

27.2

Children & Young People Safeguarding Procedures & Guidance

Hopian.org.uk

Hopian is a company limited by guarantee registered in England & Wales (company no. 7441391) and a registered charity (no. 1141699). Registered office address: 18 High Street, Rotherham, S60 1PP

Contents

1.	Introduction & Aims	4
2.	Functions of the Procedures	5
3.	Acronyms & Abbreviations	6
4.	Procedures Guidance	7
	1. Responsibility for safeguarding children in Hopian services	7
	2. Informing service users about child safeguarding policies & confidentiality	7
	3. Risk assessment	7
	4. Procedure for dealing with specific incidents or suspicion of abuse	8
	5. Responding to allegations of abuse against a member of staff	15
	6. Recording information	16
	7. Records & record-keeping	16
	8. Parental responsibility	19
	9. Direct work with children	19
	10. Recruitment, selection & supervision of staff	20
	11. Working with children & young people's services (CYPS)	21
	12. Child protection conferences	21
	13. Involving the police	22
	Appendix 1: Safeguarding Reporting Flow	23
	Appendix 2: Legislation & Statutory Guidance on Child Protection	25
	Appendix 3: A Summary Guide for Staff Working in Specialist Domestic & Sexual Abuse Services on recognising indicators of abuse	27
	Appendix 4: Basic Principles	32
	5. Policy Review	33

1. Introduction & Aims

This Guidance has been reviewed to take account of updated policies and legislation. These procedures are to be read in conjunction with Hopian's CYP Safeguarding Policy. It emphasises the fundamental importance of safeguarding children and young people and reflects Hopian's beliefs that all children & young people have a right to feel safe, valued, listened to and to receive a confidential service, (within the limits of the confidentiality policy) at all times, to support them to achieve their educational, emotional and developmental potential now and in the future.

We acknowledge the enormous impact domestic abuse has on a parent/carers ability to safeguard their children. We hope that these procedures will support children and adults to effectively safeguard their children while receiving services from us, but when this is not effective staff in contact with children & families, including those who may not have direct contact with children, have a duty to safeguard & promote the welfare of children.

Hopian is a member of Women's Aid Federation of England – these procedures reflect their National Policy on Safeguarding and Confidentiality that has been specifically designed for responding to children where domestic abuse is an issue. These procedures are in line with the Rotherham Local Safeguarding Partnership procedures, use the link <https://rotherhamscp.trixonline.co.uk/>.

Our aims in producing these procedures are:

To ensure that everyone working for Hopian Services, including volunteers, and children and families receiving a service through Hopian, know how to deal effectively with safeguarding issues.

This document contains procedural guidance which is to be read in conjunction with Hopian's policy statement. The guidance will provide clear and specific guidelines to enable Hopian Services to deal appropriately and effectively with safeguarding concerns.

2. Functions of the Procedures

The functions of the procedures are set out briefly below:

Procedural Guidance

The procedural guidance sets out the details that staff will require to carry out their duties in this area of work. It also sets out the specific tasks involved in undertaking this area of work and identifies who is responsible for carrying them out.

Your role in safeguarding children

All practitioners should make sure they understand and work within the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements in place in Rotherham. In doing so, they should be guided by the following key principles:

- ✓ Children have a right to be safe and should be protected from all forms of child abuse and neglect.
- ✓ The welfare of the child is paramount, and delay is likely to prejudice the welfare of the child (Children Act 1989, Section 1).
- ✓ Safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility.
- ✓ It is better to help children as early as possible, before issues escalate and become more damaging.
- ✓ Children and families are best supported and protected when there is a coordinated response from all relevant agencies.

As someone who comes into frequent contact with children and young people who are distressed and in crisis you are well placed to identify indicators of abuse and neglect. It is your responsibility to report any concerns immediately.

For clarity and reference in this policy, **“immediately” is defined as occurring within four hours.**

Children entering specialist services will often display behaviours similar to those displayed by abused and neglected children. To differentiate you may expect a reasonable decrease of symptomatic behaviours after a period of time, if abuse is no longer continuing.

It is important to be open to the possibility that children may have been abused or are continuing to be abused, by either parent/carer.

These procedures refer to safeguarding children and provide information for discussions around concerns, making a referral and follow up support. When staff have concerns about a child covering many situations below, they should discuss their concerns immediately with a member of the management team/DSL/DSO (within the hour after initial information is received). If they are not available this should not hold up the reporting process and advice should be sought from the MASH team. Follow on support should be addressed immediately and as and when required.

Research is clear that witnessing or being present in a household where there is domestic abuse can in itself be emotionally abusive and increases the risk of physical violence to the child. This has been recognised in the Adoption and Children Act 2002, which extended the definition of harm to include witnessing domestic abuse.

The statutory definition introduced in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 incorporates a range of abuse beyond physical violence, including controlling or coercive behaviour, emotional, and, for the first time, economic abuse. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 also recognises children who see, hear or experience domestic abuse as victims in their own right.

The principles in Appendix 3 will assist you if you come across situations when you suspect abuse or neglect but are uncertain how to act for the best.

3. Acronyms & Abbreviations

CAFCASS	Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service
CEOP	Internet Watch Foundation or the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre
CSE	Child Sexual Exploitation
CCE	Child Criminal Exploitation
CYPS	Children and Young People's Service
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service
DSL	Designated Safeguarding Lead
DSO	Designated Safeguarding Officer
EHA	Early Help Assessment
FAN	Family Assessment of Need
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FM	Forced Marriage
GDPR / UK GDPR	UK General Data Protection Regulation
LADO	Local Authority Designated Officer
LGBT+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender/Transsexual
MASH	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub
MATD	Multi-Agency Threshold Descriptors
POCA	Protection of Children Act
RLSCB	Rotherham Local Safeguarding Children's Board
RSCP	Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership
SOS	Signs of Safety
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
VAWG/VAWC	Violence against Women and Girls/Violence against Women and Children. The terms are used interchangeably to show that Women's Aid includes children of both sexes.
WAFE	Women's Aid Federation of England (Women's Aid)
WT23	Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023

4. Procedures Guidance

This procedure outlines Hopian's Services response to allegations of child abuse.

1. Responsibility for safeguarding children in Hopian services

Hopian has a clear structure for decision-making on safeguarding. Responsibility for safeguarding children's issues is held by all members of staff and their decision making should be discussed with a member of the management team or safeguarding lead/officers where available.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead and Officers (hereafter DSL & DSO) are the CEO, Family Service Manager, Outreach Service Manager and CYP Assistant Manager. In their absence it will be the remaining Service Managers.

The safeguarding Lead/officer's role is to ensure Hopian's policies, procedures, guidance and processes are suitable to ensure safety of others and safe practice.

If any member of staff has reason to believe that a child is being abused or has been abused, staff must discuss this immediately with their line manager and/or DSL/DSOs where available and a decision should be taken on whether the matter needs to be reported to Children's and Young People's Services (hereafter CYPS) and implications for the safety of other children must be considered in line with Hopian safeguarding policy and these procedures.

All staff must be aware of the procedures to follow when dealing with safeguarding cases, in the event that the staff member with responsibility for this is not available. All staff will have received training on safeguarding and confidentiality.

2. Informing service users about child safeguarding policies & confidentiality

When an adult engages with Hopian services and is given information about the service, the policies on safeguarding should be clearly explained to them. This should include when an adult is referred to the Support Service with particular emphasis at the first stage of contact about where a child may be witnessing domestic abuse.

These can be discussed in greater detail later with an appropriate staff member. It is important that service users with children understand that there are limits to confidentiality where safeguarding issues are involved. If there is reasonable grounds to suspect that the child is suffering, or at risk of harm, the service will either refer the case to CYPS for assessment or involve the police if a criminal offence may have been committed or if the child urgently requires protection.

Where a child is not currently at risk, but has alleged past abuse, it may give concern that another child is at risk. Information must be shared appropriately with other services in this instance to ensure they do not miscalculate the risk to this child or another child at a later date.

3. Risk assessment

All responses to allegations of child abuse within Hopian services must be assessed for risk and risk management procedures put in place in line with statutory and individual service policies and procedures.

It is also important that staff members do not dismiss concerns immediately as effective risk management also includes an element of professional judgement. Case meetings, accommodation meetings and case management can provide staff the opportunity to explore and express professional judgement, although staff should always seek guidance before a meeting if concerns are serious.

The Munro Review of Child Protection has further stated that systems must be more fully focused on the needs of individual children, using assessment processes that enable professional judgment to be exercised.

4. Procedure for dealing with specific incidents or suspicion of abuse

Anyone who suspects or knows that abuse or harm has or is taking place must share their concerns in the first instance with their line manager/DSL/DSO (where available) to discuss an appropriate response. If not available safeguarding advice should be sought from MASH.

Possible responses might include:

- ✔ Responding immediately with a referral to CYPS or the Police if there are grounds to suspect that a child is at risk of abuse.
- ✔ Gathering more information before deciding whether to make a referral to CYPS or the police, which is only acceptable if it is not clear whether there are grounds to suspect that a child is at risk.
- ✔ Monitoring the situation carefully and keep records of all concerns and reasons why no referral was made at this stage. A child may be safe now but they, and other children, could be at risk in the future.
- ✔ Enabling work with the parent/carer to ensure that the child's needs are met. It will not always be appropriate to ask CYPS to assess the child's needs if the service can deal with the problem effectively by arranging the provision of practical support. This would be within the Early Help framework for assessment support, prevention and early intervention for children and families.

This does not apply to concerns about a child's need for protection, as this requires a multi-agency response.

Hopian has a clear structure for decision-making on safeguarding issues, the responsibility is held with all members of staff. Staff should contact the DSL/DSO/management team if they have any concerns regarding safeguarding issues.

- ✔ Hopian's 'Designated Safeguarding Lead': Sue Wynne.
- ✔ Hopian's 'Designated Safeguarding Officers': Kate Williamson, Rachel Smith & Deb Guy.

The safeguarding Lead/Officer's role is to ensure Hopian's policies, procedures, guidance and processes are suitable to ensure safety of others and safe practice.

Hopian recognises that different forms of abuse will require different action. However it is not the responsibility of any one agency to decide if something constitutes child abuse; safeguarding is a multi-agency responsibility.

It is the responsibility of staff to report incidents and concerns to the police or CYPS so that wider enquiries can be carried out and informed decisions made as to the most effective course of action to protect the child and promote his/her welfare.

There is a clear need, which has been highlighted in research, for agencies to share information where there is a suspicion of child abuse or neglect. A referral should not be seen as a betrayal of trust but as a necessary and responsible way of protecting children.

It should not be assumed that the only function of CYPS is enquiring into child safeguarding matters, as they may be able to provide or offer access to further support services following referral and assessment of needs.

(See appendix 1: Safeguarding Reporting Flow)

4.1 Dealing with allegations of abuse from a child

If any child says something that leads to concern that this child, or another child, may be at risk of suffering harm, make time to listen carefully to what the child is saying. Let the child talk. Don't interrupt – ask only open-ended questions necessary to clarify whether the child is trying to tell you about abuse.

Don't ask leading questions.

Reassure the child and put them at ease. Explain to them, clearly, and in language appropriate to their age, what will happen next and who will be informed.

In an emergency get immediate medical help if necessary or call the police.

Keep a detailed record of the disclosure or your concerns. Sign and date this. If you have seen any marks or injuries keep a record of where and what you saw with your records. Again sign and date this. This is very important as it may be used as evidence should the police begin criminal investigations.

Share this information with the Management Team/DSL/DSO immediately. Where possible (and if appropriate) speak with the non-abusing parent/carer. This should only be done if it does not put the child or young person at further risk of harm or abuse. A parent/carer should be informed of any referral to CYPS or the police, but only where such a discussion will not place the child at increased risk of further harm.

Wherever possible, services should work in partnership with the non-abusing parent/carer to provide support to help them to cope more effectively with parenting. This should not, however, prevent a referral to CYPS or the police being made where it is necessary.

The police, CYPS departments and the NSPCC have statutory responsibilities with regard to carrying out an investigation of alleged or suspected child abuse. CYPS responsibilities also extend to identifying and protecting children 'at risk of harm'.

If there are concerns that, in isolation, do not constitute significant harm but which may contribute to a more significant pattern of abuse, these should be discussed with the Management Team/DSL/DSO and CYPS in order to establish whether a referral should be made.

All concerns raised and any conversations held in relation to the concerns and actions taken should be recorded clearly and factually at that time or at the first opportunity, giving dates and times clearly.

4.2 If the abuse is recent or continuing

Staff will:

- ✔ Tell the child what action is likely to be taken, who will be informed and what the consequences may be.
- ✔ If the child has sufficient understanding, discuss options realistically, including talking with the parent/carer with a staff member present (if the parent/carer is not the suspected abuser).
- ✔ Keep the child informed, as appropriate to their age, throughout the entire process. The staff member will then discuss the allegations with the designated person, who will decide on a course of action depending on the nature and seriousness of the abuse and seeking advice from CYPS if appropriate.
- ✔ Normally any concerns should be discussed with the parent/carer. If necessary, they should be encouraged to make their own referral to CYPS. However, this should only be done if discussion and agreement seeking will not place a child at increased risk of significant harm.
- ✔ With **any allegations of abuse, in no circumstance should staff question or discuss the alleged incident with the child**. This could have serious implications for contaminating evidence and hamper any criminal prosecution or protection of the child. Staff should simply record the allegation.

It is not the role of Hopian staff to decide whether there is a need for immediate protection of the child – if there is evidence that a child is being, or is at risk of being, abused this should be notified to CYPS. They will consider whether there is a need for immediate protection and, if so, what action to take.

4.3 If the abuse occurred previously and the child is no longer in danger

Safeguarding intervention by CYPS may not be necessary in respect of this child but a referral to CYPS must be made so the statutory service can follow their procedures as the abuser may also pose a danger to other children, now or in the future.

CYPS may offer support services. They may require a medical examination of the child.

4.4 If there is reason to believe that a child is at risk of sexual abuse

In these circumstances it is essential to seek specialist advice from CYPS and a police investigation is likely to take place. It is inappropriate for services to make enquiries about sexual abuse.

Children who have been sexually abused frequently feel very guilty and confused. If the child does talk about what has happened, it is important to reassure them that the abuse is not his/her their fault and to continue providing reassurance that they were right to tell.

4.5 If a child has been injured or has bruising

Normally, if a child is injured staff will consider whether medical help is necessary and will discuss how the injury happened with the parent/carer. However, if the child has a bruise or injury and child abuse is suspected, staff will:

- ✔ Consider whether immediate medical help is needed and, if so, should ensure that the child is taken to hospital or to a doctor. Ideally this should be done by the parent/carer with a staff member accompanying them to provide support, but anyone who has care of the child may do what is reasonable to safeguard the child's welfare (Children Act 1989 S.3 (5)17 and Children Act 2004)
- ✔ Inform the GP or hospital of any child protection concerns they have regarding the injury. If there is any indication of abuse or neglect the hospital or GP is likely to make a referral to CYPS or to the police.
- ✔ If immediate medical care is not necessary, staff should consult the DSL/DSO/manager management team about their concerns and decide whether to refer to CYPS. They should note any information about how the injury was caused that may be offered by the parent/carer or by the child but should not discuss the matter with them until a decision has been made about whether to make a referral to CYPS.
- ✔ In all cases Hopian staff should record the injury that the child has sustained as soon as possible, noting anything that was said about how the injury occurred, and should seek to provide support for both the child and the parent/carer to prevent further harm.

4.6 If the parent/carer resumes or is in a relationship with an abuser

- ✔ If it is known that a child has been abused by the partner of the parent/carer or has been affected by witnessing abuse, staff will discuss the situation with the parent/carer and explain that, in these circumstances, CYPS will have to be informed if they return to the abuser.
- ✔ Where it is known that the abuser remains or returns to the family home or resumes a relationship with the parent/carer an assessment will be undertaken to establish the risk of harm to the child. This assessment will include safety planning, referral to CYPS and the Police. This assessment will be discussed with management and either monitored or addressed through Early Help or CYPS.
- ✔ Where the level of risk has not been established or there is no engagement and there are concerns regarding the safety of the child, CYPS will be notified. This will happen even if there has been insufficient time or opportunity to explain our policies on confidentiality and child safeguarding to the parent/carer or to discuss the implications of them returning to the abuser or where a referral has been taken, and contact has been lost.

4.7 Dealing with allegations of abuse

- ✔ Hopian recognises that the Children's Act 1989 and 2004 do not provide adequate protection for abused parents and children involved in contact proceedings, because case law has established a strong presumption of contact which often overrides considerations of safety.
- ✔ As contact may lead to further abuse of both the parent and the child/children, services should offer practical support and provide written or oral evidence in court if appropriate. Services should carefully record any allegation or evidence of abuse (see Sections 6 and 7, Recording Information and Records and Record Keeping) which may be relevant to contact proceedings.
- ✔ Services should also record information about the child's behaviour if he or she appears to be disturbed or traumatised by contact arrangements, as this evidence may be needed to show that contact is not in the best interests of the child.

4.8 If there are suspicions that a child is being abused by the parent/carer

- ✔ If a member of staff suspects that a child is being abused, they should discuss this as soon as possible with the management team/DSL or DSO however this should not hold back on reporting concerns and further advice can be sort via the MASH team. This includes situations in which a child makes an allegation of abuse about a parent/carer.
- ✔ The staff member may discuss their concerns with the parent/carer and remind them of the Child Safeguarding Policy, if this seems safe and appropriate. Efforts should be made to work with the parent/carer, including offering support and practical help to prevent further harm.
- ✔ If the care given to the child is inadequate rather than abusive, staff may decide that they should work with the parent/carer over a stated period of time to help them to develop their parenting skills. At this stage the instigation of a full Early Help Assessment Family Assessment of Need (FAN) should be considered and discussed with the parent.
- ✔ This work may involve outside professionals (such as a health visitor). If staff feel that no progress has been made, or fear that the continuing inadequacy of care is putting the child at risk of significant harm, a child safeguarding referral should be made to CYPS.
- ✔ If a referral is to be made to CYPS, the parent/carer should be informed. It may be possible to encourage them to speak to CYPS themselves. However, this should only be done where it will not place the child at increased risk of significant harm.
- ✔ Reports provided by Hopian can include both positive and negative observations of parental care, but they must be factual. Opinions will be clearly stated.
- ✔ Hopian will aim to support the parent/carer and, if necessary, will outline their support needs to CYPS.
- ✔ If the parent/carer leaves the service in an attempt to prevent further action from being taken, a referral should still be made to CYPS or the police depending on the nature and urgency of the risk to the child's welfare.

4.9 If there is a conflict of interest between the child and the parent/carer

If there is a conflict of interest between the welfare of the child and the wishes of the parent/carer, the welfare of the child must take priority.

4.10 If a member of staff witnesses abuse by the parent/carer

The staff member should immediately discuss the matter with the management team/DSL/DSO who may instruct that a referral to CYPS should be made or advise that a meeting should be set up with the parent/carer.

As soon as possible, if no referral to CYPS needs to be made, a meeting should be set up with the parent/carer during whom it will be made clear that this behaviour is unacceptable, and the parent/carer should be reminded of the Child Safeguarding Policy and offered support with their parenting.

4.11 If another service user reports abuse by the parent/carer

Staff will:

- ✔ Reassure the service user that this will be taken seriously and dealt with.
- ✔ Tell them that the allegation will have to be discussed with other team members and that the allegation will be kept anonymous as far as possible, but it is important to inform them that there may be limits to the confidentiality. Explain the procedure for dealing with complaints of this kind.
- ✔ Offer them support and encourage them not to discuss this with other service users.
- ✔ Discuss the issue with the management team/DSL/DSO and then with the parent/carer, if appropriate
- ✔ Make a referral to CYPS, if necessary.
- ✔ Monitor the situation.

If CYPS are involved and they want to have direct contact with the service user who reported the abuse, services will offer to act as a go-between if the service user does not agree to direct contact.

4.12 If a child is abusing other children or adults

Many children feel intense anger and helplessness about the abuse that they have witnessed or been subjected to, and frequently this is expressed in aggressive and destructive behaviour. Managing challenging behaviour positively is an intrinsic part of working with children in specialist support services.

Where this behaviour results in the abuse of others, staff will:

- ✔ Inform the child and the parent/carer that this behaviour is abusive and unacceptable.
- ✔ Work in partnership with the parent/carer and with the child to enable her/him to cope with emotions and to relate to other people more positively.
- ✔ Monitor the situation and keep factual records.
- ✔ In extreme cases (such as sexual abuse) it will be necessary to make a referral to CYPS or the police explaining the situation clearly. If there is a clear danger to other children, a decision should be made on whether the family should be required to move to alternative accommodation (if in refuge provision) and be supported in doing so.

4.13 If a child is abusing their brother or sister

Staff will:

- ✔ Discuss with the management team/DSL/DSO
- ✔ Inform the children and the parent/carer that this behaviour is abusive and unacceptable.
- ✔ Provide support for the children (the abused child and the abuser) and the parent/carer and work with them to resolve this problem.
- ✔ Monitor the situation and keep factual records.
- ✔ Take further action if necessary to protect the abused child and a referral to CYPS will be necessary. In serious cases of sibling abuse there is a danger that the family will have to split up, so it is essential to start preventive work as soon as possible.

4.14 If it is alleged that a child has been abused by a service user (not a family member)

Staff will:

- ✔ Discuss this with the Management team/DSL/DSO
- ✔ Discuss this with the service user and the parent/carer of the child separately, if it is safe and appropriate to do so.
- ✔ Keep a record of any discussions held.
- ✔ If the allegation is of a serious nature, then CYPS should be informed.
- ✔ If the allegation involves a service user within refuge provision, it may be necessary to move the accused service user to temporary accommodation, pending full investigation, which should take place without delay.
- ✔ If the allegations are not substantiated, services will try to ensure that the accused adult and their family are offered accommodation elsewhere within the service or with a different service. In these circumstances the other service must be told what has happened and the reason for the referral.

4.15 If a child is subject to a child protection plan

- ✔ When an adult is first referred to a service, they will be asked whether they have any involvement with CYPS. If the answer is yes, then consent will be sought and contact made to that local authority to gain further information.
- ✔ If the parent/carer is in refuge provision, they should be encouraged to contact CYPS themselves to inform them that they are living in the refuge. If they are unwilling to do this, they must be told that the service will inform CYPS on their behalf. It is essential that the parent/carer does not state the actual address of the refuge but only gives the P.O. Box address.
- ✔ Ideally, in this situation, services should seek the parent/carer's consent to liaise with the CYPS team which previously dealt with the family. This can be very helpful in obtaining clear information, providing on-going support and, if necessary, negotiating a support package for the parent/carer and their child/children with the local CYPS department.
- ✔ If the parent/carer has moved to a new area, then the local authority of that area from which the family are fleeing should continue with the child protection process. It is possible that there will be a child protection conference and that their ex-partner will be invited to such a meeting (see Section 12, Child Protection Conferences),
- ✔ Staff should attend any meetings relating to child protection including, core groups and case conferences and provide a report that has been shared with the parent/carer.

4.16 A person posing a risk to children, sex offenders and others who may present a risk to children

A person posing a risk to children is defined as a person (adult or child) who is:

- ✔ Convicted or charged with an offence against a child.
- ✔ Convicted or charged with an offence in which a child has been harmed or was involved (including where a child sees, hears or experiences harm or ill-treatment cause to someone else).
- ✔ Identified as a risk of harm to a child(ren) even though they have not been charged or convicted of offences against/involving children.

And

- ✔ Is assessed as posing a continuing risk of serious harm to a child(ren).

If a person posing a risk applies for a Child Arrangement Order, staff will ensure that family court professionals, including CAFCASS, are made aware of this risk.

Staff members have a responsibility to pass information to CYPS, when they become aware of potential child abusers having contact with children.

CYPS have a responsibility to assess the risk to children where there is significant contact.

4.17 Children or young people who are suicidal, self-harming or misusing substances

For a high proportion of these children there are likely to be child safeguarding issues, but this may not be immediately apparent. Children should be provided with support and referred to appropriate services to assist them to stop self-harming or misusing substances.

If concerns emerge which lead to a suspicion of abuse or risk of suicide or further self-harm, a referral should be made to CYPS for an assessment. If the risk of suicide is immediate, emergency services are to be contacted.

4.18 Children with specific needs | Children with disabilities

Research shows that children with disabilities are at increased risk of abuse and neglect due to their increased vulnerability, particularly when the child has difficulty in communicating. Physical disabilities mean intimate care is required and this need may have to be met by several adults thus increasing their vulnerability.

Children with learning disabilities may not be able to recognise what are acceptable boundaries of behaviour by parents/carers and other adults.

Staff working with children with disabilities should be aware of the above factors and be extra vigilant. These factors could lead to staff being accused of abuse and their practice should take account of this.

4.19 Children of asylum seekers or with ill-defined immigration status

These children are vulnerable because of the uncertainty of their situation. They may be subjected to racism or bullying by members of the wider community.

These children are entitled to the same standards of service as are applied to indigenous children.

4.20 Children and young people who are abused through sexual and criminal exploitation

The Government's *Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation: Supplementary guidance to Working Together to Safeguard Children*, recommends that children who are sexually exploited are the victims of sexual abuse and must be protected from further harm.

- ✔ By its very nature, these children are being sexually abused and exploited by adults (or other children) and may well be experiencing other forms of abuse.
- ✔ Children who are being abused through sexual exploitation are particularly vulnerable and likely to have complex needs, and so multi-agency planning and delivery of services is important.
- ✔ Concerns involving the possibility of children and young people being abused through sexual exploitation should be referred to CYPS.

The Home Office defines child criminal exploitation as: 'occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18'. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual.

Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults is a geographically widespread form of harm that is a typical feature of county lines activity. It is a harm which is relatively little known about or recognised by those best placed to spot its potential victims.

Practitioners need to recognise its signs and respond appropriately so that potential victims get the support and help they need.

4.21 Young People who are experiencing domestic abuse in their own right

Where a refuge/domestic abuse service is supporting /receives a referral for a 16 to 18-year-old that has, or continues to be, the victim of domestic abuse then a DASH/YP-DASH risk assessment will be completed along with a referral to CYPS.

Concerns involving children and young people at risk or experiencing domestic abuse will require a referral to CYPS.

As with sexual exploitation Hopian will provide planned intervention to develop the young person's understanding of the dynamics of abuse including relationships, safety planning and self-esteem work.

4.22 Female genital mutilation (FGM)

Services should work with the parent/carer to establish their attitude to FGM (whether a parent/carer has disclosed in key work sessions that she has undergone FGM herself or from any discussion). A parent who is ambivalent or supportive of FGM is a cause for concern for the child.

The practice of FGM (female circumcision, excision, or infibulations) is an offence under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003. It is therefore a child safeguarding issue, and a referral should be made to the police and/or CYPS if the practice is suspected.

5. Responding to allegations of abuse against a member of staff

Allegations or suspicions of abuse about staff can be complicated as there are three potentially interacting processes – child protection, criminal prosecution and disciplinary action by employers.

Underpinning the organisations procedures is Hopian's ethos to listen to children and young people and their parents/carers and take any concerns seriously. This will include proactively seeking any concerns a parent/carer/child has and establishing how safe they feel. This will include reviews of cases, and various information and opportunities to enable speaking to more than one member of staff. Hopian is also committed to ensure that workers feel safe to express their concerns about the practice of others.

5.1 If it is alleged that a staff member or volunteer has abused a child

Staff will:

- ✔ Ensure that the child is safe and away from the person whom the allegation is made.
- ✔ Ensure that any allegation is reported immediately to a senior staff member who will ensure that the Board of Trustees is notified and other relevant people/services.
- ✔ Refer the matter to CYPS if any children appear to be at risk, and/or the police if a criminal offence appears to have been committed.
- ✔ The DSL/DSO/management team (Unless the allegation is made against them) or senior management should contact the local authority designated officer (LADO) who is contacted via the RSCP (Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership) for advice on how to proceed with the immediate situation.
- ✔ All LADO cases are to be recorded on the organisations excel recording document found in SharePoint.
- ✔ Keep a record of any allegations of child abuse made about any staff member or volunteer.

The Board of Trustees will decide what action is necessary to investigate and respond to any allegation of inappropriate behaviour by a staff member or volunteer.

The police may ask for a delay to enable the gathering of criminal evidence.

It may be necessary to suspend the staff member while the disciplinary investigation is carried out.

6. Recording information

Immediately after an incident of abuse or neglect has been reported or witnessed, a staff member should complete the appropriate section on the Oasis system (client's notes, complaints log, safeguarding tab, and or staff members' restricted section) dependent on the nature of the concern. The report should, as far as possible, record only factual, information about the alleged incident.

The report should distinguish clearly between fact and interpretation and opinion and include details of conversations with the parent/carer, child, staff members or other service users or professionals. The dates and times of these conversations must be recorded. Discussions between staff about child safeguarding concerns should also be recorded.

All reports should be signed and dated.

If the situation is being monitored within the service, regular updated reports must be filed. These can be useful if there are any further allegations or concerns about abuse or neglect.

An accurate note should be made of:

- ✔ Date and time of incident or disclosure.
- ✔ Details of any injuries seen, where and what was seen.
- ✔ Parties who were involved.
- ✔ What was said and done by whom.
- ✔ Any action taken to investigate further.
- ✔ Where relevant, why no referral is made, details of a referral made.
- ✔ Name of the person reporting.
- ✔ Name of the person receiving the referral, including date and time.
- ✔ Any other relevant action.

6.1 Ensuring that evidence is not contaminated

Hopian is aware of the danger of contaminating evidence, especially when dealing with young children and particularly in cases involving allegations of sexual abuse or serious physical abuse. Staff should follow recording procedures as outlined in Section 6.

7. Records & record-keeping

7.1 Confidentiality and disclosure of information

Personal information about service users and their children is subject to a legal 'duty of confidence' and should not normally be disclosed without their consent. However, the law permits the disclosure of confidential information if this is necessary to safeguard a child.

Disclosure should be justifiable in each case, and if there is any uncertainty advice can be sought from the RSCP. The Data Protection Act 1998 and GDPR 2018 requires that personal information is obtained and processed fairly and lawfully, that it is accurate, relevant and not held longer than necessary, that it is kept securely and only disclosed in appropriate circumstances.

Personal information may be disclosed without the consent of the subject in order to prevent or detect a crime, to apprehend or prosecute an offender or where failure to disclose could prejudice such action.

Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights states that “*everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence*”. Disclosure of such information might give rise to an issue under Article 8, but it is permissible for the prevention of crime or disorder, for the protection of health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

The disclosure of information to protect children could come under any of these headings, but disclosure should be justifiable, appropriate for the purpose and only to the extent needed to achieve that purpose.

Staff will ensure that information recorded is dated, timed and accurate. Where it is relevant to record an opinion, this will be clearly defined as the member of staff “opinion”. Decisions of why a course of action was taken will also be clearly recorded.

7.2 Security and storage of records

It is essential that personal records, including any record of child safeguarding concerns should not be accessed by unauthorised persons, so they should never be left out or unsecured. Client files are stored securely on Oasis. Any paper confidential paperwork that is required at that time should be locked away and Hopian locking up procedures followed.

Records should be retained as per Hopian policy.

7.3 Access to records

- ✔ Child safeguarding records should only be accessed by staff members who work directly with families. However, all relevant staff should be made aware of on-going child safeguarding issues.
- ✔ If personal information is to be disclosed, the purpose of any information sharing must be clearly defined, and disclosures must be registered with the Data Protection Registrar.
- ✔ Where possible, share information with consent, and where possible, respect the wishes of those who do not consent to having their information shared. Under the GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 you may share information without consent if, in your judgement, there is a lawful basis to do so, such as where safety may be at risk. You will need to base your judgement on the facts of the case. When you are sharing or requesting personal information from someone, be clear of the basis upon which you are doing so. Where you do not have consent, be mindful that an individual might not expect information to be shared.
- ✔ The Data Protection Act 1998 and GDPR 2018 requires that there is a **legitimate basis** for disclosing sensitive personal data, which would include information about the data subject’s sexual life, the alleged commission of any offence and any criminal proceedings involving that person.
- ✔ It is a general principle of data protection legislation that individuals have a right of access to information recorded about them. Access should only be refused if it could cause harm to a person or might prejudice the prevention or detection of crime.
- ✔ The parent/carer has a right to see all written reports about them and their children unless this might endanger the safety of the child or a staff member. Children have a right to see their own records, if they have sufficient understanding to comprehend the contents and this information will not harm them or compromise any investigation.
- ✔ Staff should also be aware that child safeguarding records might be subpoenaed for use in court proceedings, serious case reviews (Rapid reviews) and domestic homicide reviews.

7.4 Computer safety

- ✓ Records of child safeguarding cases will contain sensitive information. Under GDPR 2018 we should ensure documents are not duplicated or stored unnecessarily. Oasis is a secure cloud-based software and is locked down to a safe IP address that is provided by Hopian to the security contact at Oasis. The data base and other files are saved and password protected.
- ✓ External storage devices (such as memory sticks and external hard drives) should be kept in a locked drawer or filing cabinet with restricted access and should not be taken out of the service, however no sensitive information and or client information should be stored on external devices or hard drives as this increases the security risk.
- ✓ To help prevent unauthorised users from gaining access to the Oasis database and other computer files, connections must not be left unattended for any length of time and should be terminated as soon as any work is completed.
- ✓ During short periods of absence, the password protected screen saver should be used.

7.5 Email safety

- ✓ **Electronic communications should never be considered to be either wholly private or secure.** Email may be stored indefinitely on any number of computers, including that of the recipient. Copies of messages may be forwarded to others either electronically or on paper. In addition, email sent to non-existent or incorrect usernames may be delivered to unintended recipients.
- ✓ Where possible hand delivered reports/letters not emails should be used for confidential information.
- ✓ Authentication passwords should be required by all internet and email users and should remain confidential – not shared with or disclosed to other users (other than those with administrative control of the computer system or a senior manager).

7.6 Children's access to internet and email within services

If internet is provided within services to service users, staff members need to be aware of potential risks to children and young people when accessing internet or email.

See IT Usage and Communications and Guest Wi-Fi Policy situated in the employees' handbook.

The following aspects should be noted:

- ✓ Staff should encourage parents to supervise their child at all times when accessing the accommodation/service's computers.

Parents /carers should be reminded of the following:

- ✓ Children can be exposed to pictures or written material, which is pornographic, upsetting or offensive; the computers are accessible to a wide range of residents/service users.
- ✓ Identifiable Information – children should be restricted in any postings that they make on the internet, as they could lead to the location of the child by the perpetrator.
- ✓ Photos of children participating in sports and other leisure activities, where club names or logos are prominently displayed, should not be posted.
- ✓ Child sex offenders – the internet provides sex offenders with easy access to children without letting their identity be known. It also provides a mechanism to access child pornography to share information with other offenders. Children can be groomed through chat rooms where sex offenders talk to children pretending that they are other children so they can organise to meet children at a later date. Children must be informed of these.

- ✔ Child Sexual Exploitation – children may be sexually exploited through a range of mechanisms on the internet including peer-to-peer sexual exploitation, ‘sexting’ and group-based exploitation. Children must be given information about the dangers of posting explicit material online.
- ✔ Child Criminal Exploitation – Any child can be exploited, no matter their background. Criminal exploitation is also known as ‘county lines’ and is when gangs and organised crime networks groom and exploit children to sell drugs.

If Hopian staff members come across any disturbing or obscene material on the net involving children, they should immediately contact the ‘Internet Watch Foundation or the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP)’.

8. Parental responsibility

8.1 Parental responsibility and supervision of children

Parents/carers are responsible at all times for their children’s care within services and when accessing any part of Hopian’s service.

This includes health, safety and behaviour whether accessing the support service, children’s service or accommodation service.

There may be occasions when young people under the age of 18 years access our services, these cases should be assessed ‘case by case’ and Hopian’s guidance of ‘Supporting children without parental consent’ followed.

Parents/carers /residents within the refuge should supervise their children in any communal areas and ensure that children are never left alone. This obligation is clearly in the house obligations and agreement. In special circumstances (such as where a parent has to see their solicitor, attend court) it may be possible for Hopian to provide childcare. This would be assessed at that time to see if it was appropriate, further support may be sought in the area.

However, children should never be left alone without proper supervision by the parent/carer. Children should not be supervised by other residents in the refuge. This is communicated on admission to services and while accessing support.

8.2 Disciplining children

The primary responsibility for disciplining children lies with parents/carers. As an agency providing support to families escaping domestic abuse, it is important to recognise that services are well placed to provide information and advice to parents/carers on positive management of children’s behaviour.

Women’s Aid Federation of England has been promoting alternatives to smacking since the Children’s Rights Policy was published in 1993. This policy states specifically in Section 7: *All children in the refuge have the right to safety from violence, which includes the right to safety from physical punishment.*

Hopian will work directly with families to promote non-abusive methods of resolving conflict and to encourage parents/carers to consider other forms of discipline.

9. Direct work with children

9.1 Direct work with children – protecting staff and volunteers

Hopian provides specialised Children and Young People Services which can be provided on a one-to-one basis or in small groups supervised by one adult. Hopian recognises the benefits these sessions can have for a child. Practical steps will be taken to reduce the risk of unfounded allegations of abuse against staff. The importance of record keeping cannot be overstated.

- ✔ Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) will be made on all staff working directly with children (including volunteers) prior to their appointment and thereafter every 3 years.
- ✔ A written record of any injury that occurs to a child will be made. Ensure that another staff member witnesses the record and that a senior staff member is informed.
- ✔ Where possible, children should be encouraged to take responsibility for their own personal care (such as going to the toilet). Personal care should not be provided if children are able to care for themselves.
- ✔ If allegations of child abuse are made against any staff member, follow the procedures set out in Section 5 of this policy.
- ✔ If a child touches a staff member or volunteer in a sexually inappropriate way, a record must be kept of what occurred. Another staff member and a senior staff member must witness this record and a referral to CYPS is to be made.
- ✔ When play sessions are taking place, other staff should always be told when one-to-one work is being done and the parent/carer's permission should be sought. It is also good practice to keep a record of play activities, noting any issues of concern.

9.2 Direct work with children- safeguarding children

- ✔ Safety planning with age-appropriate children will include who they can talk to if they have concerns about a person. Regular reviews of cases will explore how safe does a child feel.
- ✔ The Child Line number is displayed at our Accommodation Service.
- ✔ More than one member of staff should be accessible while the family are accessing the services of Hopian, for the child and parent/carer to speak to about concerns relating to a member of staff.
- ✔ If the family is accessing Support Services, phone numbers will be provided of how to make contact with senior staff.
- ✔ Staff have a responsibility to pass on concerns about the conduct /practice of another member of staff to their line manager or a trustee member. If none of these are appropriate, then advice can be sought from the Safeguarding Children's Partnership.

10. Recruitment, selection & supervision of staff

10.1 Procedures

- ✔ Disclosure and Barring Service DBS.
- ✔ Checking references and essential qualifications before making appointments.
- ✔ Making all appointments to work with children subject to a probationary period.
- ✔ Checks should be completed on reasons for leaving previous positions working with young people at interview stage and documented accordingly.
- ✔ Full employment history should be checked with explanations for gaps at interview stage and documented accordingly.
- ✔ Working with children who have experienced domestic abuse can be demanding and stressful, particularly when child safeguarding issues are involved. Hopian staff working with children will receive regular and comprehensive support and supervision.

10.2 Safety policies

All children have the right to be safe and to be protected from harm. Services will ensure that health and safety procedures are followed to create a safe environment for children living in the refuge and accessing services. Any potential hazards will be drawn to the attention of staff and service users and will be dealt with as soon as possible.

However, there is always the risk of accidents particularly when there are a large number of children, and ultimately, it is the responsibility of each service user to ensure the safety of their own child/children.

Activities including those off site will be subject to risk assessments.

10.3 Duty of care

Hopian recognises that anyone who works with children, whether paid or unpaid, is under a legal duty of care, which case law has interpreted as a duty to act as a careful parent would.

Staff members should ensure that adequate records are kept of any accidents or injuries occurring to children. Staff will receive guidance in Health and Safety legislation and on the regulations concerning the care of children in line with the Health and Safety Handbook.

11. Working with children & young people's services (CYPS)

CYPS, along with the police, have the lead responsibility in child safeguarding. CYPS have a wide range of duties and powers to provide services for children and their families.

Hopian recognises that it is important to have a good working relationship with CYPS to ensure that child safeguarding issues are dealt with sensitively and effectively.

In order to establish a good working relationship staff should strive to meet with CYPS to:

- ✔ Explain the services which the service provides for children and their involvement in child safeguarding work.
- ✔ Discuss the Child Safeguarding Policy and how this complements CYPS' policies and procedures.
- ✔ Give CYPS the name of the person within the service with overall responsibility for dealing with child safeguarding
- ✔ Agree referral procedures, particularly for emergency cases.
- ✔ Discuss any other concerns or barriers to effective partnership working.

Wherever possible, Hopian will offer to provide training for social workers on understanding domestic abuse and the strong links between domestic abuse and child abuse.

Hopian will also ask if staff can liaise with CYPS staff on an on-going basis, as this would help to increase awareness of each other's policies and practice and to forge good working relationships.

12. Child protection conferences

Multi-agency child protection conferences are a key part of the child safeguarding process. As Hopian is well placed to assess child safeguarding issues in relation to parents/carers and children who use the service, Hopian staff can contribute to decision-making at child protection conferences.

- ✔ The chair of the involved local authority should send an invite to all professionals involved with the family to attend the core group and case conferences. And to provide a written report by the stated date.
- ✔ The report should be written by the keyworker involved with the family (may be 2 workers due to child and adult separate support).

- ✔ The report should be shared with the parent/carer/child where appropriate and provided this will not cause any further harm to the child before sending to the chair/local authority requesting it.
- ✔ It is good practice for the key worker (or the staff members who have been assigned to work with the child and the parent/carer) to contact the family's social worker when initially starting support (it is good practice to gain consent where possible) to gather any relevant information need to address their needs and provide most suitable support. Regular updates should be shared when needed.
- ✔ The parent/carer should also be given sufficient time to consider any written report prior to the child protection conference and this needs to take into account that the report is required to be with the chair 48 hours before the conference.
- ✔ Child protection conferences allow for the inclusion of positive aspects of parental care as well as concerns.
- ✔ The issue of domestic abuse and keeping the location of the service confidential, if applicable, must be discussed with the social worker before the child protection conference. It is crucial to insist that the parent/carer should be seen separately from their partner or ex-partner so that they can speak without fear of retribution.

In cases where there is an apparent conflict of interest between the parent/carer and the child, it may be appropriate for two staff members to attend the child protection conference:

- ✔ One to represent the interests of the child, and the other to provide support for the parent/carer. It is essential that these arrangements should be explained clearly to CYPS and to the parent/carer and to the child beforehand.

In cases where due to short term work the case is closed to our services prior to the conference or safeguarding meeting taking place. The keyworker will have provided an update to the social worker at the time of closure providing any information and support provided so this information is available to them when needed.

13. Involving the police

The police, along with CYPS, have a lead role and statutory responsibility in child protection. They also have a general responsibility to protect the public and to prevent crime.

The police have emergency powers to remove a child from a dangerous situation, if there is an immediate threat to the child (such as abduction or threats occurring during a contact visit) It may also be appropriate to contact the police directly in circumstances where an offence has been committed against a child and urgent investigation is needed to prevent the removal of evidence.

Appendix 1: Safeguarding Reporting Flow

1. Identification of Concern

Any staff member, volunteer, or service user who suspects or knows that abuse or harm has occurred or is occurring must act immediately.

Example: A staff member notices unexplained bruises on a child or hears a disclosure from a child about abuse.

2. Immediate Discussion

Share concerns immediately (within four hours, ideally within the hour) with your line manager, Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), or Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO). If they are unavailable, do not delay—seek advice from the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

Example: The staff member discusses the concern with the DSL/DSO/management team and seeks guidance on next steps.

3. Initial Response & Risk Assessment

The DSL/DSO or management team will assess the risk and decide on the appropriate response:

- ✔ Immediate referral to Children and Young People's Services (CYPS) or the Police if a child is at risk.
- ✔ Gather more information if the risk is unclear (without leading questions or contaminating evidence).
- ✔ Monitor and record concerns if no immediate referral is made.

Example: If the child is in immediate danger, then a call is made to the police and CYPS right away.

4. Recording Information

All concerns, disclosures, and actions taken must be recorded factually, dated, and signed in the Oasis system or appropriate log.

Example: The staff member writes a factual account of what was observed or disclosed, including dates, times, and any conversations.

5. Informing Relevant Parties

Where appropriate and safe, inform the non-abusing parent/carer about the concern and any referral being made.

If informing the parent/carer would increase risk to the child, do not inform them before consulting with CYPS or the police.

Example: The staff member discusses with the non-abusing parent only if it is safe to do so.

6. Referral to External Agencies

If a referral is required, contact CYPS and/or the police. Provide all relevant information and records.

Example: The staff member completes a referral form and sends it to CYPS, attaching the factual record.

7. Ongoing Support & Monitoring

Continue to support the child and family as appropriate, monitor the situation, and update records with any new information or developments.

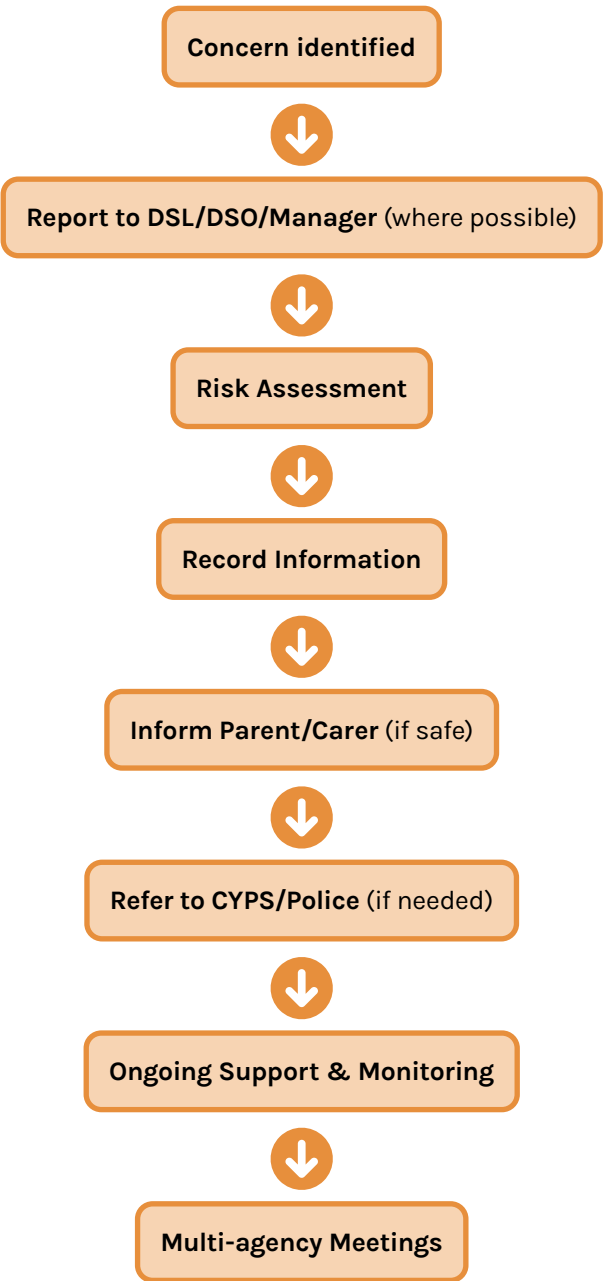
Example: The staff member checks in regularly with the child and updates the Oasis system with any changes.

8. Multi-Agency Collaboration

Attend child protection conferences, core groups, and case conferences as required. Share reports with parents/carers and CYPS, ensuring confidentiality and safety.

Example: The keyworker prepares a report for a child protection conference and shares it with the parent/carer and social worker.

Chart



Key Principles

- The welfare of the child is paramount.
- Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility.
- Act without delay—do not wait for proof.
- Keep clear, factual, and timely records.
- Work in partnership with other agencies.

Appendix 2: Legislation & Statutory Guidance on Child Protection

The **UN Convention of the Rights of a Child 1989** which states that children have an inalienable right to protection from all forms of physical, or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or other person who has care of the child (Article 19).

The **Children Act 1989** (Part I) which requires agencies working with a child to ensure that the welfare of a child is always the paramount consideration and that their wishes are taken into account and **The Children Act 2004** which introduces a number of changes to the way the child protection system is structured and organised.

The **Domestic Abuse Act 2021** is a significant piece of legislation in the UK that provides a statutory definition of domestic abuse and aims to enhance protections for victims while holding perpetrators accountable.

The **Human Rights Act 1998** which requires public agencies to ensure that a person's human rights are safeguarded and that when there is a conflict in the rights of one person in relation to another they are balanced appropriately.

The **Data Protection Act 1998** and **UK General Data Protection Regulation 2018** (UK GDPR) which requires that personal information is obtained and processed fairly and lawfully, that it is accurate, relevant and not held longer than necessary, that it is kept securely and only disclosed in appropriate circumstances.

The **Protection of Children Act 1999** which builds a framework for a cross-sector scheme for identifying those considered unsuitable to work with children or young people and referring names of unsuitable people to the POCA list.

The **Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000** which disqualifies unsuitable people from working with children, young people and vulnerable adults, especially Part II: Protection of Children.

The **Sexual Offences (Amendments) Act 2000** which reduces the age at which or certain circumstances in which sexual acts are lawful. It also introduces a new offence of the Abuse of Trust in Article 3.

The **Children and Adoption Act 2002** which extends the definition of significant harm to include impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another (Section 120).

The **Education Act 2002 (Section 175)** which places a statutory duty on organisations and individuals to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people.

The **Sexual Offences Act 2003** sets out a clear legal framework to protect children of all ages from sexual abuse. It contains a whole series of new and updated offences, with tough sentences, alongside closer monitoring of sex offenders. The Act plugs previous loopholes in the law, sets clear limits and boundaries about behaviour with children. It applies to issues such as Internet pornography and 'grooming' children for abuse. It also sets out new and updated laws on the sexual exploitation of children through prostitution and pornography as well as extending the abuse of position of trust offences set out in the **Sexual Offences (Amendments) Act 2000**.

The **Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003** makes it an offence to commit Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), and an offence to aid, abet, counsel or procure a girl to commit FGM. It is also an offence for someone in the UK to aid, abet, counsel or procure FGM outside of UK that is carried out by a person who is not a UK national or resident and any act done outside UK by UK National or resident.

The **Children and Adoption Act 2006** makes provision with regards to contact with children; family assistance orders; risk assessments and adoptions with a foreign element.

The **Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023** is the multi-agency statutory guidance that sets out expectations for the system that provides help, support and protection for children and their families. It applies at every level, to all agencies and organisations that work directly with children and families.

Rotherham Local Safeguarding Children Partnership 2022-2023 publishes an annual report on the effectiveness of child safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the local area.

Rotherham Local Safeguarding Children Board 2019 works to try and keep children and young people in Rotherham safe from harm. We want all children and young people to be safe, feel secure, well cared for and able to reach their full potential.

Appendix 3: A Summary Guide for Staff Working in Specialist Domestic & Sexual Abuse Services on recognising indicators of abuse

Recognition

Child abuse can be physical, sexual, emotional and or neglectful.

There are many different types which may fall under those four categories including:

- ✔ Bullying & Cyberbullying,
- ✔ Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE),
- ✔ Child Trafficking,
- ✔ Child Criminal Exploitation and Gangs,
- ✔ Domestic Abuse,
- ✔ Misogyny,
- ✔ Safety outside the home,
- ✔ Non-recent Abuse and On-line Abuse.

Recognition of signs and symptoms is dependent upon staff being open to the possibility of non-accidental injury or other forms of abuse, either happening within the service or the child's home. Effective child safeguarding requires appropriate information sharing between agencies.

Indicators of physical abuse

Most healthy children will collect bruises or other injuries from time to time. Accidental bruises will usually occur on the skin where it is covering bony protuberances - shin, forehead, elbow, hip, for example. Also, a very small number of children may suffer from rare conditions, like haemophilia or osteogenesis imperfecta (brittle bone disease), which makes them more susceptible to bruising and fractures.

The following list of indicators, though not exclusive nor in themselves always diagnostic of abuse, are characteristic of non-accidental abuse.

Non-accidental injury

Particular attention should be paid if:

Bruises are:

- ✔ Frequent.
- ✔ Patterned (e.g. finger marks).
- ✔ Old and new.
- ✔ In unusual positions (note the developmental level of child).
- ✔ Scarring – marks, blemish, blotch, discolour.

Burns and scalds have:

- ✔ Clear outline.

- ✔ No or few splash marks.
- ✔ Unusual positions.
- ✔ Indicative shapes.

Fractures are:

- ✔ Numerous.
- ✔ Unreported.
- ✔ Healed at different times.
- ✔ On a child that is under two years of age.

Injuries may be suspicious if they are:

- ✔ Bite marks.
- ✔ Large and deep scratches.
- ✔ Incisions.
- ✔ Not consistent with the explanation offered (e.g., extensive bruising to one area).

Other indicators of abuse:

- ✔ Delay in seeking medical attention.
- ✔ No explanation, inadequate explanation or changing explanation.
- ✔ Child/parent/witness reports abuse.
- ✔ Recurrent injuries - particularly if forming a pattern (e.g., following contact visit).
- ✔ Insufficient parental concern.
- ✔ Multiple injuries that occurred at different dates.
- ✔ Child is failing to thrive for no apparent reason.
- ✔ Repeated poisoning or other accidents.

Effects of **poisoning**:

- ✔ Vomiting, drowsiness, seizures.

Respiratory problems:

- ✔ Drowning, suffocation, poisoning

Possible **behavioural indicators** of abuse:

- ✔ Fear of adults generally or of certain adults in particular.
- ✔ Poor peer relationships.
- ✔ Social isolation and withdrawal.
- ✔ Aggression and acting out/pseudo maturity.
- ✔ Frozen awareness (a combination of lack of expression, lethargy and watchfulness).

- ✔ Detachment or indiscriminate attachment.
- ✔ No attempt to seek comfort when hurt.
- ✔ Eating disorders.
- ✔ Inconsistent explanation for injuries.
- ✔ Describes themselves as being 'bad'.
- ✔ Sleep disturbance.
- ✔ Flinches if touched unexpectedly.
- ✔ Running away or fear of going home.
- ✔ Sudden changes in behaviour or poor school performance.
- ✔ Psychosomatic complaints.
- ✔ Truancy or other unexplained absence from school.
- ✔ Self-destructive behaviour (self-mutilation, substance abuse and suicide attempts).
- ✔ Bed wetting.
- ✔ Soiling.

Risk factors associated with physical and emotional abuse

While none of these factors is 100 percent indicative of abuse in itself, each is a cause for some concern that would need to be explored with the family and other agencies, particularly if linked with other signs and indicators.

Parent/Child:

- ✔ Drug and alcohol misuse.
- ✔ Mental illness.
- ✔ Isolation or lack of support.
- ✔ Lack of attachment/unresponsive to child's needs.
- ✔ Inappropriate expectations.
- ✔ History of violence or threats to partner/abuse of children.
- ✔ Previous breaches of court orders/injunctions.
- ✔ Threatens/attempts suicide.
- ✔ Has a disability.
- ✔ Demanding as a baby (children under 2 are consistently the most vulnerable).
- ✔ Poor sleepers/feeders.
- ✔ Premature birth.
- ✔ Poor bonding.
- ✔ Failure to thrive.
- ✔ Child or siblings previously on child protection register.
- ✔ Child has contact with parent with history of abuse to parent and/ or child.

Social factors:

- ✔ Existence of domestic violence.
- ✔ Carer's fear of abuser.
- ✔ Enforced contact.
- ✔ Unemployment.
- ✔ Unsuitable housing.
- ✔ Unwanted pregnancy.
- ✔ Recent accident/ill health.
- ✔ Gender identity.

Indicators of child sexual abuse

A child's verbal allegations must always be treated with the greatest respect. Children should be listened to and their allegations should be taken seriously. Although there can be occasions when children invent allegations, as a result of adult pressures or for a variety of other reasons, research suggests that such fabricated allegations are rare and that children are in fact more likely to claim they are not being assaulted when they are.

Once concerns are reported it is important that the indicators are weighed in terms of significance and in the context of the child's life; before the assumption is made that the child is or has been sexually assaulted. Some indicators take on a greater or lesser significance depending upon the child's age.

With allegations of a sexual abuse nature, in no circumstance should staff question or discuss the alleged incident with the child or discuss with a suspected abuser. This could have serious implications for contaminating evidence and hamper any criminal prosecution or protection of the child. Record carefully what is said and contact CYPS.

Indicators suggesting a **high likelihood of sexual abuse**:

- ✔ The child's own verbal allegation ("disclosure") that an assault has occurred. A very young child may say something to indicate sexual abuse without realising they are "disclosing."
- ✔ Physical symptoms for which the only explanation is sexual activity, including genital tearing,
- ✔ Sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy in younger children.
- ✔ Children's sexual abuse of other children.
- ✔ Suicide attempts.
- ✔ Compulsive masturbation in an inappropriate setting.
- ✔ Vivid details of sexual activity in talk/play/ drawings, showing awareness of penetration, ejaculation, oral or anal sex (younger children).

Indicators suggesting **cause for concern and a need to refer for investigation** – in order to find a satisfactory explanation

- ✔ Pregnancy and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs).
- ✔ Drug and alcohol misuse.
- ✔ Persistent running away.
- ✔ Sexualised stories/poems.

- ✔ Self-mutilation.
- ✔ Chronic urinary/vaginal infections or soreness.
- ✔ Exposure of genitals.
- ✔ Eating disorders.
- ✔ Clinical depression.
- ✔ Unexplained money or gifts.
- ✔ Fear of particular people or situations.
- ✔ Obsessive behaviour.
- ✔ Developmental regression.
- ✔ Consistently taking a long time in the toilet (note that this is potentially an indicator of FGM in girls of primary school age upwards).

Appendix 4: Basic Principles

1. The protection and welfare of the child must be the paramount consideration in all situations.
2. Where there is a conflict between the wishes of the parent/carers and the welfare of the child, the welfare of the child must take priority.
3. Clear record keeping and sharing of information between agencies is of crucial importance for informed decision making.
4. A planned approach should be adopted in addressing concerns about children, except where the need immediate medical attention or protection.
5. Discussions should take place with CYPS including how and when parents/carers and children can be informed and involved in decision making.

5. Policy Review

The overall responsibility for this policy lies with the Chief Executive and the Board

Policy Author: **Sue Wynne - Chief Executive Officer**

Policy agreed by Trustees and Chair on : **18 November 2025**

Version no: **V3**

Date of next review: **18 November 2026**

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

Relevant Equality Area	Does the policy or its implementation:			Does Hopian need to proceed to full EIA? (If in doubt progress to full assessment)
	Breach Equalities Legislation?	Affect different groups in different ways (both positive and negative)	Promote equality/ good relations?	
Gender	No	No	Yes	No
Race	No	No	Yes	No
Disability	No	No	Yes	No
Sexual Orientation	No	No	Yes	No
Religion and Beliefs	No	No	Yes	No