

Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy

Reviewed: May 2026

Reviewed by: Marisa Gifford, Coaching Manager

Chimera Climbing recognises the importance of Safeguarding and is committed to ensuring that children and vulnerable adults who visit the centres are protected.

“If there is a concern about a child’s welfare, or the behaviour of an adult, the one thing not to do is do nothing”

Key Safeguarding Personnel, Titles and Abbreviations:

DSL = Designated Safeguarding Lead

SO = Safeguarding Officer

DSO = Deputy Safeguarding Officer

Marisa Gifford – DSL

Danny Litchfield – DSO (Tunbridge Wells)

Nathan Wright – DSO (Canterbury)

Adam Cordell – DSO (Chatham)

Christopher Searle – Director & Safeguarding Officer

All organisations in the U.K. working with children are required by law to have a safeguarding policy in place. Such policies are designed to protect children and vulnerable adults and to ensure a fair, impartial and confidential process for the staff who have been accused of a safeguarding violation.

This document gives clear guidance on the identification of potential and actual abuse of children or vulnerable adults and lays out the procedures for dealing with both.

The Codes of Practice and Guidelines included in this document should act as a guide for staff to create a safe environment for young people and vulnerable adults and to protect themselves against allegations of improper behaviour.

It is mandatory for all employees to read, understand and comply with the Chimera Safeguarding Policy and our Code of Conduct. These documents should enhance the training each employee received upon their induction.

Chimera Climbing has a duty of care to safeguard from harm all children and vulnerable adults involved in their activities.

All children and vulnerable adults have the right to protection and the needs of children and vulnerable adults from all backgrounds and abilities must be taken into account. This includes children and young

adults of all ages, ethnicity, social backgrounds, abilities, sexual orientation, religious belief and political persuasion.

Chimera will ensure the safety and protection of all children and vulnerable adults involved in its activities through adherence to its Safeguarding Policy and Codes of Conduct.

Chimera will support anyone who, in good faith, reports his or her concerns that a child or vulnerable adult is at risk of, or may actually be, being abused.

1. Principles

The following principles underpin the Chimera Safeguarding Policy:

- To provide children and vulnerable adults with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care and responsibility of Chimera.
- All senior staff should promote a culture that ensures children and vulnerable adults are listened to and respected as individuals.
- To allow all staff/volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific safeguarding and protection issues.
- All suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- A child is defined as an individual under the age of 18 (The Children Act 1989).
- A vulnerable adult is defined as someone “who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation”. (Home Office – Department of Health).
- That all children, regardless their age, ethnicity, abilities, social background, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, or political persuasion, have the right to live in a safe environment.
- Any sanctions used must be non-violent and must not involve the humiliation of children or vulnerable adults.
- The welfare of the child or vulnerable adult is paramount and will underpin all guidance.
- This guidance is mandatory for all staff and volunteers.

1.1. Safeguarding Definitions

These definitions are included to assist in the identification of a safeguarding concern or incident.

Safeguarding Incident: An event where there is reasonable cause to believe a child or vulnerable adult has been harmed or is at risk of harm. These events are reportable to the police and the Chimera safeguarding team.

Safeguarding Concern: A concern that, while not necessarily involving harm or risk, may breach professional or moral boundaries. These concerns are reportable to the Chimera safeguarding team

Illegal behaviour: Reportable harmful behaviours that contravene UK law, such as physical, sexual, or psychological abuse. These behaviours are reportable to the police and the Chimera safeguarding team.

Inappropriate behaviours: Reportable behaviours, not involving harm or risk, that do not contravene UK law but may breach professional or moral boundaries. These behaviours are reportable to the Chimera safeguarding team.

In accordance with the Children Act 1989, Section 31(9):

'Harm' means ill-treatment or the impairment of health or development.

Where:

'Development' refers to physical, intellectual, emotional, social, or behavioural development.

'Health' encompasses physical or mental health.

'Ill-treatment' includes abuse, including sexual abuse and other forms of ill-treatment that are not physical.

2. Recognising How Children Can Be Harmed

'Abuse' is a term used to describe ways in which children are harmed. Abuse may result from action or inaction by a staff member, volunteer or paid helper, family member or another young person.

The Children Act (1989) states that there are four main types of abuse: Physical, Emotional, Sexual and Neglect. Each type of abuse is outlined below. Please note that these definitions apply equally to someone who is considered to be a vulnerable adult.

2.1. Physical Abuse

Where adults physically hurt or injure children. In a climbing/mountaineering situation this might occur if the child is forced to train or climb beyond his or her capabilities. It may also occur if the training disregards the capacities of the child's immature and growing body. In more extreme cases this can take the form of physical attack i.e. hitting, shaking, burning or biting them.

2.2. Emotional Abuse

Occurs when a child is not given love, help and encouragement and is constantly derided or ridiculed. Emotional abuse can occur if a child is over protected preventing them from socialising. In a sporting/climbing context this may be present in the unrealistic expectations of what a child can achieve by parents, coaches or even fellow climbers. This can also occur in the undermining of a young person through ridicule. This abuse often manifests itself in the form of bullying.

2.3. Sexual Abuse

Occurs when a child knowingly or unknowingly takes part in an activity which meets the sexual needs of the adult person or persons involved. It could range from sexually suggestive comments to physical sexual activities. Exposing young people to pornography is also a form of sexual abuse. In a sporting context this may take the form of photography or videoing for the sexual gratification of the viewer.

Coaches and volunteers are often placed in a position of great trust, and it is when this trust is abused that sexual abuse can occur.

2.4. Neglect

This includes situations in which adults fail to meet a child's basic physical needs. This may involve the lack of medical attention or consistently leaving children alone and unsupervised or monitored. Neglect can also occur if a supervisor fails to ensure children are safe.

Chimera will support anyone who in good faith reports his or her concerns that a child or vulnerable adult is at risk.

3. Possible Signs of Abuse

Even for those experienced at working with abuse it is not always easy to recognise a situation where abuse may occur or has already occurred. Chimera acknowledges that its staff and volunteers are **not necessarily experts** at such recognition. Chimera therefore expects them to discuss any Safeguarding Concerns they may have with regards to the welfare of a child or vulnerable adult with the Designated SO as soon as is practicable. If this is not practical and the situation is deemed to be too serious to delay, then advice can be sought from Social Services or the Police.

It is important to recognise that some children or adults may have additional vulnerabilities and may face additional barriers or difficulties in communicating any concerns or problems because of their race, gender, age, abilities, religion, sexual orientation, or political persuasion. Adults need to recognise this and be particularly sensitive should concerns be raised by such children and vulnerable adults or in relation to them.

3.1. Characteristics of Abuse

Below are listed some of the characteristics which may be indicative of abuse.

- Unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to injury.
- Any injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent and /or the child or vulnerable adult is unwilling to discuss.
- The child or vulnerable adult describes what appears to be an abusive act involving them.
- Unexplained behaviour changes e.g. becoming very quiet, withdrawn, or displaying sudden outbursts of temper.
- Inappropriate sexual awareness.

- Distrust of adults, particularly those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected.

It is not the responsibility of those delivering Chimera Climbing activities to decide whether abuse is occurring, but it is their responsibility to act upon any Safeguarding Concerns and report them immediately.

Levels of awareness need to be raised without creating an atmosphere of anxiety or suspicion.

A basic principle should be:

if you become aware of anything which causes you to feel uncomfortable, you should speak to the DSO or DSL.

If a young person behaves in a way that gives rise to concern, this may indicate there is a problem. There may be a perfectly reasonable explanation for this behaviour. However, it is important to act on a concern and ascertain that this is the case. If it is still felt there may be a problem, it is important to seek further help.

4. What is Bullying?

Bullying is one of the most common forms of abuse. Bullying is something that needs to be taken very seriously. It is not acceptable for adults to dismiss bullying as a simple part of growing up. There is sufficient evidence to show that the consequences of bullying can be devastating both to the victim and their family.

4.1. Types of Bullying

There are three main types of bullying:

- Physical, e.g. hitting, kicking or theft
- Verbal, e.g. racist or homophobic remarks
- Emotional, e.g. persistent negative feedback.

All these will include:

- Deliberate hostility and aggression towards the victim.
- A victim who is weaker and less powerful than the bully or bullies.
- An outcome which is always painful and distressing for the victims.

Bullying behaviour may include:

- Other forms of violence.
- Sarcasm, spreading rumours, persistent teasing.
- Torment, ridicule, humiliation.
- Racial taunts, graffiti, gestures.
- Unwanted physical contact or abusive, offensive comments of a sexual nature.
- Unacceptable comments, posts or images about other young people on social media sites.

Within climbing there are potential situations where bullying can take place:

- A parent who pushes too hard.
- A coach who adopts a “win at all cost” philosophy.
- A climber who intimidates others.
- Unwanted peer pressure from other climbers to do routes that are too hard or dangerous.

5. Chimera Staff Training – Response to a Disclosure, Suspicion or Allegation

“If there is a concern about a child’s welfare, or the behaviour of an adult, the one thing not to do is do nothing”

5.1. What to do:

A child or vulnerable adult here at Chimera may indicate to you that they are being abused in some way, or information may come to you of possible abuse. On receiving this information, you should:

- React calmly - do not rush into inappropriate or prejudicial action. What you are told may be shocking, but it is important you provide the child or vulnerable adult with reassurance and stability.
- Reassure the child or vulnerable adult that they are not to blame and that they did the right thing to tell someone, i.e. you, about the incident.
- Take the person seriously and listen carefully to them. Recognise how difficult it was for them to tell you.
- Only ask questions which help to clarify the situation. **Do not question any more than is strictly necessary.** The law is very strict when it suspects someone has been led or ideas have been suggested.
- If possible, allow only one adult to talk to the child or vulnerable adult to begin with. It is possible that discrepancies in the account of what has happened can, in the event of the allegation being referred, lead to legal complications later.
- Try not to make the child or vulnerable adult repeat their account unnecessarily.

- Do not make promises you cannot keep. Explain that you may have to tell other people in order to stop what is happening but that you will endeavour to keep the incident as confidential as possible.
- **Make a full record of what has been said, heard or seen as soon as possible.**
- **Please use the Safeguarding Incident & Concern Report Form, available [via the staff intranet](#).**
- **Speak to a Designated SO as soon as possible.**
- **In the event that extreme urgency is required, call the Police.**

5.2. What not to do:

- Take sole responsibility for further action.
- Approach or try to contact the alleged abuser.
- Ignore what has happened.
- Make promises you cannot keep.

6. Recording Information

All staff involved must complete the Safeguarding Incident & Concern Report Form as soon as is practicable. This must then be passed confidentially to the Designated SO.

Information that is passed on to the BMC, Social Services, Local Authorities and the Police must be as helpful as possible. Hence there is a necessity for making a detailed and accurate record.

6.1. Storage, Access to and Retention of Recorded Information

Information passed to the Designated SO must be kept securely, in lockable, non-portable, storage containers with access strictly controlled and limited to those who are entitled to see it as part of their duties. These records are to be retained for 30 years.

6.2. Allegations of previous abuse

Allegations of abuse may be made a long time after the event (e.g. by an adult who was abused as a child or by a member of staff who is still currently working with children). Where such an allegation is made, the procedures in section '**What You Should Do Next**' should be followed and when appropriate Social Services or the Police will be informed. This is important as other children or

vulnerable adults may still be at risk from the accused individual should the allegation be proved to be correct.

7. What You Should Do Next

7.1. Concerns about poor practice and possible abuse within a Chimera setting

This relates to all those involved within Chimera Climbing.

Concerns and allegations about abuse require very careful handling and should be treated with the strictest confidence. Any form of abuse can ultimately result in a criminal conviction. It is important to keep an open mind and that all allegations are kept in the strictest practical confidence. **It is important you act on your concerns.**

The flow chart below may act as an aide memoire in such an event and is available for reference alongside the Safeguarding Incident and Concern Form.

In all cases the SO should be informed. If the allegation is against that person, then the Centre Manager for that particular case should be informed.

If the concern is about a member of staff or volunteer, they will then be notified that an allegation has been made and where appropriate suspended from his/her duties.

If you are in any doubt or do not feel confident in sharing your concerns with a senior colleague, the BMC has a Whistleblowing policy that is on the BMC website. Confidential advice on whistleblowing is available from the independent charity Public Concern at Work on [020 3117 2520](tel:02031172520) or [email](mailto:info@protect-advice.org.uk). You may also wish to consult their website www.protect-advice.org.uk.

Alternatively, you can contact the [NSPCC](http://www.nspcc.org.uk) 24hr help line on 0800 800 5000.

You can also seek advice from the Police and Social Services who have staff trained to deal with these issues.

8. Codes of Practice and Behaviour

8.1. Positions of Trust

All adults who work with young people and vulnerable adults are in a position of trust which has been invested in them by the parents and the young person. This relationship can be described as one in

which the adult is in a position of power and influence by virtue of their role. In climbing most adults recognise that there are certain boundaries in the coach/climber relationship which must not be crossed. The relationship is no different to schoolteacher and pupil.

8.2. Good Practice

Staff, particularly those involved in climbing activities, will be working in an environment where a 'hands on approach' may sometimes be necessary. Ensure that such contact is kept to the safe minimum, done openly, in response to the person's needs, and within the knowledge and consent of the child, or vulnerable adult, and their parent or carer. There may, in extreme circumstances, be situations where reasonable force may be used as restraint i.e., self-defence, preventing risk or injury or damage to property. Please record any such incident and report it to the Designated SO.

Below are outlined guidelines, ideas and suggestions that help to create a safe environment for children and vulnerable adults. They should also help in ensuring that a child, or vulnerable adult, or others do not misinterpret the behaviour of adults.

8.3. Good practice for adults working with young climbers and vulnerable adults

Staff must respect the rights, dignity and worth of all. They must also treat everyone with dignity, respect, sensitivity, and fairness as well as with equality.

Climbing coaches and supervisors should ensure that the welfare of any climber is paramount, and that the activity should be fun.

They should think about:

- Not over-climbing, or over-training young climbers.
- People climb because they enjoy it. Remember winning a competition may be only part of that enjoyment.
- Motivate people through positive feedback and constructive criticism.
- Ensure climbers climb in an environment where inherent risk is kept to a minimum and is within accepted guidelines.
- Never allow climbers to climb when injured.
- Ensure all equipment is appropriate and in good condition.

It is important when supervising young people or vulnerable adults to avoid situations where an adult and the individual are completely unobserved.

Physical contact between coaches and climbers should be limited to that which is specifically required in order to support the development of their climbing. If physical support is required e.g. spotting, or support when bouldering, ensure the individual is fully aware of what is happening and has verbally consented to this physical help. Some parents/carers are becoming increasingly sensitive about this type of help, and their views should be respected at all times.

Parents should take responsibility for their own child in situations where they need to change or require toilet assistance.

Encourage an open environment, always explain why you are doing something and try to facilitate, as far as is practical, an open and inclusive approach to Chimera activities. People often respond better if they feel they are part of the process.

8.4. Emergency situations

The following should only be sanctioned in an emergency situation and then only if the Designated SO has been consulted and has agreed:

- Taking young people or vulnerable adult alone on car journeys.
- Spending time alone with a young person, or vulnerable adult, who is not a direct relation or guardian.

The following must never be sanctioned:

- Taking young people or a vulnerable adult alone to your home.
- Sharing a room overnight with a young person or young people or vulnerable adult.
- Allowing young people to engage in the use of inappropriate language.
- Making sexually suggestive comments to a young person or vulnerable adult even in fun.
- Doing things of a personal nature for a young person or vulnerable adult that they can do themselves.
- Allowing allegations made by a child or vulnerable adult to go unchallenged, not acted upon or not recorded.
- Allowing young people to consume alcohol or take illegal recreational drugs.
- Allowing any physically rough, or sexually provocative, contact or games.

8.5. Poor Practice

Poor practice constitutes anything that is contradictory to the Chimera Safeguarding Policy document or any of the guidance outlined in BMC documentation. Poor practice may also be a failure to follow guidelines or putting children in danger. A combination of minor incidents could also be regarded as poor practice.

If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice by a member of staff, the Designated SO will deal with it as a misconduct issue.

If the allegation is about poor practice by the Designated SO, or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to the relevant BMC Officer who will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether to initiate disciplinary proceedings.

A Safeguarding Incident and Concern Form should be completed, and a copy sent to the relevant BMC Officer.

9. Guidance for Staff

9.1. What happens if you are accused of an abusive action?

In the event of an accusation:

- Make notes of all your actions/contacts with the child in question as soon as possible.
- Seek access to professional and legal advice.
- Ensure that you are no longer working with the child/children making the allegation.
- Accept that colleagues may not be in a position to discuss the matter with you while the investigation is underway.
- Accept that you may be suspended from working with any young people.

Such events are difficult for all concerned. The DSL will remain impartial in all matters relating to an accusation. The main concern with any incident is the child's welfare. For an individual, against whom an allegation has been made this will be a difficult time. It is important that you seek help and support. This can be initiated through discussion with the centre manager.

9.2. Recruitment of Staff and Volunteers

Chimera highly values the interaction of its staff with young people and adults. As part of the recruitment process, it is important that all those concerned with this work are confident that recruitment procedures are as comprehensive as possible. The vetting of individuals is a necessary part of the recruitment process. This procedure in no way reflects any element of distrust.

The rules governing checking of individuals that work or volunteer with young people and vulnerable adults changed following the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012. These guidelines have been written to take account of those changes. They are:

1. Supervised access – where no check is required.
2. Those requiring a DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check, unsupervised access, and Regulated Activity.

To ensure individuals go through the correct vetting procedures the following guidelines are to be used.

9.3. Supervised Access

9.3.1. Where no DBS check is required

Supervision

The new Act is clear that a worker (including a volunteer) who is being supervised when working with children, or vulnerable adults, does **not** need to be DBS checked. This is because, in the terminology of the Act, they are not doing a Regulated Activity.

So, what does it mean, to say someone is supervised? In terms of climbing, a worker or volunteer is **supervised** when they are in direct sight or hearing of someone who is both over-seeing them and has been enhanced DBS checked.

If no one is overseeing the worker, or if the person overseeing the worker does not have a DBS check, then the worker may need to be DBS checked.

It is important to note that supervision must take place on an on-going basis and so it must not tail off as time goes by.

9.3.2. Those requiring a DBS check

Under the 2012 Act, only people undertaking work considered to be a Regulated Activity are to be DBS checked. Regulated Activity is work that a barred person must not do. Organisations can therefore check if a person is on the barred list.

So, what is Regulated Activity? These are activities that include the following: Teaching, training, instructing, caring for or supervising children; or providing guidance / advice on well-being; or driving a vehicle only for children, on a frequent basis.

Frequency: Regulated Activities are undertaken at least once a week or more often or happen intensively on 4 or more days in a 30-day period, or overnight.

Anyone working, which includes volunteering and overseeing those who work or volunteer, with children in any of the above Regulated Activities is to be checked to see that they are not on the barred list – this is done through an enhanced DBS check.

So, those who are considered to have unsupervised access for Regulated Activities must complete the following procedure:

- undergo a DBS check.
- provide 2 written references.

9.4. Interview and Induction

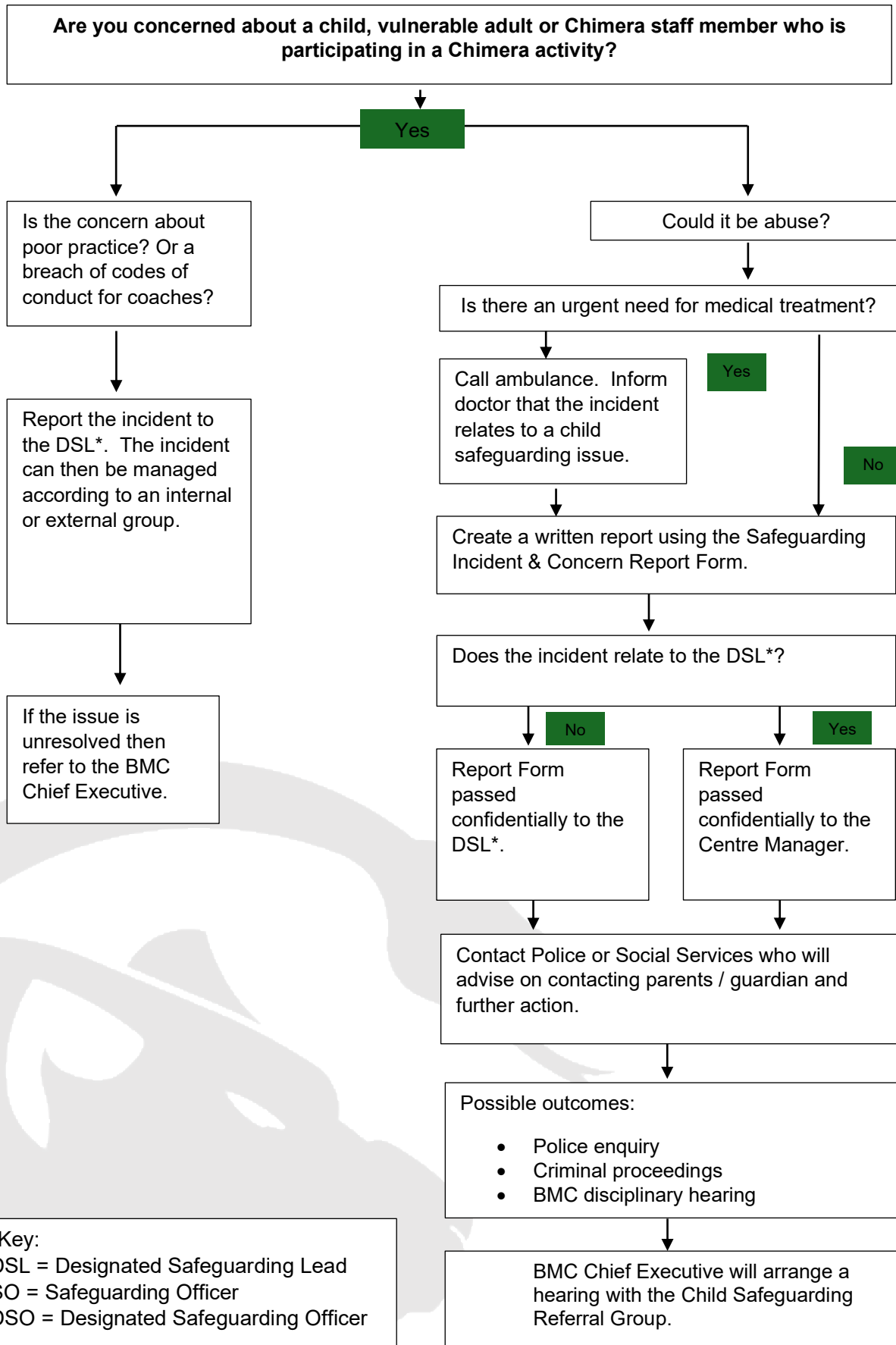
All employees and volunteers with direct or indirect access to children, or vulnerable adults, will be required to undertake an interview carried out to acceptable protocol. All employees and volunteers with direct or indirect access to children, or vulnerable adults, should receive an appropriate level of formal or informal induction during which:

- checks are carried out to ensure application forms are completed in full;
- their qualifications are substantiated;
- two references are taken up;
- the job requirements and responsibilities are clarified; and
- Child Safeguarding Procedures are explained, and training needs identified, e.g. basic child protection awareness and/or time to listen.

The following checklist is to be used to record what has been done and retained as a record.



10. Dealing with Concerns, Disclosure, or Allegations



***Key:**
 DSL = Designated Safeguarding Lead
 SO = Safeguarding Officer
 DSO = Designated Safeguarding Officer

Key Contacts

Designated Safeguarding Officer

Marisa Gifford
Coaching Manager
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Designated Deputy Safeguarding Officers

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