



## Safeguarding children and young people – policy and procedure

This policy is for:  
**All teams**

Date first issued: **July 2020**  
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Date of next review: **July 2023**

This policy and procedure is owned by:  
**Quality Directorate**

- We will promote the welfare of any child or young person who uses our services or who we come into contact with and protect them from harm.
- We will always listen to a child or young person if they make a disclosure of abuse; we will take this seriously and take the appropriate action. We will also take appropriate action if we observe or have concerns about abuse or neglect.
- We will make sure we comply with our legal, regulatory, contractual and internal requirements.

## Why we need this policy and procedure

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to ensure that we always promote the wellbeing and welfare of the children and young people who use our services or come into contact with us, and help prevent them from coming to harm, abuse or neglect, and respond effectively if concerns are raised or observed.

This policy and procedure applies to children and young people aged under 18 years of age and all staff (including volunteers and agency/supply staff) who work within Mencap.

## Our approach

We recognise that the needs and welfare of any child or young person we support is paramount, and we must take into account their wishes and feelings as much as possible when making decisions about their support<sup>1</sup>.

It is important for us to remember and highlight that children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities are more likely to be victims of abuse<sup>2</sup> and additional safeguarding barriers can exist. These can include:

- Feeling embarrassed, humiliated or threatened, and not feeling ready to tell or knowing how to tell someone they are being abused.
- Not recognising that their experiences are harmful.
- Assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child or young person's disability without further exploration.
- Being more prone to peer group isolation than other children or young people.
- The potential for being disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs.
- Communication barriers and difficulties in overcoming these barriers.

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<sup>1</sup> Children Act, 1989 - <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989>

<sup>2</sup> World Health Organisation - <https://www.who.int/disabilities/violence/en/>; NSPCC - <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/right-safe-disabled-children-abuse-report.pdf>; Jones, L et al. (2012) [Prevalence and risk of violence against children with disabilities: a systematic observational studies](#)

Children who are lesbian, gay, bi, or Trans (LGBT) can be targeted by their peers. In some cases, a child or young person who is perceived by their peers to be LGBTQ+ can be just as vulnerable as children or young people who identify as LGBTQ+. We must reduce any additional barriers faced and provide a safe space for them to speak out or share concerns with us.

This is why we are committed to promoting the welfare of any child or young person who uses our services or who we come into contact with and protect them from harm. We have an ‘it could happen here’ attitude and everyone who comes into contact with them has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action. We believe that children and young people should never experience abuse of any kind.

We show this commitment by:

- Making sure a child, young person, carer, parent or staff member feels safe to express concerns without fear.
- Responding quickly and effectively if concerns are raised or identified within or outside a Mencap setting
- Having a zero tolerance approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment.
- Making sure our approach is child-centred.
- Reporting any concerns to statutory agencies as soon as possible. Please note: the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) do not prevent the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe. We must not allow our fears about sharing information to stand in the way of the need to promote the welfare and protect the safety of children.
- Making sure teams and trustees have the appropriate training and recruitment checks for their role.
- Supporting our teams through supervision, team meetings, audits, procedures, designated child protection leads and training.
- Encouraging colleagues to feel confident to self-refer, where for example, they have found themselves in a situation, which could be misinterpreted, might appear compromising to others, or on reflection, they believe they have behaved in such a way that falls below our expected behaviour.
- Working in partnership with relevant agencies and parents/families, as appropriate.
- Making sure teams know and understand how to whistle blow. Please see our organisational [Whistleblowing policy](#) for more information.
- Having a [Complaints procedure](#) in place that is available to everyone.

**At Royal Mencap Society, the named individuals with designated responsibility for safeguarding children and young people are:**

Designated safeguarding leads/officers	Designated deputy safeguarding leads/officers
Jason Hardman 01709830956 Lifestyles & Work	Joyce Tainton 07930547099 Lifestyles & Work
Leigh Noble 02890690194 Early Years and Family Support	Hiba Momen 07852580460 Lifestyles & Work
	Diana De Rubeis 07956060569 Quality
	Claire Shepherd 02890690174 Early Years and Family Support

Our designated children and young people safeguarding leads are available to support teams to carry out their safeguarding duties and liaise closely with other services, such as children's social care.

We have an internal safeguarding panel that makes sure we have the right processes in place to manage safeguarding activity. They do this by reviewing serious incidents, organisational performance and effectiveness, by learning from safeguarding incidents, producing organisational reports and making sure we are meeting our duty of care towards children and young people.

## Definitions

**Child or children, young person or young people:** Anyone under 18 years of age

**Child abuse:** Anything which individuals, institutions or processes do or fail to do which directly or indirectly harms children and young people or damages their prospect of safe and healthy development into adulthood. Children and young people may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or by another child or children.

**Child protection:** the procedures and activities that are undertaken to prevent or in response to, suspected child abuse and neglect.

**Parental responsibility:** refers to the rights of the parents in relation to their child. There may be situations where significant adults share this responsibility with one or both parents. Parents retain parental responsibility even if their child is being looked after by Social Services. We have an obligation to share information in relation to the child with all parents/ carers who hold parental responsibility. Parental responsibility can only be determined by the Court.

**Consent:** having the freedom and capacity to choose.

Consent to sexual activity may be given to one sort of sexual activity but not another. It can be withdrawn at any time during sexual activity and each time the activity occurs. A child under the age of 13 can never consent to any sexual activity.

**Sexual harassment:** the unwanted conduct of a sexual nature that can occur online and offline. This can include sexual comments; physical behaviour, such as deliberately brushing against someone and displaying pictures of a sexual nature. We should maintain an attitude of “*it could happen here*”.

**County lines:** a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas within the UK. Children, young people and vulnerable adults can be exploited to move and store drugs and money. Offenders will often use coercion, intimidation, violence and weapons to ensure compliance of victims.

## Types of child abuse:

**Neglect** - the persistent failure to meet a child or young person’s basic physical and psychological needs<sup>3</sup>. The four main types of neglect are:

- Physical neglect: not meeting a child or young person’s basic needs, such as food, clothing or shelter; not supervising a child or young person adequately or providing for their safety.

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<sup>3</sup> Department for Education (2018); Wales Safeguarding Procedures Project Board (2019)

- Educational neglect: not making sure a child or young person receives an education.
- Emotional neglect: not meeting a child or young person's needs for nurture and stimulation.
- Medical neglect: not providing appropriate health care (including dental care), refusing care or ignoring medical recommendations.

**Physical abuse** - deliberately hurting a child or young person and causing physical harm. It includes injuries such as bruises, broken bones and cuts and can be done through hitting, shaking, throwing, burning or suffocating a child.

**Emotional abuse** - the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child or young person, which has a severe and persistent negative effect on their emotional development. It is also known as psychological abuse and may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, not giving the child opportunities to express their views or deliberately silencing them.

**Child sexual abuse** - a child or young person is forced or persuaded to take part in sexual activities. This may involve physical contact (e.g. rape<sup>4</sup>, assault by penetration, masturbation, kissing, rubbing or touching outside of clothing), or non-contact activities and can happen online or offline (e.g. flashing at a child, making, viewing or distributing child abuse images).

**Child on child abuse** – children and young people are capable of abusing their peers. This can take many forms, including bullying and cyberbullying, sexual violence and sexual harassment, physical abuse, upskirting, sharing nudes and sexting<sup>5</sup>. It can also be referred to as peer on peer abuse. It should never be tolerated or passed off as “banter” or “part of growing up”, and it is more likely that girls will be victims of this type of abuse and boys the perpetrators.

Where there has been a report of sexual violence or harassment, we should make an immediate risk and needs assessment, which covers:

- The victim, especially their protection and support.
- The alleged perpetrator.
- Any other children and, if appropriate, other adults and staff.

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<sup>4</sup> Child Sexual Offences Act (2003)

<sup>5</sup> Consensual image sharing especially between older children of the same age may require a different response. It may not be abusive but children still need to know it is illegal.

Young people should understand that the law is there to protect them rather than criminalise them.

**Child sexual exploitation (CSE)** - a type of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person into sexual activity in return for something the child needs or desires, and/or for the gain of the person(s) perpetrating or facilitating the abuse. CSE can take place in person, online or using a combination of both.

**Child criminal exploitation (CCE)** – a child or young person is manipulated, coerced or deceived into committing crimes. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power in exchange for something the child or young person needs or wants, and/or for the gain of the person(s) perpetrating the abuse, and/or through violence or the threat of violence. Examples of CCE include: children being forced to work in cannabis factories, being coerced into moving drugs or money across the country (county lines), forced to shoplift or pickpocket, or to threaten other young people.

**Child trafficking and modern slavery** – recruiting, moving, receiving, and harbouring children for the purpose of exploitation (e.g. CSE, criminal activity, forced marriage, domestic servitude). Further information on the signs that someone may be a victim of modern slavery, the support available to victims and how to refer them to the National Referral Mechanism can be found in the [Modern Slavery Statutory guidance](#).

**Harmful sexual behaviour** – developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour which is displayed by children and young people. It is also known as sexualised behaviour. It can occur online and/or face-to-face.

**Grooming** – a process by which a person prepares a child or young person, significant adults and the environment for the abuse of a child.

**Honour-based abuse** – this encompasses incidents or crimes which have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or the community. It includes female genital mutilation, forced marriage, and practices such as breast ironing.

**Female genital mutilation (FGM)** - the partial or total removal of external female genitalia for non-medical reasons. It's also known as female circumcision or cutting. Incidences of FGM must be reported to the police. Information on when and how to report can be found at: [Mandatory reporting of female genital mutilation procedural](#)

## [information](#)

**Domestic abuse** – an incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, psychological, physical, financial, sexual and emotional abuse by a partner, ex-partner, or family member. Anyone can see, hear or experience the effects of domestic abuse, regardless of sexual identity, age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sexuality or background and it can take place inside or outside of the home.

[Operation Encompass](#) is a police and education early information safeguarding partnership, which enables schools/colleges to offer immediate support to children and young people experiencing domestic abuse. It ensures that schools and colleges receive timely information about all police-attended incidents of domestic abuse.

**Bullying** - individuals or groups seek to harm, intimidate or coerce someone who is perceived to be vulnerable. It can happen anywhere – at home, school or using digital technologies (cyberbullying).

**Online abuse** – any type of abuse that happens on the internet, facilitated through technology like computers, tablets, mobile phones and other internet-enabled devices.

Cybercrime is criminal activity that either targets or uses a computer, computer network or a networked device. Children or young people with a particular skill or interest in this area may inadvertently or deliberately stray into a cyber-dependent crime. If we have concerns, we should consider referring into the Cyber Choices Programme, led by the National Crime Agency.

**Radicalisation** – radicalisation is defined in the Prevent Strategy as “the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and forms of extremism leading to terrorism”. Further information about radicalisation can be found on page 15.

**Community safety incidents** – if these occur in the vicinity of a college or service, they can raise concerns amongst children and young people, for example, people loitering nearby or unknown adults engaging children and young people in conversation. It is important that children and young people are given practical advice on how to keep themselves safe.



## Indicators of abuse

Children and young people who have been, or are being abused, may not always feel able to tell anyone what's happening to them. Sometimes, children and young people do not even realise that what is happening to them is abuse. Therefore, observations regarding specific behavioural patterns may indicate abuse.

We should not automatically assume abuse as there may be another explanation but any changes in a child or young person's behaviour must always be explored.

Indicators and signs may include:

- Unexplained changes in behaviour or personality.
- Becoming withdrawn.
- Seeming anxious.
- Becoming uncharacteristically aggressive.
- Lacks social skills and has few friends, if any.
- Poor bond or relationship with a parent.
- Knowledge of adult issues inappropriate for their age.
- Running away or going missing.
- Always choosing to wear clothes that cover their body.
- Being homeless or being at risk of becoming homeless.

Possible signs of FGM may include:

- Having difficulty walking, sitting or standing.
- Spending longer in the bathroom/toilet.
- Appearing quiet, anxious or depressed.
- Acting differently after an absence from the service.
- Reluctance to go to the doctors to have routine medical examinations.
- Reluctance to get undressed after having a toilet accident.

Possible signs of child sexual exploitation may include:

- Unhealthy or inappropriate sexual behaviour.
- Being secretive.
- Being frightened of some people, places or situations.
- Having money or things they cannot or will not explain.

- Alcohol or drug misuse.
- Sexually transmitted infections.
- Physical signs of abuse, like bruises or bleeding in their genital or anal area.
- Pregnancy.

Possible signs of radicalisation include:

- Having increasingly extreme views regarding another section of society or government policy.
- Becoming increasingly intolerant of more moderate views.
- Expressing a desire/intent to take part in or support extremist activity.
- Downloading, viewing or sharing extremist propaganda from the internet.
- Becoming withdrawn and focused on one ideology.
- Changes to their appearance, their health may suffer (including mental health) and they may become isolated from family, friends, peers or social groups.

For additional indicators of any of the abuse and neglect categories, please visit [NSPCC - types of abuse](#).

It is important to remember that abuse, neglect and safeguarding issues are rarely standalone events that can be covered by one definition or label. In most cases, multiple issues will overlap with one another.

In addition, we should all be aware that mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child or young person has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation. If we have a mental health concern about a child or young person that is also a safeguarding concern, we should speak with a designated safeguarding lead or deputy immediately. Further information about mental health can be found in our [supporting a person with their mental health - guidance](#)

### ***Think family approach***

‘Think family’ aims to promote the importance of a whole-family approach to safeguarding as neither adults nor children exist in isolation. Therefore, where safeguarding concerns lie within a family, we must have regard for the safety of any children who may be at risk and make a referral to children’s services, as appropriate.

We must ‘think family’ at all times.

## Our Procedure

### When we witness abuse, see signs/suspicions of abuse/neglect or abuse/neglect is disclosed to us

The first and most important thing we must do is safeguard the child or young person. This means making sure they are safe and, as far as possible, protected from further abuse.

We will treat all allegations or abuse seriously, even if the child or young person has a history of making false allegations.

#### Early Help

Early help, also known as early intervention, is support given to a family when a problem first emerges rather than waiting until the situation escalates<sup>6</sup>. It is important that we can recognise when a child or young person may benefit from an early help assessment from their Local Authority or Trust. Signs that a child or young person may benefit from early help include:

- Displaying disruptive or antisocial behaviour.
- Having poor attendance at school.
- Having poor general health.
- Having trouble at home, such as domestic abuse, parental substance abuse or parental mental health problems.

#### Dealing with a disclosure or an allegation of abuse

If a child or young person discloses that he or she has been abused or neglected in some way or a parent/carer makes a disclosure, we **must**:

- Listen to what is being said without displaying shock or disbelief.
- Allow the child or young person to talk freely.
- Reassure the child or young person that they are being taken seriously and they will be supported and kept safe, but not make promises which might not be possible to keep.

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<sup>6</sup> Department for Education (2018); Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (2017); Welsh Government (2018)

- Take into account a child or young person's wishes and feelings when determining what action to take and what services to provide.
- Reassure them that what has happened is not their fault.
- Not criticise the alleged perpetrator.
- Explain what has to be done next and who has to be told.
- Thank them for informing you and reassure them that they were right to do so
- Make a written record (see Record Keeping section).
- Pass the information to the designated safeguarding lead without delay.
- Make a referral to children's social care and/or the police without delay. In Northern Ireland, this will be completed by the Designated Safeguarding Lead, unless they are unavailable.

We must always make sure that we maintain an appropriate level of confidentiality. This means only involving people/organisations who need to be involved, such as the designated safeguarding lead, children's social care/ the child's social worker (if applicable) and the child's family (if deemed safe to do so).

Our responsibility to record and report an allegation of abuse remains the same, regardless of the source of the allegation.

### **Immediate risk of harm**

If you think a child or young person is at immediate risk of harm or abuse, and/or a criminal offence is taking place, you must:

1. Contact the police on 999 without delay  
[NPCC- When to call the police](#) provides guidance on when to call the police and what to expect when you do.
2. Contact a designated child protection lead to inform them about what has happened.  
*Contact details for our leads can be found on page 3 of this document.*
3. Make a referral to the local child protection service (England and Wales) or the Gateway Services team (NI) in the area where the child or young person is living, on the same day where harm or risk of harm has been identified. If the concern involves a child from our Children's Centre in NI, the designated safeguarding lead on duty is responsible for completing the referral.

If concerns arise out of office hours, referrals must be made to the local authority out of hours service or the out of hours Gateway Services team (NI).

The following links will direct you to the local children's social care/ local Gateway service contact numbers:

- [England](#)
- [Wales](#)
- [Northern Ireland](#)
- For the NI Children's Centre, the Gateway Services at Belfast Health and Social Care Trust should be contacted (please see Appendix 1 for contact details).

We must follow the local authorities and multi-disciplinary child protection procedures. Therefore, teams must have access to their local authority's child protection procedure for reporting concerns and allegations of abuse. These procedures may change and it is the responsibility of the manager to make sure that they and their team are kept up to date.

4. Complete a cause for concern form if it involves a child from our Children's Centre. We may also be asked to complete a UNOCINI (Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland).
5. Complete an internal critical incident report.
6. Notify the appropriate regulator, if required (CQC, OFSTED, CIW, RQIA, Early Years Team HSCNI and Charity Commission – Charity Commission notifications are made by the Quality team).

Throughout the whole process, we must keep the child or young person's circumstances under review, and re-refer if appropriate.

### **No immediate risk of harm**

If you're worried about a child or young person but they are not in immediate danger, you **must** still share your concerns as soon as possible:

1. Report your concerns to a designated safeguarding lead. *Contact details for our leads can be found on page 3 of this document.*
2. Make a referral to the local child protection service (England and Wales) or the Gateway Services team (NI) in the area where the child or young person is living, if required. This must be done on the same day where harm or risk of harm has been identified. If concerns arise out of office hours, referrals must be made to the local

authority/Gateway out of hours service. In Northern Ireland, this will be completed by the designated safeguarding lead.

The following links will direct you to the local children's social care/ local Gateway service contact numbers:

- [England](#)
- [Wales](#)
- [Northern Ireland](#)
- For the NI Children's Centre, you can seek advice from the Early Years Team and Gateway Services at Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (please see Appendix 1 for contact details)

3. Contact the police (where required)  
[NPCC- When to call the police](#) provides guidance on when to call the police and what to expect when you do.
4. It is good practice to inform the child or young person's parents/carers that we have identified a possible safeguarding concern **unless** this will put the child or young person at more risk. This process is led by a designated safeguarding lead or deputy.
5. Complete a cause for concern form if it involves a child from our Children's Centre.
6. Complete an internal critical incident report.
7. Notify the appropriate regulator, if required (CQC, OFSTED, CIW, RQIA, Early Years Team HSCNI and Charity Commission).

Throughout the whole process, we must keep the child or young person's circumstances under review, and re-refer if appropriate.

### **Record keeping**

All concerns, discussions and decisions made and the reasons for those decisions should be recorded in writing as soon as possible after the event. This includes any low-level concerns about a colleague. If it involves a child or young person from our Children's Centre, this information must be recorded on a cause for concern form.

The written record needs to be completed by the team member who has reported the allegation(s), witnessed the event or has the suspicions. It cannot be delegated to someone else.

The following information must be included in all written records:

- Time(s).
- Date(s).
- Location(s).
- Witnesses.
- Signature and date.
- Noticeable non-verbal behaviour and the words used by the child.
- Be clear on what is factual and what is opinion – avoid interpretations or assumptions.

We will hold records in line with our records retention schedule.

## **Investigation of an allegation**

For our services in England and Wales, we need to investigate any allegations of abuse. How and when we can do this will be determined by whether the local child protection service and/or the Police want to carry out their own investigation. They may ask us not to do our own investigation until they have concluded theirs. The child protection team may ask us to investigate on their behalf.

A criminal investigation by the Police will usually take priority over all other lines of enquiry. This means that before you proceed with any disciplinary investigation, for an incident that has been reported to the Police, you must check with them that this will not compromise their investigation in any way. The child or young person should only be interviewed in their educational setting in exceptional circumstances, and they must be accompanied by an appropriate adult at interview, with every effort made to inform the parent/carer. If this is not possible, a colleague can be nominated as the appropriate person.

If the local child protection service decide that no actions are needed, the Regional Operations Manager/ Branch Lead/ Programme Manager, in conjunction with a designated safeguarding lead, should decide if we should complete our own internal investigation.

Our internal investigation needs to be done as quickly and efficiently as possible, to avoid any unnecessary stress for the person, their family, the staff team and others.

In Northern Ireland, it is not our role to investigate allegations of abuse; this is completed by the Gateway Service at the relevant Health and Social Care Trust. However, we may be asked to complete a UNOCINI (Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland) by statutory services to gather information about the concern. The designated safeguarding lead or deputy will complete this. If the allegation is about a staff member, we would follow Mencap's disciplinary procedures (please refer to the 'Managing allegations made against staff' section below).

## **Managing allegations made against a child**

If a child or young person discloses that they have behaved abusively towards someone else, we must never promise to keep what they have said a secret. We must explain to them that we need to talk to other people who can help keep them and the other children and young people safe.

It is important to remember that a child or young person who displays challenging behaviour may be doing so because they have been, or are, experiencing abuse or neglecting themselves.

### **Telling parents/carers that their child may have abused someone else**

The child or young person's parent or carer should be told what has happened, as long as it does not increase the risk to the child or young person.

We can ask the child or young person how they would like their parent/carer to be told - for example, we could:

- Talk to the parent/carer first without the child there, then summarise everything with the child or young person present.
- Help the child or young person to tell their parent/carer in their own words with us present for support.

When we respond to an allegation of abuse made against a child or young person, it's important that we consider the needs of everyone involved. It is important to make sure parents/carers are offered appropriate support.

## **Managing allegations made against staff, including volunteers, agency staff and contractors**



Concerns relating to child abuse or neglect (actual or suspected) must be taken seriously and dealt with sensitively and promptly. This includes low-level concerns, such as having favourites, taking photographs of children or young people on a mobile phone and using inappropriate sexualised or intimidating behaviour.

The response to the allegation will depend on the situation; however, it may include:

- Informing the Designated Safeguarding Lead of low-level concerns.
- Sharing low-level concerns about agency staff or contractors with their employer.
- The Police investigating a possible criminal offence.
- The local child protection service making enquiries and/or assessing whether a child or young person is in need of support.
- Following our internal [disciplinary procedures](#) with individuals concerned.

We need to remember that at the point we are made aware of the allegation, we do not know if the person has committed abuse. We need to support the team member throughout the process as this can be a very stressful experience for them. Unless there is an objection by the children's social care services or the Police, the individual should be informed of concerns or allegations as soon as possible and given an explanation of the likely course of action.

It may be necessary to suspend a team member or change their place of work while an investigation is completed.

If the outcome of an investigation is that a team member is found to be unsuitable to work with children and young people, we will make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service and/or a NISCC referral (Northern Ireland Social Care Council) for colleagues working in Northern Ireland. If the team member works in our NI Children's Centre, the Early Years Team at Belfast Health and Social Care Trust will also be notified.

Further guidance about the process for making a DBS referral can be found in the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Policy.

## **Recruiting our teams**

We have a robust recruitment process in place which makes sure that the people who come to work for us, in any capacity, are suitable to work with children and young people.

This includes making sure that the people who are employed by us, or who volunteer for us, have an enhanced DBS/Access NI check, two written references and HSCNI vetting forms including a GP medical declaration (for our NI colleagues) in place. This is detailed in our recruitment, referencing, and Disclosure and Barring Service policies and procedures. Staff are not permitted to lone work until these documents have been received.

In our Children's Centre in NI, there must always be two staff members present for children that attend the Early Intervention Scheme.

## **Our *Prevent* duty (England and Wales)**

*Prevent* is about safeguarding people and communities from the threat of terrorism and radicalisation. It is one of the elements of the Government's counter-terrorism strategy, published in 2011. Radicalisation can occur to a person from any section of society and is not particular to any racial, ethnic or social group. Although this strategy does not directly apply in Northern Ireland, many of the principles can still be applied.

Our *Prevent* duty is monitored by Ofsted; however, it is important that we all understand what it means and what we can do to protect people from radicalisation and extremism.

At Mencap, we will:

- Ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion are embedded in everything we do.
- Promote fundamental British values.
- Not tolerate bullying.
- Provide support, advice and guidance to the people we support and staff who may be at risk of radicalisation.
- Ensure that staff and the people we support are aware of their role and responsibilities in preventing radicalisation and extremism.

Further information about the *Prevent Duty* can be found here: [Prevent duty guidance: for England and Wales](#). There is also additional [guidance](#) that applies to colleges.

We have completed a *Prevent* risk assessment. This can be accessed through our Lifestyles & Work team at [LWqueries@mencap.org.uk](mailto:LWqueries@mencap.org.uk).

### **Channel referrals (England and Wales)**

Channel is an early intervention multi-agency process designed to safeguard vulnerable people from being drawn into violent extremism or terrorism and forms a key part of the *Prevent strategy*. Members of a Channel panel include: the police, social workers, local authorities and community groups.

We must record and report any concerns regarding potential radicalisation or involvement with violent extremism using our internal Critical Incident Reporting Procedure. In addition, the relevant designated safeguarding lead will make a Channel referral to the local authority. Mencap will work in collaboration with the Channel panel in relation to any referrals we make. Guidance on how to make a Channel referral can be found in *Appendix 4 – Channel Referral Process*.

In all cases, we will liaise with the police for additional advice and guidance.

For further information about how *Prevent* applies to our work and a list of our *Prevent* Champions, please visit:

<https://royalmencapsociety.sharepoint.com/sites/MyMencapNews/SitePages/The-Prevent-duty-and-Mencap.aspx>

### **Recognising and responding to bullying and cyberbullying**

Bullying encompasses a range of behaviours, which are often combined, including: verbal abuse; physical abuse; emotional abuse and cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying can happen anywhere online that allows digital communication, such as:

- Social networks.
- Text messages and messaging apps.
- Email and private messaging.
- Online chats.

- Comments on live streaming sites.
- Voice chat in games.

Children and young people can also be groomed online. Perpetrators may use online platforms to build a trusting relationship with the child or young person in order to abuse them. This abuse may happen online or the perpetrator may arrange to meet the child or young person in person with the intention of abusing them.

Possible signs of bullying may include:

- Being reluctant to go to school.
- Being distressed or anxious.
- Losing confidence and becoming withdrawn.
- Having problems eating and/or sleeping.
- Having unexplained injuries.
- Changes in their appearance.
- Changes in performance and/or behaviour at school/college.

When responding to incidents or allegations of bullying, it is important we:

- Listen to all the children and young people involved to establish what has happened.
- Record details of the incident and any actions taken.
- Inform a designated safeguarding lead.
- Inform parents and carers (unless doing so would put a child or young person at further risk of harm).
- Provide support to the child/children being bullied, children who witnessed the bullying and the child/children who has been accused of bullying.
- Ask the child/children who have been bullied what they would like to happen next.
- Consider appropriate sanctions for children or young people that have carried out bullying.
- Continue to monitor the situation even if the situation has been resolved.

If bullying content has been circulated online, we must take action to contain it. If the content is illegal, we should contact the police who will provide us with appropriate advice and guidance.

### **Online safety**

We should always emphasise the importance of a safe online environment to children

and young people using our services, and encourage parents and carers to set age-appropriate parental controls on digital devices and use internet filters to block malicious websites.

If the learner is under 18 years old, it is a mandatory requirement for us to contact their parents and/or carers and reinforce the importance of the individual staying safe online. Further guidance can be found in *Appendix 2 – L&W – Online safeguarding*.

All online learning must be subject to the completion of the online teaching and learning activity risk assessment (*Appendix 3*).

Further information and guidance about online safety can be found in:

- [Supporting a person to be safe online – policy and procedure](#)
- [Supporting a person to be safe online - Appendix: Staying safe on social media and online](#)

## **Lost or missing children/young people**

Given the vulnerability and specific needs of the children and young people we support, any child or young person that goes missing should be reported to the police by calling 999. This includes child abduction, which is the unauthorised removal or retention of a minor from a parent or anyone with legal responsibility for the child or young person.

It is important we have the following information to hand:

- The circumstances around being unable to locate the child or young person.
- The age, basic details and description (including last known clothing).
- The possible reasons for the child or young person going missing and their likely intentions.
- Medical needs or need for urgent or ongoing medical treatment.
- Patterns of criminality or offending.
- Danger posed by the child or young person to themselves and others.
- General vulnerability of the child or young person.
- The influence of peer groups/family.

Colleagues working in our Children's Centre in NI must also immediately report a missing child to the Children and Early Years Programme Manager or the Designated Safeguarding Lead on duty.

It is important we remember that children or young people going missing, particularly repeatedly, can be a warning sign of safeguarding concerns.

Further information and guidance can be found in our [what to do if a person goes missing - policy and procedure](#).

## Further reading

This policy and procedure must also be read in conjunction with our:

- [IT user agreement](#)
- [Data Protection Policy](#)
- [Data Sharing - Policy and Procedure](#)
- [Bring your own device \(BYOD\) to work policy](#)
- [Supporting a person to be safe online – policy and procedure](#)
- [Supporting a person to be safe online - Appendix: Staying safe on social media and online](#)
- [What to do if a person goes missing - policy and procedure](#)
- [Disciplinary policy and procedure](#)
- [Recruitment policy](#)
- [Disclosure and Barring Service policy](#)
- [References policy and procedure](#)

## Useful links

- [NSPCC](#)  
The NSPCC provides a helpline for professionals at 0808 800 5000 and [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)
- [Refuge](#)  
Refuge runs a free National Domestic Abuse Helpline at 0808 2000 247
- [Childline](#)
- [Anti-bullying Alliance](#)
- [Child exploitation and online protection \(CEOP\)](#)
- [UK Safer Internet Centre](#)
- [Educate Against Hate](#)

- [Online abuse and bullying prevention guide](#) – Home Office
- [Domestic abuse: how to get help](#) – Home Office
- [When to call the police - NPCC](#)
- [Disrespect Nobody](#)
- [Rape Crisis England & Wales](#)
- [The Survivors Trust](#)
- [Operation Encompass](#)
- [LGfL DigiSafe - Undressed](#)
- [County lines and criminal exploitation toolkit](#)

## References

### England

- [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#) - Department for Education, 2018
- [Keeping children safe in education](#) - Department for Education
- [What to do if you're worried a child is being abused, Advice for practitioners](#) – HM Government, 2015
- [Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges](#) – Department for Education, 2021
- The [Children Act 1989](#)
- The [Children Act 2004](#)
- [Prevent duty guidance: for England and Wales](#) – Home Office, 2019
- [Prevent duty guidance: for further education institutions in England and Wales](#) – 2019
- [Modern Slavery: Statutory guidance for England and Wales and non-statutory guidance for Northern Ireland](#) – HM Government, 2020
- [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#)
- [Harmful online challenges and online hoaxes](#) – Department for Education, 2021
- [The right to choose: government guidance on forced marriage](#) – Home Office, 2022

### Wales

- [Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014](#)
- The [Children Act 1989](#)
- The [Children Act 2004](#)
- [Wales Safeguarding Procedures 2019](#)

- [Working together to safeguard people guidance](#) (Welsh Government, 2019)
- [Prevent duty guidance: for England and Wales](#) – Home Office, 2019
- [Prevent duty guidance: for further education institutions in England and Wales](#) – 2019
- [Modern Slavery: Statutory guidance for England and Wales and non-statutory guidance for Northern Ireland](#) – HM Government, 2020
- [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#)

## Northern Ireland

- [The Children \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1995](#)
- [Children’s Services Co-operation Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2015](#)
- [Co-operating to safeguard children and young people in Northern Ireland](#)  
Department of Health (2017)
- [Revised regional core child protection policies and procedures for Northern Ireland](#)  
Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI) (2018)
- [Safeguarding Board Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2011](#)
- [Modern Slavery: Statutory guidance for England and Wales and non-statutory guidance for Northern Ireland](#) – HM Government, 2020

## Appendices

- **Appendix 1** – NI Children’s Centre safeguarding flow chart
- **Appendix 2** – L&W – Online safeguarding
- **Appendix 3** – L&W – Online teaching and learning activity risk assessment
- **Appendix 4** – Channel Referral Process