



Putting young people first

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# WHEELS VOCATIONAL LIFE SKILLS CENTRE

## Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

**Adopted September 2013**

**Date of Last Review: September 2024**

**Next Review: September 2025**

Company Registration No. 06608327

Registered Charity No. 1157795

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Wheels Vocational and Life Skills Centre has a legal and moral duty to create and maintain the safest possible environment for young people and to safeguard them from neglect, physical, sexual or emotional abuse. We therefore have a duty to:

1. Ensure that all staff and volunteers are carefully selected, undergo the Centre's DBS procedure and understand and accept their responsibility for the safety of young people in their care.
2. Ensure that the young person's welfare is of paramount importance, regardless of age, gender, ability or race, when planning, organising, advising on and delivering activities.
3. Respond swiftly and appropriately to all suspicions or allegations of abuse, and to ensure confidential information is restricted to the appropriate external agencies.
4. Raise the awareness of staff and volunteers of child protection issues through the provision of training and attending regular Safeguarding Training Sessions.
5. Monitor and review the effectiveness of this policy on a regular basis.

### **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSO)**

The designated staff member with specific responsibility for Safeguarding at Wheels Vocational and Life Skills Centre is **Jason Garratt**. (Lead DSO). In his absence, **Clare Dulson** (DSO) has specific responsibility for all Safeguarding matters.

### **DEFINITION OF SAFEGUARDING AND PROMOTING WELFARE**

The legal definition of the Children's Act 2004 defines safeguarding as:

- Protecting young people from maltreatment.
- Preventing impairment of a young person's health and development.
- Ensuring that young people are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.
- Enabling young people to have optimum life chances and to enter adulthood successfully.

### **SAFEGUARDING HAS THREE ASPECTS**

- The creation of a culture in which children are valued and their right to be safe is upheld.
- The management of risk to minimise circumstances where harm may befall children.
- To take all necessary action to address concerns about the welfare of young people, working with local agencies as appropriate.

### **CORE SAFEGUARDING PRINCIPLES**

- Young people should be free to grow and develop their potential, without fear of violence, abuse or exploitation. The ultimate responsibility lies with adults to provide care and support.
- All young people have a fundamental right to protection from abuse and exploitation and should receive the same degree of protection as adults.
- Listening to young people is paramount in ensuring their safety and they should be enabled to participate appropriately in their protection plans.
- Wheels Vocational and Life Skills Centre staff recognise the importance of how issues of age, gender, race, culture, disability and sexuality can impact on keeping young people safe.
- Keeping young people safe is an integral part of our work at Wheels Vocational and Life Skills Centre.
- Partnership working with local agencies is essential for the protection of young people.

### **Please Note:**

Wheels Vocational and Life Skills Centre adheres to the Statutory Guidance in the publications of: "**Keeping Children Safe in Education**" (September 2024), "**Working Together to Safeguard Children**" (December 2023), "**Children Missing Education**" (August 2024), and associated documents therein. We actively promote fundamental British values.

### **1. THE COMPONENTS FOR KEEPING YOUNG PEOPLE SAFE ARE:**

- a) **Accountability**
  - clear strategies for safeguarding
  - clear organised focus on risk management.
- b) **Acting on concerns of abuse**
  - consistent procedures for reporting concerns
  - working jointly with local agencies as appropriate
  - management of allegations against staff.
- c) **Recording and information sharing**
  - standardised recording policy
  - recording and reviewing file information to identify patterns of risk
  - information sharing with local agencies as appropriate.
- d) **Recruitment**
  - standard recruitment processes to ensure consistency
  - requirement for references and criminal record checks
  - scrutiny of employment history (identifying gaps).
- e) **Supervision**
  - regular formal supervision at all levels
  - regular staff appraisal.
- f) **Empowering children**
  - ensure that Wheels Vocational and Life Skills Centre remains child-centred, and staff are child focused
  - commitment to equality / diversity issues, showing an awareness of issues around gender, sexual orientation, religion or religious practice, disability and race, extremism, and radicalisation
  - development of participation
  - our commitment that any disclosure will be taken seriously
  - formal complaints procedure in place.
- g) **Raising concerns about poor and dangerous practice**
  - procedures to be clear and backed up by a disciplinary code which allows challenges to poor practice
  - discuss in supervision any concerns with the Headteacher
  - no victimisation of 'whistle blowers'
  - update training for all staff
  - discussing project practise within team meetings / daily debriefings.
- h) **Learning and Development**
  - induction and regular training on roles and responsibilities of safeguarding
  - learning and development opportunities to support the implementation of safe positive behaviour management.

### **Children who may be particularly vulnerable**

Some children are at increased risk of neglect, abuse or exploitation. Many factors can contribute to an increase in risk, including prejudice and discrimination, isolation, social exclusion, communication issues and reluctance on the part of some adults to accept that abuse happens, or who have a high level of tolerance in respect of neglect.

To ensure that all our children receive equal protection, we will give special consideration and attention to children who are:

- Disabled or have special educational needs.
- Living in a known domestic abuse situation.
- Affected by known parental substance misuse.
- Asylum seekers.
- Living away from home.
- Vulnerable to being bullied or engaging in bullying.
- Living in temporary accommodation.

- Living transient lifestyles.
- Living in chaotic, neglectful, and unsupportive home situations that may result in children missing education. (CME)
- Vulnerable to discrimination and maltreatment on the grounds of race, ethnicity, religion or sexuality.
- Involved directly or indirectly in prostitution or child trafficking.
- Do not have English as a first language.
- Vulnerable to radicalisation or extremism. In our local area this is more likely to be focused on extreme right-wing views. (Appendix 4)

## 2. SIGNS AND TYPES OF ABUSE, NEGLECT OR EXPLOITATION

Some signs that could alert staff and volunteers to the fact that a young person might be being abused or neglected include:

- Having bruises, bleeding, burns, fractures or other injuries.
- Showing signs of pain or discomfort.
- Keeping arms and legs covered, even in warm weather.
- Being concerned about changing clothes in front of peers.
- Looking unkempt and uncared for.
- Changing their eating habits.
- Having difficulty in making or sustaining friendships.
- Appearing fearful.
- Being reckless with regard to their own or other's safety.
- Self-harm.
- Frequently missing centre or arriving late.
- Showing signs of not wanting to go home.
- Displaying a change in behaviour – from quiet to aggressive, or happy-go-lucky to withdrawn.
- Challenge authority.
- Becoming disinterested in their work.
- Being constantly tired or preoccupied.
- Being wary of physical contact.
- Being involved in, or particularly knowledgeable about drugs or alcohol.
- Displaying sexual knowledge or behaviour beyond that normally expected for their age.

If a young person displays these signs, it does not necessarily mean that they are being abused. Similarly, there may not be any signs; you may just feel that something is wrong. If you are worried, it is **not** your responsibility to decide if it is abuse, but it **is** your responsibility to act on your concerns by reporting it to the named lead person / manager.

## 3. PARTICULAR TYPES OF ABUSE

### Physical abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child (this used to be called Munchausen's Syndrome by Proxy, but is now more usually referred to as fabricated or induced illness).

### Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child, such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only for meeting the needs of another person. It may feature age – or developmentally- inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying, causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone.

## **Sexual abuse**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative and non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

## **Neglect**

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance misuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food and clothing or shelter, including exclusion from home or abandonment; failing to protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; failure to ensure adequate supervision, including the use of inadequate caretakers; or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs. (*Definitions taken from Working Together to Safeguard Children*)

## **Bullying**

While bullying between children is not a separate category of abuse and neglect, it is a very serious issue that can cause considerable anxiety and distress. At its most serious level, bullying is thought to result in up to 12 child suicides each year. All incidences of bullying should be reported and will be managed through our anti-bullying procedures as outlined in our "Safe to Learn" Policy. (See Item 10 – Specific Circumstances -Bullying). All students and parents receive a precis of the anti-bullying procedures on joining the centre and the subject of bullying is addressed at regular intervals in the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum. If the bullying is particularly serious, or the anti-bullying procedures are deemed to be ineffective, the Headteacher may consider implementing child protection procedures. If a member of staff has a concern about a particular student, they should follow the centre's normal safeguarding procedures.

Wheels Vocational and Life Skills Centre has a long tradition of providing a safe environment for debating controversial issues and helping our cohort of students to understand how they can influence and participate in appropriate and beneficial decision making.

## **Radicalisation**

We enjoy the benefits of students from various ethnic backgrounds and it is our duty to protect our students from extremist views from whichever 'organisation' may approach them. Our centre mainly admits students from across the local boroughs where there is high activity by the organisations such as 'The English Defence League' and 'The British National Party'. Both of these have junior branches, the most active of which we believe to be The Coseley Patriots. It is not our intention or duty to carry out unnecessary intrusion into family life, but as with any other safeguarding role, we must take action if we observe behaviour of concern.

## **Female Genital Mutilation**

**Female genital mutilation (FGM)** is a collective term for procedures, which include the removal of part or all of the external female genitalia for cultural or other non-therapeutic reasons. The practice is medically unnecessary, extremely painful and has serious health consequences, both at the time when the mutilation is carried out and in later life. The procedure is typically performed on girls aged between 4 and 13, but in some cases, it is performed on new-born infants or on young women before marriage or pregnancy.

FGM has been a criminal offence in the UK since the Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act 1985 was passed. The Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 replaced the 1985 Act and makes it an offence for the first time for UK nationals or permanent UK residents to carry out FGM abroad, or to aid, abet, counsel or procure the carrying out of FGM abroad, even in countries where the practice is legal. For more detail, please refer to the government **Multi-Agency Guidelines on Female Genital Mutilation** (issued in July 2020) also Appendix 1.

## **Peer on Peer Abuse**

The UK's first study (2014) into teenage relationship abuse and exploitation, found that one in three girls surveyed had experienced sexual violence from a partner before they turned 18 and 25% had been in

physically abusive relationships. Young people have reported physical, sexual and emotional abuse by peers as a means of surviving in gang affected neighbourhoods but, we must not assume that this can only take place in these areas.

- Peer on peer abuse can refer to physical, emotional, sexual or financial abuse and coercive control in their intimate relationships.
- It can also refer to Child Sexual Exploitation. In addition, it refers to serious youth violence, including murder, rape and GBH between young people.

Our ethos aims to inform students of what Peer on Peer abuse is about, how to deal with it or report it. This curriculum has, at its foundation, the aim to support students on how to make appropriate choices.

Wheels VLS works with vulnerable children involving other agencies where appropriate, to try to ensure peer on peer abuse does not occur and when it does, to ensure that it is reported to the most appropriate agency, usually Children's Services and/or the Police.

### **Honour Based Violence**

Honour based violence is a violent crime or incident which may have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family or community.

It is often linked to family members who mistakenly believe someone has brought shame to their family or community by doing something that is not in keeping with the traditional beliefs of their culture. For example, honour-based violence might be committed against people who:

- become involved with a boyfriend or girlfriend from a different culture or religion
- want to get out of an arranged marriage
- want to get out of a forced marriage
- wear clothes or take part in activities that might not be considered traditional within a particular culture.

**Women and girls are the most common victims of honour-based violence however it can also affect men and boys.** Crimes of 'honour' do not always include violence. Crimes committed in the name of 'honour' might include:

- domestic abuse
- threats of violence
- sexual or psychological abuse
- forced marriage
- being held against your will or taken somewhere you don't want to go
- assault

A forced marriage is one that is carried out without the consent of both people. This is very different to an arranged marriage, which both people will have agreed to.

Like all concerns, any issues regarding information or suspicions which may relate to Honour based violence, must be reported to the DSO immediately.

### **Child-on-child Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment**

This is a complex area. Part 5 of KCSIE (Sept 2023) must be followed. **ANY** suspicions by Staff must be reported to the DSO for immediate investigation.

## **4. KEY DO'S AND DON'T'S IF A CHILD REPORTS ABUSE**

### **Always:**

- ✓ Stay calm – ensure the young person is safe and feels safe.

- ✓ Allow the young person to speak without interruption, accepting what you have been told. (This should not be seen as believing or disbelieving what you have been told).
- ✓ Reassure the young person and stress that they are not to blame, tell them that they are right to tell you – but **do not** promise to keep it a secret.
- ✓ Alleviate feelings of guilt and isolation, without passing any judgement.
- ✓ Tell the young person that you will try to offer support, but you will have to pass the information on.
- ✓ Make a note as soon as possible after the event detailing what the young person has disclosed. Use the exact language and vocabulary the young person used.

**Never:**

- ✗ Rush into details that may be inappropriate.
- ✗ Make promises you cannot keep.
- ✗ Take sole responsibility – consult someone else so that you can protect the young person and gain support for yourself.
- ✗ Be extremely careful not to ask any leading questions when talking to the young person as this could potentially jeopardize any further criminal investigation.

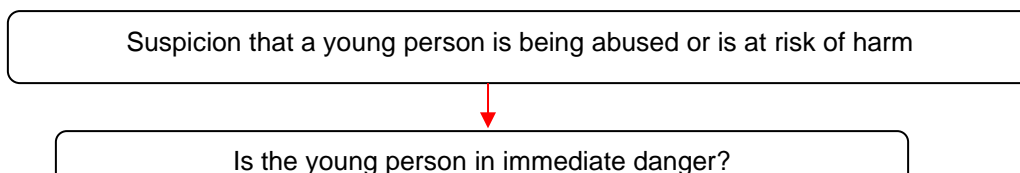
**WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE AND WHAT CONSTITUTES A CONCERN?**

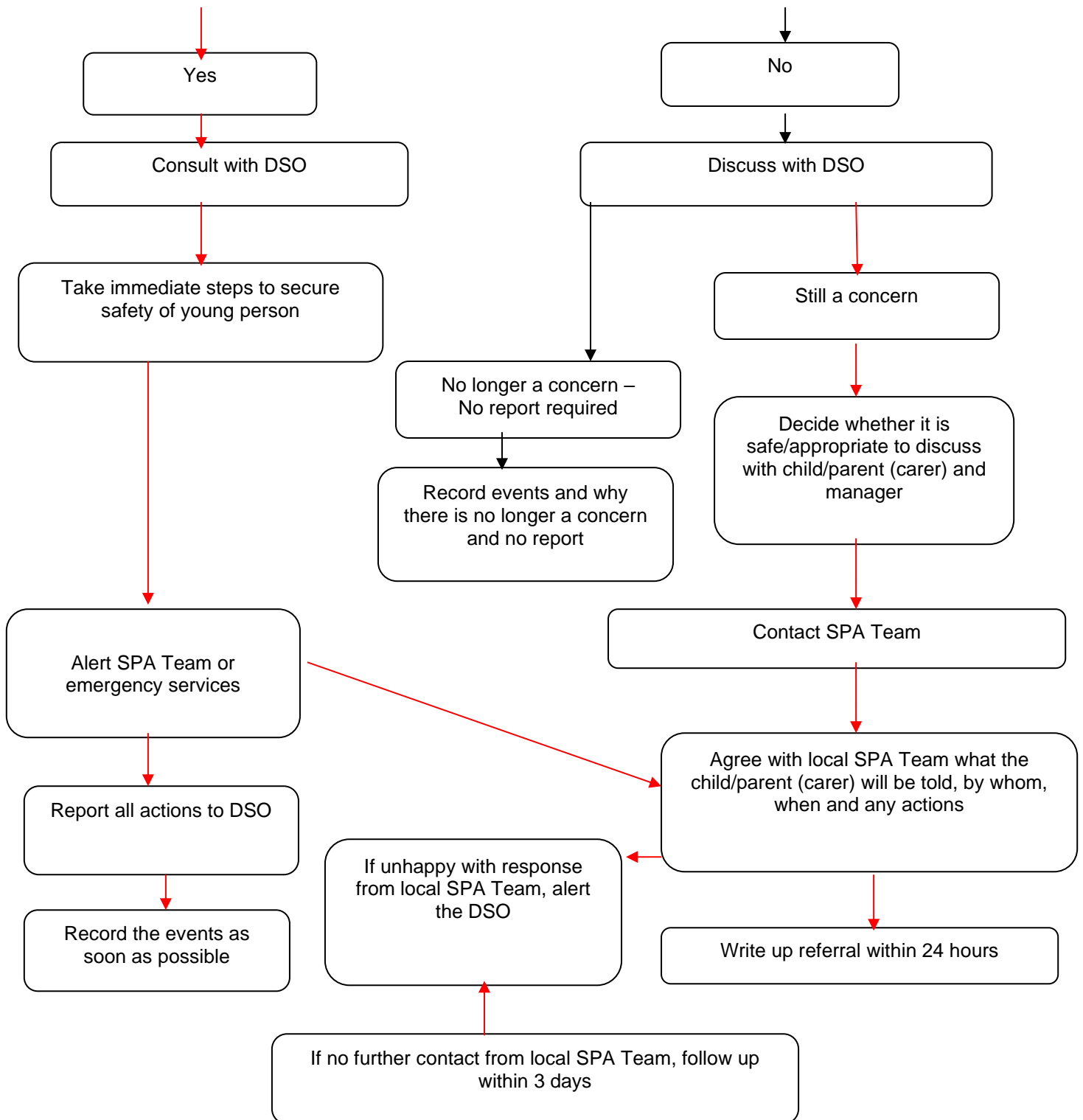
- Child abuse can be physical injury, sexual assault, exploitation, physical neglect or emotional abuse. Abuse can be about what adults do or fail to do.
- You may become concerned when a young person tells you they are being harmed; someone reports that a young person is being harmed or you witness a young person being harmed. You could become concerned following a series of incidents that leads you to think that a young person is being harmed or is at risk of harm or abuse.

**5. IF A CHILD DISCLOSES THAT THEY ARE BEING ABUSED**

- Incidents or concerns must be reported to the DSO who must then decide whether to inform Dudley Child Protection Services – Single Point Access Team (SPA – 0300 555 0050).
- If a young person tells you about an incident of abuse, always offer reassurance, listen and take seriously what they are saying.
- Tell the young person you will support them, but you have to pass the information on.
- Do not make promises you cannot keep.
- Do not contact the alleged abuser(s).
- An allegation of abuse or neglect may lead to a criminal investigation. Do not jeopardise a police investigation by asking the young person leading questions or attempting to investigate the allegations of abuse.
- Any decision not to refer a child protection issue must be recorded.
- If a referral to the SPA Team is to be made, an assessment of risk must be made when informing the family about the referral and agreement reached on action to be taken.
- Any relevant information on the young person’s development needs and the parents/carers ability must be disclosed with the referral.
- Referrals of suspected child abuse must be confirmed by a written report to SPA Team within 24 hours, with details of evidence (dates, times, action taken, persons involved and contacts).

**Flowchart: RECORD OF EVENTS**  
**Responding to concerns that a young person may be being abused.**





## 6. ACTION ON OCCURRENCE OF SUSPICION OF CHILD ABUSE

### Allegations against any staff member or volunteer

- An allegation of abuse against staff or volunteers must be dealt with under Child Protection procedures. The Headteacher must be informed and the incident logged. If the allegation refers to Jason Garratt **Clare Dulson must be informed** who will contact the appropriate agencies.



- An immediate decision must be made about whether the person against whom the allegations are made can continue in their role. They may have to transfer to another role or be suspended from their role while an investigation takes place. This decision must be taken by a DSO.
- Support must be offered to the member of staff under investigation. Any support must be separate from the investigation. Volunteers should have support as appropriate.
- At the conclusion of the case, staff should review the circumstances to determine whether any improvements could be made to procedures or practice to prevent similar incidents in the future.

### **Whistleblowing (See Policy Document for full details.)**

- Wheels Vocational and Life Skills Centre relies on the dedication, professionalism and skills of its staff. However, there may be an occasion when you will be concerned about a colleague's standard of practice.
- Whistleblowing, though uncomfortable, is an integral part of safe management and staff should be aware of the ways in which they can express a concern regarding suspected child abuse or poor practice which may result in a child coming to harm in the centre setting.
- Any concerns should be reported to the DSO in the first instance.

## **7. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS**

- Wheels Vocational and Life Skills Centre must have a contact within the Local Authority Child Protection Team or Local Safeguarding Board to ensure there is an understanding of accountability and procedural steps.
- Wheels Vocational and Life Skills Centre must be aware of the national government guidelines for safeguarding / child protection.
- Wheels Vocational and Life Skills Centre must ensure that it is able to contact the relevant team when a student lives in a different local authority.
- If Wheels Vocational and Life Skills Centre receives a referral for a student where there is an on-going safeguarding concern, the team must find out if the child is on a child protection register or whether there are any current concerns or enquiries.
- Wheels Vocational and Life Skills Centre must ensure that they are on the appropriate list to attend child protection / safeguarding conferences, reviews and case conferences if involved with the child.
- Wheels Vocational and Life Skills Centre must receive any minutes of child protection/safeguarding meetings as appropriate and must provide minutes if Wheels Vocational and Life Skills Centre chair the meeting.
- Following a child protection referral, the student should be seen by a Local Authority Social Worker. The family should be informed that a referral has been made. If it seems that the referral has not been dealt with appropriately, the DSO should address this issue with the Local Authority.

### **Child Protection/Safeguarding Policy Statements**

- In order to demonstrate our commitment to child protection/safeguarding, a policy statement should be available where it can be viewed by centre staff and visitors.
- The purpose of the statement is to:
  - ▶ Provide information on the responsibilities and duty of Wheels Vocational and Life Skills Centre to safeguard young people.

- ▶ Provide information for workers about their safeguarding responsibilities and the expectations of the centre.

## **Learning and Development**

- All staff should be enabled to have the necessary training and skills to identify and respond to safeguarding concerns.
- Safeguarding should be part of the induction programme for staff and referenced in annual appraisals and Centre Improvement Plan.
- Workers should attend an annual development day on safeguarding to update and maintain learning.

## **Distribution of safeguarding information**

- All staff must be aware of how to access Wheels Vocational and Life Skills Centre safeguarding policy and any related guidance.
- Safeguarding must be a standard agenda item at all staff meetings.

## **Records and Evidence**

- Records should be kept in order that evidence of child abuse can be clearly identified. It is essential that any noticeable change of behaviour or appearance associated with the young person's welfare is shared with the DSO.
- Records must be factual, chronological and give clear dates and times in order to be useful in investigations and as evidence.
- All records should be dated and signed by the member of staff recording the incident. Wheels Vocational and Life Skills Centre should review and countersign.

## **Record Storage**

- All records of child protection concerns, disclosures or allegations must be treated as sensitive information and kept together. Child protection files should be kept separately from the child's general centre records.
- If information is removed from the file for any reason, a record should be made indicating the reason for such removal, where the information has gone, when it was removed and who removed it.
- All child protection files should be kept together in a secure place e.g. a locked filing cabinet in the Business Manager's office. The filing system should only be accessed by the DSO or nominated persons.
- A marker (e.g. a blue star) should be placed on the cover of the main centre file for the child, indicating that there is a child protection file relating to that child. All staff should be made aware of what the symbol means. This should also serve as a reminder to transfer the child protection file if the child/young person moves to another centre or FE college.

## **8. INFORMATION SHARING WITH OTHER AGENCIES**

Evidence of abuse should be passed to the home school and appropriate Child Protection agency as appropriate (including the Independent Safeguarding Authority should the allegation/investigation relate to a member of Staff). It is only when information from a range of sources is put together that a young person can be seen to be at risk of harm.

### **Rules for Information Sharing – GDPR May 2018**

- i. Data protection is **NOT** a barrier to sharing information but provides a framework to ensure that personal information is shared appropriately.

- ii. Always be open and honest with the young person or their parent/carer about why, what, how and with whom the information will be shared.
- iii. You may share information without permission if you consider it to be in the best interest of the young person.
- iv. Base your decision to share information on consideration of the safety and well-being of the young person and others who may be affected by your actions.
- v. Ensure that the information you share is necessary for the purpose for which you are sharing it and that you only share with those people who need it.
- vi. Ensure that the information is accurate and up to date and is shared securely and in a timely manner.
- vii. Keep a record of your decision and the reasons for it – whether to share information or not. If you decide to share, then record what you have shared and with whom.

## **9. SERIOUS CASE REVIEWS**

- Wheels Vocational and Life Skills Centre has a duty to co-operate with the Local Safeguarding Board and Child Protection Committee when notified by the Local Authority that the threshold for convening a case review has been met.
- Any paper files should be copied and stored in a secure area. This should be done as soon as there is notification that a child has died or been seriously injured.
- If there is a possibility that there may be claims against Wheels Vocational and Life Skills Centre for liability, then the insurers must be notified.
- Case reports must be prepared by a DSO.
- Information gathered during the review process may be used to inform an investigation of enquiry. Staff have the right to bring a companion if they are being interviewed as part of the review process (they may not be accompanied by a practising lawyer). The companion cannot contribute to the discussion.
- The DSO must make an immediate decision whether it is safe for the staff member to continue their role with young people and their families in the interim.
- Any staff member referred to in the report has the right to:
  - See what is written about them.
  - Correct any factual errors.
  - Comment on the findings.
- The DSO must decide whether it is appropriate to continue support for the family of the identified young person during the review process.
- The DSO has responsibility for ensuring that any recommendations of the Local Safeguarding Board / Child Protection are implemented.

## **10. SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN IN SPECIFIC CIRCUMSTANCES**

### **Bullying (Detailed in “Safe to Learn Policy”)**

- Bullying hurts and harms those subjected to it, sometimes significantly, and can have both short and long-term impacts on health and well-being.
- Bullying can be difficult to address, as groups develop hierarchies in which some members are ridiculed or become scapegoats.
- All young people have the potential to be bullied and bully, have witnessed bullying and may have colluded to bullying by not challenging it, often for fear of also being subjected to bullying.

- Bullying may also be defined as deliberately hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. It can take many forms, but the three main types are:
  - ✓ Physical (hitting, kicking, theft).
  - ✓ Verbal (racist or homophobic remarks, threats, name calling).
  - ✓ Emotional (isolating the individual from the activities and social acceptance of their peer group).
- The damage inflicted by bullying can frequently be underestimated. It can have multiple impacts that cause considerable distress to young people, affect their health and development. At the extreme, bullying can cause significant harm (including self-harm and possible suicide).
- Everyone has the right to live, work and play free from fear, harassment, intimidation or violence.
- Everyone has the right to be treated with respect and to have their individual qualities and contributions recognised and valued.
- Bullying is less likely to flourish in a provision with an open and safe management culture for staff and volunteers.
- Wheels Vocational and Life Skills Centre must develop:
  - ✓ Clear expectations for staff.
  - ✓ Systems that support staff in challenging bullying.
  - ✓ A culture that values differences, whilst also addressing insensitive use of language, humour, etc.
  - ✓ A system that clearly identifies and addresses the processes of bullying.
- All staff are required to report, respond and review situations where bullying takes place.
- Staff must use supervision to identify instances where bullying occurs and how best it can be challenged.

### **Best Practice with Young People**

- The safety (including e-safety – see below) of the young person is to be addressed as a priority.
- Work should take place where the young person feels safe.
- The young person should be listened to with the purpose of fully understanding what has happened.
- The impact on the young person is to be addressed and significant harm is to be immediately reviewed as a safeguarding issue.
- The needs, strengths, resilience and support systems of the young person are to be assessed in order for the young person to move forward.
- An action plan should be agreed which involves parents and staff as appropriate.
- The experience of those witnessing bullying should be considered. It is probable that they may have issues of fear and powerlessness and this needs to be addressed.

### **Race, Ethnicity and Culture**

- All young people have a right to grow up safe from harm. All staff and volunteers need to be aware and sensitive to differing family lifestyles and practices across the different social, racial and cultural groups. This must not be confused with extremism or radicalisation.
- All staff must be committed to equality and meeting the needs of all young people and their families. Staff must understand the effects of racial discrimination and cultural misunderstanding or misinterpretation.
- All staff should receive training as part of their induction and further development, enabling them to work with young people and families from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and be able to assess individual

cases. This should take into account the values, attitudes and behaviour of religious and cultural traditions.

- Culture and religious beliefs do not explain or condone acts of commission or omission which put a young person at risk of significant harm. (See Appendix 1 for more details on FGM.)
- Staff and volunteers should guard against myths and stereotypes (both positive and negative) of black and minority ethnic families. Fear of being accused of racist practice should not prevent the necessary action being taken to safeguard a young person.
- Young people should feel valued and respected and their self-esteem be promoted – this should include diversity and sensitivity to race, culture, religion, gender and disability.

### **E-Safety (See Policy for Details)**

Most of our children will use mobile phones and computers at some time. They are a source of fun, entertainment, communication and education. However, we know that some men, women and young people will use these technologies to harm children. The harm might range from sending hurtful or abusive texts and emails, to enticing children to engage in sexually harmful conversations, webcam photography or face-to-face meetings. The centre's e-safety policy explains how we try to keep children safe in centre. Cyber-bullying by children, via texts and emails, will be treated as seriously as any other type of bullying and will be managed through our anti-bullying procedures.

Chat rooms and social networking sites are the more obvious sources of inappropriate and harmful behaviour and children are not allowed to access these sites whilst in centre. Some children will undoubtedly be 'chatting' on mobiles or social networking sites at home and we openly discuss the dangers and make our students aware of possible scenarios at appropriate times.

This policy is subject to all other policies of Wheels Vocational and Life Skills Centre.

Appendix 1. Female Genital Mutilation.

Appendix 2. Referral Pro-forma to Social Services Department.

Appendix 3. Useful Safeguarding/Child Protection Dudley Contact Details.

Appendix 4. Dudley Prevent Referral Process

## Appendix 1.

### Female Genital Mutilation

#### Definition

**Female genital mutilation (FGM)** is a collective term for procedures, which include the removal of part or all of the external female genitalia for cultural or other non-therapeutic reasons. The practice is medically unnecessary, extremely painful and has serious health consequences, both at the time when the mutilation is carried out and in later life. The procedure is typically performed on girls aged between 4 and 13, but in some cases, it is performed on new-born infants or on young women before marriage or pregnancy.

FGM has been a criminal offence in the UK since the Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act 1985 was passed. The Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 replaced the 1985 Act and makes it an offence for the first time for UK nationals or permanent UK residents to carry out FGM abroad, or to aid, abet, counsel or procure the carrying out of FGM abroad, even in countries where the practice is legal.

For more detail, please refer to the government **Multi-Agency Guidelines on Female Genital Mutilation** (issued in July 2020).

#### Indicators

These indicators are not exhaustive and whilst the factors detailed below may be an indication that a child is facing FGM, it should not be assumed that is the case simply on the basis of someone presenting with one or more of these warning signs. These warning signs may indicate other types of abuse such as forced marriage or sexual abuse that will also require a multi-agency response.

The following are some signs that the child may be at risk of FGM:

- The family belongs to a community in which FGM is practised
- The family makes preparations for the child to take a holiday, e.g. arranging vaccinations, planning an absence from centre
- The child talks about a 'special procedure/ceremony' that is going to take place
- An awareness by a midwife or obstetrician that the procedure has already been carried out on a mother, prompting concern for any daughters, girls or young women in the family.

Consider whether any other indicators exist that FGM may have or has already taken place, for example:

1. The child has changed in behaviour after a prolonged absence from centre, or
2. The child has health problems, particularly bladder or menstrual problems.

The Children's social care team will liaise with the Paediatric services where it is believed that FGM has already taken place to ensure that a **Medical Assessment** takes place.

It should be remembered that this will have lifelong consequences and can be highly dangerous at the time of the procedure and directly afterwards.

#### Protection and Action to be Taken

Where concerns about the welfare and safety of a child or young person have come to light in relation to FGM a referral to Children's social care should be made in accordance with the **Referrals Procedure**.

Children's social care will undertake an assessment and, jointly with the Police, will undertake a Section 47 Enquiry if they have reason to believe that a child is likely to suffer or has suffered FGM. A Strategy Discussion/Meeting should include the relevant Health professionals and, if the child is of centre age, the relevant centre representative.

Where a child has been identified as having suffered, or being likely to suffer, Significant Harm, it may not always be appropriate to remove the child from an otherwise loving family environment. Parents and carers may genuinely believe that it is in the girl's best interest to conform to their prevailing custom. Professionals

should work in a sensitive manner with families to explain the legal position around FGM in the UK. The families will need to understand that FGM and re-infibulation (the process of resealing the vagina after childbirth) is illegal in the UK and that if they are insistent upon carrying out the practice, the health visitor and Children's social care must be informed that a female child may be at risk of significant harm. Interpretation services should be used if English is not spoken or well understood and the interpreter should not be an individual who is known to the family. (see Working with Interpreters and others with Special Communication Skills).

Where a child appears to be in immediate danger of mutilation, legal advice should be sought and consideration should be given, for example, to seeking an Emergency Protection Order or a Prohibited Steps Order, making it clear to the family that they will be breaking the law if they arrange for the child to have the procedure.

The 2003 Female Genital Mutilation Act makes it illegal for any residents of the UK to perform FGM within or outside the UK. The punishment for violating the 2003 Act carries 14 years imprisonment, a fine or both.

## **Appendix 2**

The form is designed to assist all agencies in making referrals to the Social Services Department. Referring agencies should complete as much of the information as they are able, as this will assist Social Services to make an appropriate and timely response to the child and family. As part of good practice, and in compliance with the requirements of the Data Protection and Human Rights Acts, the referring agency should normally seek the prior agreement of the child/young person's family. The exception to this is where it is felt that the child's welfare would be compromised. If discussion with the child's parents or seeking their agreement is likely to increase the risk of significant harm then such discussion should not take place, and a telephone referral should then be confirmed in writing by completing this form. For all types of referral, further advice can be sought from the Social Services Department.

<b>Child/Young Person's Name and Address</b>
Family Name: _____ Forenames: _____
Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/>
Other names used: _____ d.o.b. _____
Age: _____
Address: _____
_____ Postcode: _____
Telephone number: _____
Current address if different from above:
_____ Postcode: _____
Telephone number: _____
Centre/Day Care: _____ Child/Young Person's Religion _____
Their ethnicity _____
Their language _____ Does the Child/Young Person have a disability?
Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
If yes, please specify _____ Is the Child/Young Person a Young
Carer? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Is an interpreter, signer or other form of assistance required Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Please specify _____

<b>Child/Young Person's Principal Carers</b>
Surname: _____ Forenames: _____ Relationship to
child/young person.

<b>Other members of the child's family/household/and other significant adults</b>
Family name: _____ Forenames: _____
d.o.b _____
Address: _____
_____ Postcode: _____
Relationship to child _____

Reason for referral/request for services:
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<b>Do you already have some information about the needs of this child/family?</b>	
<b>Consider:</b> Health Education Emotional and behavioural development Family/Social presentation Self-care skills	<b>Child/Young Person's Needs</b>
<b>Consider:</b> Basic care Ensuring safety Emotional warmth Stimulation Guidance and boundaries Stability	<b>Parenting capacity</b>
<b>Consider:</b> Community Resources Income, Housing Family history and functioning Family's social integration Employment Wider family	<b>Family and Community Support</b>

<b>Are you aware of any other agencies/professionals currently or previously working with the family?</b>  Agency: _____ Name of Worker: _____  Address: _____  Telephone number: _____
<b>Are you aware of any Health and Safety issues? Y/N</b>

<b>Name of Referring Agency:</b> _____ Address: _____ Postcode: _____ Telephone number: _____  Name of staff member completing this referral: _____ Job title: _____  How long have you known the child/family? _____ In what capacity? _____
--

What services have you provided to date? \_\_\_\_\_

Have the family agreed to you making this referral to Social Services Yes  No

If "No" please give reason(s) \_\_\_\_\_

If of sufficient age, is the child/young person aware? Yes  No

What is your view \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Appendix 3

Useful Safeguarding/Child Protection Dudley Contacts – Single Point Access (SPA)  
Dudley Safeguarding People Partnership (DSPP)

Children's Front Door (SPA) 0300 555 0050 option 3  
Email [spa-team@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:spa-team@dudley.gov.uk)

Emergency Duty Team Dudley Out of hours: 0300 555 8574

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) 01384 813061

Education: Yvonne Nelson-Brown  
01384 813110  
Sukhchandani Kaur  
01384 813066  
Email: [allegations@dudley.gcsx.gov.uk](mailto:allegations@dudley.gcsx.gov.uk)

Sport & Leisure  
& "Use of Images" Rachael Doyle – [rachael.doyle@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:rachael.doyle@dudley.gov.uk)  
Crystal Leisure Centre. 01384 815547

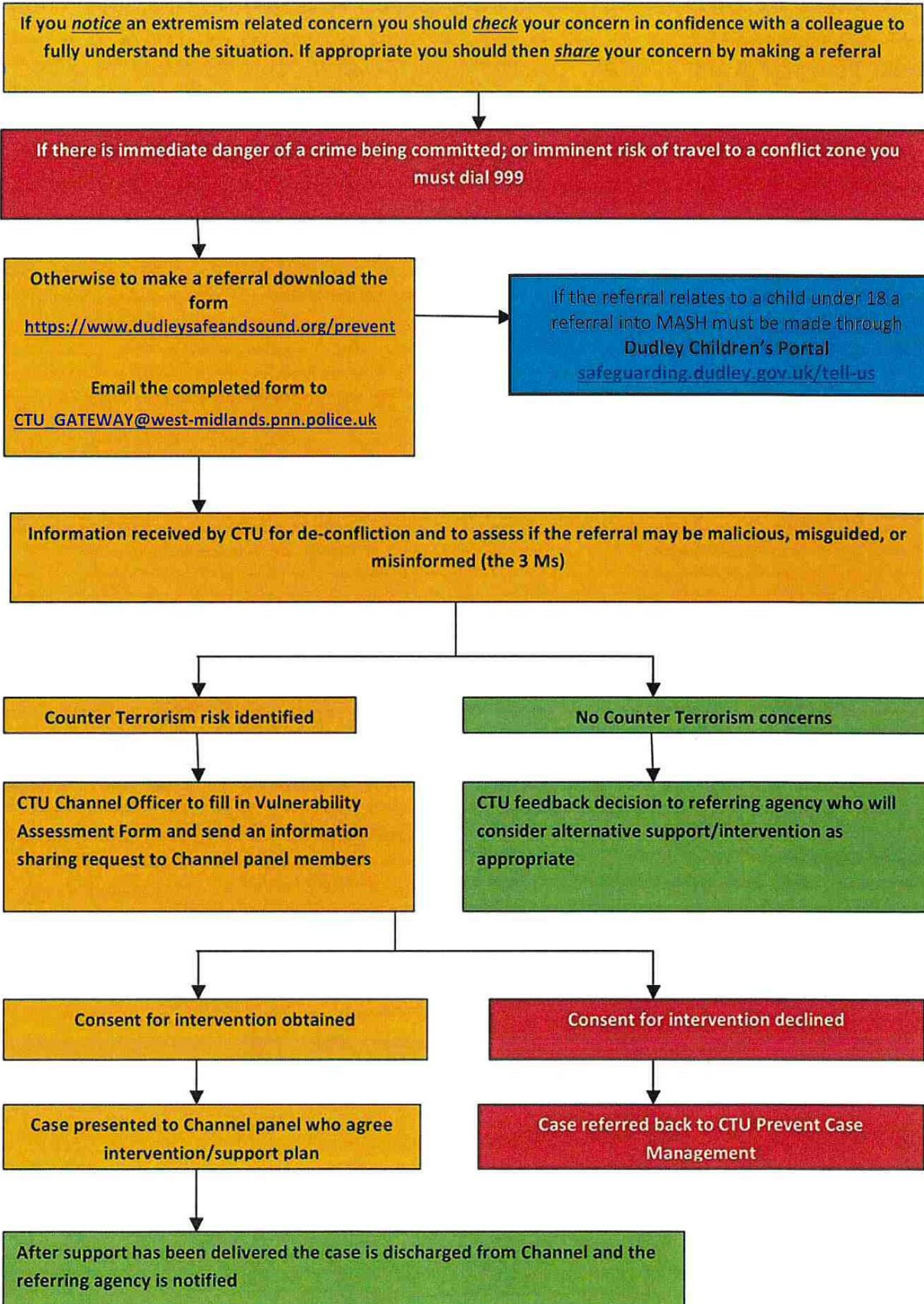
Early Help/Family Centres **Stourbridge Family Centre**, Forge Road, Stourbridge, DY8 1XF  
01384818780, [F.s.stourbridge@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:F.s.stourbridge@dudley.gov.uk)  
**Halesowen Family Centre**, Lye By-Pass, Stourbridge, DY9 8HT  
01384813954, [F.s.halesowen@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:F.s.halesowen@dudley.gov.uk)  
**Brierley Hill Family Centre**, 18 Parkes Street, Brierley Hill, DY5 3DY  
01384 813322, [F.s.brierleyhill@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:F.s.brierleyhill@dudley.gov.uk)  
**Dudley North Family Centre**, Bayer Street, Bilston, WV14 9DS  
01384813096, [F.s.dudleynorth@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:F.s.dudleynorth@dudley.gov.uk)  
**Dudley Central Family Centre**, Selbourne Road, Dudley, DY2 8LJ  
01384812440, [F.s.dudleycentral@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:F.s.dudleycentral@dudley.gov.uk)

Spurgeons –  
(Dudley Young Carers) 01902 877550

Young People at Risk  
Of Sexual Exploitation: [street-teams.org>exploitation](http://street-teams.org>exploitation)

Family Group  
Conferences: 01384 816155

## Appendix 4



**Please refer to Wheels Vocational and Life Skills Centre Policy on Safeguarding for other detailed information.**