



Young Bristol
Works for young people

PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH SUSPICIONS OR ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE AGAINST A YOUNG PERSON

1) Introduction

These guidelines are issued to all staff and volunteers working for and on behalf of Young Bristol who are working with young people. They are issued under Young Bristol's Safeguarding Policy. It is essential that all staff and volunteers read, understand and follow the guidance below.

2) Definitions of Abuse

Young Bristol has a duty through our members, management, staff and volunteers to protect children and young people who they come into contact with from abuse. For Young Bristol, the definition of children and young people (referred to in this procedure simply as "young people") includes everybody aged under 19, and those aged 19-24 with particular special needs.

"Working Together to Safeguard Children" (DCSF, 2015) defines abuse as 'any form of maltreatment of a child' and includes abuse not only by adults, but by another child or children. In particular, the paper identifies four categories of abuse:

Physical Abuse

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

Sexual Abuse

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

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 abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

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

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

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 a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

For more information, see

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/419595/Working_Together_to_Safeguard_Children.pdf

Historic Abuse

There may be occasions when an adult will disclose abuse (either sexual or physical) which occurred in the past, during their childhood. This information needs to be treated in exactly the same way as a disclosure or suspicion of current child abuse. The reason for this is that the abuser may still represent a risk to children now.

3) What to do if a young person tells you about any abuse

If a young person tells you that they or somebody else is being abused, you should take the following steps:

- Allow the young person to speak without interruption, accepting what is said

- Offer immediate understanding and reassurance, while passing no judgement
- DO NOT question or attempt to interview the young person. Any questions asked should not be leading in nature and should consist of the 5Ws (Who, What, When, Where and How) with a view to understanding what the issue is and what action should be taken under section 4 below.
- DO NOT promise to keep the information to yourself. Advise that you will try to offer support, but that you may have a duty of care to pass the information on
- Write careful notes of what was said, using actual words where possible
- Assure the young person that you will co-operate with them throughout the process
- DO NOT approach the alleged abuser
- DO NOT discuss the information with anyone else (other than as permitted under section 4 below)
- Follow the steps in section 4 below

4) What to do if you are concerned about a child or young person

If you are concerned that a young person you are working with may be suffering abuse, you must take action. First, you should decide whether you consider the situation to be an emergency, high risk or potential risk situation as described below.

4.1) Emergency Situation

If you consider that there is an immediate risk to a young person's safety, you should immediately call the Police on 999/112, or contact the Local Authority's Duty and Assessment Team on the numbers below:

Area	Address	Telephone
North Bristol	Ridingleaze, Lawrence Weston, BS11 0GE	0117 922 2534
East/Central	Welsman, Princes Street, St Pauls, BS2 9JA	0117 922 2532
South Bristol – Symes House, (Near Hartcliffe)	Symes House, hartcliffe, BS13 0EE	Unit 1: 0117 922 2533

Outside Office Hours – Emergency Duty team	Citywide	01454 615 165
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Other numbers that you can call are:

- Police Child Abuse Investigation Team (CAIT): 0117 945 4320
- NSPCC 24 hour Helpline: 0800 800 5000 (free from a landline)
- NSPCC Asian Languages Helpline: 0808 800 5000 (free from a landline)
- NSPCC Text helpline: 88858 (service is free and anonymous)
- Police: 101 (non-emergency calls)

Family Help Teams

- North: 0117 352 1499
- East / Central: 0117 357 6460
- South: 0117 903 7770

You should follow all advice or instructions from these agencies and report the matter to Young Bristol's Designated Safeguarding Officer at the earliest possible time.

The designated safeguarding officer is currently:

Lee Williams - 07983 975 136

4.2 High Risk Situation

This is where there is evidence that a child or young person is likely to suffer from abuse, and you are not comfortable with sending them home, either because the likely abuser is in the home, or there is concern over the parents / carers' capacity to deal with the situation.

In this case, you should contact a Designated Safeguarding Officer immediately to seek advice (see contact details above). If you are unable to contact one of the officers in time to avoid the situation becoming an emergency, you should contact the relevant authorities as described above.

4.3 Potential Risk Situation

This is where you are concerned about the wellbeing of a child or young person, but do not believe that there is an immediate risk of harm to them, either while they are in your care, or after sending them home. In this case, you should contact one of Young Bristol's Designated Safeguarding Officers at the earliest opportunity to discuss your concerns.

4.4 Recording

In every case, you **must** complete an incident form, and pass it to a Designated Safeguarding Officer. As a minimum, you must record:

- The nature and reasons for your concerns, and any evidence which supports them. Attach notes of any conversations with young people.

- Who you have spoken to, including dates, times and methods of contact (e.g. phone, email etc)
- Any action that you have taken as a result, including referring the matter to other agencies

Where more than one member of staff has been involved, each should complete a separate form, even if the information is the same.

These forms will be scanned and stored in a secure area on Young Bristol's server, to which only the Designated Safeguarding Officer has unrestricted access. The originals will be confidentially destroyed.

5 Actions to be Taken by Designated Safeguarding Officers

Upon receiving a report of concern from a member of staff according to the above procedure, the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) will advise the staff member on how to handle the case, and support them in doing so. This will include ensuring that any necessary referral to the statutory authorities is made in a complete and timely manner, and that all recording as required above is completed fully.

The DSO will also be responsible for discussing with the staff member, and their line manager if appropriate, the personal impact that the situation has caused them, and arranging any appropriate support or follow-up training.

Last reviewed in April 2026.

Next Review – March 2027