Our Special Friends
Safeguarding Children Policy

1. Policy Statement

Our Special Friends is an independent charity. Care is delivered by a multidisciplinary team supported by a large voluntary team. The organisation works in multiple environments, both internally and externally.

2. Purpose

This policy sets out the principles and values underpinning Our Special Friends' (OSF) commitment to promoting children's welfare whilst safeguarding them from harm, central to which is a climate of openness in which children can feel safe and listened to.

3. Introduction

Safeguarding children forms part of the general commitment to care for children and families who come into contact with Our Special Friends staff and volunteers. Staff and volunteers have a responsibility to listen to children and their concerns and to act to promote their welfare and safety.

This policy is intended to support staff/volunteers working within **Our Special Friends.** It does not replace but is supplementary to the guidance available at Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership,www.suffolksp.org.uk. The objective is to ensure that every staff member and volunteer fully understands that they have a statutory duty of care to pass on any concerns or disclosures about a child, and to provide a safe and efficient reporting system.

4. Scope

This policy applies to all staff and volunteers (permanent, seconded or temporary) of **Our Special Friends** as well as all people who work on behalf of **Our Special Friends.**

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. All volunteers and members of staff are required to report any suspected abuse. They must be aware of the appropriate reporting procedure for safeguarding.

The Safeguarding Officers are responsible for discharging their safeguarding functions in a way that ensures that any adult or child is safeguarded from harm, and that their welfare is promoted. They are responsible for following up any suspected reports of abuse and for informing the Police or other appropriate external bodies.

5. Definitions

In this policy, as in the Children Acts 1989 and 2004, **a child** is anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. 'Children' therefore means children and young people throughout. The fact that a child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently, is in further education, or is in hospital does not change his or her status or entitlement to services or protection under the Children Act 1989.

Chief Executive means Bin Johnston

Named Professional means Bin Johnston

Safeguarding Officers means Gemma Reid and Sam McAulay

6. Responsibilities and Accountability

Personnel with specific responsibilities in relation to safeguarding a child:

- **All staff and volunteers** share the responsibility to promote the welfare of children and safeguard them from harm and to follow the steps outlined in this policy if they receive or are made aware of child protection concerns.

- **Each manager** has the responsibility to discuss any child protection concern raised by a member of their team with the **Chief Executive.**

- If, after initial discussion, concerns remain that a child might need protection, or that there may be implications for the role or reputation of Our Special Friends, the **Chief Executive** must be informed immediately.

- The **Chief Executive** will make a referral to the appropriate social services team at this point. The unavailability of individual staff/volunteer must not prevent a referral being made if Our Special Friends staff/volunteers believe that a child is in danger.

- The Chief Executive will advise the **Chair of the Trustees** at the time of the report. The Chair will make the referral known to the **Board of Trustees** at the next available board meeting or sooner if the matter is of serious concern.

- The **Chief Executive** fulfils the role of Named Professional for child protection for Our Special Friends and will ensure that a referral is made to social services, consulting with social care staff or managers as appropriate.

7. Procedures and Implementation

Aims

- Providing a framework for ensuring that all staff and volunteers have an appropriate level of awareness of safeguarding matters.

- Outlining the procedures to follow when danger or harm to a child is suspected or has been disclosed.

- Ensuring Our Special Friends works within a multi-agency framework.

- Outlining the training and support for all staff and volunteers, in particular those in direct contact with children

- Specifying the staff, volunteers and trustee(s) with specific responsibilities within the organisation

- Policy and procedures are based on the understanding that everyone, whatever their job, has a responsibility for protecting children from harm and promoting their welfare. Guidance documents give detailed information on the definition and recognition of child abuse and on steps to follow if there are safeguarding concerns in a particular case. The policies will be provided to all new staff and volunteers upon completion of recruitment.

- Guidance outlines the procedures to follow to ensure the safe appointment of staff and volunteers and what steps to follow in the case of an allegation of abuse against a member of staff or volunteer.

- Guidance gives staff advice on how to respond to disclosures made by a child. The emphasis is on listening and not on investigating: the forensic aspects of an investigation, where necessary, will be undertaken by the statutory agencies later.

Training

Mandatory basic training will be provided for all staff and volunteers at regular intervals to raise awareness about safeguarding children. Additional training will be given where relevant and necessary to members of staff, volunteers and their managers who have direct contact with children. Managers will ensure that staff attend the relevant training. Mandatory training for staff and volunteers follows the guidance set out in 'Working Together' 2023 and is based on materials supplied by the local Safeguarding Board. See Dissemination and Implementation below.

Staff involvement in multi-agency safeguarding procedures

Staff and volunteers coming into contact with children and families in their everyday work, including those who do not have a specific role in relation to child protection, have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This could mean involvement in two main ways:

- Staff/volunteers referring their concerns to their designated Safeguarding Officers or Chief Executive, or in urgent cases directly to Social Services or the Police.

- Volunteers may be required to comply with multi-agency safeguarding procedures but will be given every means of support in fulfilling their duties by an experienced member of staff.

There are two designated Safeguarding Officers within the organisation to ensure

complete coverage for all staff and volunteers during times of annual leave (the two officers do not take planned annual leave at the same time) and sickness. Both report directly to the Chief Executive.

Reporting

https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/children-families-and-learning/keeping-children-safe/reporting-a-child-at-risk-of-harm-abuse-or-neglect-safeguarding

Recording, information sharing and confidentiality

After an individual reports the concern, the designated Safeguarding Officer involved at the earliest opportunity will make a written record but must not delay the referral process to the Chief Executive, Social Services for the Police.

Sharing information from a range of sources is essential while a child's safety is being established, their needs are being assessed and child protection procedures are being followed. Different professional staff/volunteer groups may have codes of conduct but these cannot and must not present barriers to information sharing where child abuse is suspected. The legal framework for sharing information comprises:

- the common law duty of confidence
- the Human Rights Act 1998
- the Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR
- the Freedom of Information Act 2000
- the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012

See the Government's *Information Sharing: Advice for Practitioners Providing Safeguarding Services to Children, Young People, Parents and Carers* (May 2024) for further detail on information sharing, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/721581/Information_sharing_advice_practitioners_safeguarding_services.pdf.

As general rule, Our Special Friends will not encounter any legal restrictions on sharing information where:

- staff/volunteers have obtained the consent of the parties likely to be affected.
- the public interest in safeguarding a child's welfare overrides the need to maintain confidentiality.
- disclosure of information is required under a court order.

The law recognises that disclosing confidential information to protect a child, without consent or court order, may be justified in the public interest. Failure to pass on information that could prevent serious harm to a child would be likely to expose a professional to severe criticism and may jeopardise their professional registration. At the same time, **proportionality** should be observed. That is to say, the amount of information and the number of people to whom it is disclosed should be no more than is necessary to satisfy the public interest in protecting child safety.
Neither professionals nor their organisations can expect to remain anonymous in referrals made about safeguarding children.

Where a member of staff or volunteer is the subject of an allegation of abuse

Volunteers and staff should be aware that abuse is a serious matter that can lead to a criminal conviction. Where applicable, Our Special Friends' disciplinary policy should be implemented.

Any allegation regarding a member of staff or volunteer must be investigated by the formal safeguarding procedures in force in Suffolk; if it's suspected that a crime has been committed, and a police investigation has been initiated, then this will take precedence over all other inquiries. However, a report must be compiled by the individual who has the concern and/or by their designated Safeguarding Officers and countersigned by the Chief Executive. It will then be forwarded promptly to the Care Quality Commission.

Our Special Friends' managers will undertake an investigation of any such allegation, but any internal investigation must not obstruct a child protection investigation police inquiry; the timing and conduct of an internal inquiry must be agreed between the named professional and the Social Services Safeguarding Manager for the locality in which the child lives.

Our Special Friends' personnel guidance outlines the procedures to be followed regarding staff or volunteer suspension, management and disciplinary matters in the event of an allegation of abuse or mistreatment to a child.

Our Special Friends will also follow its standard complaints procedure having first ensured the welfare and safety of the child making the allegation. The child should be referred to Social Services following the procedure in the case of suspected abuse.

Staff and volunteers will have been made aware of the categories of abuse during an induction session or 1-2-1 training session at start of involvement with Our Special Friends. There will also be core training requirements for all volunteers, offered at regular intervals.

Categories of abuse will recognise the different forms of abuse, including but not limited to physical, sexual, neglect and emotional. Training will discuss common signs of abuse, sharing concerns and reporting procedures.

Appointing staff and volunteers

Recruitment of staff and volunteers will adhere to Our Special Friends 'Recruitment Policy which complies with the requirements of the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 and the Disclosure and Barring Service or any government body set up in its place to implement a registration and vetting procedures. Every staff member or volunteer who comes into contact with a service user will provide evidence of a current Enhanced DBS (Children and Vulnerable Adults) or one will be acquired by Our Special Friends before they can progress within the organisation.

Dissemination and Implementation

The policy will be stored electronically and available in paper format in Our Special Friends' office. Information about this policy is given to all staff and volunteers as part of their induction and in mandatory training.

8. Related Policies /Guidelines

This policy may be read in conjunction with the Department for Education publication: *What to Do If You're Worried a Child is Being Abused,* March 2015, (DFE-00124-2015). *Working Together to Safeguard Children*, Dec 2023 remains the key source of statutory guidance and information on The Suffolk Safeguarding Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership,www.suffolksp.org.uk.

In addition, see Our Special Friends' following policies:

- Volunteer Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Consent Policy

9. Monitoring and Review

Monitoring will be undertaken by a designated Safeguarding Officer on behalf of the senior management team and trustees, as follows:

- Every two years after endorsement
- Earlier, in the event of new legislation, statutory guidance or case review
- In response to all cases of child protection dealt with by Our Special Friends' staff where evidence maybe provided for policy improvement

The Named Professional is responsible for review.

10. Statutory Compliance and Evidence

Voluntary organisations are required by *Working Together to Safeguard Children* to have procedures in the same way as public sector bodies, and work effectively with children. The Children Act 2004 sets out the duties to cooperate (section 10) and to safeguard and promote welfare (section 11). All current guidance and legislation emphasises the need for an integrated approach between agencies, statutory and voluntary, to safeguard children and ensure their needs are met, especially the need for protection and safety. This policy reflects completely the need for Our Special Friends to work in partnership with the statutory agencies.

The Children Safeguarding Policy and operational guidance at Our Special Friends are based on the Policies and Procedures of the Suffolk Safeguarding Children Board and the Department of Education document *What to do if you are worried a Child is being Abused*. Relevant legislation and statutory guidance include:

- The Children Act 1989
- The Children Act 2004
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018
- The Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and Their Families, 2000
- The Common Assessment Framework 2007
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Data Protection Act 2018
- The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012.

11. Contact Details

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12. References

- *Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children*,2023, HM Government Department for Children and Families
- *What to Do If You're Worried a Child is Being Abused: Advice for Practitioners* March 2015
- The Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership https://www.suffolksp.org.uk/
- *The Children Act* 1989 HM Government
- *The Children Act* 2004 HM Government
- *The Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and Their Families*, 2000.
- *The Common Assessment Framework*, 2007, DfES which has been replaced by Early Help Assessment (EHA) https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/children-families-and-learning/eha
- *Information Sharing: Advice for Practitioners Providing Safeguarding Services to Children, Young People, Parents and Carers,* May 2024.

Date of review: 07/08/2025
Date of next review: 07/08/2027
Owner: Bin Johnston
Signed: Bin Johnston
Dated: 07/08/2025

Appendix

Definitions and signs of child abuse

Child abuse happens when a person – adult or child – harms a child. It can be physical, sexual or emotional, but can also involve a lack of love, care and attention. Neglect can be just as damaging to a child as physical or sexual abuse. Children may be abused by:

- Family members
- Friends
- People working or volunteering in organisational or community settings
- People they know
- Or, much less commonly, by strangers

Children suffering abuse often experience more than one type of abuse. The abuse usually happens over a period time, rather than being a single, isolated incident. Increasingly, abuse can happen online.

General signs of abuse

Children who suffer abuse may be afraid to tell anybody about the abuse. They may struggle with feelings of guilt, shame or confusion – particularly if the abuser is a parent, caregiver or other close family member or friend. Many of the signs that a child is being abused are the same regardless of the type of abuse. Anyone working with children or young people needs to be vigilant to the signs listed below.

- Regular flinching in response to sudden but harmless actions, for example someone raising a hand quickly
- Showing an inexplicable fear of particular places or making excuses to avoid particular people
- Knowledge of ‘adult issues’ for example alcohol, drugs and/or sexual behaviour which is inappropriate for their age or stage of development
- Angry outbursts or behaving aggressively towards other children, adults, animals or toys
- Becoming withdrawn or appearing anxious, clingy or depressed
- Self-harming or thoughts about suicide
- Changes in eating habits or developing eating disorders
- Regularly experiencing nightmares or sleep problems
- Regularly wetting the bed or soiling their clothes
- In older children, risky behaviour such as substance misuse or criminal activity
- Running away or regularly going missing from home or care
- Not receiving adequate medical attention after injuries.

These signs do not necessarily mean that a child is being abused. There may well be other reasons for changes in a child’s behaviour such as a bereavement or relationship problems between parents/carers. In assessing whether signs are related to abuse or not, they need to be considered in the context of the child’s development and situation.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse happens when a child is deliberately hurt, causing injuries such as cuts, bruises, burns and broken bones. It can involve hitting, kicking, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or suffocating. It's also physical abuse if a parent or carer makes up or causes the symptoms of illness in children. For example, they may give them medicine they don't need, making them unwell. This is known as fabricated or induced illness (FII).

Spotting the signs of physical abuse

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

Bruising

- Bruises on babies who are not yet crawling or walking
- Bruises on the cheeks, ears, palms, arms and feet
- Bruises on the back, buttocks, tummy, hips and backs of legs
- Multiple bruises in clusters, usually on the upper arms or outer thighs
- Bruising which looks like it has been caused by fingers, a hand or an object, like a belt or shoe
- Large oval-shaped bite marks.

Burns or scalds

- Any burns which have a clear shape of an object, for example cigarette burns
- Burns to the backs of hands, feet, legs, genitals or buttocks. Other signs of physical abuse include multiple injuries (such as bruising, fractures) inflicted at different times.

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

Neglect

Neglect is persistently failing to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs usually resulting in serious damage to their health and development. Neglect may involve a parent's or carer's failure to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing or shelter
- Supervise a child (including leaving them with unsuitable carers) or keep them safe from harm or danger
- Make sure the child receives appropriate health and/or dental care
- Make sure the child receives a suitable education
- Meet the child's basic emotional needs – parents may ignore their children when they are distressed or even when they are happy or excited. This is known as emotional neglect.

Neglect is the most common type of child abuse. It often happens at the same time as other types of abuse.

Spotting the signs of neglect

Neglect can be difficult to identify. Isolated signs may not mean that a child is suffering neglect, but multiple and persistent signs over time could indicate a serious problem. Some of these signs include:

- Children who appear hungry - they may come to school without lunch money or even try to steal food
- Children who appear dirty or smelly and whose clothes are unwashed or inadequate for the weather conditions
- Children who are left alone or unsupervised
- Children who fail to thrive or who have untreated injuries, health or dental problems
- Children with poor language, communication or social skills for their stage of development
- Children who live in an unsuitable home environment, for example the house is very dirty and unsafe, perhaps with evidence of substance misuse or violence
- Children who have taken on the role of carer for other family members

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse is forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities. It doesn't necessarily involve violence and the child may not be aware that what is happening is abuse. Child sexual abuse can involve contact abuse and/or non-contact abuse. Contact abuse happens when the abuser makes physical contact with the child. It includes:

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

Non-contact abuse involves non-touching activities. It can happen online or in person and includes:

- Encouraging a child to watch or hear sexual acts
- Not taking proper measures to prevent a child being exposed to sexual activities by others
- Showing pornography to a child
- Making, viewing or distributing child abuse images
- Allowing someone else to make, view or distribute child abuse images.

Online sexual abuse includes:

- Persuading or forcing a child to send or post sexually explicit images of themselves, this is sometimes referred to as sexting
- Persuading or forcing a child to take part in sexual activities via a webcam or smartphone
- Having sexual conversations with a child by text or online
- Meeting a child following online sexual grooming with the intent of abusing them.

Abusers may threaten to send sexually explicit images, video or copies of sexual conversations to the young person's friends and family unless they take part in other sexual activity. Images or videos may continue to be shared long after the abuse has stopped. Abusers will often try to build an emotional connection with a child in order to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual abuse. This is known as grooming.

Spotting the signs of sexual abuse

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

- Anal or vaginal soreness or itching
- Bruising or bleeding near the genital area
- Discomfort when walking or sitting down
- An unusual discharge
- Sexually transmitted infections (STI)
- Pregnancy

Changes in the child's mood or behaviour may also cause concern. They may want to avoid spending time with specific people. In particular, the child may show sexual behaviour that is inappropriate for their age. For example:

- They could use sexual language or know things about sex that you wouldn't expect them to
- A child might become sexually active at a young age
- They might be promiscuous

Child sexual exploitation

Sexual exploitation (CSE) is a type of sexual abuse. Young people in exploitative situations and relationships receive things such as gifts, money, drugs, alcohol, status or affection in exchange for taking part in sexual activities.

Young people may be tricked into believing they're in a loving, consensual relationship. They often trust their abuser and don't understand that they're being abused. They may depend on their abuser or be too scared to tell anyone what's happening. They might be invited to parties and given drugs and alcohol before being sexually exploited. They can also be groomed and exploited online.

Some children and young people are trafficked into or within the UK for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Sexual exploitation can also happen to young people in gangs (Berelowitz et al, 2013).

Child sexual exploitation can involve violent, humiliating and degrading sexual assaults and involve multiple perpetrators.

Spotting the signs of child sexual exploitation

Sexual exploitation can be very difficult to identify. Warning signs can easily be mistaken for 'normal' teenage behaviour. Young people who are being sexually exploited may:

- Go missing from home, care or education
- Be involved in abusive relationships, appearing intimidated and fearful of certain people or situations
- Hang out with groups of older people, or anti-social groups, or with other vulnerable peers
- Get involved in gangs, gang fights, gang membership
- Have older boyfriends or girlfriends
- Spend time at places of concern, such as hotels or known brothels
- Not know where they are, because they have been moved around the country
- Be involved in petty crime such as shoplifting
- Have access to drugs and alcohol
- Have new things such as clothes and mobile phones which they can't or won't explain

- Have unexplained physical injuries

Harmful sexual behaviour

Children and young people who develop harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) harm themselves and others. HSB can include:

• Using sexually explicit words and phrases

• Inappropriate touching

• Using sexual violence or threats

• Full penetrative sex with other children or adults.

Sexual behaviour between children is also considered harmful if one of the children is much older – particularly if there is more than 2 years' difference in age or if one of the children is pre-pubescent and the other isn't (Davies, 2012). However, a younger child can abuse an older child, particularly if they have power over them – for example, if the older child is disabled (Rich, 2011).

Spotting the signs of harmful sexual behaviour

It's normal for children to show signs of sexual behaviour at each stage in their development. Children also develop at different rates and some may be slightly more or less advanced than other children in their age group. Behaviours which might be concerning depend on the child's age and the situation. If you're unsure whether a child's sexual behaviour is healthy, Brook provide a helpful, easy-to-use Traffic Light Tool. The traffic light system is used to describe healthy (green) sexual behaviours, potentially unhealthy (amber) sexual behaviours and unhealthy (red) sexual behaviours.

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is persistent, and, over time, it severely damages a child's emotional health and development. It involves:

- Humiliating, putting down or constantly criticising a child
- Shouting at or threatening a child or calling them names
- Mocking a child or making them perform degrading acts
- Constantly blaming or scapegoating a child for things which are not their fault
- Trying to control a child's life and not recognising their individuality
- Not allowing them to have friends or develop socially
- Pushing a child too hard or not recognising their limitations
- Manipulating a child
- Exposing a child to distressing events or interactions such as drug taking, heavy drinking or domestic abuse
- Persistently ignoring them
- Being cold and emotionally unavailable during interactions with a child
- Never saying anything kind, positive or encouraging to a child and failing to praise their achievements and successes

Spotting the signs of emotional abuse

There aren't usually any obvious physical signs of emotional abuse, but you may spot signs in a child's actions or emotions. It's important to remember that some children are naturally quiet and self-contained whilst others are more open and affectionate. Mood swings and challenging behaviour are also a normal part of growing up for teenagers and children going through puberty. Be alert to behaviours which appear to be out of character for the individual child or are particularly unusual for their stage of development. Babies and pre-school children who are being emotionally abused may:

- Be overly affectionate towards strangers or people they haven't known for very long
- Not appear to have a close relationship with their parent, for example when being taken to or collected from nursery
- Lack confidence or become wary or anxious
- Be unable to play be aggressive or nasty towards other children and animals.

Older children may:

- Use language, act in a way or know about things that you wouldn't expect for their age
- Struggle to control strong emotions or have extreme outbursts
- Seem isolated from their parents
- Lack social skills or have few, if any, friends
- Fear making mistakes
- Fear their parent being approached regarding their behaviour
- Self-harm

Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is any type of controlling, bullying, threatening or violent behaviour between people who are or were in an intimate relationship, dating, lived together or who have lived together, or who have had a child in common. There are many different types of abusive behaviours that can occur within intimate relationships, including emotional, sexual, financial, psychological and physical abuse. Domestic abuse can be underpinned by an on-going pattern of psychologically abusive behaviour (coercive control) that is used by one partner to control or intimidate the other partner.

In situations of domestic abuse, both males and females can be abused or be abusers. Domestic abuse can happen in any relationship regardless of age, sexuality, gender identity, race or religious identity. Research by the NSPCC has indicated that many young people experience domestic abuse in their own intimate relationships (Barter, 2009). The UK's cross-government definition of domestic abuse also covers relationships between young people aged 16 and 17 (Home Office, 2013).

Children's exposure to domestic abuse between parents and carers is child abuse. Children can be directly involved in incidents of domestic abuse or they may be harmed by seeing or hearing abuse happening. The developmental and behavioural impact of witnessing domestic abuse is similar to experiencing direct abuse. Children in homes where there is domestic abuse are also at risk of other types of abuse or neglect.

Spotting the signs of domestic abuse

It can be difficult to tell if domestic abuse is happening, because it usually takes place in the family home and abusers can act very differently when other people are around. Children who witness domestic abuse may:

- Become aggressive
- Display anti-social behaviour
- Suffer from depression or anxiety
- Not do as well at school - due to difficulties at home or disruption of moving to and from refuges

Bullying and cyberbullying

Bullying is behaviour that hurts someone else. It usually happens over a lengthy period of time and can harm a child both physically and emotionally. Bullying includes:

- Verbal abuse, such as name calling
- Non-verbal abuse, such as hand signs or glaring
- Emotional abuse, such as threatening, intimidating or humiliating someone
- Exclusion, such as ignoring or isolating someone
- Undermining, by constant criticism or spreading rumours
- Controlling or manipulating someone
- Racial, sexual or homophobic bullying
- Physical assaults, such as hitting and pushing
- Making silent, hoax or abusive calls.

Bullying can happen anywhere – at school, at home or online. When bullying happens online it can involve social networks, games and mobile devices. Online bullying can also be known as cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying includes:

- Sending threatening or abusive text messages
- Creating and sharing embarrassing images or videos
- 'Trolling' - sending menacing or upsetting messages on social networks, chat rooms or online games
- Excluding children from online games, activities or friendship groups
- Setting up hate sites or groups about a particular child
- Encouraging young people to self-harm
- Voting for or against someone in an abusive poll
- Creating fake accounts, hijacking or stealing online identities to embarrass a young person or cause trouble using their name

Spotting the signs of bullying and cyberbullying

It can be hard to know whether or not a child is being bullied. They might not tell anyone because they're scared the bullying will get worse. They might also think that the bullying is their fault. No one sign indicates for certain that a child’s being bullied, but you should look out for:

- Belongings getting ‘lost’ or damaged
- Physical injuries such as unexplained bruises
- Being afraid to go to school, being mysteriously 'ill' each morning, or skipping school
- Not doing as well at school
- Asking for, or stealing, money (to give to a bully)
- Being nervous, losing confidence or becoming distressed and withdrawn
- Problems with eating or sleeping
- Bullying others

Child trafficking

Child trafficking is child abuse. It involves recruiting and moving children who are then exploited. Many children are trafficked into the UK from overseas, but children can also be trafficked from one part of the UK to another. Children are trafficked for:

- Child sexual exploitation
- Benefit fraud
- Forced marriage
- Domestic servitude such as cleaning, childcare, cooking
- Forced labour in factories or agriculture
- Criminal exploitation such as cannabis cultivation, pickpocketing, begging, transporting, drugs, selling pirated DVDs and bag theft

Children who are trafficked experience many forms of abuse and neglect. Physical, sexual and emotional abuse is often used to control them and they’re also likely to suffer physical and emotional neglect.

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

Child trafficking can also be organised by individuals and the children’s own families. Traffickers trick, force or persuade children to leave their homes. They use grooming techniques to gain the trust of a child, family or community. Although these are methods used by traffickers, coercion, violence or threats don’t need to be proven in cases of child trafficking - a child cannot legally consent to their exploitation, so child trafficking only requires evidence of movement and exploitation. Modern slavery is another term which may be used in relation to child trafficking.

Modern slavery encompasses slavery, servitude, forced and compulsory labour and human trafficking (HM Government, 2014). The Modern Slavery Act passed in 2015 in England and Wales categorises offences of slavery, servitude, forced or compulsory labour and human trafficking (National Crime Agency, 2017).

Spotting the signs of child trafficking

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

- Spends a lot of time doing household chores
- Rarely leaves their house, has no freedom of movement and no time for playing
- Is orphaned or living apart from their family, often in unregulated private foster care
- Lives in substandard accommodation
- Isn't sure which country, city or town they're in
- Is unable or reluctant to give details of accommodation or personal details
- Might not be registered with a school or a GP practice
- Has no documents or has falsified documents
- Has no access to their parents or guardians
- Is seen in inappropriate places such as brothels or factories
- Possesses unaccounted for money or goods
- Is permanently deprived of a large part of their earnings, required to earn a minimum amount of money every day or pay off an exorbitant debt
- Has injuries from workplace accidents
- Gives a prepared story which is very similar to stories given by other children

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

- Making multiple visa applications for different children
- Acting as a guarantor for multiple visa applications for children
- Travelling with different children who they're not related to or responsible for
- Insisting on remaining with and speaking for the child
- Living with unrelated or newly arrived children
- Abandoning a child or claiming not to know a child they were previously with

Female genital mutilation

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is the partial or total removal of external female genitalia for non-medical reasons. It's also known as female circumcision or cutting.

The age at which FGM is carried out varies. It may be carried out when a girl is new-born, during childhood or adolescence, just before marriage or during pregnancy (Home Office et al, 2016).

Religious, social or cultural reasons are sometimes given for FGM. However, FGM is child abuse. It's dangerous and a criminal offence.

There are no medical reasons to carry out FGM. It doesn't enhance fertility and it doesn't make childbirth safer. It's used to control female sexuality and can cause severe and long-lasting damage to physical and emotional health.

Spotting the signs of female genital mutilation

A girl at immediate risk of FGM may not know what's going to happen. But she might talk about or you may become aware of:

- A long holiday abroad or going 'home' to visit family

- Relative or cutter visiting from abroad
- A special occasion or ceremony to 'become a woman' or get ready for marriage
- A female relative being cut – a sister, cousin or an older female relative such as a mother or aunt
- Missing school repeatedly or running away from home

A girl who has had FGM may:

- Have difficulty walking, standing or sitting
- Spend longer in the bathroom or toilet
- Appear withdrawn, anxious or depressed
- Have unusual behaviour after an absence from school or college
- Be particularly reluctant to undergo normal medical examinations
- Ask for help, but may not be explicit about the problem due to embarrassment

Reporting requirements

Regulated health and social care professionals and teachers in England and Wales must report ‘known’ cases of FGM in under-18s to the police (Home Office, 2016)