



Safeguarding Policy & Guidance

Rationale

The Switch Project fully recognises its responsibilities for safeguarding children and is committed to ensuring that safeguarding is integral to all planning, activity and functions. As an organisation with a broad and varied intake of young people, this policy makes reference to, and takes advice from a wide range of documents aimed at both schools and other educational settings, in order to cover an extremely broad brief. It also adheres to the statutory guidance for schools issued by the Department of Education 2014 (updated 2015) and has been developed in accordance with the principles established by the Children Acts 1989 and 2004; the Education Act 2002; and in line with government publications the Teachers' Standards 2012, 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' 2015 and 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' 2015

This policy applies to all staff, whether part time or full time, permanent, commissioned or temporary and volunteers. The main elements to our policy are:

- Ensuring we practice safe recruitment in checking the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children;
- Raising awareness of child protection issues and equipping children with the skills needed to keep them safe;
- Developing and then implementing procedures for identifying and reporting cases, or suspected cases, of abuse;
- Supporting a young person who has been identified as in need of early help or at risk of harm in accordance with his/her agreed Child Protection, Child in Need or Early Help plan;
- Establishing a safe environment in which children can learn and develop.

We recognise that because of the day-to-day contact with children, The Switch Project staff are well placed to identify concerns early and to observe the outward signs of abuse. We will therefore:

- Establish and maintain an environment where children feel safe, secure, valued and respected and encouraged to talk, believing they will be listened to;
- Ensure children know that there are adults whom they can approach if they are worried;
- Include opportunities for the children and young people to develop the skills they need to recognise and stay safe from abuse and to know who they should turn to for help.

It should be noted that all young people referred to The Switch Project remain either on roll with a school or the responsibility of a Local Education Authority. It is ultimately their responsibility to ensure that they are safe and protected at all times. We follow strict safeguarding and child protection processes in order to assist them in this responsibility and reassure them that the children and young people they have referred to us are covered by as rigorous a policy when they are with us as if they were at school. Where we identify any cause for concern or need for early help then we will always try to contact the referring organisation in the first instance. It is then their responsibility to follow this up. However, we take our responsibilities extremely seriously and, in some instances, we will make referrals ourselves.

This may include:

- If the child or young person is in immediate danger of harm
- If we cannot contact the referring organisation within a reasonable time period of the concern being identified
- If the referring organisation is unsure how to act
- If the referring organisation agrees that it is in the child or young person's best interest for us to make the referral for whatever reason
- If we have any concern at all that appropriate action has not or will not be taken
- If there is credible reason to believe that informing the referring organisation would be inappropriate in the circumstances

Procedures

We will follow the procedures set out by the Wolverhampton Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB) (www.wolverhamptonsafeguarding.org.uk) and take account of guidance issued by the Department for Education (DfE).

The Switch Project will:

- Ensure it has a Director nominated as a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) who will undertake regular, appropriate training and support for this role – currently Tim Wakefield.
- Ensure it has a member of staff who will act in the absence of the DSL: Caroline Erskine-Murphy.
- Ensure every member of staff (including temporary and volunteers) knows the name of the DSL and Deputy DSL and understands their role.
- Ensure all staff and volunteers understand their responsibilities in being alert to the signs of abuse and neglect, including the specific issues of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), child sexual exploitation (CSE), children missing education (CME) and radicalisation and extremism (RE), and maintain an attitude of “it could happen here”. All staff must always act in the best interest of the child.
- Ensure all staff and volunteers understand their responsibility for referring any concerns to the DSL in a timely manner and are aware that they may raise concerns directly with the referring organisation or Children's Social Care Services if they believe their concerns have not been listened to or acted upon.

- The Switch Project will report immediately to the referring organisation and/or Children's Social Care Services (depending on our ability to contact the referring organisation and our conviction that they will report the incident themselves) any children who have suffered or are likely to suffer significant harm. We will work with external agencies in-line with procedures set out by the Wolverhampton Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB) and take account of guidance issued by the Department of Education (DfE) to support children who are in need of additional support. The Switch Project will act to promote the welfare of a child in need of additional support, even if they are not suffering harm or are not at immediate risk.
- Ensure that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on the Switch Project and staff for child protection by publishing this policy on the website.
- Notify the referring organisation of any unexplained absence
- Develop effective links with relevant agencies and co-operate as required with their enquiries regarding safeguarding matters including attendance at strategy meetings, initial case conference, core groups and child in need review meetings.
- Ensure that the duty of care towards its children and young people and staff is promoted by raising awareness of illegal, unsafe and unwise behaviour and assist staff to monitor their own standards and practice.
- Keep written records of concerns about children, even where there is no need to refer the matter immediately.
- Ensure all child protection records are kept securely and in locked locations.
- Ensure that all child protection files are transferred in a safe and timely manner when a child moves organisations.
- Be aware of and follow procedures set out by Children's Services and the WSCB where an allegation is made against a member of staff or volunteer, including making a referral to the DBS and/or National College for Teaching and Leadership if a person in regulated activity has been dismissed or removed due to safeguarding concerns, or would have been had they not resigned. Such referrals will always be given priority and will be done promptly and made within at least one month of the person leaving our employment.
- Operate safer recruitment practice, ensuring that at least one member on every recruitment panel has completed safer recruitment training.
- Ensure that the appropriate training in Safeguarding is provided to the appropriate members of staff.
- Ensure our procedures are reviewed and updated regularly and at least annually.

Thresholds

As detailed above, in most cases any indication of concern or need of additional help will be referred back to the referring school or Local Authority. We may make recommendations on what action we think would be appropriate. In the event that The Switch Project feels that an appropriate level or amount of action has not, or will not, be taken then we will take that

action ourselves. The City Council Officers offer guidance on thresholds and the Switch Project will not hesitate to avail ourselves of this guidance in order to ensure that all children get the appropriate help, support and intervention. Advice can be sought from staff at the Wolverhampton Safeguarding Children Board. If, at any time, a child is thought to have suffered serious harm or is thought to be at risk from suffering serious harm then this should be reported to Children's Social Care immediately.

Training

When staff and volunteers join The Switch Project they will be informed of the safeguarding children arrangements in place. This policy will be referred to and they will be told who the DSL is and who acts in their absence. Staff are required to read the policy and all staff and volunteers will receive induction in Safeguarding Children. The induction programme will include basic safeguarding information relating to signs and symptoms of abuse, how to manage a disclosure from a child and when and how to record a concern about the welfare of a child, advice on safe working practice, the Safeguarding Policy, the identity of the DSL and a copy of Part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education. All regular visitors will be told where the policy is kept and given the name of the DSL and informed of the procedures in reporting concerns. At least the DSL will receive training in child protection and safe working practice in line with WSCB guidance. This training will be cascaded to others and, where possible and appropriate, other staff will receive this training too.

Responsibilities

The Director will ensure that:

- Safeguarding policies and procedures are in place, available to parents and referring organisations and reviewed annually.
- Any weaknesses brought to their attention relating to safeguarding are remedied without delay.
- The Switch Project complies with all legislative duties.
- The Safeguarding policies and procedures are fully implemented and followed by all staff and that sufficient resources are allocated to enable the DSL and other staff to discharge their responsibilities with regard to child protection. The DSL will co-ordinate action on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children within the setting.

The DSL is responsible for:

- Organising child protection induction training for all newly appointed staff and whole staff training, refreshed at least every 3 years
- Undertaking an annual audit of safeguarding procedures
- Informing the referring organisation of any cause for concern or identification of need for Early Help.
- In the event that the referring organisation cannot be contacted, cannot make a referral (or will not), referring a child or young person to the Early Help Hub or Children's Social Care promptly, when there are concerns about possible abuse and neglect. The DSL will contact the Police in the case of serious harm.

- In the event that the referring organisation cannot be contacted, cannot make a referral (or will not), referring a child or young person to the Channel Panel promptly when there are concerns about possible radicalisation or involvement in extremist groups.
- Keeping written records of concerns about children, even where there is no need to refer the matter immediately.
- Ensuring all child protection records are kept securely and in locked locations.
- Ensuring that all child protection files are transferred in a safe and timely manner when a child or young person moves settings.
- Notifying the referring organisation on the day if there is any unexplained absence.
- Monitoring unauthorised absence, particularly where children go missing on repeated occasions, reporting concerns to the referring organisation.
- Developing effective links with relevant agencies and other professionals and co-operate as required with their enquiries regarding safeguarding matters including co-operation with serious case reviews, attendance at strategy meetings, initial and review child protection conferences, core group and child in need review meetings;
- Contributing to assessments and providing a report to initial and review conferences.
- Co-ordinating a programme of safety, health and well-being through the curriculum, including issues of protective behaviours, healthy relationships, staying safe on-line, and the active promotion of fundamental of British Values.

Managing a Disclosure

Switch Project staff are in a unique position to observe children's behaviour over time and often develop close and trusting relationships with young persons. If a child or young person discloses directly to a member of staff, the following advice to staff will be followed:

- Listen carefully to what is said.
- Do not promise confidentiality.
- Ask only open questions such as: 'Could you tell me what happened?' 'Please explain what you mean when you say....?' 'Can you describe the person? or Can you describe the place?'
- Do not ask questions which may be considered to suggest what might have happened, or who has perpetrated the abuse, e.g. 'Did your Dad hit you?'
- Do not force the child or young person to repeat what he/she said in front of another person.
- Do not begin an investigation – for example by asking the child or young person to record what happened in writing or taking a photograph of any injuries.
- Report immediately to the DSL and complete a hand-written record as soon after the disclosure as possible and in any case within 24 hours, using the individual's words as far as possible. Use body maps to

record any observed injuries. Note staff must only view parts of body which are normally visible.

- Where a child or young person discloses safeguarding allegations against another young person in the same setting, the DSL should refer to the local procedures on the WSCB website (section 2.11) and seek advice from the Access Centre before commencing its own investigation or contacting parents.

Definitions of Abuse and Neglect

Abuse: a form of maltreatment of a child or young person. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child or young person by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. They 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 or young person. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child or young person.

Emotional abuse: the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child or young person such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child or young person's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child or young person 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 or young person 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 or young people. These may include interactions that are beyond a child or young person's developmental capability as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child or young person participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children or young people 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, although 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 (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children and young people.

Neglect: the persistent failure to meet a child or young person's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child or young person'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: 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); or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Child sexual exploitation (CSE): involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people receive something (for example food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, gifts, money or in some cases simply affection) as a result of engaging in sexual activities. Sexual exploitation can take many forms ranging from the seemingly 'consensual' relationship where sex is exchanged for affection or gifts, to serious organised crime by gangs and groups. What marks out exploitation is an imbalance of power in the relationship. The perpetrator always holds some kind of power over the victim, which increases as the exploitative relationship develops. Sexual exploitation involves varying degrees of coercion, intimidation or enticement, including unwanted pressure from peers to have sex, sexual bullying including cyberbullying and grooming. However, it is also important to recognise that some young people who are being sexually exploited do not exhibit any external signs of this abuse.

The Department for Education published a new definition of Child Sexual Exploitation in 2017, updating 'Working Together to Safeguard Children': "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."

Staff are aware that expert and professional organisations are best placed to provide up-to-date guidance and practical support on specific safeguarding issues. For example NSPCC offers information for schools and colleges on the TES website and also on its own website www.nspcc.org.uk Schools and colleges can also access broad government guidance on the issues listed below via the GOV.UK website:

- Child sexual exploitation (CSE) – see also below
- Bullying, including cyberbullying
- Domestic violence
- Drugs
- Fabricated or induced illness
- Faith abuse
- Female genital mutilation (FGM) – see also below

- Forced marriage
- Gangs and youth violence
- Gender-based violence/violence against women and girls (VAWG)
- Mental health
- Private fostering
- Radicalisation
- Sexting
- Teenage relationship abuse
- Trafficking

Recognising signs of child abuse

Categories of Abuse

- Physical Abuse
- Emotional Abuse (including Domestic Abuse)
- Sexual Abuse
- Neglect

Signs of Abuse in Children

The following non-specific signs may indicate something is wrong:

- Significant change in behaviour
- Extreme anger or sadness
- Aggressive and attention-seeking behaviour
- Suspicious bruises with unsatisfactory explanations
- Lack of self-esteem
- Self-injury
- Depression
- Age inappropriate sexual behaviour N.B. Please refer to further detail on signs on abuse given below.

Risk Indicators

The factors described in this section are frequently found in cases of child abuse. Their presence is not proof that abuse has occurred, but:

- Must be regarded as indicators of the possibility of significant harm
- Justifies the need for careful assessment and discussion with designated lead person
- May require consultation with and/or referral to Children's Services

The absence of such indicators does not mean that abuse or neglect has not occurred. In an abusive relationship the child may:

- Appear frightened of the parent/s
- Act in a way that is inappropriate to her/his age and development (though full account needs to be taken of different patterns of development and different ethnic groups)

The parent or carer may:

- Persistently avoid child health promotion services and treatment of the child's episodic illnesses

- Have unrealistic expectations of the child or young person
- Frequently complain about/to the child or young person and may fail to provide attention or praise (high criticism/low warmth environment)
- Be absent or misusing substances
- Persistently refuse to allow access on home visits
- Be involved in domestic abuse

Staff should be aware of the potential risk to children when individuals, previously known or suspected to have abused children, move into the household.

Recognising Physical Abuse

The following are often regarded as indicators of concern:

- An explanation which is inconsistent with an injury
- Several different explanations provided for an injury
- Unexplained delay in seeking treatment
- The parents/carers are uninterested or undisturbed by an accident or injury
- Parents are absent without good reason when their child is presented for treatment
- Repeated presentation of minor injuries (which may represent a “cry for help” and if ignored could lead to a more serious injury)
- Family use of different doctors and A&E departments
- Reluctance to give information or mention previous injuries

Bruising

Children can have accidental bruising, but the following must be considered as non-accidental unless there is evidence or an adequate explanation provided:

- Any bruising to a pre-crawling or pre-walking baby
- Bruising in or around the mouth, particularly in small babies which may indicate force feeding
- Two simultaneous bruised eyes, without bruising to the forehead, (rarely accidental, though a single bruised eye can be accidental or abusive)
- Repeated or multiple bruising on the head or on sites unlikely to be injured accidentally
- Variation in colour possibly indicating injuries caused at different times
- The outline of an object used e.g. belt marks, hand prints or a hair brush
- Bruising or tears around, or behind, the earlobe/s indicating injury by pulling or twisting
- Bruising around the face
- Grasp marks on small children
- Bruising on the arms, buttocks and thighs may be an indicator of sexual abuse

Bite Marks

Bite marks can leave clear impressions of the teeth. Human bite marks are oval or crescent shaped. Those over 3 cm in diameter are more likely to have been caused by an adult or older child. A medical opinion should be sought where there is any doubt over the origin of the bite.

Burns and Scalds

It can be difficult to distinguish between accidental and non-accidental burns and scalds, and will always require experienced medical opinion. Any burn with a clear outline may be suspicious e.g.

- Circular burns from cigarettes (but may be friction burns if along the bony protuberance of the spine)
- Linear burns from hot metal rods or electrical fire elements
- Burns of uniform depth over a large area
- Scalds that have a line indicating immersion or poured liquid (a child getting into hot water is his/her own accord will struggle to get out and cause splash marks)
- Old scars indicating previous burns/scalds which did not have appropriate treatment or adequate explanation
- Scalds to the buttocks of a small child, particularly in the absence of burns to the feet, are indicative of dipping into a hot liquid or bath.

Fractures

Fractures may cause pain, swelling and discolouration over a bone or joint. Non-mobile children rarely sustain fractures. There are grounds for concern if:

- The history provided is vague, non-existent or inconsistent with the fracture type
- There are associated old fractures
- Medical attention is sought after a period of delay when the fracture has caused symptoms such as swelling, pain or loss of movement
- There is an unexplained fracture in the first year of life

Scars

A large number of scars or scars of different sizes or ages, or on different parts of the body, may suggest abuse.

Recognising Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse may be difficult to recognise, as the signs are usually behavioural rather than physical. The manifestations of emotional abuse might also indicate the presence of other kinds of abuse.

The indicators of emotional abuse are often also associated with other forms of abuse. The following may be indicators of emotional abuse:

- Developmental delay
- Abnormal attachment between a child and parent/carer e.g. anxious, indiscriminate or no attachment
- Aggressive behaviour towards others
- Scape-goated within the family
- Frozen watchfulness, particularly in pre-school children
- Low self-esteem and lack of confidence
- Withdrawn or seen as a “loner” – difficulty relating to others

Recognising Sexual Abuse

Boys and girls of all ages may be sexually abused and are frequently scared to say anything due to guilt and/or fear. This is particularly difficult for a child to talk about and full account should be taken of the cultural sensitivities of any individual child/family. Recognition can be difficult, unless the child discloses and is believed. There may be no physical signs and indications are likely to be emotional/behavioural. Some behavioural indicators associated with this form of abuse are:

- Inappropriate sexualised conduct
- Sexually explicit behaviour, play or conversation, inappropriate to the child's age
- Continual and inappropriate or excessive masturbation
- Self-harm (including eating disorder), self-mutilation and suicide attempts
- Involvement in prostitution or indiscriminate choice of sexual partners
- An anxious unwillingness to remove clothes e.g. for sports events (but this may be related to cultural norms or physical difficulties) Some physical indicators associated with this form of abuse are:
 - Pain or itching of genital area
 - Blood on underclothes
 - Pregnancy in a In the event that the referring organisation cannot be contacted, cannot make a referral (or will not), younger girl where the identity of the father is not disclosed
 - Physical symptoms such as injuries to the genital or anal area, bruising to buttocks, abdomen and thighs, sexually transmitted disease, presence of semen on vagina, anus, external genitalia or clothing

Sexual Abuse by Young People

The boundary between what is abusive and what is part of normal childhood or youthful experimentation can be blurred. The determination of whether behaviour is developmental, inappropriate or abusive will hinge around the related concepts of true consent, power imbalance and exploitation. This may include children and young people who exhibit a range of sexually problematic behaviour such as indecent exposure, obscene telephone calls, fetishism, bestiality and sexual abuse against adults, peers or children.

Developmental Sexual Activity encompasses those actions that are to be expected from children and young people as they move from infancy through to an adult understanding of their physical, emotional and behavioural relationships with each other. Such sexual activity is essentially information gathering and experience testing. It is characterised by mutuality and of the seeking of consent.

Inappropriate Sexual Behaviour can be inappropriate socially, inappropriate to development, or both. In considering whether behaviour fits into this category, it is important to consider what negative effects it has on any of the parties involved and what concerns it raises about a child or young person.

It should be recognised that some actions may be motivated by information seeking, but still cause significant upset, confusion, worry, physical damage, etc. It may also be that the behaviour is “acting out” which may derive from other sexual situations to which the child or young person has been exposed. If an act appears to have been inappropriate, there may still be a need for some form of behaviour management or intervention. For some children, educative inputs may be enough to address the behaviour.

Abusive sexual activity includes any behaviour involving coercion, threats, aggression together with secrecy, or where one participant relies on an unequal power base. With any situation involving potential abuse by a young person the DSL will always seek guidance on the matter from the Senior Adviser for Safeguarding Children in Education or the Wolverhampton Children’s Social Care Services. The DSL will also follow the guidance in the WSCB website.

Assessment

In order to more fully determine the nature of the incident the following factors should be given consideration. The presence of exploitation in terms of:

- Equality – consider differentials of physical, cognitive and emotional development, power and control and authority, passive and assertive tendencies
- Consent – agreement including all the following:
- Understanding that is proposed based on age, maturity, development level, functioning and experience
- Knowledge of society’s standards for what is being proposed
- Awareness of potential consequences and alternatives
- Assumption that agreements or disagreements will be respected equally
- Voluntary decision
- Mental competence
- Coercion – the young perpetrator who abuses may use techniques like bribing, manipulation and emotional threats of secondary gains and losses that is loss of love, friendship, etc. Some may use physical force, brutality or the threat of these regardless of victim resistance.

In evaluating sexual behaviour of children and young people, the above information should be used only as a guide.

Recognising Neglect

Evidence of neglect is built up over a period of time and can cover different aspects of parenting. Indicators include:

- Failure by parents or carers to meet the basic essential needs e.g. adequate food, clothes, warmth, hygiene and medical care
- A child seen to be listless, apathetic and irresponsible with no apparent medical cause
- Failure of child or young person to grow within normal expected pattern, with accompanying weight loss
- Child or young person thrives away from home environment

- Child or young person frequently absent from school
- Child or young person left with adults who are intoxicated or violent
- Child or young person abandoned or left alone for excessive periods

Child Sexual Exploitation

The following list of indicators is not exhaustive or definitive but it does highlight common signs which can assist professionals in identifying children or young people who may be victims of sexual exploitation. Signs include:

- Underage sexual activity
- Inappropriate sexual or sexualised behaviour
- Sexually risky behaviour, 'swapping' sex
- Repeat sexually transmitted infections
- In girls, repeat pregnancy, abortions, miscarriage
- Receiving unexplained gifts or gifts from unknown sources
- Having multiple mobile phones/SIM cards and worrying about losing contact via mobile
- Having unaffordable new things (clothes, mobile) or expensive habits (alcohol, drugs)
- Changes in the way they dress
- Going to hotels or other unusual locations to meet friends
- Seen at known places of concern
- Moving around the country, appearing in new towns or cities, not knowing where they are
- Getting in/out of different cars driven by unknown adults
- Having older boyfriends or girlfriends
- Contact with known perpetrators
- Involved in abusive relationships, intimidated and fearful of certain people or situations
- Hanging out with groups of older people / anti-social groups / with other vulnerable peers
- Associating with other young people involved in sexual exploitation
- Recruiting other young people to exploitative situations
- Truancy, exclusion, disengagement with school, opting out of education altogether
- Unexplained changes in behaviour or personality (chaotic, aggressive, sexual)
- Mood swings, volatile behaviour, emotional distress
- Self-harming, suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts, overdosing, eating disorders
- Drug or alcohol misuse
- Getting involved in crime
- Police involvement, police records
- Involved in gangs, gang fights, gang membership
- Injuries from physical assault, physical restraint, sexual assault. The DSL is responsible for implementing local guidance in respect of child sexual exploitation as given on the WSCB website

The DSL must ensure that all staff are aware of signs and symptoms of CSE and know that these must be reported and recorded as child protection concerns.

Effects of domestic abuse on children and young people

The impact of domestic abuse on the quality of a child or young person's life is very significant. Children and young people who live with domestic abuse are at increased risk of behavioural problems, emotional trauma, and mental health difficulties in adult life.

The impact of domestic abuse on children and young people can be wide-ranging and may include effects in any or all of the following areas:

- **Physical:** Children and young people can be hurt either by trying to intervene and stopping the violence or by being injured themselves by the abuser. They may not be being cared for appropriately. They may have suicidal thoughts or try to escape or blank out the abuse by using drugs, alcohol or by running away.
- **Sexual:** There is a high risk that children and young people will be abused themselves where there is domestic abuse. In homes where living in fear is the norm, and situations are not discussed, an atmosphere of secrecy develops and this creates a climate in which sexual abuse could occur. In addition to this, children and young people may sometimes be forced to watch the sexual abuse of their mother/carer. This can have long-lasting effects on the sexual and emotional development of the child/young person.
- **Economic:** The parent or carer of the child or young person may have limited control over the family finances. Therefore, there might be little or no money available for extracurricular activities, clothing or even food, impacting on their health and development.
- **Emotional:** Children and young people will often be very confused about their feelings – for example, loving both parents/carers but not wanting the abuse to continue. They may be given negative messages about their own worth, which may lead to them developing low self-esteem. Many children and young people feel guilty, believing that the abuse is their fault. They are often pessimistic about their basic needs being met and can develop suicidal thoughts. Some children and young people may internalise feelings and appear passive and withdrawn or externalise their feelings in a disruptive manner.
- **Isolation:** Children and young people may become withdrawn and isolated; they may not be allowed out to play; and if there is abuse in the home they are less likely to invite their friends round. Schooling may be disrupted in many ways, and this may contribute to their growing isolation. They may frequently be absent from school as they may be too scared to leave their mother alone. They may have to move away from existing friends and family – e.g. into a refuge or other safe or temporary accommodation.
- **Threats:** Children and young people are likely to have heard threats to harm their mother/father. They may have been directly threatened with harm or heard threats to harm their pet. They also live under the constant and unpredictable threat of violence, resulting in feelings of

intimidation, fear and vulnerability, which can lead to high anxiety, tension, confusion and stress.

- This clearly highlights that living with domestic abuse has a significant impact on a child's ability to achieve the five outcomes as outlined in the Every Child Matters agenda: • be healthy; • stay safe; • enjoy and achieve; • make a positive contribution; • achieve economic well being.

What you might see in an educational setting:

- Unexplained absences or lateness – either from staying at home to protect their parent or hide their injuries, or because they are prevented from attending education;
- Children and young people attending when ill rather than staying at home;
- Children and young people not completing their homework, or making constant excuses, because of what is happening at home;
- Children and young people who are constantly tired, on edge and unable to concentrate through disturbed sleep or worrying about what is happening at home;
- Children and young people displaying difficulties in their cognitive and education performance;
- Children and young people whose behaviour and personality changes dramatically;
- Children and young people who become quiet and withdrawn and have difficulty in developing positive peer relations;
- Children and young people displaying disruptive behaviour or acting out violent thoughts with little empathy for victims;
- Children and young people who are no trouble at all.

This list is not exhaustive – this is intended to give you an idea of some of the types of behaviour that could be presented.

What The Switch Project can do:

Educational settings can create an environment which both promotes their belief and commitment that domestic abuse is not acceptable, and that they are willing to discuss and challenge it. For many victims, their educational setting might be the one place that they visit without their abusive partner.

Research shows that the repeated use of physical, sexual, psychological and financial abuse is one of the ways in which male power is used to control women. The underlying attitudes which legitimate and perpetuate violence against women should be challenged by the organisation's ethos.

The Switch Project can support individual children and young people by: having an organisational philosophy that domestic abuse is unacceptable; responding to disclosures and potential child protection concerns; recognising that domestic abuse and forced marriage may be a child protection concern; giving emotional support – the child or young person might need referral to a more specialist service or need additional support to

complete coursework, exams etc; facilitating a peer support network – children and young people can become isolated but often welcome talking to friends about their problems; offering practical support – if children or young people are new to the organisation they may be unfamiliar with the curriculum, the area, etc; providing somewhere safe and quiet to do their work or just to sit and think; improving the self esteem and confidence of children and young people by: offering them opportunities to take on new roles and responsibilities; offering tasks which are achievable and giving praise and encouragement; monitoring their behaviour and setting clear limits; criticising the action, not the person; helping them to feel a sense of control in their education; involving them in decision making; helping them to be more assertive; respecting them as individuals; encouraging involvement in extra-curricular activities.

Advice the Switch Project will follow on receiving notification of a Domestic Abuse incident:

Background

Following a call to a domestic abuse incident where children are involved, Police notify Social Care and Health. For those cases that are classified medium or high, the school on whose role the child or Young Person belongs will receive an e-mail informing them that an incident has taken place and giving them a copy of the Police log. For high risk cases, they will also be contacted by telephone and asked whether they have any concerns about the children at school. Social Care will also write to parents informing them that the school's DSL has been notified of the incident and reassuring them that the information will be treated confidentially.

The Switch Project action

On receiving this information, the school's DSL should:

- Log the information and keep the record alongside other information/concerns that the school has on this child/family, with all other confidential CP records in a secure place. This will allow the school to recognise any pattern and/or frequency of notifications and take appropriate action. Please note that school may receive further communication about this same incident, once further assessment of the situation has been undertaken by Police
- Inform any staff of notification on a 'need to know' only basis – e.g. class teacher/form tutor. At this point we would hope that the school would inform The Switch Project.
- We would then alert all staff who teach young person with minimum of information – e.g. 'This young person may need extra support / may need extra time to complete homework'.
- Monitor behaviour (including attendance) and should concerns arise which may be attributed to the impact of the incident, inform the school who will consult with Social Care as the concerns may be significant and lead to new safeguarding action, or to seek advice on how to proceed.

- Provide appropriate support for child, if required – do not question young person about the incident. Respect the child or young person's decision on whether or not they wish to discuss the situation.
- Provide appropriate support for adult, if asked

Bear in mind

- Victim of incident may be anxious that the information will be shared inappropriately.
- Notification may not give details as to which parent is the perpetrator/victim – any disclosure to the 'wrong' parent could heighten risk.
- Need to be aware who is 'connected' to the child – e.g. a member of staff may be the child or young person's relative / friend of the family.
- Inappropriate sharing of information could heighten the risk for the victim and/or the child. If in doubt, consult with Senior Adviser for Safeguarding Children in Education. Appendix 1 of this policy provides information and guidance on recognising and dealing with concerns about Forced Marriage, which is a form of Domestic Abuse. Appendix 2 of this policy provides information and guidance on recognising and dealing with concerns about Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), which is a form of Human Rights Abuse.

Record Keeping

Any member of staff receiving a disclosure of abuse from a child or noticing signs or symptoms of possible abuse, should make notes as soon as possible (within the hour, if possible) writing down exactly what was said, using the child's own words as far as possible. All notes should be timed, dated and signed, with name printed alongside the signature.

All records of a child protection nature should be passed to the relevant DSL including case conference minutes and written records of any concerns.

Child protection records are kept securely and transferred in a safe and timely manner when a child moves settings.

Records will be shared with the referring school or organisation unless there is credible reason to believe that this action would be inappropriate.

The DSL will maintain and regularly audit The Switch Project's child protection records and ensure that each stand-alone file includes a chronology of significant events.

Information Sharing & Confidentiality

We recognise that all matters relating to Child Protection are confidential but we will routinely share records with the referring school or organisation unless there is credible reason to believe that this action would be inappropriate.

The DSL will disclose any information about a young person to other members of staff on a need to know basis only.

All staff must be aware that they have a professional responsibility to share information with other agencies in order to safeguard children and young people.

All staff must be aware that they cannot promise a child to keep secrets that might compromise a child or young person's safety or well-being.

Communication with Parents

We recognise that good communication with parents is crucial in order to safeguard and promote the welfare of children effectively.

We may undertake appropriate discussion with parents prior to involvement of another agency unless to do so might place the child or an adult at further risk of harm or would impede a criminal investigation. We may also pass this responsibility on to the referring organisation, depending on the circumstances.

We will ensure that parents have an understanding of the responsibilities placed on educational settings and their staff to safeguard children and their duty to co-operate with other agencies in this respect.

Supporting Children and Young People

Children or young people who are abused or witness violence may find it difficult to develop a sense of self worth. They may feel helplessness, humiliation and some sense of blame. The educational setting may be the only stable, secure and predictable element in the lives of children or young people who have been abused or who are at risk of harm. We are aware that research shows that at school their behaviour may be challenging and defiant or they may be withdrawn. This may be the reason that they have been referred to The Switch Project. We will endeavour to support all children and young people by:

- Encouraging self-esteem and self-assertiveness through our work with them as well as promoting respectful relationships, challenging bullying and humiliating behaviour;
 - The organisation's ethos which promotes a positive, supportive and secure environment giving young persons a sense of being valued;
 - A consistently applied Behaviour and Well-Being Policy that is aimed at supporting vulnerable young people.
 - Ensuring that the young people know that some behaviour is unacceptable, but they are valued and not to be blamed for any abuse which has occurred;
 - Liaison with other agencies that support the young person such as Children's Services, Child and Adult Mental Health Service (CAMHS), education welfare service and educational psychology service and those agencies involved in the safeguarding of children and young people;
 - The use of Early Help Services when appropriate; Notifying Children's Social Care Services immediately there is a significant concern.
- Providing continuing support to a young person about whom there have been concerns who leaves the organisation by ensuring that appropriate

information is forwarded under confidential cover to the young person's new setting.

Supporting Staff and Supervision of Staff

We recognise that staff working in The Switch Project who have become involved with a child or young person who has suffered harm, or appears to be likely to suffer harm, may find the situation stressful and upsetting. We will support such staff by providing an opportunity to talk through their anxieties with the relevant DSL and to seek further support such as counselling or regular supervision, as appropriate.

In order to reduce the risk of allegations being made against staff, and ensure that staff are competent, confident and safe to work with children and young people, they will be made aware of safer working practice guidance and will be given opportunities in training to develop their understanding of what constitutes safe and unsafe behaviour.

Safer Recruitment and Selection of Staff

When employing new staff there will always be a member of the interview panel who has completed the 'Safer Recruitment' training.

The recruitment process is robust in seeking to establish the commitment of candidates to support The Switch Project's measures to safeguard children and to deter, identify, reject or identify people who might pose a risk of harm to children or are otherwise unsuited to work with them.

All staff in regulated activity within our organisation have been checked as to their suitability, including verification of their identity, qualifications, a satisfactory barred list check, a prohibition check and enhanced DBS check and a right to work in the UK.

Any member of staff working in regulated activity prior to verification of their satisfactory DBS Certificate will not be left unsupervised and will be subject to a risk assessment. Volunteers who are not working in regulated activity, will be supervised at all times.

Allegations against staff

Please see our Dealing With Allegations Policies (Appendices 4&5 in this document)

The Disclosure and Barring Service will be informed of any person whose services are no longer used because he/she is considered unsuitable to work with children. Reports will include as much evidence about the circumstances of the case as possible. Compromise Agreements or Settlement Agreements cannot apply in this connection, or where the individual refuses to co-operate with an investigation.

The National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) will be contacted where a teacher has been dismissed (or would have been dismissed had

he/she not resigned). Where a dismissal does not reach the threshold for DBS referral separate consideration will be given to an NCTL referral.

In the event of an allegation made against a member of staff, the organisation is aware of its legal obligations to do its utmost to protect the anonymity of the member of staff during the investigative stage. This legislation is to protect staff in the event that an allegation is found to be unfounded or malicious.

Allegations of abuse by Young persons

Please see Our Dealing With Allegations Policy

Where there is reasonable cause to suspect a child is suffering, or likely to suffer significant harm by the actions of one or more young persons the matter will be investigated according to the procedure laid out in this Policy, including referral to local agencies.

Complaints or Concerns expressed by Young persons, Parents, Staff or Volunteers

We recognise that listening to children is an important and essential part of safeguarding them against abuse and neglect. To this end any expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet in relation to an individual child will be listened to and acted upon in order to safeguard his/her welfare.

We will also seek to ensure that the child or adult who makes a complaint is informed not only about the action The Switch Project will take but also be given an indication of the length of time that will be required to resolve the complaint. The Switch Project will also endeavour to keep the child or adult regularly informed as to the progress of his/her complaint.

Prevention

We recognise that the organisation plays a significant part in the prevention of harm to our children and young people by providing them with good lines of communication with trusted adults, supportive friends and an ethos of protection.

The Switch Project will therefore:

- Establish and maintain an environment where children and young people feel secure, are encouraged to talk, and are always listened to;
- Ensure children and young people know that there are adults in who they can approach if they are worried or in difficulty;
- Include in the curriculum opportunities that equip children with the skills they need to recognise and stay safe from abuse.

Positive Physical Intervention

The Switch Project's policy on positive handling acknowledges that staff must only ever use physical intervention as a last resort, and that at all times it must be the minimal force necessary to prevent injury or damage to property .

We understand that physical intervention of a nature that causes injury or distress to a child may be considered under safeguarding children or disciplinary procedures. A record of all incidents of physical intervention that

occur in will be maintained by the DSL. The Switch Project recognises that touch is appropriate in the context of working with children and all staff are given 'safe working practice guidance' to ensure that they are clear about their professional boundaries. All staff complete 'Safe Handling' training.

Abuse of Trust

We recognise that as adults working with children and young people we are in a relationship of trust with those in our care and acknowledge that it could be considered a criminal offence to abuse that trust. We acknowledge that the principle of equality embedded in the legislation of the Sexual Offenders Act 2003 applies irrespective of sexual orientation. We recognise that the legislation is intended to protect young people in education who are over the age of consent but under 18 years of age.

Children Missing Education (CME)

We recognise that a child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect. Our procedures for dealing with children that go missing from education are based on the LA and LSCB procedures. In the first instance we expect the referring organisation to follow the correct procedures but we will make the relevant contacts if this is not possible, or we have any concerns.

We will ensure that we follow these procedures for dealing with children that go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of their going missing in future.

We will strive to ensure that children missing education are reported to the LA CME officer by their referring organisation, in line with statutory requirements. If we have any concerns then we will report them ourselves.

Radicalisation and Extremism

We encourage children and young people to respect the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. We ensure that partisan political views are not promoted in the teaching of any subject and where political issues are brought to the attention of the young persons, reasonably practicable steps have been taken to offer a balanced presentation of opposing views to young persons.

We value freedom of speech and the expression of beliefs/ideology as fundamental rights underpinning our society's values. Both children and young people and teachers have the right to speak freely and voice their opinions. However, freedom comes with responsibility and free speech that is designed to manipulate the vulnerable or that leads to violence and harm of others goes against the moral principles in which freedom of speech is valued. Free speech is not an unqualified privilege; it is subject to laws and policies governing equality, human rights, community safety and community cohesion.

We seek to ensure our children and young people are aware of the dangers of radicalisation and we work to build their resilience to such dangers through the curriculum and our work with them.

We seek to protect children and young people against the messages of all violent extremism including, but not restricted to, those linked to Islamist ideology, or to Far Right / Neo Nazi / White Supremacist ideology, Irish Nationalist and Loyalist paramilitary groups, and extremist Animal Rights movements. Appendix 3 of this Policy provides information and guidance on recognising indicators of vulnerability of radicalisation.

If a member of staff has concerns about a child or young person being at risk of radicalisation or concerns that that are being or have been subjected to radicalisation ideology they should immediately raise the matter with the DSL who will decide whether or not a referral should be made, will act on the concern and share information with appropriate referring or external agencies as required. We recognise that anybody can make a referral. Please note that information and emergency advice can be obtained from the Department of Education helpline telephone 0202 73407264 or via the Police by telephoning 101. Alternatively, the authorities can be contacted via counter.extremism@education.gsi.gov.uk

Racist Incidents

Repeated racist incidents or a single serious incident may lead to consideration under child protection procedures. We maintain a log of racist incidents in.

Anti-Bullying

To allow or condone bullying may lead to consideration under child protection procedures. All incidences of bullying, including cyber-bullying, racist, homophobic and gender related bullying, will be dealt with in accordance with our Anti-Bullying policy. We recognise that children and young people with special needs and/or disabilities are more susceptible to being bullied. We maintain a log of bullying incidents.

E-Safety

All members of staff receive regular updates in e-safety and recognising and reporting concerns.

Children and young people may expose themselves to danger, whether knowingly or unknowingly, when using the Internet and other technologies. Additionally, some young people may find themselves involved in activities which are inappropriate or possibly illegal. The organisation therefore recognises its responsibility to educate its children and young people, teaching them the appropriate behaviours and critical thinking skills to enable them to remain both safe and legal when using the Internet and related technologies. These issues are addressed within the curriculum.

Our network is covered by the safety processes and procedures of Wolverhampton City Council. All computers are covered by this and have restricted access to certain sites considered inappropriate.

Health and Safety

Please see our Health & Safety Policy. Risk Assessments are undertaken and reviewed regularly, in respect of site security, risk of children being drawn into terrorism or exposed to extremist behaviour, risk to and from children displaying harmful behaviour.

Photography and use of images

The welfare and protection of children and young people is paramount and consideration should always be given to whether the use of photography will place children at risk. Images may be used to harm children, for example as a preliminary to 'grooming' or by displaying them inappropriately on the Internet, particularly social networking sites.

Images will only ever be published with the parent or carer's permission.

Safe Environment

The Switch Project or Dovecotes Primary School undertakes appropriate risk assessments and checks in respect of all equipment and of the building and grounds in line with local and national guidance and regulations concerning health and safety.

The school has adequate security arrangements in place in respect of the use of its grounds and buildings by visitors both in and out of school hours.

Visitors to the school, for example visiting speakers, theatre groups or curriculum specialists, will be appropriately checked and vetted, to ensure they are not linked to extremist groups or promoting extremist or other harmful material.

Challenge and Escalation

We recognise that professional disagreements may arise between any agencies and resolving problems is an integral part of co-operation and joint working to safeguard children. As part of our responsibility for safeguarding children, we acknowledge that we must be prepared to challenge each other if we feel that responses to concerns, assessments or the way in which plans are implemented are not safeguarding the child and promoting their welfare. We are aware of the Wolverhampton Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB) escalation procedures for raising concerns in respect of poor practice and our responsibility to utilise these as and when necessary, in the interests of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Our Safeguarding policy and procedures will be monitored and evaluated by:

- Annual review by the DSL
- Discussions with children and young people and staff;
- Scrutiny of data and risk assessments;

- Monitoring of logs of bullying/racist/behaviour incidents and records;
- Supervision of staff involved in child protection which includes the DSL
- Case file audits undertaken by the DSL.

Appendix 1 Forced Marriage – a form of Domestic Abuse

Forced Marriage should be recognised as a human rights abuse – and should always invoke child protection procedures within the organisation.

A forced marriage is a marriage conducted without the full consent of both parties, and one where duress is a factor. A forced marriage is not the same as an arranged marriage – in an arranged marriage the families take a leading role in choosing the marriage partner. The marriage is entered into freely by both people.

Warning signs

Warning signs can include a sudden drop in performance, truancy from lessons and conflicts with parents over continuation of the young person's education.

There may be excessive parental restrictions and control, a history of domestic abuse within the family, or extended absence through sickness or overseas commitments. Young persons may also show signs of depression or self-harming, and there may be a history of older siblings leaving education early to get married.

The justifications

Most cases of forced marriage in the UK involve South Asian families. This is partially a reflection of the fact that there is a large established South Asian population in the UK. It is clear, however, that forced marriage is not a solely South Asian phenomenon — there have been cases involving families from East Asia, the Middle East, Europe and Africa.

Some forced marriages take place in the UK with no overseas element, while others involve a partner coming from overseas, or a British citizen being sent abroad. Parents who force their children to marry often justify it as protecting them, building stronger families and preserving cultural or religious traditions. They may not see it as wrong.

Forced marriage can never be justified on religious grounds: every major faith condemns it and freely given consent is a pre-requisite of Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh marriage.

Culture

Often parents believe that they are upholding the cultural traditions of their home countries, when in fact practices and values there have changed. Some parents come under significant pressure from their extended families to get their children married.

The law

Although there is no specific criminal offence of 'forcing someone to marry' within England and Wales, forced marriage may involve criminal offences.

Perpetrators — usually parents or family members — could be prosecuted for offences including: threatening behaviour, assault, kidnap, abduction, imprisonment and in the worse cases murder.

Sexual intercourse without consent is rape, regardless of whether this occurs within the confines of a marriage. A girl who is forced into marriage is likely to be raped and may be raped until she becomes pregnant.

In addition, the Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act (2007) makes provision for protecting children, young people and adults from being forced into marriage without their full and free consent through Forced Marriage Protection Orders. Breaching a Forced Marriage Protection Order is a criminal offence.

The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 makes it a criminal offence, with effect from 16 June 2014, to force someone to marry. This includes:

- Taking someone overseas to force them to marry (whether or not the marriage takes place)

What to do if a young person seeks help

- The young person should be seen immediately in a private place, where the conversation cannot be overheard.
- The young person should be seen on her own, even if she attends with others.
- Develop a safety plan in case the young person is seen i.e. prepare another reason why you are meeting.
- Guidance from the Forced Marriage Unit details that Forced Marriage issues must be treated automatically as a child protection procedure. If you take such action against the young person's wishes you must inform the young person.
- Explain all options to the young person and recognise and respect her wishes. If the young person does not want to be referred to Children's Services, you will need to consider whether to respect the young person's wishes — or whether the young person's safety requires further action to be taken. If you take action against the young person's wishes you must inform the young person.
- Establish whether there is a family history of forced marriage — i.e. siblings forced to marry.
- Advise the young person not to travel overseas and discuss the difficulties she may face.
- Seek advice from the Forced Marriage Unit.
- Liaise with Police and Children's Services to establish if any incidents concerning the family have been reported.
- Refer to the local Police Child Protection Unit if there is any suspicion that there has been a crime or that one may be committed.
- Refer the young person with her consent to the appropriate local and national support groups, and counselling services.

What to do if the young person is going abroad imminently

- The Forced Marriage Unit advises education professionals to gather the following information if at all possible — it will help the unit to locate the young person and to repatriate her:
- Photocopy of the young person's passport for retention — encourage her to keep details of her passport number and the place and date of issue
- As much information as possible about the family (this may need to be gathered discretely)
- Full name and date of birth of young person under threat
- Young person's father's name
- Any addresses where the young person may be staying overseas
- Potential spouse's name
- Date of the proposed wedding
- The name of the potential spouse's father if known
- Addresses of the extended family in the UK and overseas Specific information

Forced marriage: what educators should not do

- Treat such allegations merely as domestic issues and send the young person back to the family home
- Ignore what the young person has told you or dismiss the need for immediate protection
- Approach the young person's family or those with influence within the community, without the express consent of the young person, as this will alert them to your concern and may place the young person in danger
- Contact the family in advance of any enquires by the Police, Children's Services or the Forced Marriage Unit, either by telephone or letter
- Share information outside child protection information sharing protocols without the express consent of the young person
- Breach confidentiality except where necessary in order to ensure the young person's safety
- Attempt to be a mediator

Further guidance is available from The Forced Marriage Unit: Tel: (+44) (0)20 7008 0151 between 9.00 a.m. and 5.00 p.m. Monday to Friday Emergency Duty Officer (out of hours): (+44) (0)20 7008 1500 E-mail: fm@fco.gov.uk Website: www.fco.gov.uk/forcedmarriage FMU publication: 'Multi-Agency Practice Guidelines: Handling Cases of Forced Marriage' June 09 See also: 'The Right to Choose – Multi-Agency Guidance in relation to Forced Marriage' Government Office - November 2008 and Interagency Guidance on Forced Marriage on the WSCB website.

Appendix 2 Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) – a form of Human Rights Abuse

What is FGM?

FGM includes procedures that intentionally alter or injure the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.

There are four known types of FGM, all of which have been found in the UK: Type 1 – clitoridectomy: partial or total removal of the clitoris and, in very rare cases, only the prepuce (the fold of skin surrounding the clitoris) Type 2 – excision: partial or total removal of the clitoris and the labia minora, with or without excision of the labia majora (the labia are the 'lips' that surround the vagina) Type 3 – infibulation: narrowing of the vaginal opening through the creation of a covering seal. The seal is formed by cutting and repositioning the inner, or outer, labia, with or without removal of the clitoris

Type 4 – other: all other harmful procedures to the female genitalia for non-medical purposes, e.g., pricking, piercing, incising, scraping and cauterising the genital area.

FGM is sometimes known as 'female genital cutting' or female circumcision. Communities tend to use local names for this practice, including 'sunna'.

Why is FGM carried out?

It is believed that:

- It brings status and respect to the girl and that it gives a girl social acceptance, especially for marriage.
- It preserves a girl's virginity/chastity.
- It is part of being a woman as a rite of passage.
- It upholds the family honour.
- It cleanses and purifies the girl.
- It gives the girl and her family a sense of belonging to the community.
- It fulfils a religious requirement believed to exist.
- It perpetuates a custom/tradition.
- It helps girls and women to be clean and hygienic.
- It is cosmetically desirable.
- It is mistakenly believed to make childbirth safer for the infant.

Religion is sometimes given as a justification for FGM. For example, some people from Muslim communities argue that the Sunna (traditions or practices undertaken or approved by the prophet Mohammed) recommends that women undergo FGM, and some women have been told that having FGM will make them 'a better Muslim'. However, senior Muslim clerics at an international conference on FGM in Egypt in 2006 pronounced that FGM is not Islamic, and the London Central Mosque has spoken out against FGM on the grounds that it constitutes doing harm to oneself or to others, which is forbidden by Islam.

Within which communities is FGM known to be practised?

According to the Home Office it is estimated that up to 24,000 girls under the age of 15 are at risk of FGM.

UK communities that are most at risk of FGM include Kenyan, Somali, Sudanese, Sierra Leonean, Egyptian, Nigerian and Eritrean, as well as non-

African communities including Yemeni, Afghani, Kurdish, Indonesian and Pakistani.

Obviously, this not to say that all families from the communities listed above practise FGM, and many parents will refuse to have their daughters subjected to this procedure. However, in some communities a great deal of pressure can be put on parents to follow what is seen as a cultural or religious practice.

Is FGM harmful?

FGM is extremely harmful and is often described as brutal because of the way it is carried out, and its short and long term effects on physical and psychological health.

FGM is carried out on children between the ages of 0 and 15, depending on the community in which they live. It is often carried out without any form of sedation and without sterile conditions. The girl or young woman is held down while the procedure of cutting takes place and survivors describe extreme pain, fear and feelings of abandonment.

Where the vagina is cut and then sewn up, only a very small opening may be left. This is often seen as a way to ensure that when the girl enters marriage, she is a virgin. In some communities the mother of the future husband and the girl's own mother will take the girl to be cut open before the wedding night.

Repeat urinal tract infections are a common problem for women who have undergone FGM, and for some, infections come from menstruation being restricted. Many women have problems during pregnancy and childbirth. The removal of the clitoris denies women physical pleasure during sexual activity and some groups will practise complete removal to ensure chastity.

Is it illegal?

FGM is internationally recognised as a violation of the human rights of girls and women, and is illegal in most countries – including the UK. The Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 came into force in 2004: The act makes it illegal to:

- Practice FGM in the UK
- Take girls who are British nationals or permanent residents of the UK abroad for FGM, whether or not it is lawful in that country
- Aid and abet, counsel or procure the carrying out of FGM abroad.
- The offence carries a penalty of up to 14 years in prison, and/or a fine.

Signs, symptoms and indicators

The following list of possible signs and indicators are not diagnostic, but are offered as a guide as to what kind of things should alert professionals to the possibility of FGM. Things that may point to FGM happening:

- A child talking about getting ready for a special ceremony
- A family arranging a long break abroad
- A child's family being from one of the 'at-risk' communities for FGM (see above)

- Knowledge that an older sibling has undergone FGM
- A young person talks of going abroad to be 'cut', or get ready for marriage.

Things that may indicate a child has undergone FGM:

- Prolonged absence from school or other activities
- Behaviour change on return from a holiday abroad, such as the child being withdrawn and appearing subdued
- Bladder or menstrual problems
- Finding it difficult to sit still, and looking uncomfortable
- Complaining about pain between their legs
- Mentioning something somebody did to them that they are not allowed to talk about
- Secretive behaviour, including isolating themselves from the group
- Reluctance to take part in physical activity
- Repeated urinal tract infection
- Disclosure.

What should schools and educational establishments do?

Where schools or educational establishments have a concern about a child, they should contact Children's Social Care Services. If the concerns are based on more concrete indicators – i.e., the young person says this is going to happen to them, or disclosure that it has happened to them or to an older sister – they should make a child protection referral. Schools and educational establishments should not:

- Contact the parents before seeking advice from children's social care;
- Make any attempt to mediate between the child/young person and parents.

It is important to keep in mind that the parents may not see FGM as a form of abuse; however, they may be under a great deal of pressure from their community and or family to subject their daughters to it. Some parents from identified communities may seek advice and support as to how to resist and prevent FGM for their daughters, and education about the harmful effects of FGM may help to make parents feel stronger in resisting the pressure of others in the community. Remember that religious teaching does not support FGM.

The 'one chance' rule

In the same way that we talk about the 'one chance rule' in respect of young people coming forward with fears that they may be forced into marriage, young people disclosing fears that they are going to be sent abroad for FGM are taking the 'one chance', of seeking help.

It is essential that we take such concerns seriously and act without delay. Never underestimate the determination of parents who have decided that it is right for their daughter to undergo FGM. Attempts to mediate may place the child/young person at greater risk, and the family may feel so threatened at

the news of their child's disclosure that they bring forward their plans or take action to silence her.

Mandatory Reporting Duty

Section 5B of the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (as inserted by section 74 of the Serious Crime Act 2015) will place a statutory duty upon teachers, along with social workers and healthcare professionals, to report to the police where they discover (either through disclosure by the victim or visual evidence) that FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl under 18. Those failing to report such cases will face disciplinary sanctions. It will be rare for teachers to see visual evidence, and they should not be examining young persons, but the same definition of what is meant by “to discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out” is used for all professionals to whom this mandatory reporting duty applies.

The Mandatory reporting duty will commence in October 2015. Once introduced, teachers must report to the police cases where they discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out (this can be done by telephoning 101). Unless the teacher has a good reason not to, they should still consider and discuss any such case with the designated safeguarding lead and involve children’s social care as appropriate.

Appendix 3 Indicators of Vulnerability to Radicalisation

1. Radicalisation refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and forms of extremism leading to terrorism.
2. Extremism is defined by the Government in the Prevent Strategy as: Vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also include in our definition of extremism calls for the death of members of our armed forces, whether in this country or overseas.
3. Extremism is defined by the Crown Prosecution Service as: The demonstration of unacceptable behaviour by using any means or medium to express views which:
 - Encourage, justify or glorify terrorist violence in furtherance of particular beliefs;
 - Seek to provoke others to terrorist acts;
 - Encourage other serious criminal activity or seek to provoke others to serious criminal acts; or
 - Foster hatred that might lead to inter-community violence in the UK.
4. There is no such thing as a “typical extremist”. Those who become involved in extremist actions come from a range of backgrounds and experiences, and most individuals, even those who hold radical views, do not become involved in violent extremist activity.
5. Young persons may become susceptible to radicalisation through a range of social, personal and environmental factors - it is known that violent extremists exploit vulnerabilities in individuals to drive a wedge between them and their families and communities. It is vital that staff are able to recognise those vulnerabilities.

6. Indicators of vulnerability include: Identity Crisis – the young person is distanced from their cultural / religious heritage and experiences discomfort about their place in society; Personal Crisis – the young persons may be experiencing family tensions; a sense of isolation; and low self- esteem; they may have dissociated from their existing friendship group and become involved with a new and different group of friends; they may be searching for answers to questions about identity, faith and belonging; Personal Circumstances – migration; local community tensions; and events affecting the young person’s country or region of origin may contribute to a sense of grievance that is triggered by personal experience of racism or discrimination or aspects of Government policy; Unmet Aspirations – the young person may have perceptions of injustice; a feeling of failure; rejection of civic life; Experiences of Criminality – which may include involvement with criminal groups, imprisonment, and poor resettlement / reintegration; Special Educational Need – young persons may experience difficulties with social interaction, empathy with others, understanding the consequences of their actions and awareness of the motivations of others.
7. However, this list is not exhaustive, nor does it mean that all young people experiencing the above are at risk of radicalisation for the purposes of violent extremism.
8. More critical risk factors could include:
 - Being in contact with extremist recruiters;
 - Accessing violent extremist websites, especially those with a social networking element;
 - Possessing or accessing violent extremist literature;
 - Using extremist narratives and a global ideology to explain personal disadvantage;
 - Justifying the use of violence to solve societal issues;
 - Joining or seeking to join extremist organisations;
 - Significant changes to appearance and / or behaviour;
 - Experiencing a high level of social isolation resulting in issues of identity crisis and / or personal crisis.

Appendix 4 Dealing with allegations made against an employee/volunteer

This procedure outlines what we will do if a child protection allegation is made against an adult working for or involved in The Switch Project.

The procedure provides clear direction to staff who are called upon to deal with such allegations and to manage investigations that may result from them.

The aims of this procedure are:

- To ensure that children and young people who attend The Switch Project, and any other children who may come to our attention, are protected and supported following an allegation that they may have been abused by an adult from within The Switch Project

- To ensure that there is a fair, consistent and robust response to any allegations made, so that the risk posed to other children by an abusive individual is managed effectively
- To facilitate an appropriate level of investigation into allegations, whether they are said to have taken place recently, at any time the person in question has been employed by/volunteered with The Switch Project, or prior to the person's involvement with The Switch Project
- To ensure that The Switch Project continues to fulfill its responsibilities towards members of staff and/or volunteers who may be subject to such investigations
- To ensure that individuals are able to continue in their role if they have been at the centre of allegations that are unfounded or deemed to be malicious in origin

This procedure applies to:

- Any member of staff or volunteer to whom an allegation of abuse has been made, that involves another member of staff or volunteer
- Anyone in a managerial position (including the named person for safeguarding/child protection) who may be required to deal with such allegations and manage investigations that result from them.

How you might find out about a possible case of abuse

Ways that allegations might be made against an adult working for or involved with The Switch Project include:

- A child/young person, parent/carer or professional organisation associated with that child making a direct allegation against a member of staff or trustee
- A child/young person, parent/carer or professional organisation associated with that child expressing discomfort with the behaviour of a member of staff or trustee that falls short of a specific allegation
- Another member of staff or volunteer directly observing behaviour that is a cause for concern
- The group/organisation being informed by the police or another statutory authority that a member of staff, volunteer or trustee is the subject of an investigation
- Information emerging from the renewal of a DBS check that suggests that a member of staff or volunteer may have committed an offence or been involved in an activity that could compromise the safety of the children they work with at The Switch Project
- A staff member or volunteer telling the organisation that they have been the subject of allegations, have actually harmed a child, or committed an offence against (or related to) a child.

What to do if an allegation is made or information is received

Is a child/young person in immediate danger or does she/he need emergency medical attention?

- If a child/young person is in immediate danger and is with you, remain with him/her and call the police.
- If the child is elsewhere, contact the police and explain the situation to them.
- If the child needs emergency medical attention, call an ambulance and, while you are waiting for it to arrive, get help from your first aider.

If this is the case, the concern needs to be discussed immediately with the manager of the group/organisation and the named person for child protection. One of these (either the manager or named person) should then, in a sensitive manner, remove the staff member involved in the allegation from direct contact with children.

It should then be explained to the person, in private, that there has been a complaint made against him/her, although the details of the complaint should not be given at this stage. The person should be informed that further information will be provided as soon as possible but that, until consultation has taken place with the relevant agencies and within the organisation, they should not be working with children. It may be best, under the circumstances, for the person to return home on the understanding that the manager or named person will telephone him/her later in the day.

The information provided to him/her at this stage will need to be very limited. This is because discussions need to take place first with other agencies who may need to be involved, such as the local authority children's safeguarding department or the police.

If the person is a member of a trades union or a professional organisation, he/she should be advised to make contact with that body. Arrangements should also be made for the member of staff or volunteer to receive ongoing support in line with the responsibilities the organisation has towards his or her welfare.

Conducting an investigation

Once any urgent necessary steps have been taken, attention can be given to dealing with the full implications of the allegations.

There are up to three possible lines of enquiry when an allegation is made:

- A police investigation of a possible criminal offence
- Enquiries and an assessment by the local authority children's social care department about whether a child is in need of protection
- Investigation by an employer and possible disciplinary action being taken against the person in question. This includes implementing a plan to manage any risk posed by the individual to children and young people in the workplace until the outcome of the other investigations and enquiries is known.

Reporting an allegation or concern

If the allegation is made by a child or family member to a member of staff, or if a member of staff observes concerning behaviour by a colleague at first hand, this should be reported immediately to at least one of the two Directors and the named person for child protection; The Switch Project lead on handling the allegation (Tim Wakefield, Director).

If a staff member has received an allegation or observed something of concern about one of the Directors, the staff member should report the allegation or concern to the other Director.

If the person who is the subject of the concern is a named person for child protection, the matter should be reported to the deputy safeguarding lead, Caroline Erskine-Murphy.

When to involve the local authority designated officer

The named person should report the allegation to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) within one working day if the alleged behaviour suggests that the person in question:

- May have behaved in a way that has harmed or may have harmed a child
- Has possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
- Has behaved towards a child in a way that suggests that he/she may be unsuitable to work with children.

This should also happen if the individual has volunteered the information him/herself.

Wolverhampton's Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) Paul Cooper

- **Tel: 01902 550661**
- **Secure email: paul.cooper@wolverhampton.gcsx.gov.uk - when personal or confidential information inc. names of individuals) needs to be sent to the Designated Officer**
- **Non-secure email: Paul.Cooper@wolverhampton.gov.uk - when no confidential information is being sent / general enquiries**

Dealing with a criminal offence

If there is reason to suspect that a criminal offence may have been committed (whether or not the threshold of 'significant harm' is reached), the local authority designated officer will contact the police and involve them in a similar strategy discussion, which will include the named person for child protection.

The named person and any other representative from The Switch Project should cooperate fully with any discussion involving the police and should ask for similar cooperation from the police in terms of the sharing of information relevant to the person's employment.

Discussions with the police should also explore whether there are matters that can be acted on in a disciplinary process while the criminal investigation takes place, or whether disciplinary action must wait until the criminal process is completed.

Talking to parents about the allegation or concern

If the child/young person's parents/carers do not already know about the allegation, the named person and the local authority designated officer need to discuss how they should be informed and by whom.

Talking to the person who is the subject of the allegation

The person at the centre of the allegation should be informed as soon as possible after the initial consultation with the local authority designated officer. However, if a strategy discussion with children's social care or the police is needed, this might have to take place before the person concerned can be spoken to in full. The police and children's social care department may have views on what information can be disclosed to the person.

Only limited information should be given to the person in question, unless the investigating authorities have indicated that they are happy for all information to be disclosed or unless there is no need for involvement from these statutory agencies.

The named person will need to keep in close communication with the local authority designated officer and the other agencies involved in order to manage the disclosure of information appropriately.

Taking disciplinary action

If the initial allegation does not involve a possible criminal offence, the named person and manager of the person at the centre of the allegation should still consider whether formal disciplinary action is needed.

If the local authority children's social care department has undertaken any enquiries to determine whether a child or children are in need of protection, the named person should take account of any relevant information from these enquiries when considering whether disciplinary action should be brought against the person at the centre of the allegations.

The following timings should be kept to, wherever possible, depending on the nature of the investigation:

- If formal disciplinary action is not needed, other appropriate action should be taken within three working days.
- If disciplinary action is required, and can be progressed without further investigation, this should take place within 15 days.
- If The Switch Project decides that further investigation is needed in order to make a decision about formal disciplinary action, the named person for child protection should discuss with the local authority designated officer the possibility of this investigation being done by an

independent person to ensure that the process is objective. Whether or not the investigation is handled internally or independently, the report should be presented to the named person within 10 working days.

- Having received the report of the disciplinary investigation, the named person should decide within two working days whether a disciplinary hearing is needed.
- If a hearing is needed, it should be held within 15 working days.

The named person should continue to liaise with the local authority designated officer during the course of any investigation or disciplinary proceedings, and should continue to use the local authority designated officer as a source of advice and support.

If a criminal investigation is required, it may not have been possible to make decisions about initiating disciplinary proceedings or about the person's future work arrangements until this is concluded. The police are required to complete their work as soon as reasonably possible and to set review dates, so the named person should either liaise with the police directly or via the local authority designated officer to check on the progress of the investigation and criminal process.

The police are also required to inform the employer straight away if the person is either convicted of an offence or acquitted or, alternatively, if a decision is made not to charge him/her with an offence or to administer a caution. In any eventuality, once the outcome is known, the named person should contact the local authority designated officer to discuss the issue of disciplinary proceedings.

If the allegation is substantiated and if, once the case is concluded, The Switch Project dismisses the person or ceases to use their services, or the person ceases to provide his/her services, the named person should consult with the local authority designated officer about referral of the incident to the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA). This should take place within a month.

Managing risk and supporting the person at the centre of the allegation

The first priority of The Switch Project must always be the safety and welfare of children and young people. However, as an employee or volunteer, the person who is the subject of the allegation has a right to be treated in a fair, sensitive and non-judgmental manner and to have his or her privacy respected as far as this ensures the safety of the child and other children.

Information about the allegation must only be shared on a need to know basis with those directly responsible for supervising and managing the staff member or volunteer. Any other information (for example, explanations to other staff members as to why the person is not at work or working to different arrangements) should be agreed and negotiated with the individual concerned.

If the person is a member of a trades union or a professional organisation, he/she should be advised to make contact with that body as soon as possible

after being informed that he/she is the subject of an allegation. Arrangements should also be made for him/her to receive ongoing support and information about the progress of the investigation.

The possible risk of harm to children and young people presented by the person who is the subject of an allegation needs to be carefully managed both during and after any conclusion to the investigation processes following the allegation. This means that The Switch Project may need to consider suspending the person if there is cause to suspect that a child may be at risk of significant harm, or if the allegation is serious enough to warrant investigation by the police, or if it is so serious that it could lead to dismissal. However, a decision to suspend should not be taken automatically, as there may be other ways of managing any risk presented by the person.

The situation should be discussed fully between the named person, the individual's manager/supervisor and the local authority designated officer, who will seek the views of the police and the children's social care department on the question of possible suspension. The conclusions of the discussion should also be carefully documented. Grounds for suspension should be clearly set out if this is the conclusion. If suspension is not the conclusion, then a clear plan should be made as to how any possible risk posed by the individual is to be managed. This could involve, for example, changes to the person's duties so that they do not have direct contact with children, and/or increased levels of supervision whilst at work.

If it is decided, once the case has been concluded, that a person who has been suspended or who has taken sick leave due to the stress induced by the allegation, is able to return to work, the named person and the manager/supervisor of the person who has been the subject of the allegations should consider how best to support the individual in this process. A plan to facilitate a return should be drawn up in consultation with the individual him/herself, and should take into account the need to manage any remaining child protection risks and also to support the person concerned after what will have been and will remain a very difficult experience.

If the decision is that the person cannot return to work and has to be dismissed or chooses to resign, the named person and the local authority designated officer should discuss the need for the matter to be referred to the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) and/or to any professional body to which the person may belong. The Switch Project does not enter into compromise agreements with individuals who resign following the conclusion of investigations into allegations made against them, and will always comply with its statutory obligations to share information about the individual in the interests of protecting children and young people.

If the allegation is found to be without substance or fabricated, The Switch Project will consider referring the child in question to the children's social care department for them to assess whether he/she is in need of services or whether he/she may have been abused by someone else. If it is felt that there has been malicious intent behind the allegation, The Switch Project will

discuss with the police whether there are grounds to pursue any action against the person responsible.

Keeping a record of the investigation

All those involved in dealing with the allegation should keep clear notes of the allegations made, how they were followed up, and any actions and decisions taken, together with the reasons for these.

These notes should be compiled gradually as the situation unfolds, with each entry being made as soon as possible after the event it describes. The notes should be signed and dated by the person making them, and the person's name should be printed alongside.

The notes should be kept confidentially on the file of the person who is the subject of the allegation. Discussion should take place with the LADO to determine whether any aspects of the notes may not be shared with the person concerned. If there are no reasons not to do so, a copy of the records should be given to the individual.

The notes should be held on file for a 10-year period, whether or not the person remains with The Switch Project for this period.

We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually.

Appendix 5 Dealing with allegations made against another child or young person

This procedure explains what we will do if child protection allegations are made against another child or young person involved with the organisation.

Aims and purpose of procedure

The aims of this procedure are:

- To ensure that young people who attend The Switch Project, and any others who may come to the attention of The Switch Project are protected and supported following an allegation that they may have been abused by another child or young person involved with The Switch Project
- To ensure that there is a fair, consistent and robust response to any allegations of this nature so that the risk posed to other children by the child/young person in question is managed effectively
- To facilitate an appropriate level of investigation into allegations, whether they relate to recent alleged activity, said to have taken place during the time that the child/young person in question has been involved with The Switch Project, or whether they relate to abuse which allegedly took place prior to the child/young person's involvement with The Switch Project

- To ensure that The Switch Project continues to fulfill its responsibilities towards children and young people who may be subject to such investigations and are in need of support
- To ensure that there is an appropriate response in situations where allegations are unfounded or deemed to be malicious in origin.

The purpose of the procedure is to provide a clear direction to staff that are called upon to deal with such allegations and to manage investigations and care plans which may result from them.

This procedure applies to:

- Any member of staff or volunteer to whom an allegation of abuse has been made which suggests that another child or young person is responsible
- Anyone in a managerial position, including the named person for child protection, who may be required to deal with such allegations and manage investigations and care plans that result from them.

Ways that allegations might be made against another child/young person involved with The Switch Project

- A child/young person, parent/carer or professional organisation associated with that child/young person might make a direct allegation against another child or young person.
- A child/young person, parent/carer or professional organisation associated with that child/young person might express discomfort with the behaviour of another child or young person that falls short of a specific allegation.
- Another child, member of staff or volunteer may directly observe behaviour from one child/young person towards another that gives cause for concern.
- The organisation may be informed by a parent or by the police or another statutory authority that a child or young person is the subject of an investigation.
- A child or young person may volunteer information to the organisation that he/she has harmed another child or is at risk of doing so, or has committed an offence against or related to a child.

Child protection or bullying?

When faced with a situation of one child or young person behaving inappropriately towards another, a decision needs to be made about whether the problem behaviour constitutes bullying or a child protection concern. This is a decision that needs to be reached by the named person for child protection, in consultation with the staff member responsible for the child, the

staff member's manager/supervisor and, if necessary, the local authority children's safeguarding department.

If the conclusion is that the behaviour is an example of bullying, and if both children attend the group/organisation, it needs to be dealt with under the anti-bullying policy and procedure.

If it is behaviour that could be described as child abuse and has led to the victim possibly suffering significant harm, then it must be dealt with under child protection procedures. This should include all incidents of sexual assault and all but the most minor incidents of physical assault.

This checklist can be used to help inform the decision:

Bullying

- The difference of power between the bully and the person being bullied is relatively small.
- The bullying behaviour may be from a number of children/young people acting in a group rather than from one child acting alone.
- It may also, but not necessarily, be directed towards a group of other children rather than an individual child.
- The behaviour involves teasing or making fun of someone, excluding a child from games and conversations, pressurising other children not to be friends with someone, spreading hurtful rumours or circulating inappropriate photographs/images/drawings, cyber bullying, shouting at or verbally abusing someone, stealing someone's possessions, making threats, or harassment on the basis of race, gender, sexuality or disability.
- The behaviour has not previously been a concern and the bully or bullies may have been responding to group pressure.
- The behaviour is perceived as bullying by the victim.

Please note: physical or sexual assault, or forcing someone to do something embarrassing, harmful or dangerous is also included in the list of bullying behaviours in this toolbox, but are the most likely to constitute a child protection concern if the victim suffers significant harm as a result of the behaviour.

Child protection concerns

The difference of power between the child who is abusing and the person being abused is significant e.g. there is an age difference of more than two years, there is a significant difference in terms of size or level of ability, the abuser holds a position of power (such as being a helper, volunteer or informal leader) or the victim is significantly more vulnerable than the other child or young person. The behaviour involves sexual assault or physical assault (other than the most minor physical assault).

The child who is the victim of the behaviour may have suffered significant harm.

- The behaviour may not necessarily be perceived by the victim as abusive, particularly if it is sexual in nature.
- The behaviour is not a one-off incident and is part of a pattern of concerning behaviour on the part of the child or young person who is abusing.
- The behaviour, if sexual, is not part of normal experimentation that takes place between children and young people.

Sexual abuse or normal experimentation?

All children and young people develop an interest in their own sexuality from a young age, and seek to learn about sex from their peers. It is important not to label normal, healthy behaviour as deviant or abusive. It is equally important not to allow sexually abusive behaviour perpetrated by one child or young person towards another to go unchecked, as this is harmful both for the victim and the perpetrator.

There are ways of assessing whether sexual behaviour between children and young people is abusive or not. Indicators of abusive behaviour include:

- There is a significant difference in age, dominance or understanding between the children/young people
- The behaviour was accompanied by the use of threats or bribes
- The behaviour was carried out in secret.

For the purposes of this procedure however, it is enough to say that if there is any question that the behaviour could be abusive, the matter should be discussed with the local authority children's safeguarding department or with the NSPCC Helpline (0808 800 5000).

This can initially take place without the names of the children or young people being disclosed, although such information will have to be provided if the view of the children's social care department or the NSPCC is that the behaviour may constitute significant harm and that an investigation is needed.

A decision will need to be made about when and who should inform the families of both the child who has been abused and the child who has allegedly perpetrated the abuse, as well as the local authority children's social care department.

If the child/young person who is the alleged victim is not known to The Switch Project, it is not our role to inform the child's family. Even if the child who is the alleged victim is known, the police and/or the health services, should be part of the decision making process if they have been contacted.

The paramount consideration should always be the welfare of the children and young people involved. Issues that will need to be taken into account are:

- The children/young people's wishes and feelings

- The parents' right to know (unless this would place the child who has allegedly perpetrated the abuse in danger, or would interfere with a criminal investigation)
- The impact of telling or not telling the parents
- The current assessment of the risk to the child who has been abused and the source of that risk
- The current assessment of any risk to the child who has allegedly perpetrated the abuse and the source of that risk
- Any risk management plans that currently exist for either child.

Once any immediate danger or emergency medical need has been dealt with, the procedure set out below should be followed:

- The member of staff who has been informed of the allegation or who has the concern, should make notes of what he/she has been told or of his/her direct concerns using the reporting form, and should discuss these with his/her supervisor/manager within 24 hours. The named person for child protection should also be involved in the discussion.
- If both children/young people are known to The Switch Project and if their families do not already know about the allegation or concern, the member of staff, manager or named person should discuss it with them unless:
 - The view is that someone (for example the child who has allegedly perpetrated the abuse) may be put in danger by the family being informed
 - Informing the family might interfere with a criminal investigation. If any of these circumstances apply, discussions with the families should only take place after this has been agreed with the local authority children's social care department.
 - If only the child who is alleged to have harmed another child is known to The Switch Project, then, subject to the considerations set out in above, discussions with only this child's family should take place.
 - The child who is the subject of the allegation should also be informed of what has been said about him/her. However, if the view is that children's social care or the police should be involved, the child should only be informed after discussion and agreement with these agencies. These agencies may have views about what information should be disclosed to the child/young person at this stage.
 - If there is still uncertainty about whether the allegation or concern constitutes a child protection issue, the named person (or supervisor/manager if named person not available) should discuss with children's social care department or with the NSPCC Helpline without disclosing the identity of either child/family.

What to do if you have child protection concerns

Is the child/young person who has been allegedly abused, or the child who has allegedly perpetrated the abuse, in immediate danger or does either of them need emergency medical attention?

- If either child or young person is in immediate danger and is with you, remain with him/her and call the police if you are unable to remove the danger yourself.
- If the child is elsewhere, contact the police and explain the situation to them.
- If a child needs emergency medical attention, call an ambulance and, while you are waiting for it to arrive, get help from your first aider.
- If the first aider is not available, use any first aid knowledge that you may have yourself to help the child.
- You also need to contact your supervisor/manager or named person for child protection to let them know what is happening.

If, having discussed the situation fully and taken advice if necessary, the manager/supervisor and the named person concludes that the alleged behaviour does not constitute a child protection issue, then consideration should be given to whether the anti-bullying policy and procedure should be used (if both children/young people are known to the organisation) and whether either or both children/young people should be referred for other services.

If the view is that the behaviour does indeed amount to a child protection issue, the named person should refer both children/young people to the local authority children's social care department and confirm the referral in writing within 24 hours.

Pending the outcome of the referral to the children's social care department and the possible investigation or assessment that may follow from this, any risk that may be posed to other children/young people by the child/young person who has allegedly harmed another child/young person will need to be carefully managed. This should be done on an inter-agency basis in accordance with procedures developed by the local safeguarding children board for children and young people who display harmful behaviour towards others.

The named person should enquire of the children's safeguarding department whether these procedures are being used and, if so, should ask to be involved in or at least kept informed of inter-agency decisions made in accordance with these procedures.

- If the procedures are not being used but The Switch Project remains concerned that the child/young person could pose a risk to other children/young people, then the named person and the manager should consider whether the child/young person can continue to be involved with The Switch Project and, if so, on what basis. This is a situation that needs to be kept under regular review as the investigation and assessment conducted by the statutory agencies is carried out and reaches a conclusion. It may also need to be reviewed regularly following the conclusion of the assessment process, as the child or

young person may be receiving support that should, with time, reduce the level of risk he/she presents.

- If the allegation is found to be without substance or fabricated, The Switch Project will consider referring the child/young person who was said to have been harmed to the children's social care department for them to assess whether he/she is in need of services (for example, the child may have been abused by someone else).
- If it is felt that there has been malicious intent behind the allegation, The Switch Project will discuss with the police whether there are grounds to pursue any action against the person responsible.

What should I say to a child/young person who says that he/she has abused another child/young person?

- Reassure the child that he/she has done the right thing by telling someone about it.
- Tell him/her that you now have to do what you can to keep him/her and the child who has been abused safe.
- Let the child know what you are going to do next and who else needs to know about it.
- Let the child tell his/her whole story. Don't try to investigate or quiz the child, but make sure that you are clear as to what he/she is saying.
- If there is no risk to the child from the child's parent/carer, then explain to the parent/carer what has happened. Do this firstly without the child there, and then summarise it again in front of the child so that it is an open subject between parent/carer and child. This may enable them to talk about it together more easily.
- Check out what the child expects to happen as a result of what he/she has said. Offer reassurance where appropriate but don't make or infer promises you can't keep.
- Reassure the child that, with help, the problem can be sorted out and that what has happened does not make him/her an abuser for life.
- Give the child the ChildLine phone number.
- Remember that the child who has behaved in this way is a child in need of support.
- Make sure that the parent/carer has support too.

Recording the concerns

Use The Switch Project Concern Form to record as much detail as possible – add other pages where necessary.

We are committed to reviewing our policy and good practice annually. This policy was last reviewed on: 23rd May 2018