Virtual School

NCASP
NORTHUMBERLAND CHILDREN AND ADULTS SAFEGUARDING PARTNERSHIP

CHILD PROTECTION AND SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Policy Location:	Reviewed:	Review Due:	Person Responsible:
	September 2026	September 2027	Andrea Mead

This policy is available on our website and is referenced in our staff handbook as well as being available electronically, it is also made available to all visitors.

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1 Policy aims

- To ensure appropriate and timely action is taken to safeguard and promote children's welfare.
- To ensure all staff are aware of their responsibilities with respect to safeguarding
- To ensure all staff are trained and confident to recognise and report safeguarding concerns appropriately
- To maintain consistently high standards of safeguarding practice

1.1 Policy statement

We recognise our moral and statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all pupils. We endeavour to provide a safe and welcoming environment where children are respected and valued. We are alert to the signs of abuse and neglect and follow procedures to ensure that children receive effective support and protection.

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers and governors in the setting and is consistent with the procedures of the 3 safeguarding partners. Our policy and procedures also apply to extended setting and off-site activities.

This policy has been written with reference to key statutory guidance (as referenced throughout). The procedures contained in this policy apply to all staff, volunteers, visitors and governors and are consistent with those of the local safeguarding partnership, Northumberland Children's and Adults Safeguarding Partnership (NCASP).

We facilitate a whole setting approach to safeguarding. All systems, processes, support and policies operate with the best interests of the children.

At Hillcrest pupils are taught about safeguarding, including online, through various teaching and learning opportunities and the setting is fully committed to this as part of the delivery of a broad and balanced curriculum.

It is the responsibility of *every* member of staff, volunteer and visitor to our setting to ensure that they carry out the requirements of this policy and, at all times, work in a way that will safeguard and promote the welfare of all of the pupils at this setting. This includes the responsibility to provide a safe environment in which children can learn.

All staff are advised to maintain an attitude of '*it could happen here*' and 'think the unthinkable', where safeguarding is concerned. Where there is a safeguarding concern, we ensure the child's voice is heard and taken into account.

Hillcrest understands information sharing is vital in identifying and tackling all forms of abuse and neglect, and in promoting children's welfare, including their educational outcomes and our responsibility to share, hold and use information in an appropriate way.

1.2 Our principles

- The setting's responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children is of paramount importance
- All children, regardless of age, gender, ability, culture, race, language, religion or sexual identity, have equal rights to protection
- All staff have an equal responsibility to act on any suspicion or disclosure that may suggest a child is at risk of harm
- The setting assesses the risks and issues in the wider community when considering the wellbeing of its pupils. In Northumberland, this is know as Risks Outside the Home
- Pupils and staff involved in child protection issues will receive appropriate support

2 Legislation and statutory guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026) and Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026), and the Maintained settings governance guide. We comply with this guidance and the arrangements agreed and published by our 3 local safeguarding partners as identified in KCSiE; the local authority, integrated care boards within the LA and the chief of police for an area in the LA.

This policy is also based on the following legislation:

- Section 175 of the Education Act 2002, which places a duty on settings and local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils
- The School Staffing (England) Regulations 2009, which set out what must be recorded on the single central record and the requirement for at least 1 person conducting an interview to have completed safer recruitment training
- The Crime and Policing Act 2026 – Removal of the Supervision Exemption: Effective from 1st September 2026. Adults working in regulated activity including unpaid volunteers, even if supervised by a teacher, need enhance DBS check.
- The Crime and Policing Act 2026 Duty to report child sexual abuse
- The Children Act 1989, The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 which provides a framework for the care and protection of children
- Section 5B(11) of the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003, as inserted by section 74 of the Serious Crime Act 2015, which places a statutory duty on teachers to report to the police where they discover that female genital mutilation (FGM) appears to have been carried out on a girl under 18
- Statutory guidance on FGM, which sets out responsibilities with regards to safeguarding and supporting girls affected by FGM
- The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, which outlines when people with criminal convictions can work with children
- Schedule 4 of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, which defines what 'regulated activity' is in relation to children
- Statutory guidance on the Prevent duty, issued under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 which places a statutory obligation on settings to protect susceptible individuals from the risk of radicalisation and from being drawn into terrorism

- Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (updated March 2024) with respect to protecting people from the risk of radicalisation and extremism
- The Human Rights Act 1998, which explains that being subjected to harassment, violence and/or abuse, including that of a sexual nature, may breach any or all of the rights which apply to individuals under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)
- The Equality Act 2010, which makes it unlawful to discriminate against people regarding particular protected characteristics (including age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation). This means our governors and headteacher should carefully consider how they are supporting their pupils with regard to these characteristics. The Act allows our setting to take positive action to deal with particular disadvantages affecting a specific group of pupils (where we can show it's proportionate). This includes a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils. For example, it could include taking positive action to support girls where there's evidence that they're being disproportionately subjected to sexual violence or harassment
- The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), which explains that we must have due regard to eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation. The PSED helps us to focus on key issues of concern and how to improve pupil outcomes. Some pupils may be more at risk of harm from issues such as: sexual violence, homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying or racial discrimination

3 Definitions

Safeguarding is the action taken to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm. This means:

- Providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge
- Protecting children from maltreatment whether that is within or outside the home, including online
- Preventing impairment of children's mental and physical health or development
- Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- promoting the upbringing of children with their birth parents, or otherwise their family network through a kinship care arrangement, whenever possible and where this is in the best interests of the children
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

Child protection is part of this definition and refers to activities undertaken to protect specific children who are suspected to be suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm. This includes harm that occurs inside or outside the home, including in foster care and residential care, as well as online.

Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child, and may involve inflicting harm or failing to act to prevent harm. Appendix 1 explains the different types of abuse.

Children includes everyone under the age of 18.

4 Equality statement

Some children have an increased risk of abuse, both online and offline, and additional barriers can exist for some children with respect to recognising or disclosing it. We are committed to anti-discriminatory practice and recognise children's diverse circumstances. We ensure that all children have the same protection, regardless of any barriers they may face.

ALL of our young people have special educational needs (SEND) or health conditions (see section 10). This makes the even more vulnerable and we have to be extra vigilant.

We also give special consideration to children who:

- Are young carers
- May experience discrimination due to their race, ethnicity, religion, gender identification or sexuality
- Have English as an additional language (EAL)
- Are known to be living in difficult situations – for example, temporary accommodation or where there are issues such as substance abuse or domestic violence
- Are at risk of female genital mutilation (FGM), sexual exploitation, forced marriage, or radicalisation
- Are asylum seekers
- Are at risk due to either their own or a family member's mental health needs
- Are looked after or previously looked after (see section 12)
- Are missing or absent from education for prolonged periods and/or frequently
- Whose parent/carer has expressed an intention to remove them from setting to be home educated

5 Roles and responsibilities

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, and governors in the setting and is consistent with the procedures of the 3 safeguarding partners. Our policy and procedures also apply to extended setting and off-site activities.

Safeguarding and child protection is **everyone's responsibility** and applies to all staff, volunteers, visitors and governors. As a setting we will promote a culture of safeguarding through effective training, briefings and practice as well as collaborative multiagency working.

The setting identifies opportunities within the curriculum to teach safeguarding. This is in the context of a whole-setting approach to supporting pupils to become resilient learners and prepare them for life outside settings. In this setting we promote a culture where sexism, misogyny/misandry, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and sexual violence/harassment will not be tolerated.

5.1 All staff

All staff will read Part 1 of KCSiE annually. A record that all staff have read and understood is held in school.

Due to their day-to-day contact with pupils, setting staff are uniquely placed to observe changes in children's behaviour and recognise signs and indicators of abuse. Children may also turn to a trusted adult in setting when they are in distress or at risk.

All staff should be aware that children may not feel ready or know how to tell someone that they are being abused, exploited, or neglected, and/or they may not recognise their experiences as abusive. This should not prevent staff from having professional curiosity and speaking to the DSL (Designated Safeguarding Leads) if they have concerns about a child. It is also important that staff determine how best to build trusted relationships with children which facilitate communication.

All staff will be aware of:

- Systems that support safeguarding, including this child protection and safeguarding policy, the staff code of conduct, the role and identity of the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputies, the

relationship policy, Digital Safety Policy and the safeguarding response to children who are frequently missing/go missing from education, home or care
- The early help assessment process and their role in it, including identifying emerging problems, liaising with the DSL, and sharing information with other professionals to support early identification and assessment
- The process for making referrals to local authority children's social care and for statutory assessments that may follow a referral, including the role they might be expected to play
- What to do if they identify a safeguarding issue or a child tells them they are being abused or neglected, including specific issues such as FGM, and how to maintain an appropriate level of confidentiality while liaising with relevant professionals
- The signs of different types of abuse, neglect and exploitation, including domestic and sexual abuse (including controlling and coercive behaviour, as well as parental conflict that is frequent, intense, and unresolved), as well as specific safeguarding issues, such as child-on-child abuse, grooming, child sexual exploitation (CSE), child criminal exploitation (CCE), indicators of being at risk from or involved with serious violent crime, FGM, radicalisation and serious violence (including that linked to county lines)
- New and emerging threats, including online harm, grooming, sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, radicalisation, and the role of technology and social media in presenting harm
- The importance of reassuring victims that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe
- The fact that children can be at risk of harm inside and outside of their home, at setting and online, known as Risks Outside the Home (ROTH) in Northumberland
- The fact that children who are (or who are perceived to be) lesbian, gay, bisexual or gender questioning (LGBTQ+) can be targeted by other children
- That a child and their family may be experiencing multiple needs at the same time
- What to look for to identify children who need help or protection

5.2 Designated Safeguarding Lead Responsibilities

The DSL is a member of the senior leadership team (SLT). They take the lead responsibility for child protection and wider safeguarding in setting. Our lead DSL is Andrea Mead, Headteacher. We also have 3 Deputy DSL's who are trained to the same level as our Lead DSL and will take responsibility for safeguarding and child protection in their absence. Our Deputy DSLs are Alison Miller, Deputy Headteacher, Kirsty Nicholas, KS3 Lead TA and Joanne Coyne KS4 Lead TA. All DSLs should have read KCSiE in its entirety and further details about the role of the DSL can be found in Part 2.

The DSL will be given time, training, resources and support to:

- Act as a source of support and expertise to the setting community
- Encourage a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings
- Follow locally agreed processes for providing early help and intervention
- Refer cases of suspected abuse to children's social care or police, as appropriate
- Notify children's social care if a child with a child protection plan has unexplained absences
- Keep detailed written records of all concerns, ensuring that such records are stored securely
- Develop effective links with relevant statutory and voluntary agencies including Northumberland Children and Adults' Safeguarding Partnership
- Be the lead for Operation Encompass and Operation Endeavour in the setting

- Attend and contribute to multi agency meetings including child protection conferences and/or support other appropriate staff to do so
- Have a working knowledge of Northumberland Children and Adult Safeguarding Partnership (NCASP) procedures and priorities Northumberland Children's Services Procedures Manual (proceduresonline.com)
- Keep the headteacher informed of any issues
- Ensure all staff have an awareness of Prevent and that any concerns around radicalisation are referred in through the Northumberland Prevent Pathway
- Ensure the setting has appropriate filtering and monitoring systems in place, and all staff are aware of these systems
- Refer any cases, as appropriate, to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and/or Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)
- Ensure the child protection policy and procedures are regularly reviews and updated
- Ensure child protection records are securely transferred when a child moves on to a new setting, and a confirmation of receipt is obtained
- Liaise with any professions involved with a child when they move on to a new setting
- Ensure parents/carers are aware of the settings duty of care with regards to safeguarding and that referrals will be made when appropriate
- Attend appropriate DSL training, receive regular updates and refresher training provided by Northumberland Schools Safeguarding Team every two years.
- Ensure a record is kept of staff compliance for child protection and safeguarding training
- Ensure all staff are kept up to date with key priorities with the LA, including learning from practise reviews
- Complete and review Northumberland's S175 Safeguarding Audit and share this with the governing body
- Exercise professional challenge where there is concern decisions do not adequately safeguard a child/children and to follow NCASP escalation procedures where necessary

Whilst the activities of the designated safeguarding lead can be delegated to appropriately trained deputies, the ultimate lead responsibility for child protection, as set out above, remains with the designated safeguarding lead.

If the DSL (or deputy) are not available, staff should contact a member of the leadership team to seek advice. Advice can also be sought from One Call 01670 536400 or from the Settings Safeguarding Team 01670 623261.

5.3 Governing Body

The governing body will:

- Facilitate a whole-setting approach to safeguarding and an active culture of keeping children safe, ensuring that safeguarding and child protection are at the forefront of, and underpin, all relevant aspects of process and policy development
- Evaluate and approve this policy at each review, ensuring it complies with the law, and hold the headteacher to account for its implementation
- Be aware of its obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010 (including the Public Sector Equality Duty), and Northumberland Children and Adults Safeguarding Partnership (NCASP) priorities and procedures.

- Appoint a safeguarding governor to monitor the effectiveness of the settings safeguarding policies and procedures. This should be a different person from the DSL.
- Ensure all staff undergo safeguarding and child protection training, including online safety, and that such training is regularly updated and is in line with advice from NCASP
- Ensure that the setting has appropriate filtering and monitoring systems in place, review their effectiveness and make certain all staff know and understand the systems in place.
- Ensure the DSL has the appropriate status and authority to carry out their job, including additional time, funding, training, resources and support
- Online safety is a running and interrelated theme within the whole-setting approach to safeguarding and related policies
- Ensure safer recruitment procedures are followed
- Ensure all staff know the procedures in place for any concerns around adults working with children and how to refer concerns to the headteacher who will then decide if a referral to the LADO needs to be made. The chair of governors will manage any cases where there is an allegation of abuse made against the headteacher. See appendix F
- Ensure safeguarding policies highlight and consider the additional measures required for those who are most vulnerable including children with SEND, LGBTQ+, children with a social worker and children missing from education

In addition to the above, where the setting is being used by other services and providers:

- Assurances should be sought that the provider has appropriate safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures in place
- Ensure the setting has relevant arrangements to liaise with the provider following any concerns, as well as ensuring the setting understands their responsibility to follow any concerns up that happen on the premises
- Ensure the condition of use/lease of the setting is conditional that all safeguarding requirements are met

Governors will receive regular updates regarding the effectiveness of the school's filtering and monitoring systems. An annual review of filtering and monitoring arrangements will be undertaken by the DSL, the member of the Senior Leadership Team with responsibility for filtering and monitoring, IT support and the safeguarding governor. Evidence of this review will be recorded and reported to the governing body.
All governors read Part One of Keeping Children Safe in Education.

5.4 Headteacher

The Headteacher:

- ensures that the safeguarding and child protection policy and procedures are implemented and followed by all staff
- develops and maintains a culture of safeguarding across the setting through policy, practice, training and briefings
- communicates this policy to the whole setting community including parents and carers (and pupils where appropriate)
- allocates sufficient time, training, support and resources to enable the DSL/s to carry out their roles effectively and that there is always adequate cover if the DSL is absent
- ensures that all staff feel able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and that such concerns are handled sensitively and in accordance with the whistle blowing procedures. They will make decisions on whether the LADO threshold has been met or not met and refer appropriately

- ensures that pupils are provided with opportunities throughout the curriculum to learn and talk about safeguarding
- ensures that anyone who has harmed or may pose a risk to a child is referred to the Disclosure and Barring Service.

5.5 The Virtual School Head Teacher

Tara Prescott, the Virtual School Head Teacher has a responsibility for the strategic oversight of the educational attendance, attainment and progress of all pupils with a social worker.

VSHs also have a responsibility to promote the educational achievement of children in kinship care (children who live with a relative or close family friend).

They should also identify and engage with key professionals, e.g. DSLs, special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs), social workers, mental health leads and others.

6 Information sharing

- Timely information sharing is essential to effective safeguarding
- Fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of the need to promote the welfare, and protect the safety, of children
- The Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and UK GDPR do not prevent, or limit, the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe
- If staff need to share 'special category personal data', the DPA 2018 contains 'safeguarding of children and individuals at risk' as a processing condition that allows practitioners to share information without consent if: it is not possible to gain consent; it cannot be reasonably expected that a practitioner gains consent; or if to gain consent would place a child at risk
- Staff should never promise a child that they will not tell anyone about a report of abuse, as this may not be in the child's best interests
- If a victim asks the setting not to tell anyone about the sexual violence or sexual harassment:
    - There's no definitive answer, because even if a victim doesn't consent to sharing information, staff may still lawfully share it if there's another legal basis under the UK GDPR that applies
    - The DSL will have to balance the victim's wishes against their duty to protect the victim and other children

The DSL should consider that:

- Parents or carers should normally be informed (unless this would put the victim at greater risk)
- The basic safeguarding principle is: if a child is at risk of harm, is in immediate danger, or has been harmed, a referral should be made to local authority children's social care
- Rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault are crimes. Where a report of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault is made, this should be referred to the police. While the age of criminal responsibility is 10, if the alleged perpetrator is under 10, the starting principle of referring to the police remains

Regarding anonymity, all staff will:

- Be aware of anonymity, witness support and the criminal process in general where an allegation of sexual violence or sexual harassment is progressing through the criminal justice system
- Do all they reasonably can to protect the anonymity of any children involved in any report of sexual violence or sexual harassment – for example, carefully considering which staff should know about the report, and any support for children involved
- Consider the potential impact of social media in facilitating the spreading of rumours and exposing victims' identities

- The governments information sharing advice for safeguarding practitioners include 7 'golden rules' for sharing information, and will support staff who have to make decisions about sharing information

If staff are in any doubt about sharing information, they should speak to the DSL (or deputy) and if they are unavailable contact Northumberland Settings Safeguarding Team – 01670 623261.

7 Recognising and responding to abuse

All staff should be able to identify and recognise all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation. All children and young people can suffer from abuse, but all staff must be aware of those who are more vulnerable and may need early help. This includes children who:

- Have a disability or SEN
- Are a Young Carer
- Are bereaved or have an absent parent/carer
- Have a parent in prison/custody
- Are showing signs of being drawn into anti-social or criminal behaviour, including being affected by gangs and county lines and organised crime groups and/or serious violence, including knife crime
- Are frequently missing/goes missing from care or home
- Are at risk of modern slavery, trafficking, sexual and/or criminal exploitation
- Are at risk of being radicalised or exploited
- Are viewing problematic and/or inappropriate online content (for example, linked to violence), or developing inappropriate relationships online
- Are in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as drug and alcohol misuse, adult mental health issues and domestic abuse
- Are misusing drugs or alcohol
- Are suffering from mental ill health
- Are a cared for child
- Have returned home to their family from care
- Are a privately fostered child
- Are at risk of honour'-based abuse such as female genital mutilation or forced marriage
- Are missing education, or persistently absent from setting, or not in receipt of full-time education
- Have experienced multiple suspensions and is at risk of, or has been permanently excluded

Abuse may be committed by adult men or women and by other children. Harm can include ill treatment that is not physical as well as the impact of witnessing ill treatment of others. This can be particularly relevant, for example, in relation to the impact on children of all forms of domestic abuse.

Staff, volunteers and governors must follow the procedures set out below in the event of any safeguarding concerns.

7.1 If a child is suffering or likely to suffer harm, or in immediate danger

Liaise with the DSL who will make a referral to children's social care and/or the police **immediately** if you believe a child is suffering or likely to suffer from harm or is in immediate danger. **Anyone can make a referral.**

Tell the DSL as soon as possible if you make a referral directly.

- Contact police 999 or Onecall 01670 536400
- Complete a Multi-Agency Referral Form (MARF) using the following link: Multi Agency Referral Form
- Ensure any referral has been acknowledged by safeguarding partners

7.2 If a child makes a disclosure to you

If a child discloses a safeguarding issue to you, you should:

- Listen to and believe them. Allow them time to talk freely. Ask open, non-leading questions as appropriate
- Stay calm and do not show that you are shocked or upset
- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in telling you. Do not tell them they should have told you sooner
- Explain what will happen next and that you will have to pass this information on. Do not promise to keep it a secret
- Record your conversation as soon as possible using the child's own words. Stick to the facts, and do not include your own opinions
- Share the record with the DSL, using the setting's agreed method (paper/digital/in person). If the DSL is not available, and where appropriate, make a referral to Children's Social Care and/or the police directly and tell the DSL as soon as possible that you have done so. Aside from these people, do not disclose the information to anyone else unless told to do so by a relevant authority involved in the safeguarding process

Bear in mind that some children may:

- Not feel ready, or know how to tell someone that they are being abused, exploited or neglected
- Not recognise their experiences as abusive
- Feel embarrassed, humiliated or threatened. This could be due to their vulnerability, disability, sexual orientation and/or language barriers

None of this should stop you from having 'professional curiosity' and speaking to the DSL if you have concerns about a child.

7.3 If you discover that FGM has taken place, or a pupil is at risk of FGM

Keeping Children Safe in Education explains that FGM comprises "all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs".

FGM is illegal in the UK and a form of child abuse with long-lasting, harmful consequences. It is also known as 'female genital cutting', 'circumcision' or 'initiation'.

Any teacher who either:

- Is informed by a girl under 18 that an act of FGM has been carried out on her; or
- Observes physical signs which appear to show that an act of FGM has been carried out on a girl under 18 and they have no reason to believe that the act was necessary for the girl's physical or mental health or for purposes connected with labour or birth

Must immediately report this to the police, personally. This is a mandatory statutory duty, and teachers will face disciplinary sanctions for failing to meet it.

Unless they have been specifically told not to disclose, they should also discuss the case with the DSL and involve children's social care as appropriate.

Any other member of staff who discovers that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out on a **pupil under 18** must speak to the DSL and follow our local safeguarding procedures.

The duty for teachers mentioned above does not apply in cases where a pupil is *at risk* of FGM or FGM is suspected but is not known to have been carried out. Staff should not examine pupils.

Any member of staff who suspects a pupil is *at risk* of FGM or suspects that FGM has been carried out should speak to the DSL and follow our local safeguarding procedures.

Female Genital Mutilation (trixonline.co.uk)

7.4 If you have concerns about a child (as opposed to believing a child is suffering or likely to suffer from harm, or is in immediate danger)

Where possible, speak to the DSL first to agree a course of action.

If in exceptional circumstances the DSL is not available, this should not delay appropriate action being taken. Speak to a member of the senior leadership team and/or take advice from Northumberland's Children's Social Care through Onecall 01670 536400. You can also seek advice from Northumberland Settings Safeguarding Team – 01670 623261.

Early help assessment

If an early help assessment is appropriate, the DSL will generally lead on liaising with other agencies and setting up an inter-agency assessment as appropriate. Staff may be required to support other agencies and professionals in an early help assessment, in some cases acting as the lead practitioner.

The DSL will keep the case under constant review and the setting will consider a referral to a Family Help Worker or Children's Social Care if the situation does not seem to be improving. Timelines of interventions will be monitored and reviewed.

Concerns which do not meet the threshold for child protection intervention will be managed through the Early Help process.
Family Hubs in Northumberland, previously Sure Start Children's Centres

Early Help Support Request forms can be found here:
Supporting families (Early Help) | Northumberland County Council

Referral

If it is appropriate to refer the case to Northumberland Children's Social Care or the police, the DSL will make the referral or support you to do so.

The availability of the DSL should not delay making a referral, if you make a referral directly, you must tell the DSL as soon as possible.

Northumberland's Children's Social Care will make a decision about what course of action to take and will let the person who made the referral know the outcome. The DSL or person who made the referral must follow up if this information is not made available, and ensure outcomes are properly recorded.

If the child's situation does not seem to be improving after the referral, the DSL or person who made the referral must follow local escalation procedures to ensure their concerns have been addressed and that the child's situation improves.

professional-disagreement-protocol.pdf (trixonline.co.uk)

7.5 If you have concerns about extremism/radicalisation

Where there is a concern about a child being radicalised, the DSL will consider the level of risk and follow the Northumberland Prevent Pathway decide which agency to make a referral to. Some referrals may meet the

threshold for Channel, the government's programme for identifying and supporting individuals at risk of being drawn into terrorism.

The DfE also has a dedicated telephone helpline, 020 7340 7264, which setting staff and governors can call to raise concerns about extremism with respect to a pupil. You can also email counter.extremism@education.gov.uk. **Note that this is not for use in emergency situations.**

In an emergency, call 999 or the confidential anti-terrorist hotline on 0800 789 321 if you:

- Think someone is in immediate danger
- Think someone may be planning to travel to join an extremist group
- See or hear something that may be terrorist-related

7.6 If you have a concern about mental health

Mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation.

Staff should be aware that mental health concerns can, in some cases, develop into safeguarding concerns. This includes self-harm, suicidal ideation, suicide attempts and behaviours which indicate that a child may be at risk of significant harm. Staff must report such concerns immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and follow safeguarding procedures.

Staff will be alert to behavioural signs that suggest a child may be experiencing a mental health problem or be at risk of developing one.

- If you have a mental health concern about a child that is also a safeguarding concern, take immediate action.
- If you have a mental health concern that is **not** also a safeguarding concern, speak to the DSL to agree a course of action.

Refer to the Department for Education guidance on mental health and behaviour in settings for more information.

https://www.beyounorthumberland.nhs.uk/support/professionals-support

7.7 Whistleblowing: Concerns about a staff member, supply teacher, volunteer or contractor

In this setting staff who are concerned about an adult's behaviour will follow our Whistleblowing policy.

All concerns/allegations should be referred to the headteacher or principal who will consider whether a referral to the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) should be made.

Where there is a concern/allegation about the headteacher, this should be referred to the chair of governors.

In the event of a concern/allegation involving both the headteacher and chair of governors, or a situation where there is a conflict of interest in reporting the matter to the headteacher/chair of governors, this should be reported directly to the LADO. The LADO for Northumberland can be contacted on LADO@northumberland.gov.uk telephone 07500 606174

Abuse of position of trust

All setting staff are aware that inappropriate behaviour towards pupils is unacceptable and that their conduct towards pupils must be beyond reproach.

In addition, staff should understand that, under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, it is an offence for a person over the age of 18 to have a sexual relationship with a person under the age of 18, where that person is in a position of trust, even if the relationship is consensual. This means that any sexual activity between a member of the setting staff and a pupil may be a criminal offence, even if that pupil is over the age of consent.

The setting's Staff Code of Conduct sets out the expectations of the staff and is clearly stated in the Staff Handbook issued to staff.

7.8 Allegations of child-on-child abuse

We recognise that children can harm other children. Abuse will never be tolerated or passed off as "banter", "just having a laugh" or "part of growing up", as this can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours and an unsafe environment for pupils.

All child-on-child abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously. Our setting is a respectful place where bullying is not tolerated.

Most cases of child-on-child abuse will be dealt with under our setting's anti bullying policy, but this child protection and safeguarding policy will apply to any allegations that raise safeguarding concerns.

This might include where the alleged behaviour:

- Is serious (including harassment), and potentially a criminal offence
- Could put pupils in the setting at risk
- Involves sexual exploitation, sexual abuse or sexual harassment, such as indecent exposure, sexual assault, upskirting or sexually inappropriate pictures or videos (including the sharing of nudes and semi-nudes)
- Involves pupils being exploited including criminal exploitation, risk of serious violence

Procedures for dealing with allegations of child-on-child abuse

If a pupil makes an allegation of abuse against another pupil:

- You must record the allegation and tell the DSL
- Where appropriate the DSL will contact Northumberland's Children's Social Care team and follow its advice, as well as the police if the allegation involves a potential criminal offence
- The DSL may put a risk assessment and support plan into place for all children involved (including the child(ren) who have been harmed, the child(ren) alleged to have caused harm, with a named person they can talk to if needed. This will include considering setting transport arrangements where applicable.

If the incident is a criminal offence and there are delays in the criminal process, the DSL will work closely with the police (and other agencies as required) while protecting children and/or taking any disciplinary measures against the alleged child causing the harm.

Creating a supportive environment in setting and minimising the risk of child-on-child abuse.

To achieve a supportive environment, and minimise risk of child-on-child abuse we will:

Hillcrest recognises the impact that misogyny, misandry, harmful online influencers, extremist online content and unhealthy gender-based attitudes can have on pupils' beliefs, relationships and behaviour. Staff will actively challenge inappropriate attitudes, discriminatory language and harmful stereotypes and will treat concerns linked to such content as safeguarding matters where appropriate.

- Challenge any form of derogatory or sexualised language or inappropriate behaviour between peers, including requesting or sending sexual images/nudes
- Ensure our curriculum helps to educate pupils about appropriate behaviour and consent and opportunities to teach safeguarding and keeping children safe are identified throughout the curriculum
- Ensure pupils understand that their concerns will be taken seriously, and they are able to easily and confidently report abuse using our reporting systems
- Be alert to reports of sexual violence and/or harassment that may point to environmental or systemic problems that could be addressed by updating policies, processes and the curriculum, or could reflect wider issues in the local area that should be shared with safeguarding partners
- Support children who have witnessed sexual violence. We will do all we can to make sure the child who has been harmed, children alleged to be causing harm and any witnesses are not bullied or harassed
- Consider intra-familial harms and any necessary support for siblings following a report of sexual violence and/or harassment
- Ensure staff are trained to understand:
    - The important role they have to play in preventing child on child abuse, how to recognise the signs and indicators of child-on-child abuse and how to respond to concerns appropriately
    - That even if there are no reports of child-on-child abuse in setting, it does not mean it is not happening – staff should maintain an attitude of "it could happen here"
    - That if they have any concerns about a child's welfare, they should act on them immediately rather than wait to be told, and that victims may not always make a direct report. For example:
        - **Children can show signs or act in ways they hope adults will notice and react to**
        - A friend may make a report
        - A member of staff may overhear a conversation
        - **A child's behaviour might indicate that something is wrong**
    - That certain children may face additional barriers to telling someone because of their vulnerability, disability, gender, ethnicity and/or sexual orientation
    - That a pupil harming another child could be a sign that the child is being abused themselves, and that this would fall under the scope of this policy
    - That they should speak to the DSL if they have any concerns
    - That social media is likely to play a role in the fall-out from any incident or alleged incident and could impact all children involved including witnesses to the incident.

Disciplinary action can be taken while other investigations are on-going, e.g. by the police. The fact that another body is investigating or has investigated an incident doesn't (in itself) prevent our setting from taking appropriate safeguarding and disciplinary action. We will consider these matters on a case-by-case basis taking into account whether:

- Taking action would prejudice an investigation and/or subsequent prosecution – we will liaise with the police and/or local authority children's social care to determine this before taking action
- There are circumstances that make it unreasonable for us to reach our own view about what happened while an independent investigation is ongoing

7.9 Sharing of nudes and semi-nudes ('sexting')

This approach is based on guidance from the UK Council for Internet Safety for all staff and for DSLs and senior leaders.

Responsibilities when responding to an incident

If you are made aware of an incident involving the consensual or non-consensual sharing of nude or semi-nude images/videos (also known as 'sexting' or 'youth produced sexual imagery'), you must report it to the DSL immediately.

You must not:

- View, copy, print, share, store or save the imagery yourself, or ask a pupil to share or download it (if you have already viewed the imagery by accident, you must report this to the DSL)
- Delete the imagery or ask the pupil to delete it
- Say or do anything to blame or shame any children involved

You should explain that you need to report the incident and reassure the pupil(s) that they will receive support and help from the DSL.

All incidents should be reported to the police. This will usually be done by the DSL. Following a report of an incident, the DSL and other staff members involved will determine:

- Whether there is an immediate risk to pupil(s)
- If a referral needs to be made to children's social care
- What further information is required to decide on the best response
- Whether the image(s) has been shared widely and via what services and/or platforms (this may be unknown)
- Whether immediate action should be taken to delete or remove images or videos from devices or online services
- If there is a need to contact another setting, college, setting or individual
- Whether to contact parents or carers of the pupils involved (in most cases parents/carers should be informed)

Informing parents/carers

The DSL will inform parents/carers at an early stage and keep them involved in the process, unless there is a good reason to believe that involving them would put the pupil at risk of harm.

Recording incidents

All incidents of sharing of nudes and semi-nudes, and the decisions made in responding to them, will be recorded.

Curriculum coverage

Pupils are taught about the issues surrounding the sharing of nudes and semi-nudes as part of our relationships and sex education and computing curriculums. Teaching covers the following in relation to the sharing of nudes and semi-nudes:

- What it is
- How it is most likely to be encountered
- The consequences of requesting, forwarding or providing such images, including when it is and is not abusive and when it may be deemed as online sexual harassment
- Issues of legality
- The risk of damage to people's feelings and reputation

Pupils also learn the strategies and skills needed to manage:

- Specific requests or pressure to provide (or forward) such images
- The receipt of such images

7.10 Reporting systems for our pupils

We recognise the importance of ensuring pupils feel safe and comfortable to come forward and report any concerns and/or allegations.

To achieve this, we will:

- Put systems in place for all pupils to confidently report abuse
- Ensure our reporting systems are well promoted, easily understood and easily accessible for pupils
- Make it clear to pupils that their concerns will be taken seriously, and that they can safely express their views and give feedback
- Have a worry box in each classroom

8 Online Safety

We recognise the importance of safeguarding children from potentially harmful and inappropriate online material, and we understand that technology is a significant component in many safeguarding and wellbeing issues.

To address this, our setting aims to:

- Have robust processes (including filtering and monitoring systems, SENSO) in place to ensure the online safety of pupils, staff, volunteers and governors including measures to protect children's personal information by ensuring cyber security systems are in place. This is in line with Cyber security standards for settings and colleges
- Protect and educate the whole setting community in its safe and responsible use of technology, including mobile and smart technology (which we refer to as 'mobile phones')
- Set clear guidelines for the use of mobile phones for the whole setting community based on mobile phones in settings guidance
- Establish clear mechanisms to identify, intervene in and escalate any incidents or concerns, where appropriate
- Use the DfE guidance Teaching Online Safety in Settings

The 4 key categories of risk

Our approach to online safety is based on addressing the following categories of risk:

- **Content** – being exposed to illegal, inappropriate or harmful content, such as pornography, fake news, racism, misogyny, self-harm, suicide, antisemitism, radicalisation and extremism
- **Contact** – being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users, such as peer-to-peer pressure, commercial advertising and adults posing as children or young adults with the intention to groom or exploit them for sexual, criminal, financial or other purposes
- **Conduct** – personal online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm, such as making, sending and receiving explicit images (e.g. consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes and/or pornography), sharing other explicit images and online bullying; and

- **Commerce** – risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing and/or financial scams

To meet our aims and address the risks above, we will:

- Teach our pupils about online safety as part of our curriculum. For example:
    - The safe use of social media, the internet and technology
    - Keeping personal information private
    - How to recognise unacceptable behaviour online
    - How to report any incidents of cyber-bullying, ensuring pupils are encouraged to do so, including where they're a witness rather than a victim
- Train staff, as part of their induction, on safe internet use and online safeguarding issues including cyber-bullying, the risks of online radicalisation, and the expectations, roles and responsibilities around filtering and monitoring. All staff members will receive refresher training as required and at least once each academic year
- Educate parents/carers about online safety via our website, communications sent directly to them and during parents' evenings. We will also share clear procedures with them, so they know how to raise concerns about online safety
- Make all pupils, parents/carers, staff, volunteers and governors aware that they are expected to sign an agreement regarding the acceptable use of the internet in setting, use of the setting's ICT systems and use of their mobile and smart technology
- Make sure all staff, pupils and parents/carers are aware of the DfE's guidance on searching, screening and confiscation
- Put in place robust filtering and monitoring systems to limit children's exposure to the 4 key categories of risk (described above) from the setting's IT systems.
- Provide regular safeguarding and child protection updates including online safety to all staff, at least annually, in order to continue to provide them with the relevant skills and knowledge to safeguard effectively
- Review the child protection and safeguarding policy, including online safety, annually and ensure the procedures and implementation are updated and reviewed regularly
- Hillcrest School will complete an annual online safety risk assessment which identifies emerging trends, changes in technology, local and national safeguarding themes, and any additional risks facing Hillcrest pupils due to their SEND needs and vulnerabilities.

8.1 Artificial intelligence (AI)

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools are now widespread and easy to access. Staff, pupils and parents/carers may be familiar with generative chatbots such as ChatGPT and Google Bard.

Our setting recognises that AI has many uses, including enhancing teaching and learning, and in helping to protect and safeguard pupils. However, AI may also have the potential to increase safeguarding risks (e.g. bullying, grooming, misinformation, fraud and the use of AI chatbots that may encourage harmful behaviour) and/or expose pupils to harmful content. This can be in the form of 'deepfakes', where AI is used to create images, audio or video hoaxes that look real, including AI generated nudes and semi-nude images of children.

Staff should be aware of the risks of using AI tools whilst they are still being developed and should carry out risk assessments for any new AI tool being used by the setting and use the DfE guidance Generative AI: product safety expectations Generative AI: product safety standards - GOV.UK.

8.2 Filtering and Monitoring

When pupils use the setting's network to access the internet, they are protected from inappropriate content by our filtering and monitoring systems, which are regularly reviewed for their effectiveness.

- Filtering refers to the technology preventing access to harmful or inappropriate content, whilst monitoring refers to the practical steps staff take to ensure harmful or inappropriate access is not made.
- Monitoring can include:
    - Physical monitoring- staff being vigilant when children are using devices
    - Live monitoring- using SENSO that screen captures trigger words/phrases
    - Monitoring individual devices/users
- We make sure that any setting devices used away from the setting site are also subject to filtering and monitoring procedures.
- Each year our designated safeguarding lead, along with our IT team and a governor, review our filtering and monitoring procedures to ensure that they effectively prevent access to harmful or inappropriate content.
- All our staff undertake training to understand the risks of poor filtering and monitoring, and know how to share their concerns
- All our staff have taken part in annual cybersecurity training

However, many pupils are able to access the internet using personal devices on journeys into setting and going home. To minimise inappropriate use, we as a setting have a mobile device policy and ask parents/carers to adhere to the guidance stated.

8.3 Photography and images

The vast majority of people who take or view photographs or videos of children do so for entirely innocent and legitimate reasons. Sadly, some people abuse children through taking or distributing images.
To protect pupils, we will:

- seek parental consent for photographs to be taken or published (for example, on our website or in newspapers or publications)
- use only the pupil's first name with an image
- ensure pupils are appropriately dressed
- encourage pupils to tell us if they are worried about any photographs that are taken of them.

8.4 Staff/pupil relationships and online contact

The setting provides advice to staff regarding their personal online activity and has strict guidelines regarding online contact and electronic communication with pupils. Staff found to be in breach of these guidelines may be subject to disciplinary action or child protection investigation. This is stated in our Digital Safety Policy and Staff Code of Conduct policy.

9 Notifying parents or carers

Where appropriate, we will discuss any concerns about a child with the child's parents or carers. The DSL will normally do this in the event of an allegation or disclosure.

Other staff will only talk to parents or carers about any such concerns following consultation with the DSL.

If we believe that notifying the parents or carers would increase the risk to the child, we will discuss this with the local authority children's social care team before doing so. In the case of allegations of abuse made against other children, we will notify the parents or carers of all the children involved after seeking guidance from police and

any other agencies involved. We will think carefully about what information we provide about the other child involved, and when. We will work with the police and/or local authority children's social care to make sure our approach to information sharing is consistent.

10 Pupils with special educational needs, disabilities or health issues

We recognise that as all of our pupils have SEND, disabilities or health issues they can face additional safeguarding challenges. Children with disabilities are 3 times more likely to be abused than their peers. Additional barriers can exist when recognising abuse, exploitation and neglect in this group, including:

- Assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's condition without further exploration.
- Pupils being more prone to peer group isolation or bullying (including prejudice-based bullying) than other pupils.
- The potential for pupils with SEN, disabilities or certain health conditions being disproportionally impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs
- Communication barriers and difficulties in managing or reporting these challenges
- Cognitive understanding – being unable to understand the difference between fact and fiction in online content and then repeating the content/behaviours in setting or being unable to understand the consequences of doing so

Hillcrest recognises that all pupils have identified SEND and many experience additional vulnerabilities associated with communication, emotional regulation, trauma, adverse childhood experiences, attachment difficulties, mental health needs, social isolation and online vulnerability. Safeguarding practice at Hillcrest is therefore underpinned by relational, trauma-informed and SEND-aware approaches. Staff understand that behaviour may communicate unmet need, distress or abuse and will remain professionally curious when concerns arise.

To help overcome these barriers, Hillcrest School provides additional safeguarding support for pupils with SEND, disabilities and health needs through:

- Building strong, trusting relationships with pupils so that concerns, worries and disclosures can be shared with known and trusted adults.
- Ensuring pupils have access to identified key adults who know them well and can recognise changes in presentation, behaviour, attendance or emotional wellbeing.
- Using communication methods tailored to individual needs, including visual supports, talking mats, social stories, emotion coaching, Zones of Regulation approaches, symbols, communication aids and assistive technology where appropriate.
- Providing a trauma-informed and relational approach, which recognises that behaviour may be a communication of unmet need, distress or harm.
- Delivering age and developmentally appropriate safeguarding education, including online safety, healthy relationships, consent, exploitation, bullying and personal safety.
- Regularly reviewing attendance, behaviour, welfare and safeguarding information to identify emerging concerns at the earliest opportunity.
- Working closely with parents, carers and external professionals to ensure safeguarding concerns are understood within the context of a child's individual needs.
- Ensuring reasonable adjustments are made to safeguarding procedures and investigations so that pupils with SEND can fully understand, engage in and contribute to safeguarding processes.

- Monitoring pupils who may be at increased risk of isolation, bullying, exploitation, peer-on-peer abuse, coercion or inappropriate influence from others.
- Completing individual risk assessments and safety plans where necessary to reduce identified vulnerabilities and promote pupil safety.
- Supporting pupils to develop emotional literacy, self-advocacy and help-seeking skills so that they can recognise when something is wrong and know how to access support

10.1 Safeguarding children with medical conditions

A child having a medical condition is not in itself an indicator that a child is at greater safeguarding risk. In the event of an incident taking place the DSL will consider if any safeguarding duty has been triggered. This decision will be made in conjunction with our policy on supporting pupils with medical conditions.

11 Pupils with a Social Worker

Pupils may need a social worker due to safeguarding or welfare needs. We recognise that a child's experiences of adversity and trauma can leave them vulnerable to further harm as well as potentially creating barriers to attendance, learning, behaviour and mental health.

The DSL and all members of staff will work with and support social workers to help protect vulnerable children.

Where we are aware that a pupil has a social worker, the DSL will always consider this fact to ensure any decisions are made in the best interests of the pupil's safety, welfare and educational outcomes. For example, it will inform decisions about:

- Responding to unauthorised absence or missing education where there are known safeguarding risks
- The provision of pastoral and/or academic support
- Promote a sense of belonging and stability, to reduce risks when not in setting
- Attendance in setting is a protective factor, suspensions and reduced time in setting should only be used a last resort.
- The child's social worker must be informed prior to any suspensions

12 Cared for and previously cared for children

The most common reason for children becoming cared for is as a result of abuse or neglect. The Designated Teacher (Alison Miller) in the child's setting ensures staff have the necessary knowledge, skills and understanding to keep cared for children safe. Appropriate staff have information about a child's cared for legal status and care arrangements, including the level of authority delegated to the carer by the authority looking after the child. The Designated Teacher for Cared for Children looked after children and the DSL have details of the child's social worker and the name and contact details of the child's local authority Virtual Head Teacher. Northumberland's Virtual Setting Headteacher is Tara Prescott.

As part of their role, the Designated Teacher will:

- Work closely with the DSL to ensure that any safeguarding concerns regarding cared for and previously cared for children are quickly and effectively responded to
- Promote a sense of belonging and stability, to reduce risks when not in setting
- Attendance in setting is a protective factor, suspensions and reduced time in setting should only be used a last resort
- Collaborate with the Virtual Setting and child's social worker prior to any suspensions for additional support
- Work with virtual setting heads to promote the educational achievement of cared for and previously cared for, including discussing how pupil premium plus funding can be best used to support cared for children and meet the needs identified in their personal education plans

13 Pupils who are lesbian, gay or bisexual

The fact that a child or a young person may be LGB is not in itself an inherent risk factor for harm. However, children who are LGB can be vulnerable to discriminatory bullying. In some cases, a child who is perceived by other children to be LGB (whether or not) can be just as vulnerable as children who identify as LGB.

Risks can be compounded where children who are LGB lack a trusted adult with whom they can be open. In our setting we endeavour to reduce the additional barriers faced by providing a safe space for any child to speak with a trusted adult of their choice.

14 Pupils who are questioning their gender

Staff will not initiate any action in the area of children questioning their gender. Where a child or their parent has raised a request relating to social transition;

- Staff will take time to understand the thoughts and feelings of those children who are questioning their gender and will be appropriately professionally curious about the full range of the child's experiences
- Staff will be aware of the potential vulnerabilities of children who are questioning their gender including the possibility of complex mental health need
- Staff will be aware of the potential for discriminatory bullying and will challenge this appropriately.

We will refer to KCSiE 2026 paragraph 252-282 when making decisions around adopting any changes relating to social transition.

15 Young Carers

Staff are alert to the needs of Young Carers recognising that caring responsibilities can impact on their attendance, attainment, behaviour and wellbeing.

To support the needs of Young Carers the setting seeks support from Northumberland Young Carers service Young Carers.

16 Complaints against staff

Complaints against staff that are likely to require a child protection investigation will be handled in accordance with our procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse made against staff (see appendix F).

16.1 Other complaints

Our complaints procedure will be followed where a pupil or parent raises a concern about poor practice towards a pupil. Complaints are managed by senior staff, the headteacher and governors. An explanation of the complaint's procedure is published on the setting website.

Complaints from staff are dealt with under the setting's complaints and disciplinary and grievance procedures.

Complaints which escalate into a child protection concern will automatically be managed under the setting's child protection procedures.

17 Record keeping

All safeguarding concerns are recorded using CPOMS.

We will hold records in line with our records retention schedule.

All safeguarding concerns, discussions, decisions made and the rationale for those decisions must be recorded in writing. This should include instances where referrals were or were not made to another agency such as local authority children's social care or the Prevent programme, etc. If you are in any doubt about whether to record something, discuss it with the DSL.

Records will include:

- A clear and comprehensive summary of the concern
- Details of how the concern was followed up and resolved
- A note of any action taken, decisions reached and the outcome

Concerns and referrals will all be recorded on CPOMS.

Any non-confidential records will be readily accessible and available. Confidential information and records will be held securely and only available to those who have a right or professional need to see them.

Safeguarding records relating to individual children will be retained for a reasonable period of time after they have left the setting.

If a child for whom the setting has, or has had, safeguarding concerns moves to another setting, the DSL will ensure that their child protection file is forwarded as soon as possible, securely, and separately from the main pupil file. To allow the new setting/college to have support in place when the child arrives, this should be within:

- **5 days** for an in-year transfer, or within
- **The first 5 days** of the start of a new term

In addition, if the concerns are significant or complex, and/or social services are involved, the DSL will speak to the DSL of the receiving setting and provide information to enable them to have time to make any necessary preparations to ensure the safety of the child.

Safeguarding Record-Keeping and Information Sharing

Hillcrest School maintains comprehensive safeguarding records to support the protection, welfare and wellbeing of all pupils. Records are held primarily on a secure electronic safeguarding system, with limited paper records retained where necessary. Historical safeguarding files, signed records, body maps and other supporting documentation may be held in secure paper format until they are uploaded to the electronic system.

All safeguarding records are stored securely and separately from the main pupil file. Electronic records are protected through password-restricted access, user permissions and secure network storage. Paper records are kept in locked cabinets within secure offices accessible only to authorised safeguarding personnel. Access to safeguarding information is limited to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), Deputy DSLs, the Headteacher and other staff on a strict need-to-know basis.

Safeguarding records include concerns, disclosures, referrals, assessments, chronologies, multi-agency communications and records of actions taken. The DSL regularly monitors records to ensure they are accurate, up to date and provide a clear chronology of concerns and interventions.

When pupils transfer to another school or educational setting, safeguarding records are transferred securely and separately from the main pupil file in accordance with local authority procedures and statutory guidance. Receipt of records is recorded and retained.

Safeguarding records are retained in line with the school's Records Retention Schedule, Information and Records Management Society (IRMS) guidance and local authority requirements. Child protection files are normally retained until the pupil's 25th birthday unless a longer retention period is required due to ongoing safeguarding, legal or statutory considerations.

The school recognises the highly sensitive nature of safeguarding information and ensures confidentiality is maintained at all times. Information is only shared with staff and agencies when there is a legitimate safeguarding, welfare or educational need to do so. All staff receive training regarding information sharing, confidentiality and data protection responsibilities. Confidentiality is never promised to a child where doing so may place them at risk of harm.

Information Sharing with Other Agencies

Hillcrest School works closely with a range of partners to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Information may be shared with Children's Social Care, the Police, Health Services, Education Welfare Services, Early Help Services, the Virtual School, CAMHS, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), and other relevant professionals where there are concerns about a child's safety, welfare or wellbeing.

Information sharing will be:

- Timely, proportionate and necessary.
- Based upon the child's best interests and welfare needs.
- Undertaken in accordance with UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018, KCSIE and Northumberland safeguarding procedures.
- Recorded appropriately, including the rationale for sharing or not sharing information.

The school will seek parental consent to share information where appropriate and safe to do so. However, consent will not be sought, or may be overridden, where obtaining consent could place a child at increased risk of harm, prejudice the prevention or detection of crime, compromise a safeguarding investigation, or where there is another lawful basis for sharing information.

Where a child is believed to be suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, the DSL will make a referral to Children's Social Care and share relevant information without delay, in accordance with local safeguarding partnership procedures. Multi-agency working is a key feature of Hillcrest's safeguarding practice, and the school

actively contributes to Child Protection Conferences, Child in Need meetings, Early Help assessments, strategy discussions and other statutory processes to ensure children receive the support and protection they need.

18 Training for all staff

It is important that all staff receive safeguarding and child protection training to enable them to recognise the possible signs of abuse, neglect and exploitation and to know what to do if they have a concern. All staff must understand the setting's safeguarding systems and their responsibilities.

Training will be regularly updated and will follow NCASP recommendations. All staff will receive regular safeguarding and child protection updates (emails, staff meetings/briefings) and received Face to face training delivered by Justine Clephane annually. (1.9.26)

All staff will have Prevent training to enable them to identify children at risk of becoming involved with or supporting terrorism, and to challenge extremist ideologies.

New staff will receive a mandatory briefing during their induction, which includes the setting's child protection and safeguarding policy, code of conduct, Staff Handbook, how to report and record concerns, and details for the DSLs.

18.1 DSL and Deputy DSL

The DSL (and deputies) will receive annual safeguarding training, with subjects reflecting local and national priorities and including a DSL refresher session on their roles and responsibilities every two years, with Northumberland Settings Safeguarding Team.

In addition, they will update their knowledge and skills at regular intervals and at least annually (for example, through e-bulletins, meeting other DSLs, or taking time to read and digest safeguarding developments).

18.2 Governors

Members of the Governing Body of the setting take part in regularly updated safeguarding training to ensure that they;

- Have the knowledge and information to perform their functions and understand their responsibilities, such as providing strategic challenge.
- Can be assured that safeguarding policies and procedures are effective and support the setting to deliver a robust whole-setting approach to safeguarding.

18.3 Visitors

Supply staff and other visitors, including trainee teachers, education professionals and volunteers, will be shown the settings Visitors Information, which will be made available to them on their arrival. Supply staff and trainee teachers will also be given a copy of the Staff Handbook, so they clearly understand our procedures and protocols

19 Safer Recruitment

Our setting endeavours to ensure that we do our utmost to employ safe staff by following the guidance in Keeping Children Safe in Education and the setting's Staff Recruitment procedures, policy and checklist.

- At least one member of each recruitment panel will have attended safer recruitment training.
- The setting obtains written confirmation from supply agencies or third-party organisations that agency staff or other individuals who may work in the setting have been appropriately checked.
- Trainee teachers will be checked either by the setting or by the training provider, from whom written confirmation will be obtained.
- The setting maintains a single central record of recruitment checks undertaken.

19.1 Single Central Record

As a setting we maintain a digital record of all our checks to ensure staff, governors and those in regulated activity are safe (as much as possible) to work within our setting. This information is only kept doing the terms of employment or activity within the setting.

The SCR is audited termly by the Headteacher/DSL to ensure the accuracy of information held.

19.2 Volunteers

Volunteers, including governors will undergo checks commensurate with their work in the setting and contact with pupils. Volunteers who have not been appropriately checked (Enhanced DBS) will not be allowed to engage in regulated activity.

19.3 Supervised volunteers

Volunteers who work only in a supervised capacity and are **not** in regulated activity will undergo the safe recruitment checks appropriate to their role, in accordance with the setting's risk assessment process and statutory guidance.

19.4 Contractors

The setting checks the identity of all contractors working on site and requests DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks and barred list checks where required by statutory guidance. Contractors who have not undergone appropriate checks will not be allowed to engage in regulated activity.

19.5 Site security

Visitors to the setting, including contractors, are asked to sign in and are given a badge which confirms they have permission to be on site. Parents who are simply delivering or collecting their children do not need to sign in. All visitors are expected to observe the setting's safeguarding and health and safety regulations to ensure children in setting are kept safe. The head teacher will exercise professional judgement in determining whether any visitors should be escorted or supervised while on site.

The school will undertake appropriate checks on visiting speakers and organisations. Hillcrest will not permit organisations or speakers to promote extremist, discriminatory, hateful or harmful views. Visitors will be appropriately supervised in line with safeguarding procedures.

19.6 Extended Setting, out of setting providers and off-site arrangements

Where extended setting activities are provided, the setting uses the DfE After-setting clubs, community activities, and tuition Safeguarding guidance for providers and our own child protection and safeguarding procedures apply.

When we host out-of-setting providers on the premises it should be noted that whilst the provider is responsible for their own safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures, the setting will refer any concerns they have about the provider to the local authority or appropriate body.

When our pupils attend off-site activities, including day and residential visits and work-related activities, we will check that effective child protection arrangements are in place.

20 Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies and procedures:

- Relationship policy (formally behaviour)
- Staff handbook/behaviour/code of conduct
- Complaints
- Health and safety
- Attendance
- Online safety
- Mobile phone use
- Equality
- Relationships and sex education
- First aid
- Curriculum
- Designated teacher for cared for children and previously cared for children
- Anti-bullying
- Whistleblowing
- Supporting pupils with medical conditions
- Restrictive interventions including use of reasonable force in settings
- Allergy policy

APPENDIX A: Definitions of abuse

Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Harm can include ill treatment that is not physical, as well as the impact of witnessing the ill treatment of others. This can be particularly relevant, for example, in relation to the impact on children of all forms of domestic abuse, including where they see, hear, or experience its effect. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children may be abused by an adult or adults or by another child or children. Children may also cause harm to other family members, often referred to as child to parent or care giver abuse.

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

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child's emotional development. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone.

Emotional abuse may involve:

- Conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person
- Verbal abuse, such as persistent criticism, belittling, or name-calling, as well as not giving the child the opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate.
- Age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child from participating in normal social interaction
- Seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another
- Serious bullying (including cyber-bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve:

- Physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or penetration with an object) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing
- Non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse.

Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse.

Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

The sexual abuse of children by other children is a specific safeguarding issue in education and all staff should be aware of it.

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

Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- Protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers)
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Appendix B Specific safeguarding issues

Risks Outside the Home / Contextual Safeguarding

Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to understanding and responding to young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It recognises that the different relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, settings and online can feature violence and abuse. Parents and carers have little influence over these contexts, and young people's experiences of extra-familial abuse can undermine parent-child relationships. Risks outside the home can include, anti-social behaviour, child criminal/sexual/financial exploitation, other extra-familial sexual abuse, serious youth violence, gang affiliation, radicalisation and violent

extremism, trafficking and modern day slavery, child-on-child abuse including harmful sexual behaviour, bullying and unhealthy relationships, abuse by an adult working with children.

Local authority children's social care assessments should consider where children are being harmed in contexts outside of the home16, so it is important that settings and colleges provide as much information as possible as part of the referral process.

Financial exploitation

Child exploitation includes criminal, sexual and financial exploitation. Financial exploitation may involve coercion, online scams, exploitation through gaming platforms, use of bank accounts, financial manipulation, financially motivated sexual extortion (sextortion), or other activities where a child is used for financial gain.

Financially motivated sexual extortion (sextortion)

Financially motivated sexual extortion (FMSE), often referred to as sextortion, is a form of child sexual exploitation in which an offender threatens to share nude or semi-nude images, including stolen, hacked, digitally manipulated or AI-generated images, unless money, bank details, gift vouchers, access to a bank account, further images or another benefit is provided.

Any disclosure or concern relating to sextortion will be treated as a safeguarding matter and reported immediately to the DSL. Staff must not view, copy, save, share or ask a pupil to delete imagery. The DSL will assess immediate risk, preserve relevant information without investigating, and make referrals to Children's Social Care and the Police as appropriate.

Child criminal exploitation

Child criminal exploitation (CCE) is a form of abuse where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child into criminal activity. It may involve an exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator, and/or through violence or the threat of violence.

The abuse can be perpetrated by males or females, and children or adults. It can be a one-off occurrence or a series of incidents over time, and range from opportunistic to complex organised abuse.

The victim can be exploited even when the activity appears to be consensual. It does not always involve physical contact and can happen online. For example, young people may be forced to work in cannabis factories, coerced into moving drugs or money across the country (county lines), forced to shoplift or pickpocket, or to threaten other young people.

Indicators of CCE can include a child:

- Appearing with unexplained gifts or new possessions
- Associating with other young people involved in exploitation
- Suffering from changes in emotional wellbeing
- Misusing drugs and alcohol
- Going missing for periods of time or regularly coming home late
- Regularly missing setting or education
- Not taking part in education

If a member of staff suspects CCE, they will discuss this with the DSL. The DSL will trigger the local safeguarding procedures, including a referral to the local authority's children's social care team and the police, if appropriate.

Child sexual exploitation

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a form of child sexual abuse where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into sexual activity. It may involve an exchange for something the victim needs or wants and/or for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. It may, or may not, be accompanied by violence or threats of violence.

The abuse can be perpetrated by males or females, and children or adults. It can be a one-off occurrence or a series of incidents over time, and range from opportunistic to complex organised abuse.

The victim can be exploited even when the activity appears to be consensual. Children or young people who are being sexually exploited may not understand that they are being abused. They often trust their abuser and may be tricked into believing they are in a loving, consensual relationship.

CSE can include both physical contact (penetrative and non-penetrative acts) and non-contact sexual activity. It can also happen online. For example, young people may be persuaded or forced to share sexually explicit images of themselves, have sexual conversations by text, or take part in sexual activities using a webcam. CSE may also occur without the victim's immediate knowledge, for example through others copying videos or images.

In addition to the CCE indicators above, indicators of CSE can include a child:

- Having an older boyfriend or girlfriend
- Suffering from sexually transmitted infections or becoming pregnant

If a member of staff suspects CSE, they will discuss this with the DSL. The DSL will trigger the local safeguarding procedures, including a referral to the local authority's children's social care team and the police, if appropriate.

Child-on-child abuse

Child-on-child abuse is when children abuse other children. This type of abuse can take place inside and outside of setting. It can also take place both face-to-face and online, and can occur simultaneously between the two.

Our setting has a zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment. We recognise that even if there are there no reports, that doesn't mean that this kind of abuse isn't happening.

Child-on-child abuse is most likely to include, but may not be limited to:

- Bullying (including cyber-bullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying)
- Abuse in intimate personal relationships between children (this is sometimes known as 'teenage relationship abuse')
- Physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse)
- Sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence)
- Sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be standalone or part of a broader pattern of abuse
- Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party
- Consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery)
- Upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm
- Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals (this could include activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element)

Where children abuse their peers online, this can take the form of, for example, abusive, harassing, and misogynistic messages; the non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes, especially around chat groups; and the sharing of abusive images and pornography, to those who don't want to receive such content.

Children who are absent from education

A child being absent from education, particularly repeatedly, can be a warning sign of a range of safeguarding issues. This might include abuse or neglect, such as sexual abuse, exploitation, mental health concerns, substance abuse, radicalisation, FGM or forced marriage.

We will follow our procedures for unauthorised absence and for dealing with children who are absent from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse, exploitation and neglect, including sexual exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of going missing in future. This includes informing the local authority if a child leaves the setting without a new setting being named, and adhering to requirements with respect to sharing information with the local authority, when applicable, when removing a child's name from the admission register at non-standard transition points.

Knowing where children are during setting hours is an extremely important aspect of Safeguarding.

We monitor attendance carefully and address poor or irregular attendance without delay.

We will follow up with parents/carers when pupils are not at setting. This means we need to have a least two up to date contacts' numbers for parents/carers. Parents should remember to update the setting as soon as possible if the numbers change.

In response to the guidance in Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026) the setting has:

- Staff who understand what to do when children do not attend regularly
- Appropriate policies, procedures and responses for pupils who go missing from education (especially on repeat occasions).
- Staff who know the signs and triggers for travelling to conflict zones, FGM and forced marriage.
- Procedures to inform the local authority when we plan to take pupils off-roll when they:
    - leave setting to be home educated
    - move away from the setting's location
    - remain medically unfit beyond compulsory setting age
    - are in custody for four months or more (and will not return to setting afterwards); or
    - are permanently excluded

We will ensure that pupils who are expected to attend the setting but fail to take up the place will be referred to the local authority.

When a pupil leaves the setting, we will record the name of the pupil's new setting and their expected start date.

The setting's attendance lead will submit a monthly return to the LA, indicating children missing education and the DSL must review this submission before it is sent to ensure they are aware of any concerns or can add additional information

The setting procedures reflect the latest DfE guidance
Working-together-to-improve-setting-attendance and Children-missing-education guidance

The LA guidance is available on the Virtual Setting web page
https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Children/Looked-after/Virtual.aspx#childrennotinsetting

Honour based abuse (including FGM and forced marriage)

Honour-based abuse (HBA) encompasses incidents or crimes committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or community, including FGM, forced marriage, and practices such as breast ironing.

Abuse committed in this context often involves a wider network of family or community pressure and can include multiple perpetrators.

All forms of HBA are abuse and will be handled and escalated as such. All staff will be alert to the possibility of a child being at risk of HBA or already having suffered it. If staff have a concern, they will speak to the DSL, who will activate local safeguarding procedures.

Forced marriage

Forcing a person into marriage is a crime. A forced marriage is one entered into without the full and free consent of 1 or both parties and where violence, threats, or any other form of coercion is used to cause a person to enter into a marriage. Threats can be physical or emotional and psychological.

It is also illegal to cause a child under the age of 18 to marry, even if violence, threats or coercion are not involved.

If a member of staff suspects that a pupil is being forced into marriage they will report this to the DSL.

The DSL will:

- Speak to the pupil about the concerns in a secure and private place
- Will seek professional advice before contacting parent/carers
- Activate the local safeguarding procedures
- Seek advice from the Forced Marriage Unit on 020 7008 0151 or fmu@fco.gov.uk
- Refer the pupil to an education welfare officer, pastoral tutor, learning mentor, or setting counsellor, as appropriate

Preventing radicalisation

- **Radicalisation** refers to the process of a person legitimising support for, or use of, terrorist violence
- **Extremism** is the promotion or advancement of an ideology based on violence, hatred or intolerance, that aims to**:**
    - Negate or destroy the fundamental rights and freedoms of others; or
    - Undermine, overturn or replace the UK's system of liberal parliamentary democracy and democratic rights; or
    - Intentionally create a permissive environment for others to achieve the results outlined in either of the above points
- **Terrorism** is an action that:
    - Endangers or causes serious violence to a person/people;
    - Causes serious damage to property; or
    - Seriously interferes or disrupts an electronic system

The use or threat of terrorism must be designed to influence the government or to intimidate the public and is made for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause.

Settings have a duty to prevent children from becoming involved with or supporting terrorism. All staff will undertake Prevent training, including on extremist and terrorist ideologies. They'll make sure that staff have access to appropriate training to equip them to identify children at risk.

We will assess the risk of children in our setting from becoming involved with or supporting terrorism. This assessment will be based on an understanding of the potential risk in our local area, in collaboration with our local safeguarding partners and local police force.

We will ensure that suitable internet filtering is in place, and equip our pupils to stay safe online at setting and at home.

There is no single way of identifying an individual who is likely to be susceptible to radicalisation into terrorism. Radicalisation can occur quickly or over a long period.

Staff will be alert to changes in pupils' behaviour.

The government website Educate Against Hate and the NSPCC say that signs that a pupil is being radicalised can include:

- Refusal to engage with, or becoming abusive to, peers who are different from themselves
- Becoming susceptible to conspiracy theories and feelings of persecution
- Changes in friendship groups and appearance
- Rejecting activities they used to enjoy
- Converting to a new religion
- Isolating themselves from family and friends
- Talking as if from a scripted speech
- An unwillingness or inability to discuss their views
- A sudden disrespectful attitude towards others
- Increased levels of anger
- Increased secretiveness, especially around internet use
- Expressions of sympathy for extremist ideologies and groups, or justification of their actions
- Accessing extremist material online, including on social media
- Possessing extremist literature
- Being in contact with extremist recruiters and joining, or seeking to join, extremist organisations

Children who are at risk of radicalisation may have low self-esteem or be victims of bullying or discrimination. It is important to note that these signs can also be part of normal teenage behaviour – staff should have confidence in their instincts and seek advice if something feels wrong.

Staff should **always** take action if they are worried and report their concerns to the DSL. The DSL will fill out a **prevent referral form** if appropriate and email to: **fimunorth@ctpne.police.uk** and **prevent@northumberland.gov.uk**

Further information on the setting's measures to prevent radicalisation are set out in our Prevent Duty Policy.

Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in settings

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur:

- Between 2 children of any age and sex
- Through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children

- Online and face to face (both physically and verbally)

Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap.

Children who are victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment will likely find the experience distressing. This will, in all likelihood, adversely affect their educational attainment and will be exacerbated if the alleged perpetrator(s) attends the same setting.

If a victim reports an incident, it is essential that staff make sure they are reassured that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. A victim should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting any form of abuse or neglect. Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report.

When supporting victims, staff will:

- Reassure victims that the law on child-on-child abuse is there to protect them, not criminalise them
- Regularly review decisions and actions, and update policies with lessons learnt
- Look out for potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour, and decide on a course of action where we identify any patterns
- Consider if there are wider cultural issues within the setting that enabled inappropriate behaviour to occur and whether revising policies and/or providing extra staff training could minimise the risk of it happening again
- Remain alert to the possible challenges of detecting signs that a child has experienced sexual violence, and show sensitivity to their needs

Some groups are potentially more at risk. Evidence shows that girls, children with SEN and/or disabilities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) children are at greater risk.

Staff should be aware of the importance of:

- Challenging inappropriate behaviours
- Making clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up
- Challenging physical behaviours (potentially criminal in nature), such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia, pulling down trousers, flicking bras and lifting up skirts. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them

If staff have any concerns about sexual violence or sexual harassment, or a child makes a report to them, they will follow the procedures and report their concerns to the DSL who will take appropriate action.

Incidents of rape and sexual assault will be reported to the police; referrals to Children's Services will be made as appropriate.

Children with sexually harmful behaviour

Children may be harmed by other children. Staff will be aware of the harm caused by bullying and will use the setting's **anti-bullying procedures** where necessary. However, there will be occasions when a pupil's behaviour warrants a response under child protection rather than anti-bullying procedures.

The management of children with sexually harmful behaviour is complex and the setting will work with other relevant agencies to maintain the safety of the whole setting community. Children who display such behaviour

may be victims of abuse themselves and the child protection procedures will be followed for both victim and perpetrator. Staff who become concerned about a pupil's sexual behaviour, including any known online sexual behaviour, should speak to the DSL as soon as possible.

Serious violence

Indicators which may signal that a child is at risk from, or involved with, serious violent crime may include:

- Increased absence from setting
- Change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups
- Significant decline in performance
- Signs of self-harm or a significant change in wellbeing
- Signs of assault or unexplained injuries
- Unexplained gifts or new possessions (this could indicate that the child has been approached by, or is involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs and may be at risk of criminal exploitation (see above)

Risk factors which increase the likelihood of involvement in serious violence include:

- Being male
- Having been frequently absent or permanently excluded from setting
- Having experienced child maltreatment
- Having been involved in offending, such as theft or robbery

Staff will be aware of these indicators and risk factors. If a member of staff has a concern about a pupil being involved in, or at risk of, serious violence, they will report this to the DSL.

Missing pupils

Our procedures are designed to ensure that a missing child is reported and found as soon as possible. If a child goes missing, we will follow the procedures outlined in 'Pupils Leaving School Without Permission'.

Private fostering arrangements

A private fostering arrangement occurs when someone other than a parent or a close relative care for a child for a period of 28 days or more, with the agreement of the child's parents. It applies to children under the age of 16 or aged under 18 if the child is disabled. Children looked after by the local authority or who are placed in a residential setting, children's home or hospital are not considered to be privately fostered.

Private fostering occurs in all cultures, including British culture and children may be privately fostered at any age.

By law, a parent, private foster carer or other persons involved in making a private fostering arrangement must notify children's services as soon as possible.

When a member of staff becomes aware that a pupil may be in a private fostering arrangement, they will raise this with the DSL and the setting should notify the local authority of the circumstances.

Appendix C: Useful links

- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 Working together to safeguard children - GOV.UK
- Crime and Policing Act 2026
- Ofsted Framework Ofsted handbooks and frameworks - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- Northumberland Procedures Manual - Local Resources (trixonline.co.uk)
- NCASP Thresholds of Need Document
- NCASP Thresholds of Need Guidance
- Operation Encompass Home : Operation Encompass
- EYFS Framework
- Children and Young People with Mental Health Needs Be You Northumberland
- Attendance Guidance Working together to improve setting attendance - GOV.UK
- Information sharing guidance Information sharing advice for safeguarding practitioners - GOV.UK
- LADO Northumberland Children and Adults Safeguarding Partnership (NCASP) | Northumberland County Council
- Northumberland County Council Children Young People and Families Northumberland County Council - Safeguarding children
- Northumberland Education webpage - Northumberland Education
- Be Connected Padlet - https://padlet.com/nies1/be-connected-lx9us64xc7vv5az7
- Settings Safeguarding Team Mailbox settingssafeguarding@northumberland.gov.uk
- Offensive Weapon and Knife Crime Protocol Offensive Weapon and Knife Carrying Protocol for Northumberland
- Northumberland Family Hub Family Hubs in Northumberland, previously Sure Start Children's Centres
- Northumberland Education Contact Directory Contact Us – Northumberland Education

Appendix D: Setting process for recording concerns

CPOMs Protocol

This addendum to our safeguarding policy is to ensure our record keeping and reporting procedures are **accurate, factual and succinct**. This ensures that we can more effectively ascertain what actions are required with the information shared.

Logging an incident

- ✓ Please only complete on your own name- separate incidents/viewpoints can be merged into one now
- ✓ Where possible use bullet points in the incident box
- ✓ Only select the main category- please don't tick all that apply unless the incident started as one and became another
- ✓ Please ensure you set the date/time of the incident- not when the form was completed
- ✓ Assign - please don't complete this
- ✓ Files- you can attach any photos or evidence
- ✓ Alerts automatically to DSL

If the incident is urgent or a child/adult is in immediate risk of harm, please tell a DSL before completing the CPOMS. Where a disclosure of harm is shared this will also need immediate DSL notification.

Guidelines for wording/phrasing of incident write up

Please note- anything written on CPOMs could be subject to a Freedom of Information request. This means it can be read by pupils, parents, police and wider professionals.

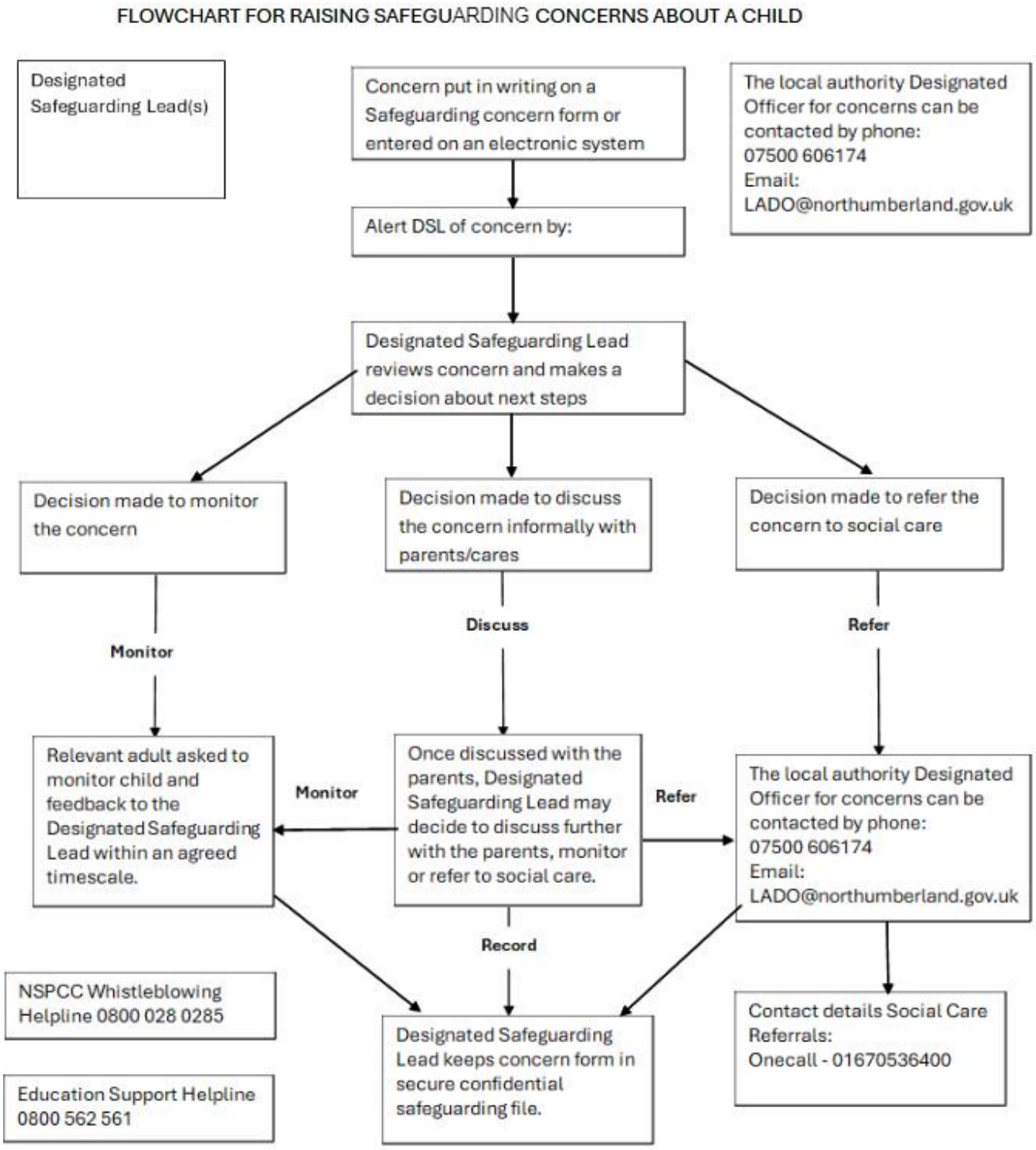
X Opinions X	√ Facts √
Really angry	The pupil shouted, stomped, tipped over
Threatening	The pupil ran/hit/threw/bit
Rude	They said, repeated
Aggressive	They had clenched fists, punched, marked, broke
Abusive	They said “”
As per	HILLCREST SCHOOL has said this on another occasion
We feel that….	The trigger was
The impact is that….	We had to
Typing protocol - please don’t use CAPITALS or !!!! to emphasize frustration or meaning. Ambiguous language- be direct and succinct. Words and phrasing can completely change an incident Physical contact- be specific (how and where) about any physical hold, movement or comfort given	

Reflection-> This is an incredibly important part of recording a behavioural incident but can also be used for challenges at home. Please share in the incident box what you/the team have done to follow up or what you are putting in place to prevent a reoccurrence.

Response-> The DSL’s will review every CPOMs incident. This may just be ‘Acknowledged’ or to clarify further details. Where appropriate an action may be for the DSL’s to meet to discuss what has logged before clarifying what action will be taken. If you are required to respond to an action, then please do so within 48hrs.

All P& I logs on CPOMS will be reviewed by one of our school based P and I trainers (Alison Miller, Kirsty Nicholas, Nicola Dixon) on CCTV and compare with write up and then any further advice/follow up listed. The aim is within 24 hours.

Appendix E: Flowchart for following up concerns



Appendix F: Dealing with allegations against people who work with children

In our setting we recognise the possibility that adults working in any setting may harm children, including governors, volunteers, trainee teachers, supply teachers and agency staff. Any concerns about the conduct of

other adults in the setting; staff, supply teachers, trainee teachers, volunteers or contractors should be taken to the headteacher without delay; any concerns about the headteacher should go to the Chair of Governors.

Concerns may come from various sources, for example, a suspicion; complaint; or disclosure made by a child, parent, or other adult within or outside of the organisation; or because of vetting checks undertaken.

The headteacher/principal must decide whether the concern is an allegation or low-level concern. The term 'low-level' concern does not mean that it is insignificant, it means that the behaviour towards a child does not meet the threshold for referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

Allegations should be reported to the LADO 'without delay'.

LADO's role is not to investigate the allegation, but to ensure that an appropriate investigation is carried out, whether that is by the police, children's social care, the setting or college, or a combination of these.

The setting follows KCSiE Part Four: Safeguarding Concerns or allegations made about staff, including supply teachers, volunteers, contractors when managing any allegations.

Staff should be encouraged and feel confident to self-refer, where, for example, they have found themselves in a situation which could be misinterpreted, might appear compromising to others, and/or on reflection they believe they have behaved in such a way that they consider falls below the expected professional standards.

Low Level Concerns

Low-level concerns should be recorded in writing and shared with the headteacher. Include in your report:

- Name of individual sharing the concerns
- Details of the concern
- Context in which the concern arose
- Action taken

Records should be reviewed by the headteacher so that potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour can be identified.

If a concerning pattern of behaviour is identified and now meets the criteria for a LADO referral, the headteacher will make the referral.

The records' review might identify that there are wider cultural issues within the setting or college that enabled the behaviour to occur. This might mean that policies or processes could be revised, or extra training delivered to minimise the risk of it happening again.

What is a Local Authority Designated Officer or LADO?

The role of LADO was initially set out in the original HM Government guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children 2010 and continues in the current guidance.

The LADO works within Children's Services and should be alerted to all cases in which it is alleged that a person who works with children has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child
- possibly committed a criminal offence against children, or related to a child
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children.

This role applies to paid, unpaid, volunteer, casual, agency and self-employed workers and all adults outside the setting workforce. They capture concerns, allegations, or offences; this can include concerns about their own personal life, e.g., incidents of domestic violence or child protection concerns relating to their own family.

If there is an allegation against the Headteacher then concerns should be reported directly to the Chair of Governors who will contact the LADO.

The LADO is involved from the initial phase of the allegation through to the conclusion of the case. They will provide advice, guidance and help to determine whether the allegation sits within the scope of the procedures. **Settings should seek advice from the LADO as soon as an allegation is made.**

The LADO coordinates information-sharing with the right people and will also monitor and track any investigation, with the aim to resolve it as quickly as possible.

Jonathan Ord

lado@northumberland.gov.uk

Call: 07500 606174

Northumberland Children and Adults Safeguarding Partnership (NCASP) | Northumberland County Council

APPENDIX G: Specific considerations

Work Experience
The setting has detailed procedures to safeguard pupils undertaking work experience, including arrangements for checking people who provide placements and supervise pupils on work experience which are in accordance with the guidance in Keeping Children Safe in Education.

Settings with Sixth Formers
This section should be included when the setting deals with young people who have reached their 18th birthday

If the student is over 18, and is not a danger to themselves, permission must be obtained from the student to share the information they have disclosed with outside agencies.'

We recognise that some procedures are different for those young people and adults over the age of 18 years. Once the student has reached the age of 18, he/she may be classed as a vulnerable adult. The definition of this is in accordance with the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006.

- A person who has reached the age of 18 and
- is in residential accommodation or sheltered housing
- receives domiciliary care or any form of health care

- is detained in lawful custody
- is by virtue of an order of the court under supervision by a person exercising functions for the purposes of part one of the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000
- receives the welfare service of an agency outside the setting
- receives any service or participates in any activity provided specifically for persons who fall within subsection 9 of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2009
- payments are made to him/her (or to another on his/her behalf) in pursuance of arrangements under section 57 of the Health and Social Care Act 2001
- requires assistance in the conduct of his/her own affairs' child (i.e., a pupil at setting who has not yet reached their 18th birthday)

In general, adult safeguarding procedures should be implemented for 18-year-olds and in these situations. Children's Safeguarding should remain equal partners throughout the process so any issues that impact on the service can be addressed. These situations may be complicated by the different procedure's timescales and processes.

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Appendix H: Training recommendations

Keeping Children Safe in Education states:

All staff will receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection (including online safety which, amongst other things, includes an understanding of the expectations, applicable roles and responsibilities in relation to filtering and monitoring) training at induction and **regularly throughout the year.** In addition, all staff will receive safeguarding and child protection updates (for example, via email, e-bulletins, and staff meetings), to continue to provide them with relevant skills and knowledge to safeguard children effectively.

The designated safeguarding lead (and any deputies) will undergo training to provide them with the knowledge and skills required to carry out the role. The designated safeguarding lead (and any deputies) will also undertake Prevent awareness training. Training should provide designated safeguarding leads with a good understanding of their own role, how to identify, understand and respond to specific needs that can increase the vulnerability of children, as well as specific harms that can put children at risk, and the processes, procedures and responsibilities of other agencies, particularly local authority children's social care

NCASP acknowledges that some DSLs may attend training delivered by other providers, however the partnership preference is that new DSLs in Northumberland attend the one-day training delivered by the Settings' Safeguarding Team. If, however, a new DSL has attended training delivered by another provider it is expected that they attend the Referral Process Training (this ensures they have a working knowledge on NCC/NCASP procedures). NCASP require that all DSLs receive their refresher every two years with the Settings Safeguarding Team.

Appendix I:Pupils Leaving School Without Permission protocol

Responding to a Pupil Leaving the School Site Without Permission

STAFF PROCEDURE

KEY PRINCIPLE: Treat the incident as a safeguarding concern. Act promptly, use a child-centred dynamic risk assessment and keep staff and pupils safe.

1. ALERT Person Following Response	**1. ALERT** In-School Response
• Take a mobile phone if possible. • Inform staff of your actions and direction of travel • Follow the pupil at a safe distance if appropriate.	• Staff notify office / SLT / DSL's immediately • Obtain a description of what the pupil is wearing, direction of travel and any other key information. • Obtain information about pupil's emotional presentation, context around them leaving school site

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2. ASSESS Person Following Response	**2. ASSESS** In-School Response
• Observe the pupil's behaviour, presentation and emotional state. • Monitor risks relating to roads, members of the public, weather and location. • Maintain visual contact where possible.	• Assess the level of risk. • Determine whether additional staff support is required.

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3. RESPOND Person Following Response	**3. RESPOND** In-School Response
• Continue to follow at a safe distance if appproiate. • Use calm, non-confrontational communication. • Encourage the pupil to return voluntarily. • Provide regular updates to school if possible. • Return to school if lose sight of pupil.	• Contact parents/carers • Maintain regular communication with the member of staff following. • Coordinate any additional support required. • Monitor duration, distance travelled and escalating risks. • Prepare for escalation if whereabouts become unknown. • If at Manor Walks, share the pupil description with the security team. • Report significant changes in location, behaviour or risk immediately. • Keep SLT / DSL updated throughout. • Consider police involvement where risks escalate or whereabouts become unknown.

5. RECORD
• Keep a clear, timed record throughout.

• Record actions, decisions and reasons, contact attempts, parent/agency communication, police reference number and outcome.
• Complete CPOMS and other required incident records.

6. RETURN & REVIEW
• Prioritise welfare and regulation when the pupil returns.
• Complete a welfare check; update parents, police and agencies.
• Allow regulation time and reflection with a key trusted adult.
• Review and update risk assessment, support plans and communication/regulation strategies.

STAFF MUST NOT
• Put themselves at risk
• Leave other pupils inadequately supervised
• Enter unsafe/private locations
• Pursue in a way that increases risk or distress
• Use physical intervention as a routine response

PHYSICAL INTERVENTION
Use only as a last resort where necessary, reasonable and proportionate to prevent immediate harm, in line with Hillcrest's Physical Intervention Policy and the pupil's plan.

READ ALONGSIDE
Hillcrest Child Protection, Attendance, Behaviour and Physical Intervention policies; individual risk assessments; KCSIE 2026; Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2026; Children Missing Education guidance 2025.

Appendix J: Key contacts

Advice Area	Contact
For advice on making a referral or to make a referral for Children's Social Care or Early Help	**OneCall: 01670 536400**

	Please note you may call to raise/discuss your initial concerns; however they must then be submitted in writing. **If you are submitting a referral, please use the link below** Forms (northumberland.gov.uk)
For further discussion about an open case or advice on the operation of child protection/safeguarding procedures of a specific case	If known, contact the allocated social worker or early help worker or OneCall 01670 536400
Settings Safeguarding Team	Justine Clephane - 07879 874168 justine.clephane@northumberland.gov.uk Vicky Kinneavy - 07966 325300 victoria.kinneavy@northumberland.gov.uk
Allegations against people working with children	Johnathan Ord 07500 606174 Email address - LADO@northumberland.gov.uk
Queries in relation to the model CP policy for settings or related guidance	Justine Clephane - 07879 874168 justine.clephane@northumberland.gov.uk
HR advice for settings	SettingsHR@northumberland.gov.uk
MAPPA – Risk Management re individuals who may pose a risk to children	Kath Burns, Senior Manager Children's Services Kath.burns@northumberland.gov.uk
MARAC - Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference	Sarah Wintringham, Principal Education Welfare Officer sarah.wintringham@northumberland.gov.uk
Attendance, children not in setting and elective home education	Sarah Wintringham sarah.wintringham@northumberland.gov.uk
Cared for Children	Tara Prescott, Virtual Setting Head Teacher Tara.Prescott@northumberland.gov.uk
Early Help	Emma Walker, Early Help Team Manager Emma.Walker@northumberland.gov.uk
CPVA	CPVA Gatekeeper CPVA@northumberland.gov.uk
Monitoring/Quality Assurance re operation of settings safeguarding arrangements	Tara Prescott - Tara.Prescott@northumberland.gov.uk Justine Clephane - justine.clephane@northumberland.gov.uk