

Child Protection Procedures

These procedures are to ensure that all staff and volunteers involved in working directly with children and young people on Back Up services, understand their responsibilities in safeguarding children.

What is child abuse?

Abuse and neglect are both forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by not acting to prevent harm.

Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting: by those known to them or, more rarely by a stranger.

Child abuse is any action by another person/s – adult or child – that causes significant harm to a child or a young person under the age of 18

Disabled children are more likely to experience abuse than their non-disabled peers.

It can happen to any child. Abuse is always wrong and it is never the child's fault.

Types of Abuse

Physical abuse

What is it?

When children are hurt or injured by parents or other people. For example, hitting, kicking, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, beating with objects, throwing and shaking are all types of physical abuse. Injuries can be pain, cuts, bruises and broken bones and even death. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child. Children living in a home where there is domestic violence are also considered to need protection even if the violence is not towards them.

Signs of physical abuse

Bumps and bruises don't always mean a child is being physically abused. All children have accidents, trips and falls. And there isn't just one sign or symptom to look out for. But it's important to be aware of the signs. If a child regularly has injuries, there seems to be a pattern to the injuries or the explanation doesn't match the injuries, then this should be reported. Examples of signs include bruises, burns, bite marks, seizures, swelling, vomiting, extremely sleepy, unusual behaviour.

Sexual abuse

What is it?

There are 2 types of sexual abuse – contact and non-contact abuse. **Contact abuse** is where an abuser makes physical contact with a child. This includes: sexual touching of any part of a child's body, whether they're clothed or not, using a body part or object to rape or penetrate a child, forcing a child to take part in sexual activities, making a child undress or touch someone else.

Non-contact abuse is where a child is abused without being touched by the abuser. This can be in person or online and includes: exposing or flashing; showing pornography; exposing a child to sexual acts; making them masturbate; forcing a child to make, view or share child abuse images or videos; making, viewing or distributing child abuse images or videos; forcing a child to take part in sexual activities or conversations online or through a smartphone.

Signs of sexual abuse

Knowing the signs of sexual abuse can help give a voice to children. Sometimes children won't understand that what's happening to them is wrong. Or they might be scared to speak out. Some of the signs you might notice include emotional or behavioural such as self harm, drug/alcohol misuse, changes in eating habits, avoiding being alone or frightened of a person they know. Some of the signs you might notice include physical such as bruises, pregnancy, bleeding, soreness in genital or anal area, sexually transmitted infections.

Emotional abuse

What is it?

Emotional abuse is any type of abuse that involves the continual emotional mistreatment of a child. It's sometimes called psychological abuse. Emotional abuse can involve deliberately trying to scare, humiliate, isolate or ignore a child. Emotional abuse is often a part of other kinds of abuse, which means it can be difficult to spot the signs or tell the difference, though it can also happen on its own. It can include blaming and scapegoating, humiliating or constantly criticising a child, not allowing a child to have friends, persistently ignoring a child, threatening a child, manipulating, never saying anything kind or positive.

Signs of emotional abuse

There might not be any obvious physical signs of emotional abuse or neglect. And a child might not tell anyone what's happening until they reach a 'crisis point'. Signs can include: seem unconfident or lack self-assurance; struggle to control their emotions; have difficulty making or maintaining relationships; act in a way that's inappropriate for their age. Signs in babies toddlers include: be overly-affectionate to strangers or people they don't know well; seem unconfident or anxious, not have a close relationship or bond with their parent. Signs in older children include: have extreme outbursts; seem isolated from their parents; struggle to control their emotions.



Neglect

What is it?

Neglect is the ongoing failure to meet a child's basic needs and the most common form of child abuse. A child might be left hungry or dirty, or without proper clothing, shelter, supervision or health care. This can put children and young people in danger. And it can also have long term effects on their physical and mental wellbeing.

Neglect can be a lot of different things, which can make it hard to spot. But broadly speaking, there are 4 types of neglect; **physical neglect** where a child's basic needs, such as food, clothing or shelter, are not met or they aren't properly supervised or kept safe; **educational neglect** where a parent doesn't ensure their child is given an education; **emotional neglect** where a child doesn't get the nurture and stimulation they need. This could be through ignoring, humiliating, intimidating or isolating them; **medical neglect** where a child isn't given proper health care. This includes dental care and refusing or ignoring medical recommendations.

Signs of neglect.

Neglect can be really difficult to spot. Having one of the signs doesn't necessarily mean a child is being neglected. But if you notice multiple signs that last for a while, they might show there's a serious problem. Signs may include: poor appearance and hygiene such as unwashed, dirty or smelly clothes; health and development problems such as untreated injuries, medical or dental issues, regular illness, missed appointments; housing and family issues such as being left alone for a long time, living in unsuitable home environment, or taking on role to care for other family members; or change in behaviour such as missing school, becoming aggressive, depressed, clingy or withdrawn.



Domestic abuse

What is it?

Domestic abuse is any type of controlling, bullying, threatening or violent behaviour between people in a relationship. It can seriously harm children and young people and witnessing domestic abuse is child abuse. It's important to remember domestic abuse: can happen inside and outside the home; can happen over the phone, on the internet and on social networking sites; can happen in any relationship and can continue even after the relationship has ended; both men and women can be abused or abusers.

Domestic abuse can be emotional, physical, sexual, financial or psychological, such as: kicking, hitting, punching or cutting; rape (including in a relationship); controlling behaviour; not letting someone leave the house; reading emails, text messages or letters; threatening to kill someone or harm them; threatening to another family member or pet.

Signs of domestic abuse.

It can be difficult to tell if domestic abuse is happening and those carrying out the abuse can act very different when other people are around. Children and young people might also feel frightened and confused, keeping the abuse to themselves.

Signs that a child has witnessed domestic abuse can include: aggression or bullying; anti-social behaviour, like vandalism; anxiety, depression or suicidal thoughts; attention seeking; bed-wetting, nightmares or insomnia; constant or regular sickness, like colds, headaches and mouth ulcers; drug or alcohol use; eating disorders; problems in school or trouble learning; tantrums; withdrawal.

There are also emerging types and methods of child abuse, including but not limited to:

- Female genital mutilation (FGM)
- Trafficking of children in order to exploit them sexually, financially, via domestic servitude, or via the involvement in activity such as the production and sale of illegal drugs
- Abuse linked to beliefs such as spirit possession or witchcraft
- Radicalisation and the encouragement or coercion to become involved in terrorist attacks
- Online abuse
- Bullying and cyberbullying
- Criminal exploitation and gangs
- Grooming

Other causes for concern can include but not limited to:

- mental health problems can be an indicator that a child has suffered abuse, neglect or exploitation
- a child's risk of homelessness and the duty to refer early on to a housing authority if this is suspected, especially with 16 and 17 year olds

Safeguarding disabled children

Children who have disabilities are at an increased risk of being abused compared with their non-disabled peers (Jones et al, 2012). They are also less likely to receive the protection and support they need when they have been abused (Taylor et al, 2014).

Factors that contribute to disabled children being at a greater risk of abuse include:

- Communication barriers
- Increased isolation
- Dependency on others
- Inadequate support
- Misunderstanding the signs of abuse

Safeguarding LGBTQ+ children

We recognise the additional risks and vulnerability factors for LGBTQ+ children and young people.

Concerns about LGBTQ+ children and young people should be dealt with sensitively, taking into consideration any complicated feelings they might have about their sexuality or gender identity.

You should be mindful that LGBTQ+ children and young people might not want to or feel ready to come out to everyone in their life. It is important to understand that sharing a child or young person's gender identity or sexuality might put them at additional risk if the person you tell is not supportive. You should only share information about a child or young person's sexuality or gender identity if they give you permission, or if it's relevant to a child protection concern such as if they are using adult dating apps.

Recognising Abuse

How you could become aware of abuse:

- ✱ A child might tell you
- ✱ Someone else might tell you a child has told them, or that they strongly believe a child has been or is being abused
- ✱ A child might show some signs of physical injury for which there appears to be no satisfactory explanation
- ✱ A child's behaviour may indicate to you that it is possible that he or she is being abused
- ✱ Something in the behaviour of a staff member, volunteer, parent or young person, or in the way they relate to a child, alerts you or makes you feel uncomfortable in some way
- ✱ You observe one child abusing another



Responding to a cause for concern, signs or suspicions

Our **child protection policy** emphasises the need to be valuing, listening to and respecting children and the fact that in some cases, for the welfare of the child, we may need to share information with other agencies to ensure the child and their family get the support they need to keep the child safe.

Our **code of conduct** gives guidelines on safe behaviour (e.g. avoid spending time with young people unobserved) and is there to protect you as well as children and young people.

If a staff member or volunteer has any concerns about a child they must always place the child or adult's welfare and interests as the paramount consideration. It is essential that you pass on any concern immediately to someone from the safeguarding team in office hours or if out of hours. Chris Yeates is the point of contact for out of hours on 020 8078 8573.

Our safeguarding team consists of:

- Designated Safeguarding Children Officer – (Ella Provan)
- Designated Safeguarding Adults Officer - (Chris Yeates)
- Director of Services, (Kevin Filby)
- Chief Executive, (Abigail Lock)
- Senior Lead for Safeguarding and Trustee (Chair of Services Committee)

If an employee believes a child or adult to be at immediate risk of harm or abuse, and/or a criminal offence is taking place, they must take immediate steps to protect that person by calling 999. Employees must then contact their line manager or the out of office hours safeguarding contact (Chris Yeates on 020 8078 8573) to let them know what has happened and to take advice on next steps.

In your role, you may have limited opportunity to recognise a cause for concern with a child. But it is really important that, if you were at all concerned about a child, you would know what to do. Back Up volunteers across our services receive a child protection training session during training weekends so that they can fully understand these procedures, including what would be a cause for concern, and be able to discuss different scenarios and what they should do.

It is important to create an environment where children feel able to disclose abuse or talk about anything that is concerning them. Children need to be able to recognise abuse, know that it is wrong and be aware of who they can talk to about it. You can help to make this possible by:

- Build trust by treating children with respect
- Be positive about children and reinforce positive messages about those who seek help
- Encourage parents to support their child in seeking help

Barriers to disclosing abuse

Children may find it difficult to disclose abuse because they:

- Feel like they may not be believed or taken seriously
- Feel worried or embarrassed
- Fear the consequences of asking for help
- Worry they will make the situation worse
- Find formal procedures overwhelming

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

The Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Act 2003 provides a mandatory duty for reporting FGM. This legislation requires regulated health and social care professionals and teachers in England and Wales to make a report to the police where, in the course of their professional duties, they either:

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

3 R's of Child Protection



Recognise

Report

Record

Responding to a child making an allegation of abuse

- **Stay calm.**
- **Listen** carefully and actively to what is said.
- **Reflect back** what you have been told to check your understanding.
- Take it **seriously**.
- **Don't react strongly** or jump to conclusions.
- Find an appropriate early opportunity, if possible and if it does not put the child at risk, to explain that it is likely the information will need to be shared with others - **do not promise to keep secrets**
- **Allow** the child to continue at his/her own pace.
- **Do not investigate.** If anything needs to be clarified in order to understand the safeguarding risk, ask clear, open questions – tell, explain, describe (TED) can be a helpful way of remembering the kinds of questions that it's ok to ask.
- **Reassure** the child that they have done the right thing in telling you.
- **Tell them** what you will do next and with whom the information will be shared.
- **Record** in writing, within 24 hours, what was said and using the child's own words. Note the date, time, any names mentioned, to whom the information was given and ensure the record is signed and dated. Do not use your phone to take photos or write the report as it could be taken away and then the record is lost.
- If the child is under the duty of care of the hospital contact **a member of hospital staff** as soon as possible.
- Speak to Back Up's **Designated Safeguarding Children Officer or someone from the safeguarding team listed above**, within 24 hours to notify them about what happened and what action was taken
- Where there is a serious and immediate threat to a child or young person then you should phone the police / ambulance on 999 as the first point of action.
- Remember you are not responsible for deciding whether abuse has or has not occurred, and that concerns about the welfare of a child always override any concerns about confidentiality. It is your responsibility to **report** any concern.

Responding to signs or suspicions of abuse

- **Ask questions of individuals for clarification only**, and at all times avoid asking questions that suggest a particular answer.
- **Tell the person involved** what you will do next and with whom the information will be shared - if this poses no risk to anyone involved.
- **Record** in writing your concerns within 24 hours. Note the date, time, and signs, what has been discussed (including any names mentioned and using the other person's words to record what they said), to whom the information was given and ensure the record is signed and dated. Do not use your phone to take photos or write the report as it could be taken away and then the record is lost.
- If the child is under the duty of care of the hospital, contact **a member of hospital staff** as soon as possible.
- Speak to Back Up's **Designated Safeguarding Children Officer** within 24 hours to notify them about what happened and what action was taken.
- Remember you are not responsible for deciding whether abuse has or has not occurred, and that concerns about the welfare of a child always override any concerns about confidentiality.

What happens next?

There is always a commitment to work in partnership with parents or carers where there are concerns about their children. Therefore, in most situations, it would be important to talk to parents or carers to help clarify any initial concerns. For example, if a child seems withdrawn, they may have experienced bereavement in the family.

However, there are circumstances in which a child might be placed at even greater risk were such concerns to be shared, e.g. where a parent or carer may be responsible for the abuse or not able to respond to the situation appropriately.

In these situations, or where concerns still exist, any suspicion, allegation, or incident of abuse must be reported to the person in charge as soon as possible, and recorded.

If a child is suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm, we may decide to share information with appropriate agencies or professionals without the child's or their parent's consent.

The Designated Safeguarding Officer, with support from other members of the safeguarding team will consider whether to:

- 1) Contact MASH or the devolved equivalent of MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) or local social services to make a referral or seek further advice
- 2) Call the police / ambulance
- 3) Gather further information / initiate an Early Help Assessment

If there is any uncertainty around what next steps to take, the local MASH or the devolved equivalent of MASH (multi-agency safeguarding hub) or the NSPCC helpline (0808 800 5000) will be contacted to seek further advice.

Allegations against a member of staff, volunteer or another organisation

These procedures also apply if there is an allegation or suspicion against a worker (staff or volunteer) of Back Up or another organisation. The GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 do not prevent, or limit, the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children and young people safe.

In the event of allegations of abuse, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) must be informed of all allegations that come to Back Up's attention and appear to meet the criteria to discuss the content of the allegation.

Allegations made against a child or young person involved in Back Up

When a child abuses another, this can be referred to as 'peer-on-peer abuse'. They may not realise that they are doing so and could include behaviour such as bullying, online abuse, sexting, sexual abuse, emotional or physical abuse. Sometimes children also may be abusive towards adults.

If allegations have been made against a child you should speak to your nominated child protection lead, who can advise you on the best way to proceed. It is really important to do this, so you respond in the appropriate way and avoid making the behaviour worse. The needs of everyone involved need to be considered.

A child may tell you themselves that they have behaved abusively. Use non-judgemental language when responding to them and let them know that they've done the right thing in telling you. Reassure the child that they can get help to change their behaviour and remember that they may need support too – you could suggest that they contact ChildLine. You should also report this to Back Ups' Safeguarding Lead for CYP.

You might see a child behaving inappropriately and decide to talk to them about this immediately, in order to manage the behaviour. It is important to remember that they may not realise their behaviour is unacceptable. Talk to them calmly and explain why their behaviour is unsuitable and what they can do to improve it. You can read more about how to manage behaviour in our [Code of Conduct](#).

Whistleblowing

All staff and volunteers should feel able to raise concerns about any wrongdoing or unsafe practice and the senior leadership team will always take such concerns seriously. The wrongdoing might have happened in the past, be happening now, or be something the whistleblower is concerned may happen in the near future (Gov.uk, 2019).

Legislation across the UK ensures that you shouldn't be treated unfairly or lose your job because you 'blow the whistle' (Gov.uk, 2021).

You should refer in the first instance to Back Up's [Whistleblowing Policy](#) for information and guidance.

Members of Staff can also access the NSPCC whistleblowing helpline if they do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally. Staff can call: 0800 028 0285 (8:00 AM to 8:00 PM Monday to Friday) or email: help@nspcc.org.uk.