



Free2B Alliance

SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Children and Adults at Risk

Version: 1.8

Date: 13<sup>th</sup> March 2026

Internal review

Authorised: Board of Directors

2024 External review completed with [ThirtyOne:Eight](#)

NEXT REVIEW DUE:

Annual review period next due – March 2027

External audit next due – March 2027

Unless an earlier review is triggered by any of the following changes:

- There are changes to operating environment / or strategic direction of the company
- Work behaviour issues that require clarification
- Changes to government policy or legislation

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## 1. SCOPE OF THE POLICY

Free2B supports LGBTQ+ young people and their parents.

We provide 1:1 support to young people in schools and in the community. We provide LGBTQ+ youth groups including trans groups both in person and online, including trips and events. We also provide a range of resources, co-created with our members. We additionally facilitate a parent peer support group online, adhoc 121 support and where possible we offer opportunities for family trips and events.

Safeguarding children and adults at risk is the responsibility of everyone. Free2B recognises its responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and adults at risk. Free2B will give equal priority to keeping all children and adults at risk safe regardless of their age, disability, gender identity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

We are aware that many children and adults at risk are the victims of different kinds of abuse and that they can be subjected to social factors that have an adverse impact upon their lives – including domestic violence, substance misuse, bullying, child sexual exploitation (CSE) and child criminal exploitation (CCE). We aim to create a safe environment within which children and adults at risk can thrive and adults can work with the security of clear guidance.

Under the terms of the Children Act 2004 anyone under the age of 18 is considered to be a child/young person.

For the purpose of this policy 'adult' means a person aged 18 years or over.

Who is included under the heading Adult at Risk:

The Care Act of 2014 refers to adults at risk

An adult at risk of abuse or neglect is defined as someone who has needs for care and support, who is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect and as a result of their care needs - is unable to protect themselves. All partners should be using this definition when raising a concern about abuse/neglect of an adult.

This could include people with learning disabilities, mental health problems, older people and people with a physical disability or impairment. It is important to include people whose condition and subsequent vulnerability fluctuates. It may include an individual who may be vulnerable as a consequence of their role as a carer in relation to any of the above.

It may also include victims of domestic abuse, hate crime and anti-social behaviour. The person's need for additional support to protect themselves may be increased when complicated by additional factors, such as, physical frailty or chronic illness, sensory impairment, challenging behaviour, drug or alcohol problems, social or emotional problems, poverty or homelessness.

Many adults at risk may not realise that they are being abused. For instance, a person with complex disabilities, accepting that they are dependent on their family, may feel that they must tolerate losing control of their finances or their physical environment. They may be reluctant to assert themselves for fear of upsetting their carers or making the situation worse.

It is important to consider the meaning of 'Significant Harm'. The Law Commission, in its consultation document 'Who Decides,' issued in Dec 1997 suggested that; 'harm' must be taken to include not only ill treatment (including sexual abuse and forms of ill treatment which are not physical), but also 'the impairment of, or an avoidable deterioration in, physical or mental health; and the impairment of physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development'.

These guidelines are for the use of all paid staff, volunteers and visitors. We will make them available to the parents and carers of the children, young people and adults at risk to whom we offer a service. Through them, we will endeavour to ensure that:

- Children and adults at risk are listened to, valued and respected
- Staff are aware of the need to be alert to the signs of abuse and know what to do with their concerns
- All paid and unpaid staff are subject to rigorous recruitment procedures
- All paid and unpaid staff are given appropriate support and training

## 2. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Children Acts 1989 and 2004

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025

The Online Safety Act 2023

Human Rights Act 1998, the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998

The Care Act 2014

Equality Act 2010

Data Protection Act 2018, Freedom of Information Act 2000, Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards, Code of Practice 2008

The Mental Capacity Act 2005, covering England and Wales, provides a statutory framework for people who lack capacity to make decisions for themselves, or who have capacity and want to make preparations for a time when they may lack capacity in the future. It sets out who can take decisions, in which situations, and how they must go about this.

The Human Rights Act 1998 gives legal effect in the UK to the fundamental rights and freedoms contained in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA) created a framework for whistle blowing across the private, public and voluntary sectors. The Act provides almost every individual in the workplace with protection from victimisation where they raise genuine concerns about malpractice in accordance with the Act's provisions.

### 3. TYPES OF ABUSE

It can often be difficult to recognise abuse. The signs listed in these guidelines are only indicators and many can have reasonable explanations. Children and adults at risk may not seem themselves, or may seem unhappy for many reasons. It is nevertheless important to know what could indicate that abuse is taking place and to be alert to the need to consult further.

Children and young people:

- Physical Abuse
- Emotional Abuse
- Neglect
- Sexual Abuse (including child sexual exploitation)
- Child trafficking
- Domestic abuse
- Bullying and cyber-bullying
- Criminal exploitation / County Lines / Gangs

Adult at Risk

- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Psychological abuse
- Financial or material abuse
- Neglect and acts of omission
- Discriminatory abuse
- Organisational abuse
- Domestic abuse

[See Appendix A for examples of abuse and indicators.](#)

### 4. WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR CONCERNS / DISCLOSURES?

All safeguarding concerns should be acted upon immediately. If you are concerned that a child or adult at risk might be at risk or is actually suffering abuse, you should tell the Named Safeguarding Children's Advisors (NSCA) or Vulnerable Adult Protection Leads (VAPL) within your organisation.

The NSCAs and VAPLs for Free2B are Lucie Brooke and Georgina Wilkinson  
Referred to herein after as the 'Designated Leads'

Contact details:

[lucie@free2b.lgbt](mailto:lucie@free2b.lgbt) | 07757 502 726

[georgina@free2b.lgbt](mailto:georgina@free2b.lgbt) | 07529 221239

[See section 13 for full contact information](#)

In the event that a child or adult at risk makes an allegation or disclosure of abuse against an adult or another child or young person, it is important that you:

- Listen to them and/or closely observe their presentation and behaviour;
- Let them know that you take what they are saying seriously;
- Do not attempt to question or interview them yourself;
- Let them know that you will need to tell someone else in order to help them.
- Take notes as soon as possible after the conversation, so you have an accurate record of what they've told you.

Do not promise to keep what they tell you secret:

- Inform your designated lead as soon as possible;
- For clients seen in schools - inform the relevant school designated lead;
- Make a written record of the incident or events.

The nominated member of staff shall telephone and report the matter to the appropriate local social services duty social worker. A written record of the date and time of the report shall be made and the report must include the name and position of the person to whom the matter is reported. The telephone report must be confirmed in writing to the relevant local authority adult social services department within 24 hours.

Sometimes you may just feel concerned about a child or adult at risk but do not know whether to share your concerns or not. In this situation you should always raise your concerns with your designated lead, who will help you to decide what to do.

The responsibility for investigating allegations of abuse, whether they result from the disclosure of a child or the concerns of an adult, lies with social workers and the Police. It is normally the responsibility of the designated lead to make a referral to these agencies, but if you judge the situation to be an emergency and / or you require urgent advice in the absence of the designated officer, you must report your concerns directly, using the contacts listed at the back of these guidelines. In the event that you report your concerns to the DSL and you feel that for whatever reason their response and actions are not sufficient, you are encouraged to challenge the decision if you feel able to, and you have the right to escalate the concerns directly to the appropriate authorities using the contacts listed at the back of these guidelines. In such an instance you should also advise the Free2B non-executive director with safeguarding oversight so that the discrepancy can be explored to determine next steps.

Access Staff Portal to download Reporting and Recording procedures.

## Children

Children's Services also employs Child Protection Advisors (CPAs), who you can contact in office hours for further specialist guidance. [See section 13 for full contact information.](#)

The Duty social worker or CPA will advise you when or whether to inform the child's parents or carers about any concerns. If they decide to pursue a child protection investigation, you should:

- Work closely and collaboratively with all professionals involved in the investigation, in order to keep the child safe
- Attend a child protection conference if you are invited. You will be asked to provide information about your involvement with the child, which is why it is important to keep records of your concerns
- Attend any subsequent child protection review conferences.

## Adults at Risk

All local authorities have a Safeguarding Adults Board, which oversees multi-agency work aimed at protecting and safeguarding adults at risk. It is normal practice for the board to comprise of people from partner organisations who have the ability to influence decision making and resource allocation within their organisation.

The Police play a vital role in Safeguarding Adults with cases involving alleged criminal acts. It becomes the responsibility of the police to investigate allegations of crime by preserving and gathering evidence. Where a crime is identified, the police will be the lead agency and they will direct investigations in line with legal and other procedural protocols.

## 5. ALLEGATIONS MADE AGAINST STAFF OR VOLUNTEERS

Organisations that work or come into contact with children and adults at risk need to be aware of the possibility that allegations of abuse will be made against members of their staff. Allegations will usually be that some kind of abuse has taken place. They can be made by children, and adults at risk and they can be made by other concerned adults. Allegations can be made for a variety of reasons. Some of the most common are:

- Abuse has actually taken place;
- Something happens to a client that reminds them of an event that happened in the past – the client is unable to recognize that the situation and the people are different;
- Clients can misinterpret your language or your actions because they are reminded of something else;
- Some clients know how powerful an allegation can be; if they are angry with you about something they can make an allegation as a way of hitting out;
- An allegation can be a way of meeting an emotional need.

All allegations should be brought to the notice of a designated lead – Free2B has two named leads and therefore if the allegation relates to one lead, it should be brought to the notice of the other. If the allegation relates to both leads it should be brought to the attention for the non-executive director with safeguarding oversight.

A common procedure is:

- Make sure that the child or adult at risk in question is safe and away from the alleged abuser;
- Contact the police, LADO, or Children’s Service relevant to where the client lives, depending on the nature of the allegation
- Contact the parents or carers of the child if advised to do so by the social worker/officer in charge of allegations;
- Irrespective of any investigation by social workers or the police, you should follow the appropriate disciplinary procedure with suspension as a last resort, in line with Government Guidance: Allegations Against Staff 2012
- Consider whether the person has access to children or adults at risk anywhere else and whether those organisations or groups need to be informed;
- Act upon the decisions made in any strategy meeting.

All incidents should be investigated internally after any external investigation has finished, to review organisational practice and put in place any additional measures to prevent a similar thing happening again.

## 6. SAFE RECRUITMENT

The application of rigorous procedures for the recruitment of any staff who come into contact with children, both directly and indirectly, can reduce the likelihood of allegations of abuse being made that are founded. As an absolute minimum, the following standards should be followed:

- All roles will have a written job and personal specification for the post;
- All prospective workers (paid and unpaid) should complete an application form which asks for details of their previous employment and for the names of two referees;
- A self-declaration form and disclosure and barring check (DBS) has been completed where necessary (we will comply with Code of Practice requirements concerning the fair treatment of applicants and the handling of information);
- All prospective workers (paid and unpaid) should be interviewed to establish previous experience of working in an environment where there is contact with children and perceptions of acceptable behaviour;
- Nobody should start work before references have been requested and are being processed.
- Referees should be reminded that references should not misrepresent the candidate or omit to say things that might be relevant to their employment;
- It is acceptable for a new worker (paid or unpaid) to start in their post once both references have been received and are approved, if they have an existing DBS less

than 3 years old (at the same level as required for their new post) whilst the new DBS is being processed.

- All appointments to work with children and adults at risk should be subject to an agreed probationary period;
- New members of staff should be clear about their responsibilities and work to an agreed job description;
- New members of staff will be provided with a suitable induction and training programme;
- New members of staff will be given a copy of the organisation's safeguarding policy and know how to report concerns;

These guidelines should be available to everyone and discussed as part of an induction process.

## 7. DUAL ROLE CONSIDERATIONS

If an employee holds a separate role outside of their role with Free2B, this must be shared with their line manager. The DSLs will review the nature of the additional role and any safeguarding implications that may overlap with their duties at Free2B, in order to carry out a suitable risk assessment.

## 8. GOOD PRACTICE

- Every organisation working with children and adults at risk should have a NSCA and VAPL who must undergo safeguarding training. It is the responsibility of this person to make themselves available for consultation by staff, volunteers, visitors, children and their families.
- All staff are responsible for children and adults at risk while on these premises and must make sure that health and safety guidelines are adhered to.
- The designated lead should attend DSL safeguarding training every two years and all staff working with children and adults at risk should undertake an annual refresher training.
- All staff working with children and adults at risk should receive regular supervision from a more experienced staff member with the frequency relevant to their role. For staff with 121 caseloads this will be 6 weekly.
- No member of staff should be left alone with a child or adult at risk where others cannot observe them, unless they have a specific role remit (such as a therapist) and appropriate insurance in place.

- Under no circumstances should visitors be allowed to wander around the premises unaccompanied when children and adults at risk are present. And all visitors will be required to wear a visitors' lanyard / badge.
- Where possible there should always be at least two adults present with a group of children – it is vital that the ratio of adult to child is adequate to ensure safety.
- Staff should be alert to strangers frequently waiting outside a venue with no apparent purpose.

## 9. CONFIDENTIALITY AND CONSENT

All Free2B members including children and adults at risk are provided with the following confidentiality statements as part of the membership sign up process:

Everything we discuss in our 1:1, group & youth club sessions is confidential except:

- A. for the purposes of supervision: supervision sessions are with Free2B team members (and with a qualified external organisation for therapy roles) to allow staff to gain support and guidance in their work and also to check that we are working ethically and competently.
- B. where, in our opinion, there may be a danger to yourself or to others. In this situation, we will need to pass information on to ensure we are keeping you and others safe.

Consent to participate in Free2B services is based on Gillick Competency and Fraser Guidelines enabling children aged 13+ to provide their own consent. For those under 13, parental consent is mandatory. In the instance that parent consent is deemed to place the child at significant risk of harm, the school safeguarding lead can provide consent in loco parentis to enable access to 1:1 support  
See Data Protection Policy for further details.

## 10. SAFEGUARDING DATA STORAGE & RETENTION

Additional information is available in the Free2B Data Protection Policy.

Information and records relating to *Individuals* will be stored securely and will only be accessible to authorised staff and volunteers.

Information will be stored for only as long as it is needed or required by statute and will be disposed of appropriately in line with the Retention, Archiving and Destruction of Information procedure.

Any recorded information on users/members, volunteers and staff will be:

- Kept in locked cabinets, in locked offices.
- Protected by the use of passwords if kept on computer; with software being kept up to date.
- Appropriate back-up and disaster recovery solutions shall be in place.
- Destroyed confidentially if it is no longer needed.
- Archived and stored securely in a locked office, if appropriate.

### Safeguarding records

If anyone in your organisation has concerns about a child or at risk adults' welfare or safety, it's vital all relevant details are recorded. This must be done regardless of whether the concerns are shared with the police or children's social care.

Keep an accurate record of:

- the date and time of the incident/disclosure
- the date and time of the report
- the name and role of the person to whom the concern was originally reported and their contact details
- the name and role of the person making the report (if this is different to the above) and their contact details
- the names of all parties who were involved in the incident, including any witnesses
- the name, age and any other relevant information about the child who is the subject of the concern (including information about their parents or carers and any siblings)
- what was said or done and by whom
- any action taken to look into the matter
- any further action taken (such as a referral being made)
- the reasons why the organisation decided not to refer those concerns to a statutory agency (if relevant).

Access Staff Portal to download Reporting and Recording procedures.

## 11. PHOTOGRAPHY AND/OR FILMING

Children, parents and carers and adults at risk must be made aware that photography and filming is taking place during a session / event and give written consent for photos/films to be obtained and used. Parental consent is required on behalf of children aged under 16 (in line with Wandsworth council youth service procedures).

Staff members to use Free2B equipment to take photos or videos to avoid having images on personal devices. And team members who do not have a Free2B device are not permitted to take photographs or videos.

If we hire a photographer for one of our events, we will seek to keep children and adults at risk safe by:

- providing the photographer with a clear brief about appropriate content and behaviour
- ensuring the photographer wears identification at all times
- informing children, their parents and carers and adults at risk that a photographer will be at the event and ensuring they give written consent
- not allowing the photographer to have unsupervised access to children or adults at risk
- not allowing the photographer to carry out sessions outside the event or at a child's home
- reporting concerns regarding inappropriate or intrusive photography following our child protection procedures.

#### Storing images

We will store photographs and videos of children and adults at risk securely, in accordance with our safeguarding policy and data protection law. We will keep hard copies of images in a locked drawer and electronic images in a protected folder with restricted access.

Images will be retained in line with our data storage policy: records will be stored for 7 years after an individual has left our service.

In relation to images intended for online use (such as Free2B website promotions) the photography/video consent forms makes explicit that we cannot control how or where images/films may be shared beyond the original intention due to the nature of the internet and social media.

## 12. ADDITIONAL POLICIES

This policy needs to be read in conjunction with other policies for the organisation including:

- Lone Working and 121 Working (Staff handbook)
- Members anti-bullying (policy)
- Complaints and compliments (policy)
- Digital Communications (Policy)
- HR: Code of Conduct (Staff handbook)
- HR: Disciplinary procedure
- HR: Grievance procedure
- HR: Data Protection (Policy)
- HR: Whistle Blowing (Staff handbook)
- HR: Equity & Inclusion Policy
- HR: Health & safety Policy

## 13. CONTACTS

### FREE2B SAFEGUARDING CONTACT NUMBERS - CHILDREN

- Free2B NSCA – Lucie Brooke  
[lucie@free2b.lgbt](mailto:lucie@free2b.lgbt) | 07757 502 726
- Free2B NSCA – Georgina Wilkinson  
[georgina@free2b.lgbt](mailto:georgina@free2b.lgbt) | 07529 221 239
- Free2B Non-Executive Director Mark Holliday: Dedicated Googleform (via staff portal)
- LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer)  
0208 871 7440 | [LADO@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk](mailto:LADO@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk)
- Children’s Social Care Wandsworth Council  
020 8871 6622 (out of hours – 020 8871 6000)  
[Make a referral to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub \(MASH\) - Wandsworth Borough Council](#)
- Emergency Out of Hours Wandsworth Council  
020 8871 6000
- NSPCC Helpline  
0808 800 5000
- Missing Persons Unit (Met Police)  
0207 275 3404
- OFSTED: 08456 404 040
- In an emergency dial 999

### [Safeguarding contacts for London Boroughs](#)

### FREE2B SAFEGUARDING CONTACT NUMBERS – ADULTS AT RISK

- Designated Safeguarding Leads for Free2B are:  
Lucie Brooke: [lucie@free2b.lgbt](mailto:lucie@free2b.lgbt) | 07757 502 726  
Georgina: [georgina@free2b.lgbt](mailto:georgina@free2b.lgbt) | 07529 221239
- Non-Executive Director Mark Holliday: Dedicated Googleform (via staff portal)
- LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer)  
0208 871 7440 | [LADO@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk](mailto:LADO@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk)

- The adult social care Access Team Wandsworth: 020 8871 7707: Email: [accessteam@wandsworth.gov.uk](mailto:accessteam@wandsworth.gov.uk)
- Community Mental Health Team Wandsworth: 020 8767 3411: Email: [safeguardingadults@wandsworth.gov.uk](mailto:safeguardingadults@wandsworth.gov.uk)
- Emergency Out of Hours Wandsworth 020 8871 6000
- Missing Persons Unit (Met Police) 0207 275 3404
- In an emergency dial 999

#### REFERENCES, INTERNET LINKS AND FURTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION 'No Secrets' report

The first national policy developed for the protection of adults at risk, for use by all health and social care organisations and the police. It introduced guidance around local multi-agency arrangements and was issued under Section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970. Its implementation is led by local authorities with social services responsibilities.

[http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Lettersandcirculars/Dearcolleagueletters/DH\\_4002849](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Lettersandcirculars/Dearcolleagueletters/DH_4002849)

Action on Elder Abuse (AEA) is a charity working to protect, and prevent the abuse of, vulnerable older adults.

<http://www.elderabuse.org.uk>

The Centre for Policy on Ageing was established in 1947 by the Nuffield Foundation with a remit to focus on the wide-ranging needs of older people

<http://www.cpa.org.uk/index.html>

## Appendix A - Types of abuse and indicators

### Children

#### Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is when someone hurts or harms a child or young person on purpose. Physical abuse can involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning, and suffocating. It can also result when a parent or carer deliberately causes the ill health of a child in order to seek attention; this is called Fabricated or Induced Illness.

Symptoms that indicate physical abuse include:

- Bruising in or around the mouth, on the back, buttocks or rectal area
- Finger mark bruising or grasp marks on the limbs or chest of a small child
- Bites
- Burn and scald marks; small round burns that could be caused by a cigarette
- Fractures to arms, legs or ribs in a small child
- Large numbers of scars of different sizes or ages

#### 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.

Emotional abuse is often a part of other kinds of abuse, which means it can be difficult to spot the signs or tell the difference, though it can also happen on its own.

Emotionally abusive behaviour occurs if a parent, carer or authority figure is consistently hostile, rejecting, threatening or undermining. It can also result when children are prevented from social contact with others, or if developmentally inappropriate expectations are imposed upon them. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of someone else.

Symptoms that indicate emotional abuse include:

- Excessively clingy or attachment-seeking behaviour
- Very low self esteem or excessive self-criticism
- Excessively withdrawn behaviour or fearfulness; a 'frozen watchfulness'
- Despondency
- Lack of appropriate boundaries with strangers; too eager to please
- Eating disorders

#### Neglect

Neglect is the ongoing failure to meet a child's basic needs and the most common form of child abuse.

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, causing damage to their health and development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter or clothing, failing to protect a child from harm or danger, or failing to access appropriate medical care and treatment when necessary. It can exist in isolation or in combination with other forms of abuse.

Symptoms of physical and emotional neglect can include:

- Inadequate supervision; being left alone for long periods of time
- Lack of stimulation, social contact or education
- Inadequate nutrition, leading to ill-health
- Constant hunger; stealing or gorging food
- Failure to seek or to follow medical advice such that a child's life or development is endangered
- Inappropriate clothing for conditions

### 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. This may include physical contact, both penetrative and non-penetrative, or involve no contact, such as watching sexual activities or looking at pornographic material. Encouraging children to act in sexually inappropriate ways is also abusive. Under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, any sexual activity – contact or non-contact – with a child under the age of 13, is a crime.

Symptoms of sexual abuse include:

- Allegations or disclosure
- Genital soreness, injuries or discomfort
- Sexually transmitted diseases; urinary infections
- Excessive preoccupation with sexual matters; inappropriately sexualized play, words or drawing
- A child who is sexually provocative or seductive with adults
- Repeated sleep disturbances through nightmares and/or wetting

Older children and young people may additionally exhibit:

- Depression
- Drug and/or alcohol abuse
- Eating disorders; obsessive behaviours
- Self mutilation; suicide attempts
- School/peer/relationship problems

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child 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 under the age of 18 into sexual activity

- a) In exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and / or
- b) For the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator.

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.

Some members of our communities hold beliefs that may be common within particular cultures but which are against the law in England. Examples of particular practices are:

**Forced Marriages** No faith supports the idea of forcing someone to marry without their consent. This should not be confused with arranged marriages between consenting adults.

**Under-age Marriages** In England, a young person cannot legally marry until they are 18 years old or more, or have a sexual relationship until they are 16 years old or more.

**Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)** This is against the law yet we know that for some in our communities it is considered a religious act and a cultural requirement. It is also illegal for someone to arrange for a child to go abroad with the intention of having her circumcised.

**Ritualistic Abuse** Some faiths believe that spirits and demons can possess people (including children). What should never be condoned is the use of any physical violence to get rid of the possessing spirit. This is physical abuse and people can be prosecuted even if it was their intention to help the child.

**Child Trafficking** is where children and young people tricked, forced or persuaded to leave their homes and are moved or transported and then exploited, forced to work or sold. Children are trafficked for:

- sexual exploitation
- benefit fraud
- forced marriage
- domestic slavery like cleaning, cooking and childcare
- forced labour in factories or agriculture
- committing crimes, like begging, theft, working on cannabis farms or moving drugs.

### Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse is any type of controlling including coercive control, 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. It's important to remember that domestic abuse:

- can happen inside and outside the home
- can happen over the phone, on the internet and on social networking sites
- can happen in any relationship and can continue even after the relationship has ended
- Any gender can be abused or abusers.

Signs that a child has experienced domestic abuse can include:

- aggression or bullying
- anti-social behaviour, like vandalism
- anxiety, depression or suicidal thoughts
- attention seeking
- bed-wetting, nightmares or insomnia
- constant or regular sickness, like colds, headaches and mouth ulcers
- drug or alcohol use
- eating disorders

- problems in school or trouble learning
- tantrums
- withdrawal.

### Bullying and cyber-bullying

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.

Signs of bullying include:

- belongings getting 'lost' or damaged
- physical injuries, such as unexplained bruises
- being afraid to go to school, being mysteriously 'ill' each morning, or skipping school
- a change in how they are doing at school, including a dip in grades or not handing homework in
- asking for, or stealing, money (to give to whoever's bullying them)
- a change in behaviour, including being nervous, losing confidence, or becoming distressed and withdrawn
- a change in eating or sleeping habits
- bullying others.

### Criminal exploitation / County Lines

Criminal exploitation is child abuse where children and young people are manipulated and coerced into committing crimes. County Lines is the police term for urban gangs exploiting young people into moving drugs from a hub, normally a large city, into other markets – suburban areas and market and coastal towns – using dedicated mobile phone lines or “deal lines”.

Signs to look out for if you're worried a child or young person has joined a gang, or is being criminally exploited

- Frequently absent from and doing badly in school.
- Going missing from home, staying out late and travelling for unexplained reasons.
- In a relationship or hanging out with someone older than them.
- Being angry, aggressive or violent.
- Being isolated or withdrawn.
- Having unexplained money and buying new things.
- Wearing clothes or accessories in gang colours or getting tattoos.
- Using new slang words.
- Spending more time on social media and being secretive about time online.
- Making more calls or sending more texts, possibly on a new phone or phones.
- Self-harming and feeling emotionally unwell.
- Taking drugs and abusing alcohol.
- Committing petty crimes like shop lifting or vandalism.
- Unexplained injuries and refusing to seek medical help.
- Carrying weapons or having a dangerous breed of dog.

## Adults at risk

The Care Act 2014 defines abuse of adults at risk as:

Physical abuse - including hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint, or inappropriate sanctions.

Sexual abuse - including rape and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the adult at risk has not consented, or could not consent or was pressured into consenting.

Emotional / Psychological abuse - including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks.

Financial or material abuse - including theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.

Neglect and acts of omission - including ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.

Self-neglect and hoarding - Persistent inattention to personal hygiene and/or environment, repeated refusal of services that would improve their quality of life and causing self-endangerment through unsafe behaviours.

Discriminatory abuse - including race, sex, culture, religion, politics, that is based on a person's disability, age or sexuality and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment, hate crime.

Organisational abuse - although not a separate category of abuse in itself, it requires specific mention simply to highlight that adults placed in any kind of care home or day care establishment are potentially vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. This can be especially so when care standards and practices fall below an acceptable level as detailed in the contract specification.

Modern day slavery and human trafficking - Encompasses slavery, human trafficking, forced labour, forced criminality and domestic servitude where the threat or use of force, coercion, abduction, abuse of power or deception are exploited for the purposes of prostitution, forced labour, slavery or other similar practices.

## Domestic abuse

Home Office Definition 2021:

[Domestic Abuse: statutory guidance \(accessible version\) - GOV.UK](#)

'Domestic abuse is behaviour of a person towards another person if they are personally connected and the behaviour is abusive. This includes threatening behaviour, violence, abuse (coercive control, psychological, physical, sexual, financial,

or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members. The definition encompasses a wide range of behaviours and is not limited to physical violence.'

Women's Aid Definition:

'Domestic violence is physical, sexual, psychological or financial violence that takes place within an intimate or family-type relationship and that forms a pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour. This can also include forced marriage and so-called "honour crimes". Domestic violence may include a range of abusive behaviours, not all of which are in themselves inherently "violent".

Most research suggests that domestic violence occurs in all sections of society irrespective of race, culture, nationality, religion, sexuality, disability, age, class or educational level.

Both definitions would therefore also include incidents where extended family members may condone or share in the pattern of abuse e.g. forced marriage, female genital mutilation and crimes rationalized as punishing women for bringing 'dishonour' to the family.

It is important to recognise that adults at risk may be the victims of Domestic Abuse themselves or be affected by it occurring within their household. This is likely to have a serious effect on their physical and mental wellbeing.

Multiple forms of abuse - Multiple forms of abuse may occur in an ongoing relationship or an abusive service setting to one person, or to more than one person at a time, making it important to look beyond single incidents or breaches in standards, to underlying dynamics and patterns of harm. Any or all of these types of abuse may be perpetrated as the result of deliberate intent and targeting of vulnerable people, negligence or ignorance.