

## **Child Protection Policy**

### **Policy Statement**

Nidderdale Plus recognises that all children have a right to protection from abuse and takes seriously its responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of children and young people (under 18 years).

We will:

- Respond swiftly and appropriately to all suspicions or allegations of abuse, and provide parents and children with the opportunity to voice their concerns
- Have a system for dealing with concerns about possible abuse
- Maintain good links with statutory childcare authorities.

### **Purpose of Policy**

Nidderdale Plus recognises that many children and young people today are the victims of neglect, physical, sexual and emotional abuse. Accordingly, Nidderdale Plus has adopted the policy contained in this document (hereafter “the policy”). The policy sets out agreed guidelines relating to and responding to allegations of abuse, including those made against staff and volunteers of Nidderdale Plus. We also recognise the need to build constructive links with the childcare agencies. These guidelines have been prepared in accordance with the North Yorkshire Area Child Protection Procedures. The policy applies to all staff and volunteers who act on behalf of the organisation and who come directly into contact with children using our services. The policy also includes any young person (under 18) who may be working with us, for example, in a Duke of Edinburgh capacity or as a student placement. Every individual has a responsibility to inform the Nidderdale Plus Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) in respect of child protection or their deputy of concerns relating to safeguarding children. The DSL must decide if the concerns should be communicated to social services or the police.

### **Definitions of Abuse**

#### **Bullying and Cyberbullying**

Bullying is intentional behaviour that hurts someone else. It includes name calling, hitting, pushing, spreading rumours, threatening or undermining someone. It can happen anywhere – at school, at home or online. It's usually repeated over a long period of time and can hurt a child both physically and emotionally. Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place online. Unlike bullying offline, online bullying can follow the child wherever they go, via social networks, gaming and mobile phone. A person can be bullied online and offline at the same time.

#### **Child Sexual Exploitation**

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a type of sexual abuse. It happens when a child or young person is coerced, manipulated or deceived into sexual activity in exchange for things that they may need or want

like gifts, drugs, money, status and affection. Children and young people are often tricked into believing they're in a loving and consensual relationship so the sexual activity may appear consensual. This is called grooming and is a type of abuse. They may trust their abuser and not understand that they're being abused. CSE does not always involve physical contact, and can also occur through the use of technology.

### **Child trafficking**

Traffickers often groom children, families and communities to gain their trust. They may also threaten families with violence or threats. Traffickers often promise children and families that they'll have a better future elsewhere. Trafficking is also an economic crime. Traffickers may ask families for money for providing documents or transport and they'll make a profit from money a child "earns" through exploitation, forced labour or crime. They'll often be told this money is to pay off a debt they or their family "owe" to the traffickers.

### **Criminal Exploitation and Gangs**

Criminal exploitation is child abuse where children and young people are manipulated and coerced into committing crimes. The word 'gang' means different things in different contexts, the government in their paper '*Safeguarding children and young people who may be affected by gang activity*' distinguishes between peer groups, street gangs and organised criminal gangs. It's not illegal for a young person to be in a gang – there are different types of 'gang' and not every 'gang' is criminal or dangerous. However, gang membership can be linked to illegal activity, particularly organised criminal gangs involved in trafficking, drug dealing and violent crime.

### **Domestic Abuse**

Domestic abuse is any type of controlling, bullying, threatening or violent behaviour between people who are or have been in a relationship. It can also happen between adults related to one another. It can seriously harm children and young people, and experiencing domestic abuse is child abuse.

### **Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse is any type of abuse that involves the continual emotional mistreatment of a child. It's sometimes called psychological abuse. Emotional abuse can involve deliberately trying to scare, humiliate, isolate or ignore a child.

### **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**

FGM is when a female's genitals are deliberately altered or removed for non-medical reasons. It's also known as 'female circumcision' or 'cutting', but has many other names.

### **Grooming**

Grooming is when someone builds a relationship, trust and emotional connection with a child or young person so they can manipulate, exploit and abuse them. Children and young people who are groomed can be sexually abused, exploited or trafficked. Anybody can be a groomer, no matter their age, gender or race. Grooming can take place over a short or long period of time – from weeks to years. Groomers may

also build a relationship with the young person's family or friends to make them seem trustworthy or authoritative.

### **Harmful Sexual Behaviour**

Harmful sexual behaviour is developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour displayed by children and young people which is harmful or abusive. This includes peer-on-peer sexual abuse, which takes place between children of a similar age or stage of development, and child-on-child sexual abuse which takes place between children of any age or stage of development.

### **Neglect**

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

### **Non-Recent Abuse**

Non-recent child abuse, sometimes called historical abuse, is when an adult was abused as a child or young person under the age of 18. Sometimes adults who were abused in childhood blame themselves or are made to feel it's their fault. But this is never the case: there's no excuse for abuse.

You might have known you were abused for a very long or only recently learnt or understood what happened to you. Whether the abuse happened once or hundreds of times, a year or 70 years ago, whatever the circumstances, there's support to help you. It's never too late. This video explains more about non-recent abuse: [https://youtu.be/84G\\_1gUDM7M](https://youtu.be/84G_1gUDM7M).

### **Online Abuse**

Online abuse is any type of abuse that happens on the internet. It can happen across any device that's connected to the web, like computers, tablets and mobile phones. And it can happen anywhere online, including: social media, text messaging and messaging apps, emails, online chats, online gaming, and live streaming sites. Children can be at risk of online abuse from people they know or from strangers. It might be part of other abuse which is taking place offline, like bullying or grooming. Or the abuse might only happen online.

### **Physical Abuse**

Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institution or community setting; by those known to them, or more rarely by a stranger. 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 carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health to a child whom they are looking after.

### **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape or buggery) or 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.

### **Nidderdale Plus Child Protection Procedures**

#### **What you should do if you suspect abuse**

1. You must report concerns as soon as possible to the DSL, who is nominated by Nidderdale Plus to act on their behalf in referring allegations of suspicions of neglect or abuse to the statutory authorities. In the absence of the DSL, the matter should be brought to the attention of the Safeguarding Trustee ('Deputy DSL'). If it is an emergency, and the designated persons cannot be contacted, then social services or the police should be contacted at the numbers given below.
2. If the suspicions relate to the DSL, then the deputy or social services should be contacted.
3. Suspicions should not be discussed with anyone, other than those named above.
4. It is the right of any individual to make direct referrals to the child protection agencies, although we would hope that an individual would use the procedure outlined above. However, if you feel that the organisation has not responded appropriately to your concerns, it is open to you to contact the child protection agencies direct.

#### **Allegations of physical injury, emotional abuse or neglect**

If a child has an injury which may be a non-accidental injury, or symptoms of neglect and a referral is to be made then:

1. The DSL should contact social services. If there has been a deliberate injury or where there are concerns about the child's safety the child's parents should not be contacted before first consulting with social services.
2. Where emergency medical attention is necessary it should be sought immediately. The DSL should inform the doctor of any suspicion of abuse.
3. If a referral is being made without the parent's knowledge and non-urgent medical treatment is required, social services should be informed. Otherwise, speak to the parent/carer and suggest medical attention be sought for the child.
4. If appropriate the parent/carer should be encouraged to seek help from the Social Services Department prior to a referral being made. If they fail to do so in situations of real concern the designated person will contact social services directly for advice.

#### **Allegations of sexual abuse**

In the event of allegations of sexual abuse the DSL will:

1. Contact the North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership or Police Child Protection Team directly. The DSL will not speak to the parents/carers.

2. Under no circumstances should the DSL, or any other member of the organisation, attempt to carry out any investigation into the allegations or suspicions of sexual abuse. The role of the DSL is to collect the exact details of the allegations or suspicion and to provide this information to the child protection agencies that will investigate the matter under the Children Act 1989.

### **What to do once a child has talked to you about abuse**

1. Make a note immediately of what the child has said, writing down exactly what the child has said, write down what you said in reply, when they said it and what was happening immediately beforehand. Record dates and times of the events and when the record was made. Keep all notes secure.
2. Report your discussion as soon as possible to the DSL.
3. Once a child has talked about abuse, the DSL must consider if it is safe for a child to return home to a potentially abusive situation. On a rare occasion it might be necessary to take immediate action to contact social services and/or the police to discuss putting into effect safety measures for the child so that they do not return home.
4. All records must be passed to the DSL to deal with and store in appropriate locked storage.
5. *Allegations against staff or volunteers will be investigated. Where there are concerns that a child has been put in danger of abuse or has suffered abuse owing to the actions of a member of staff or volunteer social services or the police will be contacted. Details of any allegation which has not resulted in a referral will be kept securely in the same way as described in 4 above.*

### **North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children partnership**

In the first instance, employees and volunteers should report to the DSL any matters of concern regarding child protection. However, in urgent situations when the DSL or deputy DSL is not available, if you have a concern about a child or young person, or urgently need to make a referral to the North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children Partnership, **please make contact with them by phoning 0300 131 2 131. This number can also be used outside normal office hours, but you will be speaking to the Emergency Duty Team if you do call outside 9am-5pm, Monday-Friday.**

### **Police**

Where there are significant immediate concerns about the safety of a child, you should contact the police on 999.

### **Building Awareness of County Lines**

County lines is a form of criminal exploitation where urban gangs persuade, coerce or force children and young people to store drugs and money and/or transport them to suburban areas, market towns and coastal towns (Home Office, 2018). It can happen in any part of the UK and is against the law and a form of child abuse.

Children and young people may be criminally exploited in multiple ways. Other forms of criminal exploitation include child sexual exploitation, trafficking, gang and knife crime. County lines gangs are highly

organised criminal networks that use sophisticated, frequently evolving techniques to groom young people and evade capture by the police.

Perpetrators use children and young people to maximise profits and distance themselves from the criminal act of physically dealing drugs (National Crime agency, 2019). Young people do the majority of the work and take the most risk.

Dedicated mobile phone lines or “deal lines” are used to help facilitate county lines drug deals. Phones are usually cheap, disposable and old fashioned, because they are changed frequently to avoid detection by the police. Gangs use the phones to receive orders and contact young people to instruct them where to deliver drugs. This may be to a local dealer or drug user, or a dealer or drug user in another county.

Nidderdale Plus employees and volunteers should be aware of warning signs that may indicate that a child is a victim of County Lines. The NSPCC has put together some information to help anyone who works or volunteers with children and young people to recognise the signs that a child might be being exploited by a county lines gang and understand what action to take to help keep children safe. The link is here: <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-abuse-and-neglect/county-lines>.

<b>Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)</b>	Helen Flynn
<b>Tel no during office hours</b>	01423 714953
<b>Mobile (outside office hours)</b>	07789 173011
<b>Deputy DSL</b>	Jackie Kerr
<b>Mobile</b>	07778 783695

**Approved at Trustee meeting held on 23 June 2026**

**This policy will be reviewed annually**