given to the suitability of any external organisations.

- **Unscheduled Visitors:** If the visit is unscheduled and the visitor is unknown, The Space will contact the relevant organisation to verify the individual's identity if necessary.

7.3 Site Safety:

Risk assessments are undertaken and maintained in accordance with The Space's health and safety policy. When premises are hired or rented to other organisations, including shared site providers working with children, those organisations must adhere to the guidance for out-of-school settings.

7.4 Off-Site Visits:

Prior to any off-site visit, The Space will carry out a risk assessment and designate specific roles and responsibilities for each adult, whether employed or volunteers.

7.5 Use of Reasonable Force:

Reasonable force refers to physical contact used to restrain and control children, using no more force than necessary. The use of reasonable force is determined by the professional judgment of the staff member concerned and individual circumstances, considering the vulnerability of any child with Special Educational Needs or Disability (SEND).

7.6 Minimising Use of Force:

The use of reasonable force will be minimised through positive and proactive behaviour support and de-escalation, following government guidance:

- **Reducing the Need for Restraint and Restrictive Intervention** (2019)

7.7 Incident Recording:

Any incident involving positive handling or restraint is robustly recorded. Further review of the incident is conducted to reflect on how it could be avoided, involving the child and their family.

7.8 Whistleblowing Procedures:

Staff must be aware of the following whistleblowing channels for situations where they feel unable to raise an issue with the senior leadership team or feel that their genuine concerns are not being addressed:

- **The Space Whistleblowing Policy:** Available on The Space's website, staff intranet.
- **General Guidance and Advice:** <https://www.gov.uk/whistleblowing>

- **NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline:** Available for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally. Staff can call 0800 028 0285 or email help@nspcc.org.uk. Phone lines are open 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday.

8 Additional Information:

Additional information about key safeguarding areas can be found in "Keeping Children Safe in Education" (2024) and on the NSPCC website under Types of Abuse.

8.1 Local Safeguarding Resources:

Local safeguarding resources are available via:

- **Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership:** Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership [Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)

8.2 Key Safeguarding Areas:

Below are some themes that can impact on children and families:

- Children in the court system
- Children affected by parental offending/imprisonment.
- Children missing from education (including persistent absence).
- Child Exploitation (including both Child Sexual Exploitation and Child Criminal Exploitation and county lines, modern day slavery and trafficking).
- Cybercrime.
- Domestic Abuse.
- Homelessness.
- So-called Honour based Abuse (including Female Genital Mutilation and Forced Marriage).
- Online Safety.
- Mental health.
- Child on child abuse:
 - Bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying)
 - Abuse in intimate personal relationships between peers
 - Physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse)

- Sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence)
 - Sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be standalone or part of a broader pattern of abuse
 - Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party
 - Consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nude images and or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery)
 - Up skirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress, or alarm; and
 - Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals (this could include activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element)
- Preventing Radicalisation (The Prevent Duty)
 - Serious Youth Violence
 - Substance Misuse.
 - Young Carers
 - Private Fostering

Part 2 – Procedures

9. Reporting Concerns

9.1 All staff must be clear about recording and reporting concerns to the DSL/DSL deputies in a timely way. In the case a child or young person is in immediate danger, staff should phone the Police on 999 and inform the DSL that they have done so.

9.2 For all safeguarding concerns a Safeguarding Concern Recording Sheet must be completed and given to The Space DSL as soon as possible.

9.3 Children and young people accessing The Space's services and activities will be told how to raise a concern and what mechanism they can use. They will be informed that any referral will be treated seriously.

10. Information Sharing

10.1 The Space is committed to have due regard to relevant data protection principles which allow for sharing and withholding personal information as provided for in the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulations. This includes how to store and share information for safeguarding purposes, including information which is sensitive and personal and should be treated as 'special category personal data'.

10.2 Staff at our settings are aware that:

- 'Safeguarding' and 'individuals at risk' is a processing condition that allows practitioners to share special category personal data.
- Practitioners will seek consent to share data where possible in line with Information Sharing for Safeguarding Practitioners 2024.

10.3 There may be times when it is necessary to share information without consent such as:

- Where gaining consent would place the child at risk.
- Where gaining consent would compromise a criminal investigation.
- Where it cannot be reasonably expected that a practitioner gains consent.
- Where sharing information will enhance the safeguarding of a child in a timely manner, but it is not possible to gain consent.

10.4 The Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR do not prevent the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe. Fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare and protect the safety of children.

11. Responding to Incidents of Child-on-Child Abuse

11.1 All staff should recognise that children can abuse their peers, including through online abuse. It is important that incidents of abuse and harm are treated in line with the Safeguarding Policy and in conjunction with the Behaviour Policy and Anti Bullying Policy.

11.2 **Concerns** regarding the welfare of children and young people and any subsequent support process will be recorded on their safeguarding file.

11.3 **Examples** of child-on-child abuse can be found in the Key Safeguarding Areas section of this policy (8.2). Child-on-child abuse can happen in any environment and is not restricted to school or community settings and/or online.

11.4 Child-on-child abuse is not tolerated, passed off as “banter” or seen as “part of growing up”. The different forms of child-on-child abuse is likely to include, but not limited to:

- bullying (including cyber bullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying)
- abuse in intimate personal relationships between peers
- physical abuse which can include hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling or otherwise causing physical harm
- ‘upskirting’ or any picture taken under a person’s clothing without their permission or them knowing to obtain sexual gratification or cause humiliation, distress or alarm.
- causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent
- initiation/hazing type violence and rituals.
- consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as sexting)
- sexual violence and sexual harassment between children, as defined by Sexual offences act 2003 which considers rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault, all types of sexual violence. Sexual violence and sexual harassment can be between two children, or a group of children and can occur online and offline.

11.5 There are clear systems in place for children and young people to report any abuse knowing their concerns will be treated seriously and respectfully. Consequently, child-on-child abuse is dealt with as a safeguarding issue and recorded as such, not managed through the systems set out in the behaviour policy.

- Any child who may have been victimised and/or displayed such harmful behaviours, along with any other child affected by child-on-child abuse, will be supported through

The Space's safeguarding system and the support will be regularly monitored and reviewed.

- We will address inappropriate behaviour (even if it appears to be relatively innocuous) as this can be an important intervention that may help prevent problematic, abusive and/or violent behaviour in the future.
- We acknowledge that even if there are no reported cases of child-on-child abuse, such abuse may still be taking place and is simply not being reported. Staff maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here' where safeguarding is concerned.

11.6 Child-on-child sexual violence and sexual harassment: The DSL will follow local and national guidance when there has been a report of sexual violence and harassment between children. This will include liaising with other professionals to develop robust risk and needs assessments and multi-agency safety planning with appropriate specialist targeted work for children who are identified as posing a potential risk to other children. The Brook - Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Assessment Tool should be utilised to inform assessment of risk and what actions to subsequently take. Any assessments need to take a Contextual Safeguarding approach to consider risks posed by any wider environmental factors present in a child's life. The DSL will record specifically the time and location of the incident, and any action required to make the location safer.

- The NSPCC has a dedicated helpline 0800 136 663 to provide children who are victims of sexual abuse with appropriate support and advice. The helpline also provides support to parents and professionals.
- Where the report includes an online element, the setting will follow Searching, screening and confiscation at school and Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people. The key consideration is for staff not to view or forward illegal images of a child. The highlighted advice provides more details on what to do when viewing an image is unavoidable.
- When an incident involves an act of sexual violence (rape, assault by penetration, or sexual assault) the starting point is that this should be passed on to police regardless of the age of criminal responsibility (10 years old). This must be reported directly via 101 for recording purposes and accountability. A concurrent referral to social care must also be made.

11.7 Serious violence

All staff are aware of the indicators which may signal 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 educational 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 and may be at risk of criminal exploitation.

11.8 Contextual Safeguarding Approach to Child-on-Child Abuse. This enables us and other support services to better identify high-risk groups, areas and environments within our community that increase the risk of abuse occurring and take appropriate action. The DSL

and Deputy DSLs will review and consider whether any practice or environmental changes can be made in relation to any areas for development. This might include making changes to staffing and supervision, making changes to the physical environment and considering the utilisation and delivery of safeguarding topics on the curriculum.

12. Responding to Allegations and Whistleblowing

12.1 Staff must report any concerns or allegations about a professional's behaviour (including supply staff, volunteers, and contractors and those from organisations or individuals using the school premises) where they may have:

- 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 they 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.

12.2 Low Level Concerns

This section should be read in conjunction with the staff code of conduct and Keeping children Safe in Education (2024). A low-level concern is not insignificant. This process should be used in events where a concern about professional conduct does not meet the threshold set out. Reports should be made to the DSL/Deputy DSL (or the CEO if it is regarding the DSL). The Space will create an environment where staff are encouraged and feel confident to self-refer where they have found themselves in a situation where a low level concern may have occurred.

The DSL will:

- address unprofessional behaviour and support the individual to correct it at an early stage providing a responsive, sensitive, and proportionate handling of such concerns when they are raised.

- review and correct any deficits in the setting's safeguarding system. Including keeping a confidential log of low level concerns that have been reported.

12.3 Further information on this topic is available in the Dealing with Allegations Against Staff and the Whistleblowing policy, both of which are available on The Space intranet.

13. Online Safety

13.1 Online safety is an integrated and interwoven theme with other safeguarding considerations.

13.2 It is essential that the DSL takes a lead on ensuring that interventions are effective. This means co-ordinating support and engaging with other colleagues who may have more technological expertise such as the IT Support.

13.3 The Space committed to addressing online safety issues around content, contact, conduct and commerce. This includes:

- Ensuring that online safety is considered in relevant policies and procedures.
- Ensuring that online safety is interwoven in safeguarding training for staff and volunteers.
- Acknowledging that child-on-child abuse can happen via mobile and smart technology between individuals and groups.
- Preparing children with information for any online challenges and hoaxes, sharing information with parents and where to get help.
- Ensuring that staff, visitors and volunteers must never use a personal mobile phone to contact children and young people or take photographs of children and young people.

Appendix A: Safeguarding report form

[Safeguarding Recording Sheet Feb 24.doc](#)

Appendix B: Code Of Conduct

[Code of Conduct.docx](#)

Appendix C: When a child tells me about abuse they have suffered, what must I remember?

- Stay calm.
- Do not communicate shock, anger or embarrassment.
- Reassure the child. Tell them you are pleased that they are speaking to you.
- Never promise confidentiality. Assure them that you will try to help but let the child know that you may have to tell other people in order to do this. State who this will be and why.
- Encourage the child to talk but do not ask "leading questions" or press for information. Use 'Tell Me, Explain to me, Describe to me' (TED) questioning.
- Listen and remember.
- Check that you have understood correctly what the child is trying to tell you.
- Praise the child for telling you. Communicate that they have a right to be safe and protected.
- It is inappropriate to make any comments about the alleged offender.
- Be aware that the child may retract what they have told you. It is essential to record all you have heard.
- At the end of the conversation, tell the child again who you are going to tell and why that person or those people need to know.
- As soon as you can afterwards, make a detailed record of the conversation using the child's own language. Include any questions you may have asked. Do not add any opinions or interpretations. N.B. It is not staff's role to seek disclosures. Your role is to observe that something may be wrong, ask about it, listen, be available and try to make time to talk.

“The 5 R’s” are helpful in understanding what a professional's duties are in relation to responding to an incident:

Recognise – Respond – Reassure – Refer – Record

Appendix C: Types of abuse and neglect

Abuse and neglect are defined as the maltreatment of a child or young person whereby someone may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to prevent harm. They may be abused by an adult or adults or by another child or children. All staff should be aware that abuse, neglect and safeguarding issues are rarely standalone events that can be covered by one definition or label. In most cases multiple issues will overlap with one another.

For children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) additional barriers can exist when identifying abuse and neglect, these include:

- assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's disability without further exploration.
- being more prone to peer group isolation than other children.
- the potential for children with SEN and disabilities being disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs; and
- communication barriers and difficulties in overcoming these barriers.

The following are the definitions of abuse and neglect as set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023) however, the ultimate responsibility to assess and define the type of abuse a child or young person may be subject to is that of the Police and Children's Services – our responsibility is to understand what each category of abuse is and how this can impact on the welfare and development of our children and where we have concerns that a child or young person may be at risk of abuse and neglect (one or more categories can apply) to take appropriate action as early as possible.

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

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

• **Emotional abuse:** the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs

of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability as well as 31 overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone.

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