

Corfe Valley Outdoor Learning Ltd
Child Protection Policy, Procedure & Guidance

Corfe Valley Outdoor Learning Ltd is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

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Owner: Tom Smith/Kirstie Smith

Safeguarding Lead Details

DSL	Kirstie Smith 07739358334 Corfevalleyoutdoorlearning@gmail.com
DDSL	Tom Smith 07729776203 Corfevalleyoutdoorlearning@gmail.com
DDSL	Kate Unwin 077375490180 Corfevalleyoutdoorlearning@gmail.com

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Policy Statement

In line with KCSiE 2024 and all new updates Corfe Valley recognises that “Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone’s responsibility. Everyone who meets children, and their families has a role to play. To fulfil this responsibility effectively, all practitioners should make sure their approach is child centred. This means that they should consider, at all times, what is in the best interests of the child.’ KCSiE.

Corfe Valley will make every effort to provide a safe and welcoming environment underpinned by a culture of openness and inclusiveness where both adults and children feel secure, able to talk and believe that they are being listened to. All staff maintain an attitude of ‘it could happen here’ where safeguarding is concerned.

The purpose of this policy is to provide all staff at Corfe Valley with the framework they need to keep children safe and secure at our provision and to help inform parent and carers on how we will safeguard their children whilst in our care.

Terminology

Child protection is an aspect of safeguarding but is focussed on how we respond to children who have been significantly harmed or are at risk of significant harm.

Staff applies to all those working at Corfe Valley.

Child refers to all our young people who have not yet reached their 18th birthday.

Parent refers to birth parents and other adults in a parenting role for example adoptive parents, stepparents, guardians, and foster carers.

Abuse could mean neglect, physical, emotional, or sexual abuse or any combination of these, as well as children witnessing domestic abuse. Parents, carers, and other people can harm children either by direct acts and/or failure to provide proper care. Explanations of such are included in our policy.

Aims

The aims of this policy are to:

- Provide staff with the framework to promote and safeguard the wellbeing of children and in so doing ensure they meet their statutory responsibilities.
- To ensure consistent good practice across our provision.
- To demonstrate our commitment to protecting children.

Principles & Values

- All children have a right to feel secure and safe.
- All children have a right to be protected from harm.
- All staff have a key role to play in prevention of harm.
- We know how essential it is to work in partnership with all agencies that help to protect children.
- Whilst Corfe Valley will work openly with parents as far as possible, we do reserve the right to contact Children’s Social Care or the police, without notifying parents if this is believed to be in the child’s best interests.

Leadership & Management

Corfe Valley has clear procedures in place for helping to protect our young people and all staff adhere to these. At Corfe Valley any individual can contact the DSL or the DDSL if they have concerns about a young person.

As an employer we follow safer recruitment guidance as set out in KCSIE 2024 including informing candidates that online searched will be carried out.

Training

All staff at Corfe Valley are expected to be aware of the signs of abuse and must be able to respond appropriately. Training is provided and completed at least annually plus additional training to all new staff via induction. Any updates to national or local guidance will be shared with staff and discussed in person during INSETS.

Referral

Following any concerns raised, the DSL will assess the information and consider if significant harm has happened or there is a risk that it may happen. If the evidence suggests the threshold of significant harm, or risk of significant harm has been reached, or if it is not clear if the threshold is met, the DSL will contact Children's Social Care and, if appropriate, the police. If the DSL or DDSL is not available or there are immediate concerns, the staff member will refer directly to Children's Social Care and the police if appropriate.

The DSL will normally inform parents prior to making a referral. However, there are situations where this may not be possible or appropriate, particularly when informing parents, may put the child at further risk.

The exception to this process will be in those cases of known FGM where there is a mandatory requirement for the teacher to report directly to the police. The DSL also should be made aware.

Confidentiality

Corfe Valley will treat all matters relating to child protection as confidential and only shared as per the 'Information Sharing Advice for Practitioners' DfE 2024 guidance. We understand that there is a lawful basis for child protection concerns to be shared with agencies who have a statutory duty for child protection. We will only share information with individuals within our setting on a 'need to know' basis and understand that we cannot promise a child to keep a disclosure confidential.

Education

Corfe Valley has instilled a culture of openness and safety where our young people will be safe to talk freely about any concerns, they may have knowing that they will be listened to and valued. We have high adult ratios so we can ensure that each young person under our care has a trusted adult they can talk with at any point throughout the day.

How Corfe Valley will deal with concerns and allegations against staff

If a concern is raised about the practise or behaviour of a member of one of our staff, this information will be recorded and passed to the directors of Corfe Valley, Kirstie & Tom Smith. The directors will make an assessment to determine if the matter is a 'low level concern' or an 'allegation'. The Local

Authority Designated Officer (LADO) will be contacted for all allegations and the relevant guidance will be followed. If the directors need advice or guidance, they will contact the LADO. If the allegation is against the directors, the person receiving the allegation will contact the LADO directly. Please see our comprehensive 'Dealing with Allegations Policy' & flowchart for Corfe Valley.

Roles and responsibilities at Corfe Valley

Staff responsibilities

We will follow the statutory guidance as set out in the latest Keeping Children Safe in Education, adhering to the roles, responsibilities and expectations identified. Each staff member at Corfe Valley is committed to providing a safe environment and a clear and honest approach to working with children and their families. Our main focus will always be the child and their safety are paramount and therefore we will always involve other relevant agencies where necessary. Where safe to do so, we will seek to inform parents/carers before involving agencies such as Children's Social Care. All staff have a key role to play in identifying concerns early and in providing help for children. To achieve this, they will:

- Our safeguarding and child protection policy and related procedures
- Our policy and procedures on how to deal with child-on-child abuse.
- Our behaviour policy and related procedures (which include measures to prevent all types of bullying)
- Staff behaviour policy, Code of Conduct, and all related procedures
- Our safeguarding response to children who go missing from education; and
- The role of the DSL and deputy
- All staff will maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here'.
- Identifying concerns early and helping to prevent them from escalating.
- Providing a safe environment where children and young people can flourish.
- Knowing what to do if a child tells them that they are being abused, exploited, or neglected.
- Recognising the barriers for children and young people when making a disclosure.
- Following all our safeguarding procedures.
- Attending regular safeguarding and child protection training.
- Recognising that children missing from education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, sexual abuse, and child sexual and criminal exploitations.
- Reading and understanding Part 1, Annex B of KCSIE.
- Being aware of systems in the setting which support safeguarding e.g., safeguarding policies and procedures, behaviour policy, code of conduct.

Copies of all relevant policies and procedures are provided to staff at induction including a copy of part one of KCSIE plus Annex A. All identified related training must be fully completed before a member of staff is able to work with a young person. Training provided for staff is regularly reviewed and updated where necessary.

Our Proprietors – Tom & Kirstie Smith will:

- Ensure that child protection, safeguarding, recruitment and managing allegations policies and procedures, including the staff code of conduct and behaviour policy, are consistent with the Local Authority and statutory requirements, are reviewed annually and that the safeguarding and child protection policy is publicly available on our website.
- Ensure that our staff and volunteers are all provided with our safeguarding and child protection policy, code of conduct and behaviour policy.
- Ensure that all staff have read Keeping Children Safe in Education Part 1 and Annex B
- Ensure that our safer recruitment procedure includes statutory checks on staff and that at least one person involved in the recruitment process has completed safer recruitment training.

- Ensuring that we have procedures in place for dealing with allegations of abuse against staff, volunteers and against children and young people.
- Ensuring we have a DSL and they have had the appropriate training.
- Ensuring that procedures are in place for safeguarding children who go missing from education.
- Ensuring that appropriate online filtering and monitoring systems are in place.
- Contribute to inter-agency working in line with 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 guidance'

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DSL & DDSL responsibilities

The role of the DSL is to be read in conjunction with the DSL role description in KCSiE.

The DSL for Corfe Valley Outdoor Learning (including online safety) is Mrs Kirstie Smith who is the co-founder of Corfe Valley Outdoor Learning Alternative Provision.

Mr Tom Smith and Mrs Kate Unwin are the DDSL's and the people to whom reports should be made in the absence of the DSL. This ensures there is the required cover for the role at all times.

The DSL/DDSL's receive updated child protection training at least every two years to provide them with the knowledge and skills required to carry out the role. Further details of the required training content for the DSL are set out in Annex B of KCSiE.

In addition to their formal training, the DSL's knowledge and skills are updated at least annually to keep up with any developments relevant to their role. All the senior staff are trained to the same level as the DSL.

Roles and responsibilities will include:

- Being available during opening hours.
- Managing referrals to Children's Social Care, Channel programmes, disclosure and barring service, the police, and other professional partners.
- Attending CP, CIN and LAC review meetings.
- Sharing information and managing child protection files.
- Raising safeguarding concerns.
- Updating training, knowledge and skills required to carry out the role of DSL.
- Providing advice, support and guidance to staff.
- Knowing which children and young people are on multi-agency plans and which children/young people have a social worker.
- Ensuring that the setting has appropriate filtering and monitoring systems in place and review their effectiveness. This includes:
 - Making sure that all staff are aware of the provisions in place, and that they understand their expectations, roles and responsibilities around filtering and monitoring as part of safeguarding training.
 - Review the DFE's filtering and monitoring standards.

Corfe Valley's Child Protection Procedures

Overview

The following procedures apply to all staff working at Corfe Valley and will be covered by training to enable staff to understand their role and responsibility. The aim of our procedures is to provide a clear framework which enables staff to take appropriate action when they are concerned that a child is being harmed or is at risk of harm.

Our prime concern at all stages is for the interests and safety of the child. Where there is a conflict of interest between the child and adult, the interests of the child must come first.

We are aware that at Corfe Valley we will have some young people who will find communicating their concerns trickier than others and this may come out through their behaviour.

If a member of staff suspects abuse, spots signs or indicators of abuse, or they have a disclosure of abuse made to them then they must:

- Log using MyConcerns which all staff have access to
- Report to the DSL immediately
- The DSL will consider if immediate medical intervention is needed. Urgent medical attention should not be delayed if the DSL is not immediately available.
- An accurate record must be kept that includes dates, times, injuries, explanation given by the young person, action taken, and any actual words used by the child.
- If the DSL or DDSL is not available staff must refer directly to Children's Social Care and the police if appropriate if there is the potential for immediate or significant harm.

Following a report of concerns the DSL must:

- Decide whether or not there are sufficient grounds for suspecting significant harm, in which case a referral must be made to Children's Social Care and the police if appropriate.
- Normally concerns will be discussed with the young person's family before making a referral to Children's Social Care, however where there are doubts about involving the family the DSL will talk to Children's Social Care and the Police. The child's views should also be taken into account when appropriate.
- If there are grounds to suspect a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm the DSL or DDSL must contact Children's Social Care direct on the phone for Dorset and via the inter-agency referral form for BCP making a clear statement of the facts, any allegations and whether you have contacted the child's family.
- If a young person is in immediate danger and urgent protective action is required, the police must be called. The DSL must then notify Children's Social Care.
- If there is no risk of significant harm, the DSL will either actively monitor the situation or consider the Early Help process.
- In cases of allegations against staff Corfe Valley will use our Low-Level Concerns procedure.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT A CHILD BEING ABUSED

Staff member has concerns about a child's welfare

Be alert to signs of abuse and question any unusual behaviours

When a child or young person discloses abuse or neglect

Listen and take the allegation seriously, reassure them and keep them safe.

- Listen carefully
- Avoid showing shock
- Observe child's demeanour
- Explain carefully that the information shared does need to be shared you cannot keep this a secret.
 - Allow the child or young person to explain at their own pace and do not interrupt
 - Avoid asking leading questions – only ask for clarification
 - Reassure the child that they have done the right thing talking about it
 - Explain what will happen next and who you will share information with
 - Do not ask the child to repeat a disclosure to anyone else
 - Do not raise the allegation with possible abuser (parent/staff/other)

After disclosure – login and complete 'My Concern' once the form is completed, it will automatically alert the DSL

Discuss concerns with DSL or DDSL in the absence of the DSL.

The DSL will consider further actions required, including consultation with CHAD and/or current social worker if applicable. Concerns and discussions, decisions and reasons for decisions should be recorded on My Concern.

Still have concerns – refer to CHAD/current Social Worker (within 24 hours)

No longer has safeguarding concerns.

ChAD/Social Worker

1. *Acknowledg receipt of referral*
2. *Decide on next course of action (within 1 working day)*
3. *Feedback decision to referrer (e.g. further assessment including Strategy discussions/child protection enquires, no further action required)*

DSL/DDSL – follow up in 72 hours if not had feedback

Children's Advice and Duty Service (ChAD) – Professionals Number:

01305 228558

BCP – Children's First Response Hub:

01202 735046

Additional Needs

Consult with relevant agencies and undertake an Early Help CAF and Team around the Child meetings as appropriate

Dealing with disclosures.

All staff should:

Any member of staff who is approached by a child or young person should maintain a positive attitude and try to reassure them. They should not promise complete confidentiality and should explain that they may need to pass information on to other professionals to help keep them safe or other children. The degree of confidentiality should always be governed by the need to protect the child.

All staff are aware that they should communicate with a child in a way that is appropriate to their age and understanding.

All staff at Corfe Valley know who the DSL is and who to approach should the DSL not be available. All staff are aware that ultimately it everyone's responsibility and all staff have a right to make a referral to the police or social care directly if appropriate.

Principles of the Seven R's

Receive

- Listen to the child and what is being said without showing shock or disbelief
- Accept what has been said and take it seriously
- Make a note of what has been said as soon as practicable

Reassure

- Reassure the child, but do not make promises
- Do reassure e.g. "I am glad you came to me"

Respond

- Respond to the child only as far as is necessary for you to establish whether or not you need to refer this matter
- Do not ask leading questions
- Do not ask the child why something has happened
- Do not criticise the alleged perpetrator
- Do not ask the child to repeat it all to another member of staff. Explain to the child what you now have to do and reassure them again.

Report

- Share concerns with the DSL as soon as possible, verbally or by email
- If the DSL is not available go to the DDSL
- If the child is at risk of immediate harm contact children's services directly

Record

- If possible make brief notes at the time and write them up as soon as possible
- Log into MyConcern with all the information asked e.g. times and dates
- Record using the child language
- Complete a body map if needed indicating the position of any noticeable bruising or marks
- Record facts only not your own interpretations

Remember

- Support the child

- Share your knowledge only with appropriate professional colleagues
- Try and get some support for yourself if you need it
- All staff must be aware that children may not feel ready or know how to tell somebody that they are being abused, exploited or neglected and/or they may not recognise their experiences as harmful

Review (led by DSL)

- Has the action on MyConcern being taken and provided good outcomes for the child?
- Did the procedures work?
- Were any deficiencies identified in the procedure? Have these been remedied?
- Is further training required?

What happens next?

It is important that concerns are followed up and it is everyone's responsibility to ensure that they are. The member of staff should be informed by the DSL what has happened after the report being made. If they do not receive this information, they should be proactive in seeking it out.

If a staff member believes that their concerns have not been dealt with effectively or that the child remains at risk, they should initially ask the DSL to reconsider ensuring that the risks are understood. If this does not result in a satisfactory outcome, or the DSL rationale appears to miss the risk to the child, the whistleblowing procedures of Corfe Valley should be followed. If the DSL is unhappy with the response from children's social care, they should consider following the escalation policy.

Receiving a disclosure can be upsetting for the member of staff and Corfe Valley will ensure we follow procedures for supporting them after the disclosure. This may include reassurance that they have followed the procedure correctly and that their quick thinking will enable the allegations to be handled appropriately. The local and updated Escalation Policy can be found on the Pan-Dorset Website.

Allegations against adults who work with children

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023) states that organisations should have clear policies for dealing with allegations against people who work with children. Those policies should make a clear distinction between an allegation, a complaint or a concern about the quality of care or practice.

Allegations as defined by KCSiE should be reported to the LADO. Complaints or concerns can be managed by our Corfe Valley internal procedures. If the allegation is about the directors then the person with concerns should contact the LADO. In all cases of allegations against staff, the directors will contact the LADO without delay for advice.

Complains could be:

- Breaches of the code of conduct
- Breach of data protection or confidentiality
- Poor behaviour management
- Inappropriate use of social media

Concerns could be:

- Inappropriate language
- Discussing personal or sexual relationships with, or in the presence, of children
- Making unprofessional comments which scapegoat, demean or humiliate children

Lower Level Concerns, which do not reach the allegations harm threshold (or complaints criteria) should be dealt with using our Lower Level Concern procedures.

Procedures for Allegations that meet the harm threshold

This procedure should be used in all cases when it is alleged a member of staff, or another adult who works with children has either:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child; or
- Possibly committed a criminal offense against or related to a child; or
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she would 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.

When considering allegations of suitability the LADO would consider the following situations:

- Parents of children who are placed on a CIN plan or receiving early help
- Arrests for offences against adults
- Presentation to other professionals around mental health
- Extreme political viewpoints
- Concerns about behaviour in their private lives

In any of these situations the LADO criteria for intervention will be assessed against the likelihood and impact of transferable risk to children.

The LADO will record all allegations and provide advice and guidance. It will:

- Be involved in the management and oversight of individual cases which meet the threshold
- Provide advice and guidance
- Liaise with the police and other agencies
- Monitor the progress of cases to ensure they are dealt with as quickly as possible and fairly.

Lower Level Concerns (LLC's)

The LLC policy is part of Corfe Valley's approach to safeguarding. The purpose of the policy is to encourage an open and transparent culture, which enables us to identify concerning or inappropriate behaviour at an early stage. It should also empower staff to share any LLC with the DSL. Examples of LLC's include, but not limited to:

- Being over friendly with children
- Having favourites
- Taking photographs of children on their personal mobile phone
- Engaging with a child on a 1:1 basis in a secluded area
- Using intimidating or offensive language

The LLC policy will:

Ensure that staff are clear about what constitutes appropriate behaviour, and are confident in distinguishing expected and appropriate behaviour from concerning, problematic or inappropriate. It will also empower staff to share low level safeguarding concerns with the DSL and help to address unprofessional behaviour and support the individual at an early stage.

In line with our LLC policy:

- All LLC's will be shared responsibly with the DSL, recorded in writing and dealt with in an appropriate and timely manner.
- All LLC's will be reviewed.
- If LLC's are found to be escalating and reaching the harm threshold, a referral will be made to the LADO.

If there is any doubt the LADO will be called for advice.

Corfe Valley Managing Allegations Procedure Flow Chart

Concerns about a member of staff or a volunteer working with children

If you or Corfe Valley receives an allegation or have a concern about the behaviour of a member of staff working or volunteering with children and that concern could amount to:

1. They have behaved in a way that has harmed or may have harmed a child.
2. They have possibly committed a criminal offence against, or related to a child.
3. They have behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children.
4. They have behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.

Report your concerns without undue delay to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (Kirstie)

Complete a written record of the nature and circumstances surrounding the concern, including any previous concerns help. Include where the concern came from and brief details.

Where there is sufficient evidence to meet the criteria as above or where there is any reasonable suspicion the DSL will inform the Local Authority Designated Officer LADO – Dorset Council [01305 221122](tel:01305221122)

The LADO will review the information and convene an allegations management meeting if required. This might result in a criminal investigation, a Social Care investigation and /or an investigation to inform whether disciplinary action is required. If it is agreed that the allegation does not meet the criteria, the LADO will record the initial discussion and send it to you for your records. Any further action will then be taken within Future Roots procedures.

Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges

Context

This policy is about how staff should respond to all reports and concerns of child-on-child sexual violence and sexual harassment, including those that have happened outside of Corfe Valley and school, and or online. All staff are advised to maintain an attitude of ‘it could happen here’.

All staff are aware that by not recognising, acknowledging or understanding the scale of harassment and abuse or downplaying some behaviours relating to abuse can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviour and an unsafe environment as well as a culture that normalises abuse.

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex. It can also occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children.

Children and young people who are victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment will likely find the experience stressful and distressing. This can affect their emotional wellbeing and attendance. Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap; they can occur online and offline (both physically and verbally) and are never acceptable. It is important that all victims are taken seriously and offered appropriate support. It is also important to recognise that some perpetrators may themselves also be victims.

Reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment are extremely complex to manage and all staff involved should also be offered support.

Policy

We believe that all children have a right to attend education and to learn in a safe environment. Children should be free from harm by adults in the provision and by other children.

We recognise that it could happen here and any abuse will be dealt with under our child protection policy and in line with KCSiE (2024).

This policy is underpinned by the principle that we have a zero-tolerance to sexual violence and sexual harassment. We are clear that this is not acceptable and will never be tolerated.

Corfe Valley will minimise the risk of child-on-child abuse by:

- Providing staff training
- Clear values
- Having a whole provision approach to safeguarding and child protection

Responding to reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment:

- This will be taken seriously and the child will be supported
- We understand that our initial response to a report from a child is incredibly important
- If the report contains an element of online then staff will be mindful of the Searching, Screening and Confiscation: advice for schools (DfE, 2022) guidance.
- DSL will be informed as soon as possible but at least within 24 hours
- Parents and carers will normally be informed unless this puts the child at risk
- If a child is at immediate risk of harm or danger then a referral will be made to children's social care

Action:

- The DSL will contact the child's safeguarding lead where they are on role at school and together they will make a risk assessment for the child which will be kept under review
- The report will be managed with the appropriate action; early help, children social care or referred to the police.
- All concerns will be logged on MyConcern and reviewed and updated so that any potential patterns can be identified
- The child's risk assessment will be kept under review

Physical Abuse

While a clear focus of child-on-child abuse is linked to sexual abuse and harassment, physical assaults and initiation violence and rituals from pupils to pupils can also be abusive.

This is equally not tolerated at Corfe Valley, if it is believed that a crime has been committed, will be reported to the police.

References: KCSiE (2024)

Online Safety

As a professional Alternative Provision, it is essential that we safeguard children from potentially harmful and inappropriate online material.

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

Content: being exposed to illegal, inappropriate, or harmful content, for example, pornography, fake news, racism, misogyny, self-harm, suicide, radicalisation and extremism.

Contact: being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users for example: peer to peer pressure, commercial advertising and adults posing as children or young adults with the intention to groom or exploit them for sexual, criminal, financial or other purposes.

Conduct: personal online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm; for example, making, sending, and receiving explicit images (e.g. consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes and/or pornography, sharing other explicit images and online bullying; and

Commerce: risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing and or financial scams. If we feel our young people or staff are at risk, we will report it.

Although at Corfe Valley our young people spend very limited time online whilst at our setting, we are aware of the amount of time our young people spend online outside of here and therefore we make a conscious effort to educate and talk openly about online safety.

Filtering & Monitoring

Corfe Valley uses appropriate filtering and monitoring software to help keep our young people safe online which is in place on all devices. Corfe Valley uses 'Smoothwall' to filter and monitor content. Staff are aware of the roles and responsibilities in relation to filtering and monitoring. To support educational establishments the DfE have produced the following guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/meeting-digital-and-technology-standards-in-schools-and-colleges/filtering-and-monitoring-standards-for-schools-and-colleges>

Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing in a safeguarding context

Corfe Valley has a whistleblowing procedure in place to protect members of staff who report colleagues they believe are doing something wrong or illegal, or who are neglecting their duties.

This does not replace the whistleblowing policy and should be read in conjunction with the policy.

The whistleblowing policy is not designed to be used for concerns that fall under stator procedures (for example, child protection or allegations against staff) as these should be reported under the relevant procedures. However, the whistleblowing policy will apply if there is good reason to believe that the relevant procedures is not being followed or will not be followed effectively.

Within Corfe Valley, Tom & Kirstie Smith are the directors who are responsible for all staff. If you are concerned that any member of staff is not following safeguarding procedures or behaving in a way that is placing children at risk, you should make us aware.

What is child abuse?

The following definitions are taken from Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023). In addition to these definitions, it should be understood that children can also be abused by being sexually exploited, through honour-based violence, forced marriage or FGM.

What is abuse and neglect?

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

Physical abuse

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

Emotional abuse

The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to 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 a children. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), 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 include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Neglect

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

Indicators of abuse

Neglect

Neglect is a lack of parental care but poverty and lack of information or adequate services can be contributory factors.

Far more children are registered to the category of neglect on a child protection plans than to the other categories. As with abuse, the number of children experiencing neglect is likely to be much higher than the numbers on the plans.

Neglect can include parents or carers failing to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter
- Protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- Ensure adequate supervision
- Ensure access to medical care

NSPCC research has highlighted the following examples of the neglect of children under 12:

- Frequently going hungry
- Frequently having to go to school in dirty clothes
- Regularly having to look after themselves as their parents are away or have drugs and alcohol misuse
- Being abandoned or deserted
- Living at home in dangerous physical conditions
- Not being taken to the doctor when ill
- Not receiving dental care

Neglect is a difficult form of abuse to recognise and is often seen as less serious than other categories. It is, however, very damaging: children who neglected often develop more slowly than others and may find it hard to make friends and fit in with their peer group.

Neglect is often noticed at a stage when it does not pose a risk to the child. The duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children would suggest that an appropriate intervention or conversation at this early stage can address the issue and prevent a child continuing to suffer until it reaches a point when they are at risk of harm or in significant need.

Neglect is often linked to other forms of abuse, so any concerns should be at least discussed with the DSL.

Indicators of neglect

The following is a summary. It is important to remember that indicators alone cannot confirm whether a child is being abused. Each child should be seen in the context of their family and wider community and a proper assessment carried out by appropriate persons.

Physical indicators of neglect

- Constant hunger
- Poor personal hygiene
- Underweight
- Dressing unsuitable for weather
- Poor state of clothing
- Illness or injury untreated

Behavioural indicators of neglect

- Constant tiredness
- Frequently absent
- Missed medical appointments
- Isolated among peers
- Frequently unsupervised
- Stealing (especially food)
- Destructive tendencies

Emotional abuse

The nature of emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is difficult to define, identifying/recognise and/or prove.

Emotional abuse is chronic and cumulative and has a long-term impact.

All kinds of abuse and neglect have emotional effects although emotional abuse can occur by itself.

Children can be harmed by witnessing someone harming another person – as in domestic violence.

It is sometimes possible to spot emotionally abusive behaviour from parents and carers to their children, by the way that the adults are speaking to, or behaving towards children. An appropriate challenge or intervention could affect positive change and prevent more intensive work being carried out later on.

Indicators of emotional abuse

Developmental

- Delays in physical, mental and emotional development
- Speech disorders

Behaviour

- Acceptance of punishment which appears excessive
- Over reaction to mistakes
- Continual self-deprecation (I'm stupid)
- Neurotic behaviour (rocking, hair twisting)
- Self-mutilation
- Suicide attempts
- Drug/solvent abuse
- Running away
- Compulsive stealing
- Acting out
- Poor trust in significant adults
- Regressive behaviour
- Eating disorders
- Destructive tendencies

Social Issues

- Withdrawal from physical contact
- Withdrawal from social interaction
- Over compliant behaviour
- Insecure
- Poor social relationships

Emotional response

- Extreme fear of new situations
- Inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations (I deserve this)
- Fear of parents being contacted
- Self-disgust
- Low self esteem
- Unusually fearful towards adults

- Lack of concentration
- Restless
- Extremes of passivity or aggression

Physical abuse

Most children collect cuts and bruises quite routinely as part of the rough and tumble of daily life. Clearly, it is not necessary to be concerned about most of these minor injuries. However, accidental injuries normally occur on the bony prominences e.g. shins. Injuries on the soft areas of the body are more likely to be inflicted intentionally and should therefore make us more alert to other concerning factors that may be present.

A body map can assist in the clear recording and reporting of physical abuse. The body map should only be used to record observed injuries and no child should be asked to remove clothing by a member of staff.

Indicators of physical abuse/factors that should increase concern

- Multiple bruising or bruises and scratches (especially on the head and face)
- Clusters of bruises e.g. fingertip bruising (caused by being grasped)
- Bruises around the neck and behind the ears – the most common abusive injuries are to the head
- Bruises on the back, chest, buttocks, or on the inside of the thighs
- Marks indicating injury by an instrument e.g. linear bruising (stick), parallel bruising (belt), marks of a buckle
- Bit marks
- Deliberate burning may also be indicated by the pattern of an instrument or object – e.g. electric fire, cooker, cigarette
- Scalds with upward splash marks
- Untreated injuries
- Recurrent injuries or burns
- Bald patches

In the social context of our provision, it is normal to ask about a noticeable injury. The responsive to such an enquiry is generally light-hearted and detailed. So, most of all, concern should be increased when:

- The explanation given does not match the injury
- The explanation uses words or phrases that do not match the vocabulary of the child (adult words)
- No explanation is forthcoming
- The child (or the parent/carer) is secretive or evasive
- The injury is accompanied by allegations of abuse or assault

You should be. Concerned if the child or young person:

- Is reluctant to have parents/carers contacted
- Runs away or shows fear of going home
- Is aggressive towards themselves or others
- Flinches when approached or touched
- Is reluctant to undress to change clothing for sport
- Wears long sleeves during hot weather
- Is unnaturally compliant in the presence of parents/carers
- Has a fear of medical help or attention

- Admits to a punishment that appears excessive

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse is often perpetrated by people who are known and trusted by the child e.g. relatives, family friends, neighbours, babysitters, people working with the child in school. Faith settings, clubs or activities. Children can also be subjected to child sexual exploitation.

Sexual exploitation is seen as a separate category of sexual abuse. Indicators of CSE can be found in our safeguarding policy.

Characteristics of child sexual abuse:

- It is often planned and systematic – people do not sexually abuse children by accident, though sexual abuse can be opportunistic
- Grooming the child – people who abuse children take care to choose a vulnerable child and often spend time making them dependent
- Grooming the child's environment – abusers try to ensure that potential adult protectors (parents and other carers especially) are not suspicious of their motives.

Most people who sexually abuse children are men, but some woman sexually abuse too.

Indicators of sexual abuse

Physical observations

- Damage to genitalia, anus or mouth
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Unexpected pregnancy, especially in very young girls
- Soreness in genital area, anus or mouth and other medical problems such as chronic itching
- Unexplained recurrent urinary tract infections and discharges or abdominal pain

Behavioural observations

- Sexual knowledge inappropriate for age
- Sexualised behaviour or affection inappropriate for age
- Sexually provocative behaviour
- Hinting at sexual activity
- Depression or other sudden apparent changes in personality as becoming insecure or clinging
- Lack of concentration, restlessness
- Socially isolated
- Overly-compliant behaviour
- Acting out, aggressing behaviour
- Onset of wetting, day by day
- Suicide attempts, self disgust
- Suddenly drawing sexually explicit pictures
- Eating disorders or sudden loss of appetite or compulsive eating
- Regressing to younger behavioural patterns such a thumb sucking
- Becoming worried about clothing being removed
- Trying to be 'ultra-good' or perfect; overreacting to criticism