

Valley Youth Hub CIC (VYH)

Safeguarding Policy

1. SAFEGUARDING POLICY STATEMENT

1.1 The Purpose of this Safeguarding Policy Statement

“Everyone who works with children has a responsibility for keeping them safe. No single practitioner can have a full picture of a child’s needs and circumstances and, if children and families are to receive the right help at the right time, everyone who comes into contact with them has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action.” Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2018

VYH works primarily in the Gleadless Valley area of Sheffield, offering free play opportunities for children in recognition that play is crucial for the well being of children and their wider communities.

The purpose of this policy statement is:

- to protect children and young people who take part in VYH’s services.
- to provide parents, staff and volunteers with the overarching principles that guide our approach to safeguarding, supporting and promoting children’s welfare.

This policy applies to everyone who works or volunteers for VYH in any capacity and in any setting – all Directors, staff (employed, self-employed, full time, part time, casual, subcontractors) and volunteers. This policy applies to all children and young people aged 0 to 16 (or up to 25 for young people with special educational needs, disabilities or leaving care).

VYH’s core age range for open access play and youth services is for children and young people aged 6 to 16 and (or aged up to 25 for young people with special educational needs, disabilities or leaving care, who must be accompanied and supervised by a parent at all times).

We also welcome younger children, who must be accompanied and supervised by a parent at all times. Older young people may participate as volunteers at the agreement of VYH Directors.

2. The Legal Framework

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of legislation, policy and guidance that seeks to protect children in England. This includes:

- the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, including the child’s rights to play, health and well-being and the right to protection from all forms of violence, abuse, maltreatment or neglect.

- The Children Acts 1989 and 2004 and Working together 2018 and 2023 provide the legal framework for the care and protection of children and young people, and also for open access play provision, in England.

Other relevant legislation includes:

General Data Protection Regulations 2018

Children and Social Work Act 2017

Children and Families Act 2014

SEND Code of practice: 0-25 years 2014

Protection of Freedoms Act 2012

Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

Sexual Offences Act 2003

Human Rights Act 1998

Key Guidance includes:

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 and 2023

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

What to do if you're worried a child is being abused: advice for practitioners, Department for Education, 2015, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/what-to-do-if-youre-worried-a-child-is-being-abused--2>

Mandatory reporting of female genital mutilation (FGM), Home Office, 2015, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mandatory-reporting-of-female-genital-mutilation-procedural-information>

The Ofsted Early Years Registration Handbook and the National Occupational Standards in Playwork (including The Playwork Principles), which provide guidance on open access play provision and staff to child ratios.

Information Sharing: Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers, Department for Education, 2015.

Strategies for dealing with Safeguarding issues in Charities, 2017, the Charity Commission
Safeguarding for Trustees, the Safe Network

More information on the key legislation and guidance is available from nspcc.org.uk/child-protection.

3. Our Aims and Beliefs

A child-centred approach to promoting welfare

We aim to:

- deliver high quality play services that are responsive to children and young people's needs, wishes and feelings, through our playwork practice, supported by our staff training programme and through implementation of our policies and procedures.
- have a child-centred approach, with the needs and wishes of each child and young person central to what we do in both our playwork and our safeguarding practice.
- support a culture of listening to children, observing, respecting and responding sensitively and swiftly.

We believe that:

- the welfare of the child/young person is paramount
- a child or young person should never experience abuse or neglect of any kind – it is always unacceptable, without exception

We recognise that:

- all children and young people, regardless of age, ability, gender identity, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity have the right to play and the right to protection from all types of harm and abuse
- some groups of children may be more vulnerable to harm or exploitation because of ability, refugee status, looked after status, poverty and other social factors
- we have a responsibility – directors, staff and volunteers – to promote and safeguard the welfare of all children and young people by a commitment to practice that aims to keep children and young people safe from harm
- we have a responsibility to work closely in partnership with children, young people, parents, carers and our partner agencies to promote children and young people's welfare – respecting confidentiality but sharing information on a need to know basis.

Our partner agencies include (but are not limited to) Sheffield City Council Children's Services, the Police and other children and young people's services in Sheffield and England.

Our Designated Safeguarding Lead is Emma Merrick (emma@vallyyouthorganisation.org)

We will seek to keep children and young people safe from harm by:

- valuing, listening to and respecting children and young people
- appointing a Designated Safeguarding Lead
- developing safeguarding policies and procedures which reflect best practice
- using our safeguarding procedures to share concerns and relevant information with agencies who need to know, and involving children, young people, parents, families and carers appropriately, and maintaining a good working relationship with agencies charged with investigative responsibilities
- creating and maintaining an anti-bullying environment and ensuring that we have a Behaviour policy and procedure to help us deal effectively with any bullying that does arise
- developing and implementing an effective online safety policy and related procedures

- sharing information about child protection and safeguarding best practice with children, their families, staff and volunteers via leaflets, posters, group work and one-to-one discussions
- recruiting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made
- providing effective management for staff and volunteers through induction, supervision, support, clear lines of reporting, policies and procedures, quality assurance and training for staff, volunteers and Directors
- implementing a code of conduct for staff and volunteers using our procedures to manage any allegations against staff and volunteers appropriately
- ensuring that we have effective complaints and whistleblowing measures in place
- ensuring that we provide a safe physical environment for our children, young people, staff and volunteers, by applying health and safety measures in accordance with the law and regulatory guidance.
- recording and storing information professionally and securely.

This Safeguarding Policy details the following Procedures:

- Procedures for responding to concerns about a child or young person's wellbeing
- Dealing with allegations of abuse against a child or young person
- Role of the designated safeguarding officer
- Managing allegations against staff and volunteers
- Child protection records retention and storage policy

This Policy should also be read in conjunction with our:

Safer recruitment policy and procedures

Code of conduct for staff and volunteers

Behaviour Policy and Anti-bullying Policy

Online safety policy and procedures for responding to concerns about online abuse

Photography and image sharing guidance

Whistleblowing policy

Health & Safety Policy and Procedures

Privacy Policy (including GDPR)

SAFEGUARDING PROCEDURES

What is safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children?

Safeguarding concerns relate both to children at risk of abuse or neglect and to children who are at risk of not being able to thrive and meet positive outcomes in their lives.

Safeguarding and the promotion of children's welfare is defined in Working Together 2018 as:

- protecting children from maltreatment;
- preventing impairment of children's health or development;

- ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and
 - taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.
- (Source: Working Together, 2018)

Child protection is part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. This refers to the activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm.

What Children have said that they need

All practitioners should take note of what children want from the adults around them. This includes:

- vigilance: to have adults notice when things are troubling them
 - understanding and action: to understand what is happening; to be heard and understood; and to have that understanding acted upon
 - stability: to be able to develop an ongoing stable relationship of trust with those helping them
 - respect: to be treated with the expectation that they are competent rather than not
 - information and engagement: to be informed about and involved in procedures, decisions, concerns and plans
 - explanation: to be informed of the outcome of assessments and decisions and reasons when their views have not met with a positive response
 - support: to be provided with support in their own right as well as a member of their family
 - advocacy: to be provided with advocacy to assist them in putting forward their views
 - protection: to be protected against all forms of abuse and discrimination and the right to special protection and help if a refugee
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Definitions of abuse and neglect

Children may be vulnerable to neglect and abuse or exploitation from within their family and from individuals they come across in their day-to-day lives. These threats can take a variety of different forms, including: sexual, physical and emotional abuse; neglect; exploitation by criminal gangs and organised crime groups; trafficking; online abuse; sexual exploitation and the influences of extremism leading to radicalisation.

The definitions of abuse and neglect that follow are taken from Working Together 2018.

Abuse

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. 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 another child or children.

Physical Abuse

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

Emotional Abuse

The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person.

It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on 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 participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Sexual Abuse

Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. 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.

Neglect

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

pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- a. provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- b. protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- c. ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers)
- d. ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment

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

Other forms of abuse that should be dealt with immediately as a Safeguarding issue using this policy include:

Bullying and cyberbullying:

Bullying can happen anywhere – at school, at home or online. It's usually repeated over a long period of time and can hurt a child both physically and emotionally. It includes verbal abuse, such as name calling, non-verbal abuse, such as hand signs or glaring, emotional abuse, such as threatening, intimidating or humiliating someone, exclusion, such as ignoring or isolating someone, undermining, by constant criticism or spreading rumours, controlling or manipulating someone, racial, sexual or homophobic bullying, physical assaults, such as hitting and pushing, making silent, hoax or abusive calls.

Cyberbullying includes: sending threatening or abusive text messages, creating and sharing embarrassing images or videos, 'trolling' - sending menacing or upsetting messages on social networks, chat rooms or online games, excluding children from online games, activities or friendship groups, setting up hate sites or groups about a particular child, encouraging young people to self-harm, voting for or against someone in an abusive poll, creating fake accounts, hijacking or stealing online identities to embarrass a young person or cause trouble using their Name.

More information on preventing and responding to Bullying can be found in our [Children's Behaviour Policy](#) and our [Anti-Bullying Policy](#).

Child Criminal Exploitation: Where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into any criminal activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or (c) through violence or the threat of violence. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child criminal exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

Child trafficking: is a type of abuse where children are recruited, moved or transported and then exploited, forced to work or sold.

County Lines: a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas within the UK, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of 'deal line'. They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store the drugs and money, and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons.

Domestic Abuse: Witnessing domestic abuse is child abuse, and teenagers can suffer domestic abuse in their relationships. Domestic abuse includes domestic violence and also damaging behaviours such as coercive control and financial control, when one person restricts and controls another's activities, sometimes isolating them from friends and family.

Online Abuse: Online abuse is any type of abuse that happens on the internet. It can happen across any device that's connected to the web, like computers, tablets and mobile phones. And it can happen anywhere online, including: social media, text messages and messaging apps, emails, online chats, online gaming, live-streaming sites. It includes: cyberbullying, emotional abuse, grooming, sexting, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation. More information on dealing with online abuse can be found in our **Bullying and Cyber-Bullying Policy**.

Child Sexual Exploitation: Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

Female genital mutilation (FGM): is the partial or total removal of external female genitalia for non-medical reasons.

Grooming: Children and young people can be groomed online or in the real world, by a stranger or by someone they know - for example a family member, friend or professional.

Harmful sexual behaviour: Children and young people who develop harmful sexual behaviour harm themselves and others.

Further information about forms of abuse and neglect are available from the NSPCC website, www.nspcc.org.uk.

Recognising signs of abuse in children and young people

All VYH staff and volunteers need to be vigilant to possible indicators of abuse and neglect. If you're worried that a child is being abused, watch out for any unusual behaviour. Our experience as Playwork Practitioners is that sometimes the first indicators that a child or young person is experiencing abuse or neglect can be seen in their play. Indicators of abuse include, but are not limited to, those listed below.

Signs that a child or young person is at risk that are sometimes seen in Play and Youth settings:

- Extremely challenging behaviour (where the child replicates abusive or violent behaviour through their play, eg in role play, fantasy play or socio-dramatic play. This can be an indicator that the child has been on the receiving end of this behaviour themselves.
- Difficulties interacting with other children/staff or responding to play cues, where the child persistently misreads or responds in a negative way to other children, eg persistently destroying or disrupting other children's play. This can be indicative of low resilience linked with emotional abuse.
- Excessive risk taking behaviours in play, eg we would have concerns where the child is either unable to make reasonable judgements about risk for themselves or engages in extreme levels of risk taking that could be a cry for help or an attempt at self-harm
- Play behaviours that are inconsistent with the age range of the child, eg younger children exhibiting adolescent behaviours
- Attempting to bring drugs, alcohol or weapons onsite (please remove these from the child and report immediately)
- Aggressive, evasive or inappropriate behaviour by parents when they are dropping off or collecting, either towards children or towards our staff, eg shouting, humiliating, violence, threats, being under the influence of drugs or alcohol, very sexualised clothing, failing to respond or engage about concerns about the child's welfare
- Disclosures from children and young people, eg that they are experiencing abuse or neglect, expressing anxiety about bullying, things that are happening online, or that they or their friends are becoming involved in exploitation or gang involvement.
- Disclosures from parents, eg that they are experiencing domestic violence, mental health problems, drug or alcohol problems, that they have concerns about their child or that our staff are unable to contact parents or get them to respond to concerns in a timely way

Please be aware that in some cases we may be the only professionals who are in regular contact with a child or family, eg particularly in the case where a child is being home schooled or is out of school due to moving home or exclusion. In these cases it is even more important to be alert and to report any concerns about the child's safety and wellbeing.

NSPCC has excellent guidance on its website on recognising signs of abuse on its website at: <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/media/1188/definitions-signs-child-abuse.pdf>. VYH recommends that all playworkers read this briefing, that is summarised here:

General signs of Abuse

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

Signs of Physical Abuse

- bruises on the cheeks, ears, palms, arms and feet
- bruises on the back, buttocks, tummy, hips and backs of legs
- multiple bruises in clusters, usually on the upper arms or outer thighs
- bruising which looks like it has been caused by fingers, a hand or an object, like a belt or shoe
- large oval-shaped bite marks
- any burns which have a clear shape of an object, for example cigarette burns
- burns to the backs of hands, feet, legs, genitals or buttocks
- multiple injuries, unexplained or frequent injuries

Signs of Neglect

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

Signs of Sexual Abuse

- Showing sexual behaviour that is inappropriate for their age
- anal or vaginal soreness or itching
- bruising or bleeding near the genital area

- discomfort when walking or sitting down
- an unusual discharge
- sexually transmitted infections (STI)
- pregnancy
- using sexual language or know things about sex that you wouldn't expect them to
- becoming sexually active at a young age

Signs of Sexual Exploitation

- go missing from home, care or education
- being involved in abusive relationships, appearing intimidated and fearful of certain people or situations
- hanging out with groups of older people, or anti-social groups, or with other vulnerable peers
- getting involved in gangs, gang fights, gang membership
- having older boyfriends or girlfriends
- spending time at places of concern, such as hotels or known brothels
- not knowing where they are, because they have been moved around the country
- being involved in petty crime such as shoplifting
- having access to drugs and alcohol
- having new things such as clothes and mobile phones which they can't or won't explain •
- having unexplained physical injuries.

Harmful Sexual Behaviour

- using sexually explicit words and phrases
- inappropriate touching
- using sexual violence or threats
- full penetrative sex with other children or adults

Signs of Emotional Abuse

- being overly-affectionate towards strangers or people they haven't known for very long
- not appearing to have a close relationship with their parent, for example when being taken to or collected from play scheme
- lacking confidence or becoming wary or anxious
- being unable to play
- being aggressive or nasty towards other children and animals
- using language, act in a way or know about things that you wouldn't expect for their age
- struggling to control strong emotions or have extreme outbursts
- seeming isolated from their parents
- lacking social skills or have few, if any, friends
- fearing making mistakes
- fearing their parent being approached regarding their behaviour
- self-harming, depression and mental health issues.

Signs of Domestic Abuse

- becoming aggressive
- displaying anti-social behaviour
- suffering from depression or anxiety
- struggling at school.

Signs of Bullying and Cyberbullying

- belongings getting 'lost' or damaged
- physical injuries such as unexplained bruises
- being afraid to go to school, being mysteriously 'ill' each morning, or skipping school
- not doing as well at school
- asking for, or stealing, money (to give to a bully)
- being nervous, losing confidence or becoming distressed and withdrawn
- problems with eating or sleeping
- bullying others.

Signs of Child Trafficking

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

Signs of Female Genital Mutilation

- a long holiday abroad or going 'home' to visit family
- relative or cutter visiting from abroad
- a special occasion or ceremony to 'become a woman' or get ready for marriage
- female relative being cut; a sister, cousin or an older female relative such as a mother or aunt
- missing school repeatedly or running away from home
- having difficulty walking, standing or sitting
- spending longer in the bathroom or toilet
- appearing withdrawn, anxious or depressed
- having unusual behaviour after an absence from school or college
- being particularly reluctant to undergo normal medical examinations

- asking for help, but may not be explicit about the problem due to embarrassment or fear.

Whilst these signs do not necessarily mean that a child is being abused, they probably indicate that the child or family is having some problems which should be investigated.

Further information about signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect are available on the NSPCC website.

Be Alert

Practitioners should, in particular, be alert to the potential need for early help for a child who:

- is disabled and has specific additional needs
 - has special educational needs
 - is a young carer
 - is showing signs of being drawn into anti-social or criminal behaviour, including gang involvement and association with organised crime groups
 - is frequently missing/goes missing from care or from home
 - is at risk of modern slavery, trafficking or exploitation
 - is at risk of being radicalised or exploited
 - is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as drug and alcohol misuse, adult mental health issues and domestic abuse
 - is misusing drugs or alcohol themselves
 - has returned home to their family from care
 - is a privately fostered child
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Roles and Responsibilities

VYH's policy and procedures are available to all staff, students, volunteers and the public.

All VYH staff, directors and volunteers have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and adults.

VYH does not have statutory duties or powers under the Children's Act to carry out investigations into suspicions or allegations of abuse – our role is to identify and report any concerns about the children and young people that we work with.

All staff and volunteers at VYH have a duty to report concerns so that the agencies powered with investigative responsibility can do so.

All staff, directors and volunteers should:

- Be familiar with and follow VYH's policy and procedures for safeguarding the welfare of children
- Know who to contact to express concerns about a child's or adult's welfare
- Remember that an allegation of child abuse or neglect may lead to a criminal investigation and therefore practitioners should not do anything that may jeopardise a police investigation, such as asking leading questions or attempting to investigate the allegations of abuse
- Attend training that raises awareness of safeguarding issues and equips them with the skills and knowledge needed

VYH's Director Emma Merrick is the Designated Safeguarding Lead with overall responsibility for safeguarding and child protection.

The role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead is to:

- Make sure all staff are aware how to raise safeguarding concerns
 - Ensure all staff understand the symptoms of child abuse and neglect
 - Oversee referrals of any concerns to social care (or the appropriate agency including calling the police when necessary)
 - Monitor and oversee monitoring of children who are the subject of child protection plans
 - Maintain accurate and secure child protection records
 - Refer any concerns to social care (or the appropriate agency including calling the police when necessary)
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What to do if you have a safeguarding concern about a child

If you think that a child is at risk of immediate harm, please contact the police immediately on 999.

If you have a safeguarding concern about a child or young person please call **Sheffield Safeguarding Hub on 01142734855 (available 24 hours a day)** where you can discuss your concerns with a social worker.

If you are concerned that a member of staff or any other person is harming or abusing a child or vulnerable adult, you must report your concerns immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead for VYH, Emma Merrick.

If you have urgent concerns about the safety of a child and are unable to contact the

Designated Safeguarding Lead, do not hesitate to contact the Sheffield Safeguarding Hub or the police using the numbers above. These external agencies will be in a position to determine an appropriate course of action and to advise you on next steps.

In all situations, you may be asked to provide an outline of your concerns in writing. If the matter is referred to Children's Services or the police, you may be asked to provide a formal statement of your concerns for subsequent external investigations.

If you are approached by a child or young person, with a disclosure that she/he is being, or has been harmed or abused, or you are informed of such a disclosure by a staff member or member of the public.

Do:

- Stay calm
- Listen to what is said, allowing the child to proceed at his or her own pace
- Explain to the child that this information will probably need to be shared with others and never promise to "keep a secret"
- Ask questions for clarification only, and not to elicit a particular answer.
- At the earliest opportunity, and within a maximum of 24 hours of the incident taking place, write a report of exactly what was said, not an interpretation (e.g. "Then X said "P touched my bum" NOT "Then X told me his friend had touched him inappropriately") and ensure this report is signed and dated. (Use incident report form Appendix 3)

Don't:

- Promise to keep the information secret. Make it clear that you have a duty to refer the matter on.
- Stop the individual who is freely recalling significant events.
- Make the individual tell anyone else. S/he may have to be formally interviewed later and it is important to minimise the number of times information is repeated.
- Make any suggestions to the individual about how the incident may have happened.
- Question the individual, except to clarify what they are saying.
- Discuss the information with anyone other than your line manager, a Safeguarding Officer or an appropriate external agency.

If child protection concerns have arisen over a period of time from observations of a child's behaviour or through observation of someone's behaviour towards the child, the VYH worker should write a detailed report with dates, about what has caused him/her to suspect a child protection concern. As with a verbal disclosure this report must be objective, with descriptions of specific and observable incidences and should distinguish fact from opinion. (Use incident report form Appendix 3).

Where there is a concern about the welfare of a child, but no immediate risk, it should be discussed as soon as possible with the Designated Safeguarding Lead. The DSL should

support the worker to write their concerns, discuss a course of action and refer to Sheffield Safeguarding Hub.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will respond as quickly as possible and will assess the concerns to determine whether an external referral to Children's Services or the police should take place, or can be addressed via VYH's internal procedures, based on the guidance set out by the Sheffield Multi-Agency Arrangements (MASA) [multi-agency_safeguarding_arrangement_2024.pdf](#).

VYH aims to make external referrals within a maximum of 24 hours of initial report. The Designated Safeguarding Lead is usually responsible for making external referrals Sheffield Safeguarding Hub or the Police, except in an emergency. In the event that a staff member makes a referral, a copy must be provided immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

In an emergency, where a child or young person makes a serious allegation, or if there has been an assault or a worker witnesses an incident which causes him/her to consider the child is in immediate risk of significant harm, then VYH will need to take action immediately to ensure the protection of the child. If it is not possible to discuss the situation immediately with one of the Designated Safeguarding Leads, the worker will need to contact the police or Sheffield Safeguarding Hub directly (see Appendix 1 for contact details).

VYH's Designated Safeguarding Lead is responsible for ensuring that incident reports, referrals and all information regarding safeguarding individual children is securely stored in a locked filing cabinet in a secure location or in a separate password-protected digital file or online drive.

If possible and appropriate VYH will inform the child's parents of the need to make a referral and why it is being made - it is important that VYH staff work in partnership with families as far as possible in the best interests of the child(ren).

Any parent or child who has a concern about safeguarding should raise their concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Allegations of abuse made against children

Please be aware that sometimes children of both genders can direct physical, sexual or emotional violence towards their parents, siblings, or other children.

The harm caused to children by harmful or bullying behaviour of other children, either by a single child or groups of children can be significant. This may take the form of a single incident or ongoing harmful behaviours.

Such abuse is subject to the same safeguarding procedures as apply in respect of children being abused by an adult.

When it is alleged that a child has been abused by another child, this must be reported to the

Designated Safeguarding Lead and referred to Sheffield Safeguarding Hub as set out in this Safeguarding Policy. Two separate referrals should be made – one for the child who is alleged to have been abused and a separate referral for the child who is alleged to be the abuser. This may result in investigation of each child's needs separately or identifying an alternative or more local strategy.

Children who harm others should be held responsible for their harmful behaviour and professionals responding to them should be alert to the fact that they are likely to pose a risk to children other than the current victim.

VYH's Designated Safeguarding Lead will carry out a risk assessment regarding whether the child or children who have perpetrated the abuse will be allowed to continue to attend. We will also seek advice and support from Sheffield Safeguarding Hub, where appropriate, for additional support and restorative processes for all children and young people involved.

Preventing and responding to Bullying and Harassment

VYH regards bullying and harassment as unacceptable. Children have a right to play in an environment which is free from fear and intimidation. Firm action will be taken whenever it occurs: maintaining a strong stance against bullying helps to create a positive, caring and healthy play environment where individuals are respected and feel secure in a way which enhances personal and social development.

Any allegation of bullying made against a member of VYH's staff will be dealt with via the child protection procedure if it involves inappropriate physical contact with a child, and via the line management system otherwise (e.g: verbal harassment or intimidation), as set out in our staff and volunteer code of conduct.

Further information about Anti-Bullying Policy and staff response to bullying is set out in our Anti-Bullying Policy.

Allegations against staff members

If you share a concern that a person may have behaved inappropriately or you have received information that may constitute an allegation, you should:

- report it to the VYH Designated Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible, however trivial it may seem;

- make a signed and dated written record of your concerns, observations or the information you have received to pass on to the Designated Safeguarding Lead
- maintain confidentiality and guard against publicity while an allegation is being considered or investigated and follow local information sharing protocols

If the allegation concerns a member of staff or a volunteer the Designated Safeguarding Lead must inform the other Directors immediately and this also confirmed in writing. If the allegation concerns the VYH Designated Safeguarding Lead, an alternative Director should be informed directly.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (or the Director where allegations are against the Designated Safeguarding Lead) will pass on all concerns relating to staff to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO, see Appendix 1 for contact details). In the first instance this can be verbal, but should be followed up by a written LADO Referral Form

https://www.safeguardingsheffieldchildren.org/assets/d504ee07/lado_referral_form_aug_2023.docx

VYH will also follow its own Disciplinary Procedures, particularly if the threshold of significant harm is not met (e.g. the allegation is of a minor physical restraint, or something similar which does not merit a Section 47 investigation but nevertheless may be inappropriate behaviour or professional misconduct). Failure to comply with Safeguarding procedures is identified as potential grounds for misconduct and gross misconduct under VYH's Disciplinary Policy.

Inter-Agency Working

The agencies with statutory duties of child protection under the Children Act 1989 and 2004 are Children's Social Care (social services), the NSPCC and the police.

Effective child protection depends on cooperative interdisciplinary and interagency working relationships. To this end VYH is committed to establishing links with the Sheffield Safeguarding Children's Partnership. [Sheffield Children Safeguarding Partnership -](#)

In the case of an agency with statutory powers investigating a possible incidence of child abuse, VYH will share all information relevant to the case. The investigating agency should keep VYH Informed.

Once VYH has made a child protection referral, the agency with statutory powers takes the lead role. There are a number of responses this agency can make. Carrying out a Child protection investigation under Section 47 of the Children Act is one, but not the only, option.

If the agency with statutory powers carries out a Section 47 investigation, all VYH staff, students

and workers will be expected to cooperate fully and share all relevant information. This may involve witness statements, or participation in a Child Protection conference or other roles. Children or young people who have made allegations must be supported to understand why a referral has been made and, if possible, what will happen. VYH staff must not make any false promises or assurances.

Privacy, Confidentiality and Information Sharing

VYH will respect the privacy of the child and family, by recognising that all information regarding possible or actual abuse within a setting should be kept confidential to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the staff immediately involved with the child. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will disclose any information about an abused child on a need to know basis only. All staff, volunteers and directors must be aware that they have a professional responsibility to share information with other agencies in order to safeguard children, e.g. the police and social care.

VYH will ensure that children's data (e.g. from registration forms) and any photographs and images of children taken will be stored securely. **VYH does not allow any unauthorised use of photography of its play projects. All registration forms include parental consent for use of photography by authorised personnel only.**

VYH recognises that the Internet is a significant tool in the distribution of indecent photographs of children. Adults are now using the Internet to try to establish contact with children to 'groom' them for inappropriate or abusive relationships. Children also have increased access to inappropriate content through the use of smartphones and technology. VYH staff will treat all inappropriate use of the internet as a potential safeguarding issue.

VYH will also respect the privacy of staff members, by following the procedures set out in our Disciplinary and Grievance procedures and by keeping HR information confidential and secure. Information is shared on a need to know basis and the Sheffield LADO will be informed of allegations against staff and we will follow any advice given by the LADO.

VYH will take a balanced approach to confidentiality, set out in more detail in VYH's Confidentiality Policy, based on the seven golden rules for information sharing set out in Information sharing Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers, published by the Government in 2015 and the principles that information sharing must be: necessary and proportionate, relevant, adequate, accurate, timely, secure and recorded.

For more information see VYH's Privacy Policy and Confidentiality Policy.

Safer Recruitment

VYH uses Safer Recruitment set out in our Safer Recruitment Policy to recruit staff and volunteers, along with our Equal Opportunities policy.

All staff, volunteers and directors:

- Are required to complete the VYH Application Form, which includes a self-disclosure declaration of any criminal offences, cautions or pending cases.
- Must attend a face-to-face interview with a minimum of 2 members of VYH staff including at least one Director.
- Are required to provide 2 referees including their current or most recent line manager.
- Must undertake an enhanced DBS check, prior to starting work/volunteering and once every three years thereafter, and provide 2 forms of photo id.
- Are required to undertake induction, including induction in Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, prior to starting work or volunteering.
- Are required to attend supervision with their line manager, including supervision on safeguarding issues. This includes volunteers.

VYH will:

- Make clear its commitment to safer recruitment in all Job Packs.
- Ensure that all staff, volunteers and trustees have a clear job description and person specification for their post, including a description of the post holder's safeguarding Responsibilities.
- Ensure that 2 references are provided for all new staff, volunteers and trustees, using VYH's reference request form.
- Pay for all staff, volunteer and Director DBS checks.
- Provide induction, training and supervision for all staff, volunteers and directors, including training in safeguarding.
- Ensure that a Directors receives safer recruitment training and that this is refreshed whenever the law is updated.

Induction, Supervision and Training

VYH is committed to providing all its employees, students, sessional workers and volunteers with entry level child protection training, as part of VYH's induction programme, which will ensure they understand the primary types of abuse, the main potential indicators, the serious impact on children and the duty to report all concerns.

All VYH staff, volunteers and Directors undertake induction, prior to starting in their roles that includes information and a briefing on Safeguarding policy and procedures. The Director keeps a record of who has undertaken internal induction and training.

Staff, volunteers and Directors are all given a copy of VYH's Safeguarding Policy.

VYH uses Sheffield Safeguarding Partnership to access training for staff [Sheffield Children Safeguarding Training](#)

All staff in contact with children and young people attend the multi-agency training course or an agreed Introduction to Safeguarding course and regular refreshers.

All staff in supervisory roles, e.g. the Designated Safeguarding Lead / Deputy, whose role is to support those in contact with children and young people attend training at the appropriate level and subsequent refreshers.

Appendix 1

Useful Safeguarding Information and Contacts

If you think a child is at risk of immediate harm, please contact the police immediately on 999.

If you have an urgent safeguarding concern about a child or young person call:

Sheffield Safeguarding Hub (24 hours): 01142734855

VYH Designated Safeguarding Lead: Emma Merrick

Referrals – concerns about children and young people

Sheffield Safeguarding Hub Tel: 01142734855 (24 hours)

conversational front door, all referrals are telephone based.

They will advise you and put you in contact with the child/families social worker if they already have one.

Allegations about staff members

These should always be followed up by the Designated Safeguarding Lead or another Director

Sheffield LADO – 0114273 4855 (select option 3).

Office hours are Monday – Thursday (8:45am – 5:15pm) Fri (8:45am – 4:45pm).

Further information including referral forms can be found here [Sheffield Children Safeguarding Partnership - Allegations of abuse against people who work with children - LADO](#)

NSPCC Helpline now on 0808 800 5000

ChildLine on 0800 1111

Key Documents and Guidance

Sheffield Safeguarding Partnership, [Sheffield Children Safeguarding Partnership -](#)

Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2018, www.dfe.gov.uk

Sheffield Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements,

[multi-agency safeguarding arrangement 2024.pdf](#)

Safe Network, www.childrenengland.org.uk/safe-network/

Charity Commission, www.gov.uk

APPENDIX 2

About Sheffield Safeguarding Hub and Early Help

What is Sheffield Safeguarding Hub?

- Includes South Yorkshire Police Officers, Social Workers including Early Help Prevention and Intervention Social Workers, Independent Domestic Violence Advisers and Health staff
- Will respond to new concerns about vulnerable children and young people by providing an integrated service with swift and secure information sharing between professionals
- Will signpost to Early Help services where children are not at risk but may need support
- Will advise professionals to contact the allocated social worker for open cases
- Does not replace calling the police – for non-urgent matters for police attention ring 101
- If a child or young person is in immediate danger, contact the police on 999

What happens when you contact Sheffield Safeguarding Hub?

You will be put through to a trained 'screening' social worker, who will:

Take information from you

- Provide a clear and focused telephone conversation
- Analyse your information and give you clear advice in a way that is easily understood
- Make a decision on how the concern will be dealt with
- Tell you what will happen next

If the concern is progressed they will also

- Record the discussion on the child's file and progress the contact as agreed

Update parents, carers and professionals of the outcome, in writing, within 3 days of referrals where it is safe to do so

APPENDIX 3

VYH Record of Initial Concern form

This form is to provide guidance to VYH staff on what information to record if you have a concern about a child. Please complete the form and send a copy to your line manager as soon as possible after any incident.

Please familiarise yourself with the signs and symptoms of abuse. If you have any concerns about a child, please raise these with your line manager as soon as possible.

GENERAL DETAILS OF INCIDENT

Name of Child:

Date and time of incident:

Place of incident (address and specific site/address)

Who was there?

What happened? Please give exact details. If a child has told you something that caused you concern, please try to use the child's exact words.

What action did you take?

Who have you told about the incident? VYH staff - Who and When? Child's Parents? Yes/no.

Date..... time.....

Who did you speak to?.....

What was their response?

Other person? (outside organisations?) yes/no

Date..... time.....

Who did you speak to?

What was their response?

Any other details (use separate sheet if needed):

Your Name:

Your role: