

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Updated September 2022. Next review date September 2023

24 hour Safeguarding Helpline
For students, parents, staff, homestays and schools
0203 397 7744

Safeguarding Statement

UK Study Centre Guardianship acknowledges the duty of care to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in its care involved in school and leisure activities, meaning protecting children from physical, emotional, sexual abuse or neglect (see Appendix for the types and definitions of abuse along with common signs to be aware of). A child is defined as a person under the age of 18 (The Children Act 1989*). The policy is based on the latest version of government guidance (staff / homestays are advised to read): Keeping Children Safe in Education** and Working Together to Safeguard Children*** along with other appropriate legislation. Our policies and processes are in line with the requirements of the Association of Education and Guardianship of International Students (AEGIS) and National Minimum Boarding Standards.

The purpose of this guidance is to provide help to staff / host families to establish the safest and most supportive environment for our students to secure the well-being and very best outcomes for the students under our guardianship, and to build trusted relationships with children which facilitate communication.

What do we do to keep children safe and respond to concerns

The aim of the UK Study Centre Guardianship Child Protection Policy is to promote good practice by:

- Providing children and young people with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care of the UK Study Centre Guardianship;
- Providing an environment in which students feel safe, secure, valued and respected, and feel confident, and know how to approach adults if they face any issues
- Promoting an environment of trust and open communication between students, school, UK Study Centre Guardianship personnel and UK Study Centre Guardianship Host Families, in order to recognise students' safety issues:

- Having an appointed Designated Safeguarding Person, who is fully trained and aware about the action required to receive complaints of abuse, to investigate those complaints and to record and report them to the appropriate authority;
- Ensuring that all guardianship personnel and host families are informed and aware of their responsibilities to act on any concerns of signs of abuse, neglect and other safeguarding issues relating to children and young people by reporting allegations;
- Ensuring that all guardianship personnel and host families are recruited according to safe recruitment practices and formally screened through the completion of an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check;
- Responding to any child abuse allegations or suspicions in accordance with the guidelines of the Association for the Education and Guardianship of International Students (AEGIS);
- Maintaining links with the appropriate governmental authorities with jurisdiction in matters pertaining to child welfare.

Confidentiality

UK Study Centre Guardianship will keep all child protection records confidential, disclosure will be allowed only to those who will need the information to safeguard and ensure the welfare of the children. However, all staff must be aware that they have a professional responsibility to share information with other agencies in order to safeguard children under section 47 of the Children Act 1989* and cannot promise a child to keep secrets which might compromise the child's safety or wellbeing.

Designated Safeguarding Person (DSP)

Marianna Slivnitskaya, Head of Guardianship of the UK Study Centre Guardianship, has been appointed the Designated Safeguarding Person (DSP) for child protection for the UK Study Centre Guardianship, contact details are provided below.

Marianna Slivnitskaya
Marianna@ukstudycentre.com
0203 397 7744
07730 132888

In the absence of the Designated Safeguarding Person, the role will be carried out by Deputy Designated Safeguarding Person (DDSP) Alexander Nanian who can be contacted on 07970 293673 or alex@ukstudycentre.com.

The main responsibilities of the DSP for child protection issues are:

- To act as a first contact person for students, parents, host families, schools and external agencies in all matters of child protection;
- To co-ordinate child protection procedures within the UK Study Centre Guardianship and to review and update regularly the procedures and the implementation of the procedures;
- To maintain an ongoing training programme for UK Study Centre Guardianship staff and host families and keep appropriate records of this training;
- To monitor and store the records related to child protection;
- To liaise with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), social services and other external agencies as necessary and ensure all local inter-agency procedures are followed and documented
- To liaise when appropriate with the Designated Safeguarding Leads of schools/colleges and keep parents informed of the action to be taken in relation to their child when appropriate
- When appropriate, to partake in child protection conferences or reviews
- The DSP must attend AEGIS, NSPCC or LSP safeguarding training every two years

The prevent lead

UK Study Centre Guardianship acknowledges the duty under section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015****, in the exercise of their functions, to have "due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism". This duty is known as the Prevent duty. The prevent lead is responsible for making sure that students of any faith, ethnicity or background receive support before their vulnerabilities are exploited by those that would want them to embrace terrorism, and before they become involved in criminal terrorist related activity. Marianna Slivnitskaya has been appointed as the Prevent Lead for UK Study Centre Guardianship. See the *Anti-Radicalisation – Prevent Duty Policy* for further details.

Actions to be followed if there are safeguarding concerns

UK Study Centre Guardianship will respond promptly to any safeguarding concerns including allegations against staff members, host families or local coordinators or allegations of Child-on-Child abuse and submit their concerns in writing. The record is created in order for the incident to be effectively managed, the safety of the student to be maximised and any risk to be minimised.

In the situation of suspicion of abuse or complaint made to the UK Study Centre Guardianship staff member or host family, the following procedure and the complaint or suspicion must be immediately reported to DSP, or in their absence to DDSP in writing or by phone. All staff and home stay should be aware that children may not feel ready or know how to tell someone that they are being abused, exploited or neglected, and / or they may not recognise their experience as harmful, this should not prevent staff / hosts speaking to DSP / DDSP if they have concerns about a child.

Staff or host family members should:

- Follow the procedure according to the *Guidance on handling a disclosure from a child* below
- Attempt to safeguard and preserve all available evidence (for example, notes, mobile phones containing text messages, clothing, computers)
- As soon as reasonably possible report to the DSP or in their absence, DDSP
- Immediately provide a safe environment for the student as necessary.

Once the DSP or DDSP has been informed of the allegations or complaints of abuse, the staff or host family member suspecting or hearing of the abuse should continue to pass on any further information that comes to light but should not carry out any further investigations into the incident as this may prejudice the investigations of external agencies.

If at any point there is a risk of immediate serious harm to the student a referral should be made to children's social care immediately.

Action to be taken by the designated person

On being notified of a complaint or suspicion of abuse, the action to be taken by the Designated Person will take into account:

- the local procedures of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Team (MASH), London Borough of City of Westminster. Contact details: 020 7641 4000, 020 7641 6000 (out of hours), acesstochildre services@westminster.gov.uk
- the nature and seriousness of the suspicion or complaint. A complaint involving a serious criminal offence will always be referred to children's social care or the police immediately
- the student's wishes and feelings
- duties of confidentiality, so far as applicable.

If there is room for doubt as to whether a referral should be made, the DSP will consult with Children's Services on a no names basis without identifying the child. However, as soon as sufficient concern exists that a child may be at risk of significant harm, a referral to children's social care will be made without delay (and in any event within 24 hours).

If the DSP concludes that the matter does not require Child Services intervention, then student's school and parents will be usually be informed and the person raising the concern will be given written reasons as to why Children's Services are not involved. The person will be advised that, if they remain concerned, they are free to consult with or report to the relevant authorities.

Our procedures will be annually reviewed and updated. Any deficiencies or weaknesses in the procedures will be remedied without delay.

The 24-hour Childline is available on 0800 1111. All calls are free and confidential, and trained counsellors will help any child with any problem.

Guidance on handling a disclosure from a child

Children who are abused are often threatened by the perpetrators to keep the abuse a secret. Thus, telling an adult takes a great amount of courage. So, care must be taken to remain calm and to show support to the child throughout the disclosure phase. The following guidelines will help lessen the risk of causing more trauma to the child and/or compromising a criminal investigation during the disclosure phase.

Staff or host family members should:

- Listen to what is being said without displaying shock or disbelief. A common reaction to news as unpleasant and shocking as child abuse is denial. However, showing it may lead to the child being afraid to continue. Staff or host family members should accept what is being said without judgment and take it seriously
- Reassure the child that they did nothing wrong and that you take what is said seriously. All staff must be aware that they have a professional responsibility to share information with other agencies in order to safeguard children and cannot promise a child to keep secrets. It is advised to tell the child that some people need to know, but only those whose job it is to protect children. It is important to acknowledge how difficult it must have been to talk.
- Listen quietly, carefully and patiently without assuming anything or jumping to conclusions. Staff or host family members should not investigate, interrogate or decide if the child is telling the truth and must remember that an allegation of child abuse may lead to a criminal investigation. It is advisable to let the child explain in his or her own words what happened, but not to ask leading questions. It is important to communicate with the child in a way that is appropriate to their age, understanding and preference, taking into account that English is not the first language for most students.
- Refer directly to the DSP as soon as possible and do not discuss the case with anyone outside the child protection team.
- Make some very brief notes at the time and write them up in detail as soon as possible (notes should be kept in case they are required by Court). Staff or host family members should record

all the details (see below) and how the child appeared to them – being specific and recording the actual words used; including any swear words or slang. It is important to keep it factual and record statements and observable things rather than interpretations or assumptions.

- The record should include: the date and time of the incident/disclosure, the date and time of the report, the name and role of the person to whom the concern was originally reported and their contact details, the name and role of the person making the report (if this is different to the above) and their contact details, the names of all parties who were involved in the incident, including any witnesses to an event, what was said or done and by whom, any action taken to look into the matter, any further action taken (such as a referral being made).

Storage of child protection records

Information about child protection concerns and referrals is kept in a separate child protection file for each child and is separate from the Student Care Plan. The file is started as soon as we become aware of any concerns. The Student Care Plan is marked to indicate that there is a separate child protection file. Child protection files should be passed on to any new school the child attends and kept until they are 25 (*Information and Records Management Society (IRMS), 2016*).

Low-Level Concerns (see separate policy document)

Missing Child

Unexplained student absences or other situations affecting student safety, should be reported to UK Study Centre Guardianship immediately, either via the landline (0203 397 7744 – get redirected onto the emergency mobile outside of the office hours) or on the mobile (07730 132888). Specifically, should a student who is booked with a host family not arrive within two hours of when they are expected, it is the duty of the host family to advise us of this matter and we will follow up taking all necessary actions to locate the child. If the child can not be located The Designated Safeguarding Person will refer concerns to Children's Services and Police. The guidance we use is "*The statutory guidance Children Missing Education*" (September 2016)*****.

School Emergency Removal (in case of contagious and life-threatening illnesses)

According to the current legislation and standards (AEGIS, BSA and Ofsted) a school must provide a 24 hour medical care for their boarding students during term time and have a Duty of Care for their safety and wellbeing. Occasionally schools ask guardians to remove the student from the school, and although we understand their right to protect their other children and staff in some cases removal from the school might be not in interest of the child.

UK Study Centre Guardianship does not have own medical facilities (although schools normally do), which is why it might be not possible to remove the children in those situations. We also have a duty to protect out host families and in case of contagious or life-threatening illnesses it is not acceptable to put our host families in risk and ask them to host those students.

Therefore, in those cases we work closely with the school to make sure that the child is either stay there or get home (to the parents) safely. We provide logistics and translation services to make sure that the situation is sorted to the best interest of the child.

Death of a Student (see separate policy document)

The death of a student is most frequently an unexpected event. The circumstances in which the death occurs will have a significant bearing on the degree of involvement from our staff. We will deal with the event immediately, professionally and with the high level of sensitivity. We will verify the information, liaise with the School, net of kin and authorities, and provide support as necessary.

Safer Staff Recruitment and Staff Training

UK Study Centre Guardianship will ensure that all guardianship personnel and personnel offering outsourced services who come into direct contact with students in our care, are recruited using safe recruitment practices (as detailed in the most recent version of Keeping Children Safe in Education **) and are formally screened through the Enhanced Data & Barring Services (DBS) with suitable references taken and checked.

The Head of Guardianship involved in staff and host family recruitment receives Safer Recruitment training from a recognised provider refreshed regularly.

As a part of our commitment to safeguard children the recruitment process include the follows:

- Ensuring the job description refers to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children;
- Ensuring the person specification refers specifically to working with children, or in a setting where children are present;
- Keeping detailed noted of all staff and homestay interviews;
- Verifying an applicant's identity by the passport or if not the birth certificate;
- Ensuring that the member of staff or homestay has the right to work in the UK and record the date that this check took place;
- Obtaining comprehensive and appropriate information from applicants, this should be scrutinised, particularly for any discrepancies or anomalies. These should be checked until a satisfactory outcome is reached;

- Obtaining and verifying independent professional and character references (two references are required from people who have known the candidate for at least two years), that specifically request information about an applicant's suitability to work with children, or around, children and take up any concerns; on receipt, references are checked and the referees contacted to address any discrepancies or for further clarification, if needed
- Where relevant, checking employment history and other experience;
- Verifying they have the levels of health and physical capacity required for the post;
- Obtaining an Enhanced DBS Disclosure check on all adults over the age of 16, that includes a children's barred list check for all the members of the host family residing in the household and other employees and volunteers who come into contact with our students, renewed every three years (unless they are signed up to the DBS update service for the children's workforce)
- Where a DBS certificate (for a member of staff, homestay or homestay family member) lists a previous conviction, completing a written risk assessment to determine whether the member of staff is suitable to work with children, or if the homestay would be suitable to host students;
- An overseas check will be undertaken if a member of staff, volunteer or homestay member has lived or worked abroad for more than 3 months in the last five years including a police check from the country where the individual lived, an additional reference and conducting a risk assessment.

The DSP ensures that all members of staff, volunteers and homestays receive appropriate safeguarding training to an appropriate basic awareness level (renewable every three years) – UK Study Centre Guardianship keeps a formal record of all safeguarding training. All homestays receive regular safeguarding updates, at least once per year.

Whistleblowing (see separate policy document)

All staff and homestays are trained so that they understand they are expected and encouraged to raise concerns they have, whether related to the safeguarding and welfare of students, the conduct of staff or other matters.

UK Study Centre Guardianship is committed to conducting business with honesty and integrity and we expect all staff and homestays to maintain high standards. We encourage staff and homestays to raise any concerns that they may have about the conduct of others and report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible. It is important that any fraud, misconduct or wrongdoing is reported and properly dealt with. See Whistleblowing Policy for the details of how staff may raise any concerns that they have and how those concerns will be dealt with.

NSPCC whistleblowing helpline can be contacted on 0800 028 0285 (Monday to Friday) or by email help@nspcc.org.uk

LADO (the Local Authority Designated Officer)

The LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) is the point of contact in the Council for anyone who has concerns/allegations about an individual working with children. The LADO helps co-ordinate information-sharing with the right people and will also monitor and track any investigation, with the aim to resolve any allegations as quickly as possible.

Should there be any cause to suspect that a staff member of UK Study Centre Guardianship has harmed, may harm or failed to protect a child or young person you must tell Westminster's Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) on 020 7641 7668 or lado@westminster.gov.uk.

LSP (Local Safeguarding Partnerships)

UK Study Centre Guardianship is committed to maintain links with the appropriate governmental authorities with jurisdiction in matters pertaining to child welfare. Below is the list of contact details for all LSPs within the areas where UK Study Centre Guardianship operates:

School Name	LSP	Contact
Abington School	Oxfordshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)	0345 050 7666
Ackworth School	Wakefield Safeguarding Children Partnership (WSCP)	0345 8503 503
Cheltenham College	Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership	01452 426565
Christ's Hospital School	West Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership	0330 222 7799
Claremont School	East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership	01323 464222
Clifton College	Keeping Bristol Safe Children Partnership	0117 9036444
Kingswood School	Bath and North East Somerset (B&NES) Community Safety and Safeguarding Partnership	01225 396312 or 01454 615165
Mill Hill School	Barnet Safeguarding Children Partnership (BSCP)	020 8359 4066
Radley College	Oxfordshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)	0345 050 7666
Repton School	Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Partnership	01629 533190
Roedean School	Brighton & Hove Safeguarding Children Partnership	01273 290400
Royal Russell School	Croydon Safeguarding Children Partnership	0208 255 2888
St Michael's School	Carmarthenshire Children's Services Department	0300 333 2222
Stonyhurst St Mary's Hall	Lancashire Safeguarding Children Board	0300 123 6720
Woldingham School	Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership	0300 470 9100
Wycliffe Prep School	Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership	01452 426565

Student Behaviour

All students are provided with a Student Handbook. Their guardian will go through the Handbook with the student to ensure that it is understood. Clear guidelines on behaviour whilst staying with a host family which include: behaviour and conduct when staying with a homestay, sanctions and how these are recorded, curfew arrangements, use of the kitchen area, use of the bathroom, use of the Wi-Fi, rules regarding the consumption of alcohol, rules regarding the use of drugs and illegal substances, rules regarding smoking, rules regarding sexual activity, rules regarding tattoos and piercings, rules regarding the use of hair dye, arrangements when students wish to stay away from the homestay.

Any student disobeying any of the above will be dealt with accordingly and appropriately either by the host at the time of the incident, or on return to school if more serious.

Bullying including Cyberbullying and E-Safety (see separate policy document)

Professional Code of Conduct (see separate policy document)

Complaints (see separate policy document)

Policy Availability and Review

The Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy is available to all students, parents, agents and given to all members of staff, volunteers, homestays and partner schools. It is reviewed regularly and any changes are notified to all the parts involved.

Appendix

Safeguarding is a recognised multi-agency pro-active process for protecting children at risk of harm or potential abuse. Effective safeguarding will reduce the need for action to protect children from harm.

Types and signs of abuse

Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. They may be abused by an adult or adults or another child or children. *Keeping Children Safe in Education (2022)** * defines the following main types of abuse.

- Physical abuse

- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Neglect

Specific safeguarding issues

All staff are also expected to be aware of safeguarding issues such as drug use, child sexual exploitation and radicalisation.

Staff should also know that safeguarding issues can manifest via peer-on-peer abuse, including (but not limited to):

- Bullying (including cyberbullying)
- Physical abuse
- Sexual violence and sexual harassment
- Sexting
- Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals

Physical abuse

Physical abuse happens when a child is deliberately hurt, causing injuries such as cuts, bruises, burns and broken bones. It can involve hitting, kicking, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or suffocating. It's also physical abuse if a parent or carer makes up or causes the symptoms of illness in children. For example, they may give them medicine they don't need, making them unwell. This is known as fabricated or induced illness.

Spotting the signs of physical abuse

All children have trips, falls and accidents which may cause cuts, bumps and bruises. These injuries tend to affect bony areas of their body such as elbows, knees and shins and are not usually a cause for concern.

Injuries that are more likely to indicate physical abuse include:

Bruising

- bruises on the cheeks, ears, palms, arms and feet
- bruises on the back, buttocks, tummy, hips and backs of legs
- multiple bruises in clusters, usually on the upper arms or outer thighs
- bruising which looks like it has been caused by fingers, a hand or an object, like a belt or shoe
- large oval-shaped bite marks.

Burns or scalds

- any burns which have a clear shape of an object, for example cigarette burns
- burns to the backs of hands, feet, legs, genitals or buttocks.

Other signs of physical abuse include multiple injuries (such as bruising, fractures) inflicted at different times.

If a child is frequently injured, and if the bruises or injuries are unexplained or the explanation doesn't match the injury, this should be investigated. It's also concerning if there is a delay in seeking medical help for a child who has been injured.

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is persistent and, over time, it severely damages a child's emotional health and development.

It involves:

- humiliating, putting down or constantly criticising a child
- shouting at or threatening a child or calling them names
- mocking a child or making them perform degrading acts
- constantly blaming or scapegoating a child for things which are not their fault
- trying to control a child's life and not recognising their individuality
- not allowing them to have friends or develop socially
- pushing a child too hard or not recognising their limitations
- manipulating a child
- exposing a child to distressing events or interactions such as drug taking, heavy drinking or domestic abuse
- persistently ignoring them
- being cold and emotionally unavailable during interactions with a child
- never saying anything kind, positive or encouraging to a child and failing to praise their achievements and successes.

Spotting the signs of emotional abuse

There aren't usually any obvious physical signs of emotional abuse but you may spot signs in a child's actions or emotions.

It's important to remember that some children are naturally quiet and self-contained whilst others are more open and affectionate. Mood swings and challenging behaviour are also a normal part of growing up for teenagers and children going through puberty. Be alert to behaviours which appear to be out of character for the individual child or are particularly unusual for their stage of development.

Children may:

- use language, act in a way or know about things that you wouldn't expect for their age
- struggle to control strong emotions or have extreme outbursts
- seem isolated from their parents
- lack social skills or have few, if any, friends
- fear making mistakes
- fear their parent being approached regarding their behavior
- self-harm

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse is forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities. It doesn't necessarily involve violence and the child may not be aware that what is happening is abuse.

Child sexual abuse can involve contact abuse and/or non-contact abuse. Contact abuse happens when the abuser makes physical contact with the child.

It includes:

- sexual touching of any part of the body whether the child is wearing clothes or not
- rape or penetration by putting an object or body part inside a child's mouth, vagina or anus
- forcing or encouraging a child to take part in sexual activity
- making a child take their clothes off, touch someone else's genitals or masturbate.

Non-contact abuse involves non-touching activities. It can happen online or in person and includes:

- encouraging a child to watch or hear sexual acts
- not taking proper measures to prevent a child being exposed to sexual activities by others
- showing pornography to a child
- making, viewing or distributing child abuse images
- allowing someone else to make, view or distribute child abuse images.

Online sexual abuse includes:

- persuading or forcing a child to send or post sexually explicit images of themselves, this is sometimes referred to as sexting
- persuading or forcing a child to take part in sexual activities via a webcam or smartphone
- having sexual conversations with a child by text or online
- meeting a child following online sexual grooming with the intent of abusing them.

Abusers may threaten to send sexually explicit images, video or copies of sexual conversations to the young person's friends and family unless they take part in other sexual activity. Images or videos may continue to be shared long after the abuse has stopped.

Abusers will often try to build an emotional connection with a child in order to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual abuse. This is known as grooming.

Spotting the signs of sexual abuse

There may be physical signs that a child has suffered sexual abuse. These include:

- anal or vaginal soreness or itching
- bruising or bleeding near the genital area
- discomfort when walking or sitting down
- an unusual discharge
- sexually transmitted infections (STI)
- pregnancy.

Changes in the child's mood or behaviour may also cause concern. They may want to avoid spending time with specific people. In particular, the child may show sexual behaviour that is inappropriate for their age.

For example:

- they could use sexual language or know things about sex that you wouldn't expect them to
- a child might become sexually active at a young age
- they might be promiscuous.

Neglect

Neglect is persistently failing to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs usually resulting in serious damage to their health and development. Neglect is the most common type of child abuse. It often happens at the same time as other types of abuse.

Neglect may involve a parent's or carer's failure to:

- provide adequate food, clothing or shelter
- supervise a child (including leaving them with unsuitable carers) or keep them safe from harm or danger
- make sure the child receives appropriate health and/or dental care
- make sure the child receives a suitable education
- meet the child's basic emotional needs – parents may ignore their children when they are distressed or even when they are happy or excited. This is known as emotional neglect.

Spotting the signs of neglect

Neglect can be difficult to identify. Isolated signs may not mean that a child is suffering neglect, but multiple and persistent signs over time could indicate a serious problem.

Some of these signs include:

- children who appear dirty or smelly and whose clothes are unwashed or inadequate for the weather conditions
- children who are left alone or unsupervised
- children who fail to thrive or who have untreated injuries, health or dental problems
- children with poor language, communication or social skills for their stage of development

Child-on-child abuse

All staff / homestays should be aware that children can abuse other children (often referred to as child-on-child abuse), and that it can happen both inside and outside of school and online. All staff / homestays should be aware of the important role they have to play in preventing it and responding where they believe a child may be at risk from it. As such it is important if staff have any concerns regarding child-on-child abuse they should speak to DSP / DDSP in accordance to the guidance on actions to be followed if there are safeguarding concerns.

It is essential that all staff / homestays understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours between children, many of which are listed below, that are abusive in nature. Downplaying certain behaviours, for example dismissing sexual harassment as “just banter”, “just having a laugh”, “part of growing up” or “boys being boys” can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours, an unsafe environment for children and in worst case scenarios a culture that normalises abuse leading to children accepting it as normal and not coming forward to report it.

Child-on-child abuse is most likely to include, but may not be limited to:

- bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying)
- abuse in intimate personal relationships between children (sometimes known as ‘teenage relationship abuse’)
- physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse)
- sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence)
- sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be standalone or part of a broader pattern of abuse

- causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party
- consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery)
- upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress, or alarm, and
- initiation/hazing type violence and rituals (this could include activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element).

Child sexual exploitation

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a type of sexual abuse. Young people in exploitative situations and relationships receive things such as gifts, money, drugs, alcohol, status or affection in exchange for taking part in sexual activities.

Young people may be tricked into believing they're in a loving, consensual relationship. They often trust their abuser and don't understand that they're being abused. They may depend on their abuser or be too scared to tell anyone what's happening. They might be invited to parties and given drugs and alcohol before being sexually exploited. They can also be groomed and exploited online. Some children and young people are trafficked into or within the UK for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Sexual exploitation can also happen to young people in gangs. Child sexual exploitation can involve violent, humiliating and degrading sexual assaults and involve multiple perpetrators.

Spotting the signs of child sexual exploitation

Sexual exploitation can be very difficult to identify. Warning signs can easily be mistaken for 'normal' teenage behaviour.

Young people who are being sexually exploited may:

- go missing from home, care or education
- be involved in abusive relationships, appearing intimidated and fearful of certain people or situations
- hang out with groups of older people, or anti-social groups, or with other vulnerable peers
- get involved in gangs, gang fights, gang membership
- have older boyfriends or girlfriends
- spend time at places of concern, such as hotels or known brothels
- not know where they are, because they have been moved around the country

- be involved in petty crime such as shoplifting
- have access to drugs and alcohol
- have new things such as clothes and mobile phones which they can't or won't explain
- have unexplained physical injuries.

Bullying and cyberbullying

Bullying is behaviour that hurts someone else. It usually happens over a lengthy period of time and can harm a child both physically and emotionally.

Bullying includes:

- verbal abuse, such as name calling
- non-verbal abuse, such as hand signs or glaring
- emotional abuse, such as threatening, intimidating or humiliating someone
- exclusion, such as ignoring or isolating someone
- undermining, by constant criticism or spreading rumors
- controlling or manipulating someone
- racial, sexual or homophobic bullying
- physical assaults, such as hitting and pushing
- making silent, hoax or abusive calls.

Bullying can happen anywhere – at school, at home or online. When bullying happens online it can involve social networks, games and mobile devices. Online bullying can also be known as cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying includes:

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

Spotting the signs of bullying and cyberbullying

It can be hard to know whether or not a child is being bullied. They might not tell anyone because they're scared the bullying will get worse. They might also think that the bullying is their fault. The signs may include:

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

Female genital mutilation

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is the partial or total removal of external female genitalia for non-medical reasons. It's also known as female circumcision or cutting.

The age at which FGM is carried out varies. It may be carried out when a girl is new-born, during childhood or adolescence, just before marriage or during pregnancy. Religious, social or cultural reasons are sometimes given for FGM. However, FGM is child abuse. It's dangerous and a criminal offence.

There are no medical reasons to carry out FGM. It doesn't enhance fertility and it doesn't make childbirth safer. It's used to control female sexuality and can cause severe and long-lasting damage to physical and emotional health.

Spotting the signs of female genital mutilation

A girl at immediate risk of FGM may not know what's going to happen. But she might talk about or you may become aware of:

- a long holiday abroad or going 'home' to visit family
- relative or cutter visiting from abroad
- a special occasion or ceremony to 'become a woman' or get ready for marriage
- a female relative being cut – a sister, cousin or an older female relative such as a mother or aunt
- missing school repeatedly or running away from home.

A girl who has had FGM may:

- have difficulty walking, standing or sitting

- spend longer in the bathroom or toilet
- appear withdrawn, anxious or depressed
- have unusual behaviour after an absence from school or college
- be particularly reluctant to undergo normal medical examinations
- ask for help, but may not be explicit about the problem due to embarrassment or fear

References

*Children Act 1989: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents>

**Keeping children safe in education 2022: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1101454/Keeping_children_safe_in_education_2022.pdf

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**** Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/6/contents/enacted>

***** Children missing education (2016): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/550416/Children_Missing_Education_-_statutory_guidance.pdf