



## **Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy**

### **Our Commitment**

At Dorset Pathways, we hold the safeguarding and protection of all children and young people in the highest regard, placing it at the forefront of our operations and considering it a collective responsibility within our organization.

As a dedicated entity, we are resolute in our commitment to creating an environment within Dorset Pathways that is secure, nurturing, and empathetic for those we serve.

This encompasses equipping our staff with the ability to identify signs of distress and abuse, while also ensuring their familiarity with the protocols we have established to address any safeguarding concerns. We acknowledge this as a crucial skill and obligation, given our role as an entrusted organization responsible for the well-being of individuals, working in collaboration with their primary caregivers and other relevant agencies.

### **This Document**

- Defines the role and responsibilities of individuals in the organisation
- Applies to all people who work for and with Dorset Pathways, including our staff, stakeholders, volunteers and contractors
- Supports our aims as an organisation
- Is based on current legislation, government guidance and best practice. These documents are referenced at the end of this policy
- Contains the relevant contact details at the end of this policy

### **Obligations**

At Dorset Pathways, we are firmly committed to upholding the rights of our young people to protection, regardless of factors such as age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, belief, first language, race, culture, health, or disability. Ensuring a safe environment for our young people is paramount and is the shared responsibility of everyone within our organization.

Our primary goal is to cultivate a secure, nurturing, and supportive atmosphere at Dorset Pathways. To this end, we recognize our statutory duty to safeguard young people, and we are dedicated to fulfilling our legal and statutory obligations effectively.



Aligned with this commitment, our policies are meticulously designed and consistently monitored to reflect our dedication to creating an environment where young people both feel and are safe at all times.

This policy is built upon the procedures outlined by the Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership (PDSCP) and national statutory guidance, 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (updated July 2018), and 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (updated September 2022).

'Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families has a role to play. In order to fulfil this responsibility effectively, all practitioners should make sure their approach is child centred. This means that they should consider, always, what is in the best interest of the child.'

'Working Together to Safeguard Children', the HM Government statutory guidance, defines safeguarding as:

- Protecting children from maltreatment.
- Preventing impairment of children's health or development.
- Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best life outcomes.

Moreover, this policy ensures that every staff member at Dorset Pathways is well-informed about the established procedures and necessary actions to safeguard young people and respond appropriately to safeguarding and child protection concerns.

The objectives of this policy are:

Prioritizing child protection and young people's safety within Dorset Pathways.

Enhancing staff awareness and identifying responsibilities in reporting concerns related to young people's social, emotional, physical, or academic well-being (see anti-bullying policy, student behaviour policy, and health and safety policy).

Fostering effective communication among all staff when addressing potential safeguarding or child protection issues, while maintaining confidentiality, respect, and trust.

Clearly outlining the correct procedures for individuals encountering safeguarding or child protection issues and ensuring that all staff members receive up-to-date training.

Ensuring compliance with our statutory obligations to safeguard young people.

Note: For the purpose of this policy, "staff" refers to any member of staff, whether permanent or part-time, paid or unpaid, contracted, visiting, or invited into the Dorset Pathways community in any capacity where they will be in contact with young people.



## **Roles & Responsibilities**

The Directors will operate in accordance with Section 175 / Section 157 of the Education Act 2002 and the accompanying statutory guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (September 2022) to safeguard and promote the well-being of young people at Dorset Pathways.

The Directors bear the responsibility of ensuring that Dorset Pathways fulfils its statutory obligations for safeguarding, with all policies and procedures in place and effective.

According to the Dorset Safeguarding Standard (recommended by the Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership), Directors will receive an annual report from the Designated Safeguarding Lead for monitoring compliance with statutory responsibilities. This report will be reviewed at the Oversight Committee to assess the efficacy of mandatory policies, procedures, and training.

Both the Oversight Committee and Directors will ensure that all individuals involved in provision receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection training, including online training, upon induction. This training will empower them with knowledge to provide strategic input and ensure that safeguarding policies and procedures are effective in supporting a robust approach to safeguarding. Their training will be regularly updated.

The Oversight Committee and Directors are conscious of their obligations under the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010 (including the Public Sector Equality Duty), and local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

The Dorset Standards also necessitate that schools and colleges submit an annual audit of their safeguarding and child protection arrangements, along with an action plan, to the Safeguarding Children Board. Our most recent Safeguarding Audit was completed in July 2023.

All adults at Dorset Pathways hold the duty to safeguard and promote young people's welfare by taking appropriate action, particularly in cases involving child protection concerns.

The Directors are accountable for maintaining an effective Safeguarding Policy at Dorset Pathways, reviewed at least annually and accessible to the public on our website.

Designated Safeguarding Leads and deputy DSLs, along with other key staff members, must complete accredited training every two years. All staff, regardless of their role, will receive basic training upon appointment and subsequently online or in-house training within a 12-month period. Additionally, annual updates will be provided to keep all staff members current on the latest information and guidance.



Staff members are obliged to immediately report any concerns regarding the health, safety, or well-being of a young person at Dorset Pathways to the DSLs. These concerns may be either firsthand or second hand. While the initial concern may be reported in person or by phone, it must be provided to the DSL in written form. A determination will then be made regarding the most suitable course of action. Further details on the procedures can be found on page 8.

Everyone is expected to adhere to the guidelines outlined in this policy and the Code of Behaviour issued to all staff, especially in cases where a young person discloses abuse. Abuse can manifest as sexual, emotional, physical, or discriminatory actions. It can also be linked to neglect or cultural, faith, and belief factors. Even in the absence of a disclosure, staff should recognize the signs and symptoms and refer any concerns to the DSL to establish a suitable course of action. Any staff member is authorized to make a referral directly to children's social care.

It is crucial to remember that DPA and UK GDPR do not prohibit information sharing for the purpose of safeguarding children and promoting their welfare. In cases of uncertainty about sharing information, staff members should consult with the designated safeguarding lead or a deputy. Concerns about sharing information should not impede the imperative of safeguarding and promoting children's welfare.

## **Forms of Abuse**

### **Recognising child abuse – signs and symptoms**

Ensuring Child Safety within Educational Settings (September 2022)

It is crucial for all members of the Dorset Pathways community to possess an understanding of indicators associated with abuse and neglect. This awareness equips them to identify instances where children might require assistance or protection.

Recognizing child abuse isn't always straightforward, and it's important to clarify that determining whether child abuse has definitively occurred or if a child is at significant risk is not the responsibility of Dorset Pathways staff. Nonetheless, all staff members have an unequivocal duty to take action when they hold concerns about a child's welfare or safety, or when a child discloses instances of abuse. A guiding principle should be to maintain an outlook that acknowledges the possibility of such events occurring within our environment while consistently prioritizing the best interests of the young person.

KCSIE (Keeping Children Safe in Education) emphasizes the urgency of promptly reporting cases where a child is presently experiencing, or is likely to face, harm. This entails making immediate referrals to local authority children's social care, and if deemed appropriate, involving the police.



It's important to acknowledge that emotional abuse is a facet present across all forms of abuse, and safeguarding concerns seldom exist in isolation, defying single definitions or labels. Numerous children and young people may be subjected to various forms of abuse simultaneously, often with overlaps between multiple issues.

Abuse entails maltreatment of a child, encompassing the infliction of harm or the failure to prevent harm. Harm isn't solely confined to physical mistreatment; it extends to the repercussions of witnessing ill treatment, such as in cases of domestic abuse. Abuse can manifest within family, institutional, or community settings, involving individuals known to the child, and, albeit less frequently, by strangers. The realm of abuse also extends to online spaces, where technology may facilitate offline harm. Perpetrators can be adults, children, or a combination of both, leading to child-on-child abuse.

Child on child abuse takes diverse forms, including but not limited to bullying (including cyberbullying), sexual violence, sexual harassment, and physical abuse. This encompasses actions such as hitting, kicking, biting, and other forms of physical harm. Initiation activities that escalate into bullying or criminal behaviour are also categorized within this context. Notably, criminal offenses like up-skirting—invoking the unauthorized capture of intimate images—are unequivocally condemned. All forms of abuse, regardless of context, should be treated seriously and not trivialized as "banter," humour, or a natural part of growing up.

Sexting represents another dimension of child-on-child abuse, involving the exchange of indecent or sexually explicit images or videos among children under 18. Our response to sexting incidents is guided by UKCCIS recommendations.

While recognizing that child on child abuse often exhibits gender-specific patterns, where girls are more frequently victims and boys tend to be perpetrators, it's crucial to underscore that all forms of child-to-child abuse are unacceptable and will be treated seriously within Dorset Pathways.

All staff members, particularly the designated safeguarding lead and their deputies, must contemplate the potential for abuse or exploitation beyond familial contexts. Extra-familial risks manifest in various forms, encompassing sexual abuse, domestic abuse within intimate teenage relationships, criminal exploitation, serious youth violence, involvement in county lines networks, and susceptibility to radicalization.

Children might encounter or be drawn into relationships with individuals associated with criminal networks and gangs engaged in serious violent crime. Indicators mirroring those of child sexual exploitation, along with signs of increased absence, missing episodes, and unexplained injuries, may signal such involvement.



Domestic abuse spans a broad spectrum of behaviours, spanning psychological, physical, sexual, financial, and emotional dimensions. Children can be victims of domestic abuse, experiencing its effects within their own homes or intimate relationships. These experiences can significantly impact their health, well-being, development, and capacity to learn.

Examples of possible indicators of each of the kinds of abuse. The list below is not exhaustive:

### **Physical Abuse**

#### **Abusive Action**

Hitting. Slapping. Pushing. Kicking. Poisoning. Drowning. Suffocating. Burning / Scalding. Misuse of medication. Restraint. Inappropriate sanctions.

#### **Signs & Symptoms**

Series of unexplained falls, major injuries or pain. Injuries/bruises at different stages of healing. Bruising in unusual sites e.g. inner arms, thighs, ears, hands. Abrasions. Teeth indentations. Injuries to head or face. Young person very passive.

### **Sexual Abuse**

#### **Abusive Action**

Including rape and sexual assault or sexual contact and acts to which the student has not consented, or could not consent, or was pressured into consenting. It may also include non-contact activities involving children in looking at or the production of sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging sexual behaviour or grooming( including via the internet). Perpetrators can be both adults and children. Victims may be any age or gender.

#### **Signs & Symptoms**

Change in behaviour. Overt sexual behaviour or language. Difficulty in walking, sitting or stomach pain. Pain/itching or injuries to genital and/or anal area. Fear and nightmares / bed wetting. Change in eating patterns.

### **Neglect**

#### **Abusive Action**

Includes acts of omission. Ignoring physical or medical care needs. Failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services. Withholding necessities of life e.g. nutrition, heating, medications.

#### **Signs & Symptoms**

Absence of food, heat, hygiene, clothing, comfort. Preventing students from having access to services. Isolation. Absence of prescribed medication. Complaining of being tired all the time.



## **Emotional Abuse**

### **Abusive Action**

Threats of harm or abandonment. Deprivation of contact. Humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks. Age or developmentally inappropriate expectations or overprotection. Seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another. Bullying including cyberbullying.

### **Signs & Symptoms**

Failure to thrive, self-harm, withdrawal, depression. Cowering and fearfulness. Change in/disturbed sleep patterns. Agitation, confusion, change in behaviour. Change in appetite/weight.

Examples of possible indicators of each of the kinds of abuse. The list below is not exhaustive:

## **Discriminatory**

### **Abusive Action**

Racist, sexist, or that based on a young person's disability. Other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment.

### **Signs & Symptoms**

Low self esteem, withdrawal, depression, fear, anger.

## **Linked to Culture, Faith or Belief**

### **Abusive Action**

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). Forced Marriage. So-called 'honour based violence.' Radicalisation and extremism

### **Signs & Symptoms**

Change in behaviour, withdrawal, prolonged absence from school, planned long holidays, unreasonable restrictions and controls. Talk of a "special procedure or celebration". Vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values. Expression of extreme views, and lack of respect to others or tolerance to diversity. Obsessive and extended secretive use of the internet.

## **Child Sexual Exploitation**

### **Abusive Action**

Exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people receive something e.g. alcohol, affection, gifts, money as a result of performance of sexual acts. This can occur through technology e.g. by posting sexual images on the Internet / mobile phone. Grooming methods may lead students not to recognise they are being abused but consider they are acting voluntarily/"in a relationship".



## **Signs & Symptoms**

Change in behaviour, friendship groups, social activities. Sudden increase in wealth and possessions.

## **Online Safety**

Exploring Online Safety: A Comprehensive Overview

The realm of online safety encompasses a wide array of concerns, which can be conveniently classified into three distinct areas of risk:

### **Content Exposure:**

This pertains to the potential exposure to illicit, inappropriate, or harmful materials online.

**Contact Hazards:** This refers to the risk of encountering harmful interactions with other users in the online sphere.

### **Conduct Consequences:**

Personal online conduct that escalates the likelihood of, or leads to, harm.

In addition, there are potential risks tied to Commerce, including online gambling, unsuitable advertising, phishing attempts, and financial scams (Page 35, Keeping Children Safe in Education - KCSIE 2022).

Should there be a concern regarding the safety of a child, young person, or staff member, it is advised to report it to the Anti-Phishing Working Group via their website: <https://apwg.org/>.

Dorset Pathways acknowledges that mobile phones and computers are commonly utilized by children and young people for purposes such as entertainment, communication, and education. However, the organization recognizes the potential for misuse of these technologies by certain adults and young individuals, which could be detrimental to the well-being of children and young people. The harm may encompass various forms, ranging from hurtful or abusive communication to enticing children into sexually harmful conversations, behaviours, webcam activities, or face-to-face meetings. Instances of cyberbullying via electronic communication will be treated with the same gravity as any other form of bullying, and proper procedures will be followed. Access to chatrooms and social networking sites is prohibited within school premises due to their association with inappropriate content and behaviour. Although some students may engage in online interactions outside of school, Dorset Pathways encourages parents to take steps to ensure their children's safety while using social media.

An online agreement is established between Dorset Pathways, the child or young person, and their parent or caregiver to outline the guidelines and expectations.





Regular monitoring of browser history is conducted on a weekly basis to ensure that children and young people are not accessing unauthorized content unrelated to their educational needs.

To ensure your safety while using the internet, consider Childline's Top 5 tips for online safety:

Mindful Sharing: Be cautious about sharing personal information online. Once posted, content may become uncontrollable. If you wouldn't want your parents or teachers to see it, avoid posting it.

Stranger Awareness: Avoid meeting individuals you've only interacted with online. Even if you feel a connection, the true identity of online acquaintances may remain unknown.

Strong Passwords: Opt for complex passwords that are difficult for others to guess. Changing your password regularly is a wise practice.

Privacy Check: Regularly review your privacy settings to determine who can access your posts. Be aware of whether your accounts are public or private.

Open Communication: If you encounter distressing or unsettling content online, discuss your concerns with a trusted adult.

By adhering to these guidelines and fostering open communication, we can collectively promote a safer online environment for all.

Other helpful resources:

- [Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre](#) – Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre delivers a multi-agency service dedicated to tackling the exploitation of children
- [Childnet](#) – Childnet International's mission is to work in partnership with others around the world to help make the Internet a great and safe place for children.
- [CEOP thinkuknow](#) – Find the latest information on the sites you like to visit, mobiles and new technology. Find out what's good, what's not and what you can do about it.
- [Zipit App](#) – Zipit is a free app for you which is designed to provide you with witty images to send in response to a request for explicit images, and advice on how to stay safe – for Android, Apple and BlackBerry smartphones (and iPod touch).
- [NSPCC Online Safety](#) – The NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) provides E-Safety advice and support in a digital world.

Above referenced from the Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership.

**Promoting Safety and Well-being:**

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## **Our Approach and Procedures**

Within the realm of safeguarding, we address a range of concerns to ensure the health, safety, and well-being of young individuals both within and outside Dorset Pathways. Any apprehensions about a young person's welfare should be promptly reported to the designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) or deputy DSLs, whether such concerns are first-hand or second-hand. Subsequently, an appropriate course of action will be determined.

Staff members should recognize that children might not always be prepared or able to express that they are experiencing abuse, exploitation, or neglect. There can be obstacles such as embarrassment, threats, vulnerability, disabilities, sexual orientation, or language barriers that hinder them from disclosing harmful experiences. Nonetheless, these factors should not dissuade staff from exercising professional curiosity and discussing any concerns they have about a child with the DSL. It is vital for staff to establish trustworthy relationships with children and young people that foster open communication.

In the event of a disclosure, staff should:

- Treat the child's words seriously and respond calmly, avoiding interruptions.
- Reassure the child that they are not at fault; they are victims, not culprits.
- Communicate what steps will be taken next as soon as possible, avoiding promises of confidentiality that could hinder disclosure.
- Be precise while minimizing leading questions, ensuring accurate information is conveyed without bias.
- Follow the TED approach: Tell, Explain, Describe.
- Record the conversation as accurately as feasible, using the child's language, and document it promptly.
- Share the information immediately with the DSL, either in person or through designated mobile numbers.

Should concerns arise regarding the safety and well-being of a young person, or if there is a complaint, concern, or allegation involving an adult or oneself, follow these steps:

- Notify the DSL without delay.
- Carefully document what was witnessed, heard, or reported.
- Share the notes with the DSL, signing and dating them.
- Seek guidance from the DSL to mitigate or eliminate potential risks to young people's well-being.

If a young person faces immediate and significant harm, involve the DSL or a senior staff member to contact the police or social services for swift referral.



Every individual has the right to confidentially report concerns about another, free from harassment. Please refer to the Whistle Blowing Policy for detailed information. A concise summary of this guidance is presented to all staff members within the Code of Behaviour.

Our actions related to child protection adhere to procedures delineated in documents from the Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership.

Additionally, if a teacher or educational staff member suspects or becomes aware that female genital mutilation (FGM) is being carried out or is in danger of being performed on a girl under 18, they are obliged to report this to the police as a mandatory duty.

### **Addressing Child on Child Abuse**

Dorset Pathways is committed to minimizing risk by:

Training staff to recognize, prevent, identify, and respond to peer-on-peer abuse.

Educating young people about the nature of peer-on-peer abuse through open dialogue in citizenship, e-safety lessons, and the broader curriculum.

Ensuring all instances of peer-on-peer abuse are communicated to the DSL to detect potential patterns.

Cultivating an environment where young people feel safe sharing concerns without judgment and are assured of prompt and appropriate responses.

Allegations, whether involving staff or peers, will be recorded, investigated, and managed in accordance with the same safeguarding protocols. In cases of peer-on-peer sexual violence, a DSL-conducted risk assessment will encompass the victim, alleged perpetrator, other children, and if relevant, any adults requiring protection.

We acknowledge the necessity of support for victims, those alleged of wrongdoing, and any other affected young individuals. Collaboration with local services and agencies guides our processes to ensure all needs are met.

### **Addressing Missing Children & Young People**

Children who are absent from education may face heightened risks, making their identification and reintegration into educational settings crucial. Potential reasons for absence include failure to begin suitable education, illegal exclusion, transitions between schools, highly mobile families, mental health challenges, and vulnerability to various forms of abuse. Children missing education are at greater risk of exploitation, and efforts are undertaken to locate and support them. For children from Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller (GRT) families, special attention is given to prevent disengagement and disruption in their education due to frequent mobility.



## **Addressing Allegations and Concerns**

Allegations of abuse or safety concerns against staff members prompt immediate communication with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and police. Concerns about staff members, including volunteers or contractors, that do not meet harm thresholds should be shared following the Low-level Concerns Policy.

For allegations involving community members, the Children's Advice and Duty Service (ChAD) can be contacted. Cases of suspected radicalization and extremism can be reported to the Dorset Prevent Team. All referrals are documented and securely stored, with ongoing support and guidance offered to the young person throughout the process. Dorset Pathways collaborates with external agencies and attends relevant meetings to ensure best practices.

## **Ensuring Ongoing Effectiveness**

The efficacy of our safeguarding policy is continually monitored and evaluated through:

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation, including feedback from young people, professionals, parents, and staff, along with incident reports to the DSL.

Strategic monitoring and evaluation, involving formal case reviews and Dorset Safeguarding Annual Audit assessments.

By embracing these procedures, we are dedicated to safeguarding the well-being of our young individuals and creating a secure learning environment.

## **Lockdown**

As part of our Safeguarding Dorset Pathways has a Lockdown Policy. On very rare occasions, it may be necessary to seal off the provision so that it cannot be entered from the outside. This will ensure that children and young people, staff and visitors are safe in situations where there is a hazard on site or outside our site in the near vicinity. A lock down is implemented when there are serious security risks on the premises due to for example, nearby chemical spillage, proximity of dangerous dogs, serious weather conditions or attempted access by unauthorised person's intent on causing harm or damage.

## **Contact Details**

### **DSLs**

Mr Rob Halfhide: 07813283956 | [rob.halfhide@dorsetpathways.co.uk](mailto:rob.halfhide@dorsetpathways.co.uk)

### **Deputy DSLs**



Mrs Maryanne Halfhide: 07891825179 [maryanne.halfhide@dorsetpathways.org](mailto:maryanne.halfhide@dorsetpathways.org)

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole –

Children’s First Response Hub - 01202 735046 [childrensfirstresponse@bcpcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:childrensfirstresponse@bcpcouncil.gov.uk)

Early Help – 01202 123334 [childrensfirstresponse@bcpcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:childrensfirstresponse@bcpcouncil.gov.uk)

Dorset County Council –

Children’s Advice and Duty Service (ChAD) Professionals 01305 228558

Early Help 01305 228558 [earlyhelphub@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:earlyhelphub@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk)

Dorset Families and Members of the Public - 01202228866

**In an emergency or out of hours contact:**

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole - Out of hours contact - 01202 738256

[childrensOOHS@bcpcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:childrensOOHS@bcpcouncil.gov.uk)

Dorset - Out of hours service - 01305 228558

Police Non-Emergency - 101

Police Emergency - 999

**Referenced Documents and Links**

[Working Together to Safeguard Children](#) updated July 2018

[Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) updated September 2022

[Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership’s \(PDSCR\) Procedures](#)

[UK Council for Child Internet Safety \(UKCCIS\), Sexting in Schools and Colleges: Responding to Incidents and Safeguarding Young People](#)

Authored by Directors

Last reviewed: August 2023

Next review: August 2024