



# Full House Theatre Safeguarding Policy and Procedures October 2025

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Information and guidance relating to specific safeguarding topics can be found on the [Safeguarding Bedfordshire website](#).

## Introduction

This policy applies to all staff including the Board of Trustees, paid staff, volunteers and sessional workers, agency staff, students or anyone working on behalf of Full House Theatre. It shows a commitment to protecting and safeguarding children/young people and vulnerable adults against potential harm or actual harm. It fully accepts and promotes the principle enshrined in the Children Act 1989 that the welfare of the child is paramount.

The policy also demonstrates a commitment to working with statutory bodies, voluntary agencies and communities to promote the safety and welfare of children/young people and vulnerable adults and acting promptly whenever a concern is raised about a child/young person or vulnerable adult or about the behaviour of an adult. Full House Theatre will work with the appropriate statutory bodies when an investigation into abuse is necessary.

We will endeavour to safeguard children/young people and vulnerable adults by:

- Valuing, listening and respecting them
- Adopting safeguarding guidelines through procedures and a code of conduct for staff and volunteers
- Recruiting staff and volunteers safely ensuring all necessary checks are made
- Sharing information about safeguarding and good practice with children/young people, vulnerable adults, parents, staff and volunteers
- Sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents, children/young people and vulnerable adults appropriately
- Providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training.
- Reviewing our policy and good practice annually with updates and a total review every 3 years or sooner if required.

Full House Theatre will endeavour to safeguard the children/young people and vulnerable adults who take part in activities we organise or facilitate by following the procedure if a concern is raised.

The definition of a child/young person for the purpose of this document is anyone under the age of 18 years.

The definition of a vulnerable adult for the purpose of this document is a person who is 18 years of age or over. They either are or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness. They either are or may be unable to take care of themselves, or unable to protect themselves against significant harm or serious exploitation.

For the purposes of this document children/young people and vulnerable adults will be referred to as 'vulnerable groups' or 'vulnerable person'.

**It is important that everyone in the organisation is aware that the person who first encounters a case of alleged or suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation is not responsible for deciding whether or not abuse, neglect or exploitation has occurred. That is a task for the professional child protection agencies following a referral to them of concern about a child or the adult safeguarding co-ordinator**

if the concern is regarding a vulnerable adult. It is important to note that any information should only be shared on a 'need to know' basis.

## Important contacts

Full House Theatre has an appointed individual who is responsible for dealing with any safeguarding concerns. In their absence, a deputy will always be available for workers to consult with. Full House Theatre also has an appointed individual who is responsible for dealing with any safeguarding concerns in the absence of the others listed below or is concerned with the individuals listed below.

The named persons for child protection within Full House Theatre are:

Designated Safeguarding Lead Harriet Hardie  
Work telephone number 01525 630783  
Mobile number 07968732506

Name of deputy Ben Miles  
Work telephone number 01525 630783  
Mobile number 07889 245305

Designated Safeguarding Lead (Board of Trustees) Vanessa Pearce  
Mobile Number 07946 060444

Name of deputy (Board of Trustees) Suha Al-Khayyat  
Mobile Number 07967 101396

### Other key contacts

#### Children/young people Safeguarding

Multi Agency Support Hub (MASH):

- Bedford Borough (Integrated Front Door): 01234 718700
- Luton: 01582 547653  
[MASH@luton.gov.uk](mailto:MASH@luton.gov.uk)
- Central Bedfordshire: 0300 300 8585

Bedfordshire Police 01234 841212 (or in an emergency 999)

NSPCC: 0808 800 5000

#### Adult Safeguarding

- Bedford Borough: 01234 276222 [adult.protection@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:adult.protection@bedford.gov.uk)
- Luton: 01582 547730 [adultsafeguarding@luton.gov.uk](mailto:adultsafeguarding@luton.gov.uk)
- Central Bedfordshire: 0300 300 8122 [adult.protection@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:adult.protection@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

All staff members can access the free and confidential Hourglass helpline on 0808 808 8141 or texting 07860 052906.

Out of hours emergency number for all councils for all safeguarding concerns 0300 300 8123.

## **Responsibilities of individuals in implementing this policy and procedure**

All members of Full House Theatre are to:

- Understand and apply this policy and procedure in their activities
- Identify opportunities and undertake appropriate training to support them in their role
- Act appropriately at all times and be able to challenge inappropriate behaviour in others
- Be able to recognise signs of abuse, neglect or exploitation
- Know how to report any disclosures, allegations, concerns in a timely and appropriate way

In addition, managers in the organisation are to:

- Encourage all staff and volunteers to understand this policy and procedure
- Offer opportunities to undertake appropriate safeguarding training and refresher training
- Ensure that the policy and procedure is adhered to and to undertake regular compliance audits

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

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

## Outcomes for vulnerable groups

In developing this policy Full House Theatre intends that it will promote the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults attending and taking part in activities, whether in person or online.

Vulnerable groups and their parents/carers can be assured that Full House Theatre takes their welfare seriously and wants them to enjoy the activities in a safe and secure environment.

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

All adults working for or with Full House Theatre will have been appropriately recruited and an Enhanced DBS will be applied for and references taken up. Their induction into the organisation will include basic child protection training, a briefing on this policy and a requirement to read and sign the staff Code of Conduct for working with children and vulnerable adults online, where relevant.

## Policy Statement

This policy document aims to be a reference for all members of staff and volunteers.

In implementing this safeguarding policy Full house Theatre will:

- Ensure that all workers understand their legal and moral responsibility to protect vulnerable groups from harm, abuse and exploitation by including training on safeguarding in their induction and in subsequent training that is undertaken.
- Ensure that all workers understand their responsibility to work to the standards that are detailed in the organisation's Safeguarding Procedures and work at all times towards maintaining high standards of practice.
- Ensure that all workers understand their duty to report concerns that arise about a vulnerable person, or a worker's conduct towards a vulnerable person, to the organisation's named person for safeguarding.
- Ensure that a named person responsible for safeguarding is appointed and that they understand their responsibility to refer any safeguarding concerns to the statutory safeguarding agencies (i.e. police and/or local safeguarding children/adults board).
- Ensure that any procedures relating to the conduct of workers are implemented in a consistent and equitable manner.
- Provide opportunities for all workers to develop their skills and knowledge, particularly in relation to the welfare and protection of vulnerable groups.
- Ensure that vulnerable groups are enabled to express their ideas and views on a wide range of issues.
- Ensure that parents/carers are encouraged to be involved in the work of the organisation and, when requested, have access to all guidelines and procedures.
- Endeavour to keep up-to-date with national developments relating to the welfare and protection of vulnerable groups.
- Ensure that appropriate background checks are undertaken when anyone joins the organisation and before they start working directly with vulnerable groups.
- Ensure that all people working directly with vulnerable groups have at least a basic understanding of safeguarding and as part of their training have at the very least undertaken an online, certificated child protection course.

## Legal Framework

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

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

'Working Together to Safeguard Children' 2023 sets out how organisations and individuals should work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in accordance with 'The Children Act' 1989 and 'The Children Act' 2004.

The Department for Education's 'Keeping children safe in out-of-school settings' 2023 sets a non-statutory code of practice to support providers of out-of-school settings. Full House Theatre also complies with the Department of Education's 'Keeping children safe in Education' 2025.

It is important that all practitioners working to safeguard vulnerable groups understand fully their responsibilities and duties as set out in primary legislation and associated regulations and guidance.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child sets out key principles which are enshrined within these acts and the statutory guidance. Every child in the UK is entitled to over 40 specific rights. These include:

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

The rights included in the convention apply to all children and young people, with no exceptions. (<https://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights>)

This policy aims to support and work in accordance with the following Acts;

- Human Rights Act 1998
- Safeguarding Vulnerable groups Act 2006
- Children and Families Act 2014

## Recognising abuse and neglect

### Definition of abuse

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment. Somebody may abuse or neglect a vulnerable person by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Vulnerable persons may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger for example, via the internet. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

An abused child is any child, under 18 years of age, who has suffered from, or is believed likely to be, at risk of significant risk of physical injury, neglect, emotional abuse or sexual abuse.

A vulnerable adult is a person aged 18 years or over; who may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of themselves, or unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation.

The following is a list of the different types of abuse that may be subjected to either children or vulnerable adults:

- Physical abuse
- Psychological abuse
- Domestic abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Child Trafficking/Modern slavery
- Discriminatory abuse
- Organisational abuse
- Neglect and acts of omission

For details on the different types of abuse and signs to help identify them, please refer to [Appendix 1](#). This is not an exhaustive list. Please refer to your safeguarding training which will have provided you with all the information you need on the types of abuse and how to recognise them.

Abuse can come to someone's attention by:

1. Directly witnessing an act or an incident where a vulnerable person has been abused.
2. By being told that abuse has occurred, either by the person who has been subject to the abuse, or another person.
3. By seeing evidence or signs which lead to a suspicion of abuse.

**However you may become aware of abuse, it is imperative that you follow the guidelines and report it. Any concerns regarding abuse should be reported at the earliest opportunity.**

## Disclosure, Suspicion, Allegation – Steps to follow

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

If a vulnerable person confides in you:

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

### Step 1

- Initially talk to a vulnerable person about what you are observing. It is okay to ask questions, for example: "I've noticed that you don't appear yourself today, is everything okay? **But never use leading questions**
- Listen carefully to what the vulnerable person has to say and take it seriously
- Never investigate or take sole responsibility for a situation where a vulnerable person talks about matters that may be indicative of abuse
- Always explain to them that any information they have given will have to be shared with others
- Notify the Designated Safeguarding Lead for Full House Theatre (Harriet Hardie)
- Record what was said as soon as possible using the form in [appendix 5](#) and body maps in [appendix 6](#) if applicable after any disclosure and send to the Designated Safeguarding Lead for Full House Theatre. If the child/vulnerable adult is at risk of immediate or imminent harm call the police first and then send to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- Respect confidentiality and file documents securely in line with GDPR

### Step 2

- The Designated Safeguarding Lead (Harriet Hardie) will take immediate action if there is a suspicion that a vulnerable person has been abused or likely to be abused. In this situation the

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Designated Safeguarding Lead will contact the appropriate Safeguarding Services (Children or Adults). If a referral is made directly via telephone this must be followed up in writing within 24 hours.

- It is your responsibility to check that your report has been received by the Designated Safeguarding Lead as email and written reports can all go astray. Your report will be acknowledged by the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead can also seek advice and clarity about a situation that is beginning to raise concern through contacting Safeguarding Services through the numbers provided in the '[Important Contacts](#)' section of this document or from the NSPCC on 0800 800 5000 [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)
- There may be occasions when the Designated Safeguarding Lead is unsure whether to report or not e.g. the vulnerability of the adult is uncertain. If in any doubt, the Designated Safeguarding Lead must consult the Adult Safeguarding Team for advice.
- When the concerns relate to a vulnerable person who lives or receives services in another local authority area, both local authority safeguarding services must be informed by the designated safeguarding lead.

**If you are worried about a vulnerable person, you have a duty to refer.**

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

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

The suspicion or allegation may relate to a parent or professional or volunteer caring for or working with the child – see [Managing allegations against an adult working with vulnerable groups \(page 13\)](#).

A referral must be made even if it is known that Safeguarding/Social Services are already involved with the vulnerable person/family.

### **What to record**

- The form in [Appendix 5](#) should be used to record details of a disclosure, suspicion or allegation
- All documents must provide accurate factual information e.g. times, dates, names of people
- Wherever possible the exact words the abused person used
- Hearsay and third-party information must be clearly recorded as such
- Use body maps ([Appendix 6](#)) to illustrate any physical injuries

### **How to record and store information**

- Records must be kept from the time that a concern, allegation or disclosure is made
- Records must be made as soon as possible after the event, always within 24 hours
- Always check accuracy, particularly after recording in a stressful situation

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- All records should be typed up and stored securely and confidentially in all forms (both electronic and physical if original handwritten notes were made)
- Any alterations to records must be made by drawing a single line through the word(s)
- Correction fluid must not be used
- All records must be stored in accordance with the UK data protection act 2018 and GDPR

## Managing allegations against an adult working with vulnerable groups

The Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (CBSCB) has specific guidance on their website relating to management of allegations against an adult working with children or young people. In Bedfordshire, allegations against a member of staff or a volunteer organisation working with children and young people must be referred to the relevant Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

An allegation against an adult who works with vulnerable groups could include any activity connected with their employment or voluntary activity whereby they have:

- Behaved in a way that has, or may have harmed a vulnerable person
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against/related to a vulnerable person
- Behaved toward a vulnerable person in a way which indicates they are unsuitable to work with children/young people/vulnerable adults.

If an accusation is made against an adult (whether as a permanent, temporary or agency staff member, contract worker, consultant, volunteer of Full House Theatre) whilst following the procedure outlined below, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will need to liaise with the relevant Safeguarding Services in regards to the potential suspension of the worker, also making a referral to a Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) who should discuss with them the need to make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service.

Where allegations involve staff and or volunteers, consideration must be given to whether to suspend them pending enquiries. Suspension is a neutral act, so the employee is not disadvantaged. Advice should be taken from the Local Safeguarding Team as appropriate and acted upon.

### Procedure

1. The person to whom an allegation is first reported should take the matter seriously and keep an open mind. They should not investigate or ask leading questions if seeking clarification, it is important not to make assumptions. Confidentiality should not be promised, and the person should be advised that the concern will be shared on a 'need to know' basis only.
2. Actions to be taken include making a written record of the allegation using the informant's words - including time, date, and place where the alleged incident took place, what was said and anyone else present. This record should be signed and dated and immediately passed on to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (Harriet Hardie) without delay.

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

3. If there is an immediate or imminent risk of significant harm to a vulnerable person, you should contact the local Safeguarding Services or the Police and then speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (Harriet Hardie) to inform them of the actions you have taken and follow this up in writing.

4. The Designated Safeguarding Lead must take steps to ensure that the person against whom the allegation is removed from the situation immediately. This may be done by either agreement or suspension from the organisation until the matter has been fully investigated.
5. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will refer the issue to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). The LADO must be told, within one working day, of all allegations that come to the employer's attention.

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

If, for any reason, there are difficulties with following the above procedure, a referral should be made directly to the local Safeguarding Services and/or the Police.

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

#### **Contacts**

Bedford Borough:	01234 276 693	<a href="mailto:lado@bedford.gov.uk">lado@bedford.gov.uk</a>
Luton:	01582 548 069	<a href="mailto:lado@luton.gov.uk">lado@luton.gov.uk</a>
Central Bedfordshire:	0300 300 8142	<a href="mailto:lado@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk">lado@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk</a>

## Safer Recruitment

Full House Theatre will act in accordance with government guidance on the safe recruitment of staff.

Full House Theatre ensures that those involved in the recruitment process are suitably experienced to assess the suitability of candidates to work with children.

All staff and volunteers aged 18 and over are required to undertake an Enhanced DBS check. When an enhanced level DBS is requested, Full House Theatre will only ask an individual about convictions and cautions that are not protected. Full House Theatre makes every applicant of a criminal record check submitted to DBS aware of the existence of the [code of practice](#) and makes a copy available on request. DBS checks will be renewed every three years. Where a staff member or volunteer is part of the update service, their record will be checked every three years. If deemed necessary Full House Theatre will renew/review a staff member or volunteers DBS check earlier than three years.

References will be taken up in advance of anyone commencing with Full House Theatre and these should be checked. Offers of employment will be conditional until references are taken up and enhanced DBS is completed. Full House Theatre undertakes to discuss any matter revealed on a DBS certificate or reference with the individual seeking the position which may result in withdrawing the conditional offer of employment.

All employees and trustees will take part in an induction which will include safeguarding training. Full House Theatre will also ensure that appropriate safeguarding training is undertaken by freelance contractors and volunteers as necessary. All employees and regular freelance contractors for Full House Theatre will have annual refresher training. At the minimum all staff will undertake online refresher training provided by NSPCC or the UK governments online Out-of-school-settings training. The designated safeguarding lead will also undertake annual refresher training on their role and responsibilities. When possible, sector specific safeguarding training will also be undertaken by staff.

All employees and freelance contractors will sign a contract in which it is stated that they are aware of and fully understand and accept Full House Theatre's safeguarding policy.

Where staff are expected to participate in sessions online with children and/or vulnerable adults, they will be required to read and sign a Code of Conduct for working with children and/or vulnerable adults online.

Where appropriate staff are issued with 'guidelines for working with children and young people' in [Appendix 2](#) and/or 'guidelines for working with vulnerable adults' in [Appendix 4](#) when they are inducted.

Any staff or volunteers who have not been vetted prior to working with vulnerable groups (for example those under 18 or on very short-term engagement) will be closely supervised and never be left alone with a vulnerable person in a one-to-one situation.

The procedure in response to concerns about the suitability of employees and volunteers once they have begun their role is outlined with [Managing activities involving vulnerable groups](#) (page 13).

## Confidentiality

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

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

The Designated Safeguarding Lead may ask you for further information in order to make any referrals. You should not discuss or share this information with anyone else within the organisation. Any paperwork you have generated should be stored securely in a locked filing cabinet, or if stored on a computer it should be password protected following GDPR procedure.

## Managing activities involving vulnerable groups

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When managing an activity involving vulnerable groups, it is important to consider a risk assessment, both in terms of the health and safety of the participants, but also of the potential safeguarding issues.

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

### **Record keeping**

Whilst record keeping may seem overly bureaucratic from time-to-time, it is important to keep good and clear records. It is particularly important to keep a register of attendance, a fire register and emergency contact details for all children and adults, including for activity which takes place in 'closed groups' online.

Any details must be kept securely in accordance with the UK Data Protection Act and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018. You should also store copies of your risk assessments for activities. A copy of your risk assessment could be required as evidence in the case of an allegation against an adult working with vulnerable groups arising.

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

## **Taking photographs or videos of vulnerable groups**

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From time-to-time photographs and videos may be taken on behalf of the organisation of participants during activities.

Photos and videos taken for official use are covered by UK Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR. Vulnerable groups as well as their parents/guardians/carers will be advised as to why they are being taken. Permission must always be obtained prior to photos or video being taken. This permission will be reviewed with parents/guardians/carer, and participants where applicable, annually.

Wherever possible photos and videos should be taken using official Full House equipment and not on personal mobile phones. Where photos and videos are taken on personal mobile phones, they are to be sent to Full House Theatre as soon as possible and deleted from the device.

For further information and guidance please refer to the [Full House GDPR policy](#).

## Appendix 1 – Definitions and Signs of Abuse and Neglect

Children experiencing abuse often experience more than one type of abuse over a period of time. Children who experience abuse may be afraid to tell anybody about the abuse. They may struggle with feelings of guilt, shame or confusion – particularly if the abuser is a parent, caregiver or other close family member or friend.

Many of the signs that a child is being abused are the same regardless of the type of abuse. Anyone working with children or young people needs to be able to recognise the signs.

These include a child:

- being afraid of particular places or making excuses to avoid particular people
- knowing about or being involved in ‘adult issues’ which are inappropriate for their age or stage of development, for example alcohol, drugs and/or sexual behaviour
- having angry outbursts or behaving aggressively towards others
- becoming withdrawn or appearing anxious, clingy or depressed
- self-harming or having thoughts about suicide
- showing changes in eating habits or developing eating disorders
- regularly experiencing nightmares or sleep problems
- regularly wetting the bed or soiling their clothes
- running away or regularly going missing from home or care
- not receiving adequate medical attention after injuries.

These signs do not necessarily mean that a child is being abused. There may well be other reasons for changes in a child’s behaviour such as a bereavement or relationship problems between parents or carers. If you have any concerns about a child’s wellbeing, you should report them following your organisation’s safeguarding and child protection procedures.

The following information on the definitions and signs of abuse and neglect have been taken from the NSPCC’s website.

### 1.1 Physical abuse

Physical abuse happens when a child is deliberately hurt, causing physical harm. It can involve hitting, kicking, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or suffocating.

It’s also physical abuse if a parent or carer makes up or causes the symptoms of illness in children. For example, they may give them medicine they don’t need, making them unwell. This is known as fabricated or induced illness (FII). Breast ironing or breast flattening, a practice of using hard or heated objects to suppress or reverse the growth of breasts, is a recognised form of child abuse (Crown Prosecution Service, 2019).

#### 1.1.1 Signs

All children have trips, falls and accidents which may cause cuts, bumps and bruises. These injuries tend to affect bony areas of their body such as elbows, knees and shins and are not usually a cause for concern.

Injuries that are more likely to indicate physical abuse include:

#### **Bruising**

- bruises on babies who are not yet crawling or walking
- bruises on the cheeks, ears, palms, arms and feet

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- bruises on the back, buttocks, tummy, hips and backs of legs
- multiple bruises in clusters, usually on the upper arms or outer thighs
- bruising which looks like it has been caused by fingers, a hand or an object, like a belt or shoe
- large oval-shaped bite marks

### **Burns or scalds**

- any burns which have a clear shape of an object, for example cigarette burns
- burns to the backs of hands, feet, legs, genitals or buttocks

Other signs of physical abuse include bite marks, multiple injuries (such as bruising, fractures) inflicted at different times and changes in behaviour such as fear of a specific individual, flinching when approached or touched, depression or withdrawn behaviour.

If a child is frequently injured, and if the bruises or injuries are unexplained or the explanation doesn't match the injury, this should be investigated. It's also concerning if there is a delay in seeking medical help for a child who has been injured.

## **1.2 Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse is the ongoing emotional maltreatment of a child, which can have a severe and persistent negative effect on the child's emotional health and development. It's also known as psychological abuse.

Exposing a child to aggression, cruelty or abuse between others is also a form of emotional abuse.<sup>5</sup>

Most forms of abuse include an emotional element, but emotional abuse can also happen on its own.

There are several categories of emotional abuse. These include:

### **Rejection**

This can include:

- telling a child they aren't good enough
- physical abandonment
- excluding the child from activities
- not listening to a child or letting them express their views
- belittling a child
- not communicating with the child

### **Terrorising**

This covers:

- threatening violence
- deliberately frightening a child
- deliberately putting a child in a dangerous situation

### **Bullying**

This could take the form of:

- verbal humiliation
- name-calling
- undermining or mocking a child.
- Physical bullying can also have emotional effects.

## **Manipulation**

Manipulation involves coercing or persuading a child to take part in activities that:

- they aren't comfortable with
- aren't appropriate for their age or stage of development
- are unsafe
- Gaslighting is also a form of manipulation. This is where perpetrators make someone doubt their own perception, judgment or memory

## **Imposing unreasonable expectations**

Placing age or developmentally inappropriate expectations on a child, including:

- interacting with children in ways that are beyond their developmental capability
- putting unreasonable limitations on a child's freedom
- restricting or preventing social interaction

## **Exposing to ill-treatment of others**

Children seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of others, including through domestic abuse, is also a form of emotional abuse.

### *1.2.1 Signs*

There aren't usually any obvious physical signs of emotional abuse, but you may spot changes in a child's actions or emotions.

Some children are naturally quiet and self-contained whilst others are more open and affectionate. Mood swings and challenging behaviour are also a normal part of growing up for teenagers and children going through puberty. Be alert to behaviours which appear to be out of character for the individual child or are particularly unusual for their stage of development.

Signs and indicators that might indicate that an infant or young child is being or has been emotionally abused, include:

- displaying passive and withdrawn behaviour when interacting with their caregiver
- not seeming upset when separated from their caregiver
- being angry or disinterested when playing and showing little creativity.

You might also observe caregivers:

- not responding to their needs or not being sensitive to their child's feelings. For example, rarely speaking to or interacting with them, not often showing affection, or not responding to their signals for help
- describing their child as irritating or demanding, even within the first few days of life.

Older children may:

- lack confidence and have low self-esteem
- be withdrawn and very quiet
- experience mental health issues
- have a language delay
- struggle to focus and concentrate on tasks
- struggle to make or maintain relationships
- display behaviour perceived to be aggressive or hostile
- seem isolated from their parents, carers and peers
- lack social skills or have few, if any, friends.

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### 1.3 Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is when a child is forced or persuaded to take part in sexual activities. This may involve physical contact or non-contact activities and can happen online or offline.

Children and young people may not always understand that they are being sexually abused.

Children and young people of any age, including very young children and babies, can experience sexual abuse.

Child sexual abuse can involve contact abuse and non-contact abuse.

**Contact abuse** involves activities where an abuser makes physical contact with a child. It includes:

- sexual touching of any part of the body, whether the child is wearing clothes or not
- forcing or encouraging a child to take part in sexual activity
- making a child take their clothes off or touch someone else's genitals
- rape or penetration by putting an object or body part inside a child's mouth, vagina or anus.

**Non-contact abuse** involves activities where there is no physical contact. It includes:

- flashing at a child
- encouraging or forcing a child to watch or hear sexual acts
- not taking proper measures to prevent a child being exposed to sexual activities by others
- making a child masturbate while others watch
- persuading a child to make, view or distribute child abuse images (such as performing sexual acts over the internet, sexting or showing pornography to a child)
- making, viewing or distributing child abuse images
- allowing someone else to make, view or distribute child abuse images
- meeting a child following grooming with the intent of abusing them (even if abuse did not take place)
- sexually exploiting a child for money, power or status (child sexual exploitation).

Abusers may threaten to send sexually explicit images, video or copies of sexual conversations to the young person's friends and family unless they take part in other sexual activity. Images or videos may continue to be shared long after the abuse has stopped.

Abusers will often try to build an emotional connection with a child in order to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual abuse. This is known as grooming.

#### 1.3.1 Signs

There may be physical signs that a child has suffered sexual abuse.

These include:

- bruising
- bleeding
- discharge
- pain or soreness in the genital or anal area
- wetting or soiling unrelated to toilet training
- sexually transmitted infections

In children who are able to become pregnant, pregnancy can also be an indicator of sexual abuse.

Emotional and behavioural indicators include:

- displaying sexualised behaviour or having sexual knowledge that's inappropriate or problematic for their stage of development
- being afraid of or avoiding a particular person (including a family member or friend)
- changes in sleep such as difficulties sleeping or nightmares
- being withdrawn
- alluding to 'secrets'
- self-harming
- running away from home
- developing eating problems
- misusing drugs or alcohol

There are also additional indicators that professionals need to be particularly aware of when working with babies and young children.

It can be difficult to recognise and identify that a baby or very young child is experiencing sexual abuse. Children at these early developmental stages can't always communicate their experiences. Children in their early years experiencing sexual abuse might display disruption or regression of normal development such as toilet training, eating and interacting with other children. They may also resist or become distressed with intimate care such as nappy changing.

## 1.4 Child Sexual Exploitation

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a type of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity.

Children and young people in sexually exploitative situations and relationships are persuaded or forced to perform sexual activities or have sexual activities performed on them in return for gifts, drugs, money or affection.

CSE can take place in person, online, or using a combination of both.

### 1.4.1 Signs

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) can be very difficult to identify. Warning signs can easily be mistaken for 'normal' teenage behaviour.

Children and young people who are being sexually exploited may display certain behaviours:

- displaying inappropriate sexualised behaviour for their age
- being fearful of certain people and/or situations
- displaying significant changes in emotional wellbeing
- being isolated from peers/usual social networks
- being increasingly secretive
- having money or new things (such as clothes or a mobile phone) that they can't explain
- spending time with older individuals or groups
- being involved with gangs and/or gang fights
- calling an older person their 'boyfriend' or 'girlfriend'
- missing school and/or falling behind with schoolwork
- persistently returning home late
- returning home under the influence of drugs/alcohol
- going missing from home or care

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- being involved in petty crime such as shoplifting
- spending a lot of time at hotels or places of concern, such as known brothels
- not knowing where they are, because they have been trafficked around the country

Physical signs include:

- unexplained physical injuries and other signs of physical abuse
- changed physical appearance - for example, weight loss
- scars from self-harm (Department for Education, 2017).

Repeat sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy and terminations can also be a sign of CSE.

## 1.5 Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse is any type of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between people who are, or who have been in a relationship, regardless of gender or sexuality. It can also happen between adults who are related to one another. It can include coercive control, stalking and harassment, physical, sexual, emotional, financial or technology-facilitated abuse.

Exposure to domestic abuse is child abuse. Children can be directly involved in incidents of domestic abuse, or they may be harmed by seeing or hearing abuse happening. Children in homes where there is domestic abuse are also at risk of other types of abuse or neglect.

### 1.5.1 Signs

It can be difficult to tell if domestic abuse is happening, because abusers can act very differently when other people are around.

Children who witness domestic abuse may:

- become aggressive
- display anti-social behaviour
- suffer from depression or anxiety
- not do as well at school - due to difficulties at home or disruption of moving to and from refuges

## 1.6 Child Trafficking and Modern Slavery

Child trafficking is child abuse. It's defined as recruiting, moving, receiving and harbouring children for the purpose of exploitation. Child trafficking is a form of modern slavery (HM Government, 2014). Many children are trafficked into the UK from overseas, but children can also be trafficked from one part of the UK to another.

Children are trafficked for:

- child sexual exploitation
- criminal activity, including:
  - cannabis cultivation
  - street crime - such as pickpocketing, begging and bag theft
  - moving drugs
  - benefit fraud
  - immigration fraud
  - selling pirated goods, such as DVDs
- forced marriage
- domestic servitude, including:
  - cleaning
  - childcare

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- cooking
- forced labour, including working in:
  - restaurants
  - nail bars
  - factories
  - agriculture
- illegal adoption
- unreported private fostering arrangements (for any exploitative purpose).

This list is not exhaustive and children who are trafficked are often exploited in more than one way.

Child trafficking can require a network of organised criminals who recruit, transport and exploit children and young people. Some people in the network might not be directly involved in trafficking a child but play a part in other ways, such as falsifying documents, bribery, owning or renting premises or money laundering (Europol, 2011). Child trafficking can also be organised by individuals and the children's own families.

Traffickers trick, force or persuade children to leave their homes. They use grooming techniques to gain the trust of a child, family or community. Although these are methods used by traffickers, coercion, violence or threats don't need to be proven in cases of child trafficking - a child cannot legally consent to their exploitation so child trafficking only requires evidence of movement and exploitation.

Modern slavery is another term which may be used in relation to child trafficking. Modern slavery encompasses slavery, servitude, forced and compulsory labour and human trafficking (HM Government, 2014). The Modern Slavery Act passed in 2015 in England and Wales categorises offences of slavery, servitude, forced or compulsory labour and human trafficking.

### *1.6.1 Signs*

Signs that a child has been trafficked may not be obvious, but you might notice unusual behaviour or events.

Children who have been trafficked may:

- have to do excessive housework chores
- rarely leave the house and have limited freedom of movement
- not have any documents (or have falsified documents)
- give a prepared story which is very similar to stories given by other children
- be unable or reluctant to give details of accommodation or personal details
- not be registered with a school or a GP practice
- have a history with missing links and unexplained moves
- be cared for by adults who are not their parents or carers
- not have a good quality relationship with their adult carers
- be one among a number of unrelated children found at one address
- receive unexplained or unidentified phone calls whilst in a care placement or temporary accommodation

There are also signs that an adult is involved in child trafficking, such as:

- making multiple visa applications for different children
- acting as a guarantor for multiple visa applications for children
- having previously acted as the guarantor on visa applications for visitors who have not left the UK when the visa expired

## 1.7 Neglect

Neglect is not meeting a child's basic physical and psychological needs. It is a form of child abuse that can have serious and long-lasting impacts on a child's life - it can cause serious harm and even death.

The four main types of neglect are:

- **physical neglect:** not meeting a child's basic needs, such as food, clothing or shelter; not supervising a child adequately or providing for their safety
- **educational neglect:** not making sure a child receives an education
- **emotional neglect:** not meeting a child's needs for nurture and stimulation, for example by ignoring, humiliating, intimidating or isolating them
- **medical neglect:** not providing appropriate health care (including dental care), refusing care or ignoring medical recommendations (Horwath, 2007).

Neglect can happen at any age, sometimes even before a child is born. If a mother has mental health problems or misuses substances during pregnancy, for example, she may neglect her own health and this can damage a baby's development in the womb (Haynes et al, 2015).

### 1.7.1 Signs

There's often no single indicator that a child is being neglected. You may notice more than one sign and your concerns might become more frequent if problems are mounting up. This could indicate that a child and their family need support.

Children of all ages who are neglected may:

- live in an unsuitable home environment, for example in a house that isn't heated throughout winter
- have a lack of, or inappropriate, stimulation, activities or toys
- not have enough sleep or a sleep routine
- be left alone for a long time
- struggle with personal hygiene and washing
- struggle with poor oral and dental health
- wear clothing that hasn't been washed or is inadequate (for example, not having a winter coat)
- seem particularly hungry, seem not to have eaten breakfast or have no packed lunch or lunch money
- not be brought to medical appointments such as vaccinations or check-ups
- not be given the prescribed medication, treatment or adaptations needed for a diagnosed illness, disability or condition.

They may suffer from poor health, including:

- untreated injuries
- medical and dental issues
- repeated accidental injuries due to lack of supervision
- untreated or recurring illnesses or infections
- long term or recurring skin sores, rashes, flea bites, scabies or ringworm anaemia.

## 1.8 Bullying and cyberbullying

Bullying is when individuals or groups seek to harm, intimidate or coerce someone who is perceived to be vulnerable.

It can involve people of any age, and can happen anywhere – at home, school or using online platforms and technologies (cyberbullying). This means it can happen at any time.

Bullying encompasses a range of behaviours which may be combined and may include the behaviours and actions we have set out below.

**Verbal abuse:**

- name-calling
- saying nasty things to or about a child or their family.

**Physical abuse:**

- hitting a child
- pushing a child
- physical assault.

**Emotional abuse:**

- making threats
- undermining a child
- excluding a child from a friendship group or activities.

**Cyberbullying/online bullying:**

- excluding a child from online games, activities or friendship groups
- sending threatening, upsetting or abusive messages
- creating and sharing embarrassing or malicious images or videos
- 'trolling' - sending menacing or upsetting messages on social networks, chat rooms or online games
- voting for or against someone in an abusive poll
- setting up hate sites or groups about a particular child
- creating fake accounts, hijacking or stealing online identities to embarrass a young person or cause trouble using their name.

Bullying and cyberbullying can be a form of discrimination, particularly if it is based on a child's disability, race, religion or belief, gender identity or sexuality.

### *Signs 1.8.1*

It can be hard to know whether or not a child is being bullied. They might not tell anyone because they're scared the bullying will get worse. They might also think that the bullying is their fault.

Indicators that a child could be experiencing bullying or cyberbullying include:

- being reluctant to go to school
- being distressed or anxious
- losing confidence and becoming withdrawn
- having problems eating and/or sleeping
- having unexplained injuries
- changes in appearance
- changes in performance and/or behaviour at school.

Adults may notice that a child isn't spending time with their usual group of friends, has become isolated or that other children's behaviour towards a child has changed.

## **1.9 County Lines**

County lines is a type of criminal exploitation. Urban gangs persuade, coerce or force children and young people to store drugs and money and/or transport them to suburban areas, market towns and coastal towns.

It can happen in any part of the UK. County lines is against the law and a form of child abuse.

Children and young people may be criminally exploited in multiple ways. Other forms of criminal exploitation include child sexual exploitation, trafficking, gang and knife crime.

County lines gangs are highly organised criminal networks that use sophisticated, frequently evolving techniques to groom young people and evade capture by the police.

Perpetrators use children and young people to maximise profits and distance themselves from the criminal act of physically dealing drugs. Young people do the majority of the work and take the most risk.

Dedicated mobile phone lines or “deal lines” are used to help facilitate county lines drug deals. Phones are usually cheap, disposable and old fashioned (known as ‘burner’ phones). They are changed frequently to avoid detection by the police.

Gangs use the phones to receive orders and contact young people to instruct them where to deliver drugs. This may be to a dealer or drug user locally or in another county.

Phrases that young people may use to refer to county lines include:

- ‘running a line’,
- ‘going OT/out there’
- ‘going country’
- ‘going cunch’.

These all refer to going out of town to deliver drugs or money.

### *Signs 1.9.1*

The signs that a young person is being groomed or exploited for county lines are similar to those of other forms of criminal exploitation.

This includes behavioural signs such as going missing, frequent travel to different locations, being unwilling to explain their whereabouts, changes in mental health and use of drugs and alcohol.

Professionals should also watch for unusual online activity such as being online for increased or excessive amounts of time, building inappropriate relationships, experiencing online abuse or receiving gifts from someone online.

Young people may also have money or possessions, like clothes or a mobile phone, that they are unable to account for. They may carry weapons or have multiple phone handsets (particularly ‘burner’ phones). They may also have train tickets for unusual journeys or become attached to a rucksack or bag that they will not leave.

There may be physical signs that a young person is being exploited. This includes unexplained injuries, refusing food or drink, being in possession of lubricants or condoms, having a dishevelled appearance or being physically unwell.

These signs are not an exhaustive list and there are many other indicators that a young person may be being exploited.

## 2. Vulnerable Adults

There are additional categories of abuse that relate to vulnerable adults.

The following is a list of the different types and patterns of abuse and neglect and the different circumstances in which they may take place. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list but an illustrative guide as to the sort of behaviour which could give rise to a safeguarding concern.

- **Domestic violence** – including psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional abuse; so called ‘honour’ based violence.
- **Psychological abuse** – including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, cyber bullying, isolation or unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal of services or supportive networks.
- **Financial or material abuse** – including theft, fraud, internet scamming, coercion in relation to an adult’s financial affairs or arrangements, including in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.
- **Modern slavery** – encompasses slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude. Traffickers and slave masters use whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment.
- **Discriminatory abuse** – including forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment; because of race, gender and gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion.
- **Organisational abuse** – including neglect and poor care practice within an institution or specific care setting such as a hospital or care home, for example, or in relation to care provided in one’s own home. This may range from one off incidents to on-going ill-treatment. It can be through neglect or poor professional practice as a result of the structure, policies, processes and practices within an organisation.
- **Self-neglect** – this covers a wide range of behaviour, neglecting to care for one’s personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding.

## Appendix 2 – Guidelines on working with Children and Young People

All Full House staff of children and young people should follow these guidelines:

- Do not be alone one to one with a child or young person. Be sure you can be seen at all times. This includes both in person and ‘closed group’ online activity (i.e. where groups of children are invited to take part in interactive activity online – as opposed to the open streaming of footage).
- When counselling, where privacy and confidentiality are important, ensure another adult knows the interview is taking place and with whom. If possible, another adult should be present, and the young person should know they are there.
- Treat all children and young people with respect and dignity befitting their age: watch language, tone of voice and where you put your body.
- Do not:
  - initiate rough, physical or sexually provocative games;
  - make suggestive comments about or to a young person;
  - touch in an intrusive or inappropriate way;
  - scapegoat, ridicule or reject a child or young person.
- Be mindful of your relationship with young people outside of the group setting, showing particular caution when using social media. A degree of professionalism and distance is required to maintain appropriate worker:child relationships.
- Make sure you know and follow first aid and fire procedures – only authorised, qualified first-aiders can treat children and young people.
- If any abuse is suspected – or if allegations are made – do not jump to conclusions or start to investigate but consult the Designated Safeguarding Lead without delay.
- Please talk with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (Harriet Hardie) if you have any concerns or need help or advice.

## Appendix 3 – Keeping Children Safe in Education

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68add931969253904d155860/Keeping\\_children\\_safe\\_in\\_education\\_from\\_1\\_September\\_2025.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68add931969253904d155860/Keeping_children_safe_in_education_from_1_September_2025.pdf)

## Appendix 4 – Out-of-school settings: safeguarding guidance for providers

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6509558022a783000d43e81f/After-school\\_clubs\\_community\\_activities\\_and\\_tuition\\_safeguarding\\_guidance\\_for\\_providers.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6509558022a783000d43e81f/After-school_clubs_community_activities_and_tuition_safeguarding_guidance_for_providers.pdf)

## Appendix 5 – Guidelines on working with Vulnerable Adults

When workers are either leading a group or providing a service to vulnerable adults, relationships must retain a degree of professionalism. Leaders and volunteers should never allow any personal relationship with a vulnerable adult to develop an inappropriate level of emotional or physical intimacy. This could compromise the safety and integrity of everyone involved. If any volunteers/workers have past personal relationships with a vulnerable adult, this should be declared to the group leader.

### Professional conduct:

It is important that all staff and volunteers practice professionalism and boundary setting to ensure transparency and consistency across their team. In practice, professionalism includes:

- Never allowing yourself to be compromised by, nor take advantage of, your relationship with vulnerable adults;
- Never forming sexual or close personal relationships with participants
- Never gambling with vulnerable adults;
- Never buying a vulnerable adult alcohol. Avoid drinking alcohol when acting within a worker's role. If exceptions occur (for example at an event) please use discernment and accountability.
- Maintaining full confidentiality at all times.
- Keep physical contact to a minimum. Hugs/kisses may be acceptable if they are given in an open area, initiated by the vulnerable adult and you are comfortable to receive it. If not politely decline the advance.
- When counselling, where privacy and confidentiality are important, ensure another adult knows the interview is taking place and with whom. If possible, another adult should be present.

Vulnerable adults may not always understand boundaries and privacy. Please take care of what you disclose about yourself to them.

Make sure you know and follow first-aid and fire procedures.

If any abuse is suspected – or if allegations are made – do not jump to conclusions or start to investigate but consult the Designated Safeguarding Lead (Harriet Hardie) without delay.

Please talk with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (Harriet Hardie) if you have any concerns or need help or advice.



## Appendix 7 - Body Maps



