BIRCH Network Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy and Procedures

Last updated	November 2026
Review Date	November 2027

Part 1: Safeguarding Policy

Introduction:

This document is the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy and Procedures for BIRCH Network which will be followed by all staff, including the steering group and board of trustees, paid members of staff, volunteers, sessional workers, students on placement or anyone working on behalf of the organisation.

Birmingham Community Hosting Network aims to provide hospitality and friendship to vulnerable asylum seekers, refugees, all those seeking sanctuary and other vulnerable migrants.

The purpose of this policy:

- to protect children and young people who receive Birmingham Community Hosting Network's services. This includes the children of adults who use our services;
- To provide staff and volunteers with the overarching principles that guide our approach to safeguarding and child protection;

We know that being a child or young person makes them vulnerable to abuse by adults. The purpose of this policy is to make sure that the actions of any adult in the context of the work carried out by the organisation are transparent and safeguard and promote the welfare of all children and young people.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead

Our Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is Joy Robinson. They have lead responsibility and management oversight and accountability for child protection and, with the deputy DSL will be responsible for coordinating all safeguarding and child protection activity.

The deputy DSL, Helen Hibberd will support the DSL within the role and deputise when the DSL is not available.

Contact details:

Safeguarding Lead: Joy Robinson
Tel: 07816587522

Email: joy@birchnetwork.org

Deputy Safeguarding Lead: Helen Hibberd
Tel: 07834805276
Email: helen@birchnetwork.org

Trustee Safeguarding Lead: Andrew Jolly
Tel: 07580274638
Email: a.jolly.1@bham.ac.uk

Principles upon which the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy is based:

- The welfare of a child or young person will always be paramount.
- The welfare of families will be promoted.
- The rights, wishes and feelings of children, young people and their families will be respected and listened to.
- Those people in positions of responsibility within the organisation will work in accordance with the interests of children and young people and follow the policy outlined below.
- Those people in positions of responsibility within the organisation will ensure that the same opportunities are available to everyone and that all differences between individuals will be treated with respect.

Legal framework:

This document has been drawn up in accordance with the laws and guidance which seeks to protect children and young people, namely:

- The Children Act 1989 and 2004
- United Convention on the Rights of the Child 1991
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Special educational needs and disability (SEND) code of practice: 0 to 25 years: Statutory guidance for organisations that work with and support children and young people who have special educational needs and disabilities; HM Government 2014
- Birmingham Safeguarding Children Board
- The NSPCC
- Working together to safeguard children: a guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children (HM Government 2026)

This policy should be read alongside our policies and procedures on:

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Volunteer Grievance Procedure
- Data Protection and GDPR Policy

- Personal safety and risk assessment

What we recognise:

- We recognise that the welfare of the child and young person is paramount, as enshrined in the Children Act 1989
- All children and young people, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, cultural background, language needs, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have a right to equal protection from all types of harm and abuse
- Some children and young people, such as those with a refugee and migrant background, are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, current experiences (such as citizenship status, displacement, loss of significant adult carers), their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues
- Working in partnership with children, young people, their carers, and other agencies is essential in promoting the welfare of children and young people

How we seek to keep children and young people safe**:**

- valuing them, listening to and respecting them
- appointing a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) for children, young people and supported adults and a deputy.
- adopting child protection and safeguarding practices through procedures and a code of conduct for staff and volunteers
- developing and implementing an effective e-safety policy and related procedures
- providing effective management for staff, trustees and volunteers through supervision, support and training
- recruiting staff, trustees and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made, two references per volunteer to be obtain, DBS checks to be undertaken
- Share our safeguarding statement at all relevant sessions
- recording and storing information professionally and securely, and sharing information about safeguarding and good practice with children, young people, families, carers, staff and volunteers, via leaflets, posters, one-to-one discussions
- using our safeguarding procedures to share concerns and relevant information with agencies who need to know, and involving children, young people, parents, families and carers appropriately.

Expectations

All staff, trustees and volunteers will:

- Be familiar with this child protection & safeguarding policy;
- Understand their role in relation to safeguarding;
- Be subject to Safer Recruitment processes and checks, whether they are new staff, sessional staff, volunteers, students on placement, etc.;
- Be alert to signs and indicators of possible abuse (See Part 2: Key Procedures of this document for current definitions and indicators);
- Record concerns and give the record to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), or deputy DSL, and
- Deal with a disclosure of abuse from a child or young person in line with the guidance in Part 2: Key Procedures, inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately, and provide a written account as soon as possible.

All staff will receive safeguarding training every two years and update briefings as appropriate. Volunteers will undertake safeguarding training as part of their induction process. Trustees will be encouraged to attend

safeguarding training as part of their induction. Updates and briefings will be shared across the organisation as appropriate. Designated safeguarding leads will attend additional training every two years relevant to their specific roles.

Reporting concerns:
If any parent or young person/child has any concerns about the conduct of any member of the organisation, this should be raised in the first instance with our Designated Safeguarding Leads: Joy Robinson and Helen Hibberd. If the concerns relate to either of these staff, our designated trustee lead, Andy Jolly can be contacted.
The Designated Safeguarding Lead will monitor our organisation's involvement in initiating Safeguarding and Child Protection referrals to children's services and the police of vulnerable children and young people identified within the organisation. They will have oversight of all actions made by paid staff within the organisation. These actions will be evidenced and recorded in our database

When the organisation has concerns about a child or young person, staff and the Designated Safeguarding Lead will decide what steps should be taken and should inform the Steering Group.

Child protection information will be dealt with in a confidential manner. Staff and volunteers will be informed of relevant details only when the Designated Safeguarding Lead feels their having knowledge of a situation will improve their ability to deal with an individual child, young person and/or family. A written record will be made of what information has been shared, with whom, and when.

Safeguarding records will be stored securely in a central place. Individual files will be kept for each child and young person. Files will be kept for at least the period during which the child or young person is involved with organisation, and beyond that in line with current data legislation and guidance.

A safer organisational culture

Safer Recruitment and Selection
The organisation works to ensure Safer Recruitment practice - see safer recruitment policy.

Staff Support
We recognise the stressful and traumatic nature of safeguarding and child protection work. We will support staff by providing an opportunity to talk through their anxieties with their supervisors or safeguarding leads and seek further support as appropriate.

Safeguarding children and young people who are vulnerable to radicalisation

The current threat from terrorism in the United Kingdom may include the exploitation of vulnerable people, to involve them in terrorism or in activity in support of terrorism. The normalisation of extreme views may also make children and young people vulnerable to future manipulation and exploitation. Birmingham Community Hosting Network is clear that this exploitation and radicalisation should be viewed as a safeguarding concern and that protecting children from the risk of radicalisation is part of the organisation's safeguarding duty.

Definitions of radicalisation and extremism, and indicators of vulnerability to radicalisation are in APPENDIX 4.

There is no single way to identify an individual who is likely to be susceptible to an extremist ideology. Specific background factors may contribute to vulnerability and these are often combined with specific needs for which an

extremist group may appear to provide answers, and specific influences such as family, friends and online contacts. The use of social media has become a significant feature in the radicalisation of young people.

Numerous factors can contribute to and influence the range of behaviours that are defined as violent extremism, but most young people do not become involved in extremist action. For this reason the appropriate interventions in any particular case may not have any specific connection to the threat of radicalisation, for example they may address mental health, relationship or drug/alcohol issues.

Staff and volunteers at Birmingham Community Hosting Network will be alert to changes in a child or young person's behaviour or attitude which could indicate that they are in need of help or protection.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead should be contacted where there are concerns in relation to protecting individuals from radicalisation and involvement in terrorism, with safeguarding and child protection procedures initiated.

Safeguarding children and young people who are vulnerable to exploitation, forced marriage, female genital mutilation or trafficking

Our organisation keeps itself up to date on the latest advice and guidance provided to assist in addressing specific vulnerabilities and forms of exploitation.

Our staff are supported to recognise warning signs and symptoms in relation to specific issues.

Our staff work with and engage with families and the local communities to talk about such issues.

Our staff are supported to talk to families and carers about sensitive concerns in relation to their children and young people and to find ways to address them together wherever possible.

Our Designated Safeguarding Lead and Deputy know where to seek and get advice as necessary.

Reporting of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Our organisation understands that where it has information that raises concerns for a child or young person about the act of FGM, with have a safeguarding duty to report to children's services and the police. Failure to report such cases will result in disciplinary sanctions. Staff and volunteers will also discuss the situation with the Designated Safeguarding Lead who will consult children's social care before a decision is made as to whether the mandatory reporting duty applies.

Children and young people who go missing from education or accommodation placement

A child going missing from education, social care placement or other private accommodation arrangement is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect, including sexual exploitation, FGM, forced marriage or travelling to conflict zones. Organisation staff will be alert to these safeguarding concerns when a child or young person is discovered to be frequently absent or goes missing from education and/or accommodation for a period, or on repeat occasions.

Part 2: The Key Procedures: Initiating safeguarding and child protection

Reporting concerns - What we do when we are concerned about a child or young person

If volunteers have any safeguarding concerns about any service users, they should in the first instance, discuss these concerns with their project lead - unless there is an immediate threat or risk to life, then they should follow the **Immediate Action to Ensure Safety** guidelines below. If they are not able to contact a project lead, then they should contact one of the Designated safeguarding leads. See APPENDIX 2 on **Dealing with a disclosure of abuse.** Project staff will then assess the situation and use the flow chart below to decide how to respond.

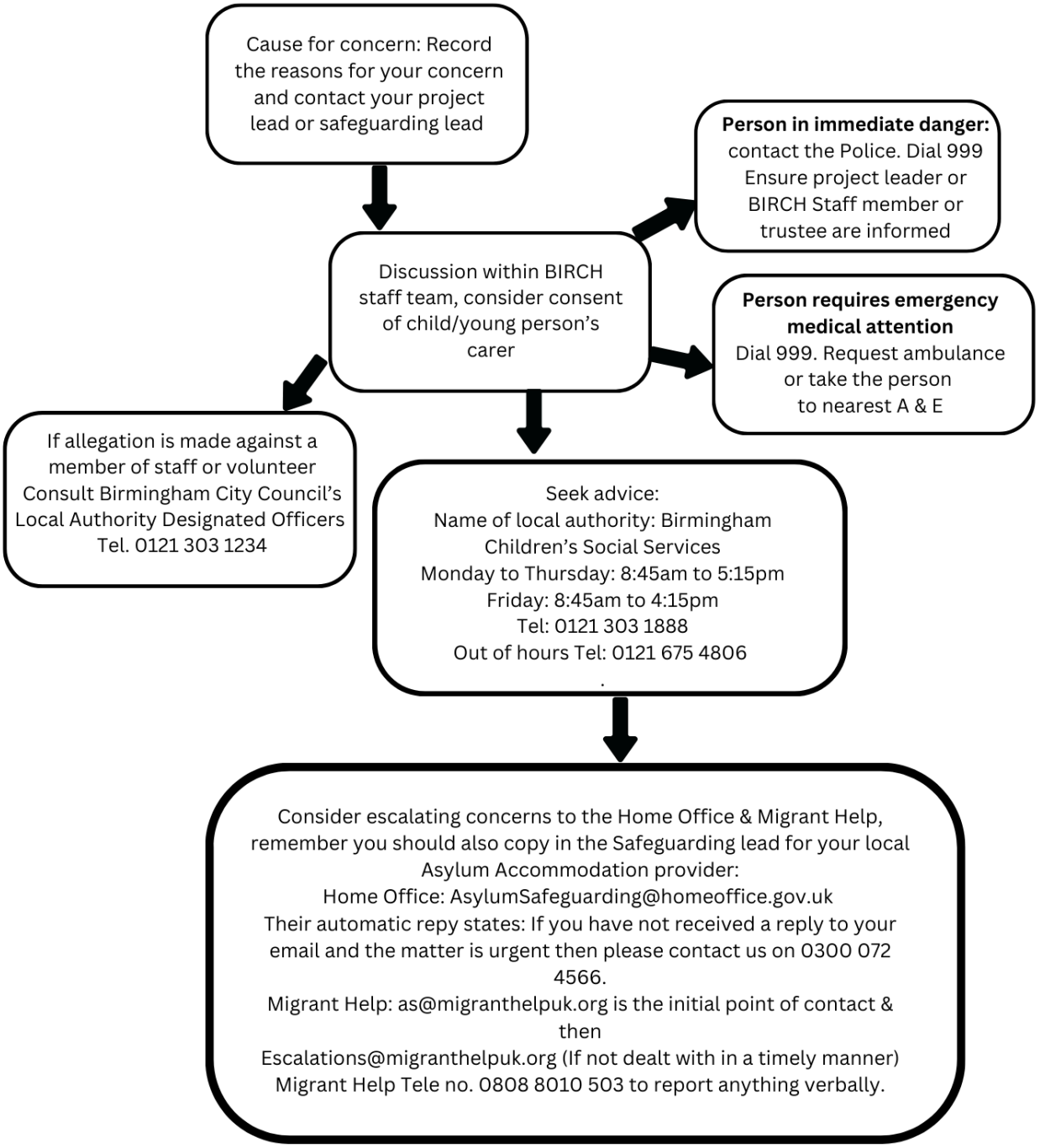
In the case of an emergency, volunteers should alert project leads or safeguarding staff as soon as is practically possible.

If staff have safeguarding concerns, they must also assess if they need to take **Immediate Action to Ensure Safety** and if this is not necessary, can decide to discuss the safeguarding concern with the Designated Safeguarding Lead or take responsibility for actioning and appropriate follow on or referrals. They will keep records of these decisions, any actions taken and outcome, via case records and in our database. Any referrals which include the risk to public or any reputational risk to the charity (see Serious Incidents Policy) need to discussed with the Designated Safeguarding Leads and brought to the attention of the trustees for review. These incidents could include:

- Serious harm to the people the charity helps or other people who come into contact with the charity through its work.
- A charity not following the law, which significantly damages its reputation and public trust in charities generally.

If a serious incident is reported to the trustees, the Serious Incidents Policies and Procedures must be followed.

Flow chart for reporting concerns and key agencies to contact:



Immediate Action to Ensure Safety

Immediate action may be necessary at any stage in involvement with children, young people and families.

In all cases it is vital to take whatever action is needed to safeguard the child/ren or young person/young people:

- If a child is in immediate danger the police should be contacted in the first instance. Dial 999; as they alone have the power to remove a child immediately if protection is necessary, via Police Protection Order.
- If emergency medical attention is required, this can be secured by calling an ambulance (dial 999) or taking a child/young person to the nearest Accident and Emergency Department.
- Children's Advice Support Service (CASS) should be contacted in all cases of immediate concern for a child or young person by phone on 0121 303 1888. The concerns should also be emailed to CASS (cass@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk) within 24 hours after becoming aware of concerns.
- In some cases, there may also be concerns for the welfare of an adult with care and support needs. Contact Adult Social Care Services 0121 303 1234 to raise concerns and follow-up this phone call in writing within 24 hours by emailing: ACAP@birmingham.gov.uk

Consulting about your concern

- The purpose of consultation is to discuss your concerns in relation to a child or young person and decide what action is necessary.
- You may become concerned about a child or young person who has not spoken to you, because of your observations of, or information about that child or young person.
- It is good practice to ask a child or young person why they are upset or how a cut or bruise was caused; or respond to a child or young person wanting to talk to you. This practice can help clarify vague concerns and result in appropriate action.
- If you are concerned about a child or young person you must share your concerns. Initially you should talk to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy DSL in Birmingham Community Hosting Network. If one of those people is implicated in the concerns, you should discuss your concerns directly with Birmingham City Council's LADO team (see Responding to Allegations Made Against Staff or Volunteers below and Appendix 3).

You can consult externally with Children's Advice and Support Service (children's social care) in the following circumstances:

- when you remain unsure after internal consultation as to whether child protection concerns exist
- when there is disagreement as to whether child protection concerns exist
- when you are unable to consult promptly or at all with the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy DSL for child protection
- when the concerns relate to any member of the organising committee.

Consultation is not the same as making a referral, **providing no identifying information is given on the persons involved**.

Consultation should enable a decision to be made as to whether a referral to Children's Advice and Support Service (children's social care) or the Police should progress.

It is important to note, that once identifying information is provided to Children's Advice and Support Service (children's social care), the service is obliged to act.

Making a referral

A referral involves giving children's social care, adult social care or the Police information about concerns relating to an individual or family in order that enquiries can be undertaken by the appropriate agency followed by any necessary action.

In certain cases, the level of concern will lead straight to a referral without external consultation being necessary.

Parents/carers should be informed if a referral is being made except in the circumstances outlined under 'Involving Parents and Carers' below.

An inability to inform parents/carers for any reason should not prevent a referral being made. It would then become a joint decision with Children's Social Care about how and when the parents/carers should be approached and by whom.

If your concern is about abuse or risk of abuse from someone not known to the child or child or young person's family, you should make a telephone referral directly to the police and consult with the parents/carers.

If your concern is about abuse or risk of abuse from a family member or someone known to the child or young person, you should make a telephone referral to Birmingham City Council's Children's Advice Support Service (CASS), Telephone: 0121 303 1888.

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<u>Information required</u>

Be prepared to give as much of the following information as possible (in emergency situations some of this information may not be available). Unavailability of some information should not stop you making a referral:

- Your name, telephone number, position and request the same of the person to whom you are speaking (if Police, request their badge number).
- Full name and address, telephone number of family, date of birth of child and siblings.
- Gender, ethnicity, first language, any special needs.
- Names, dates of birth and relationship of household members and any significant others.
- The names of professionals' known to be involved with the child/family eg: GP, Health Visitor, School.
- The nature of the concern; and foundation for them.
- An opinion on whether the child may need urgent action to make them safe.
- Your view of what appears to be the needs of the child and family.
- Whether the consent of a parent with parental responsibility has been given to the referral being made.

Action to be taken following a safeguarding referral

- Ensure that you keep an accurate record of your concern(s) made at the time
- Put your concerns in writing to Children's Advice and Support Service (CASS) following the referral (within 24 hours).
- Accurately record the action agreed or that no further action is to be taken and the reasons for this decision.

Confidentiality

The organisation should ensure that any records made in relation to a referral should be kept confidentially and in a secure place.

Information in relation to child protection concerns should be shared on a "need to know" basis. However, the sharing of information is vital to child protection and, therefore, the issue of confidentiality is secondary to a child or young person's need for protection.

If in doubt, consult.

Involving parents and carers

In general, we will discuss any child protection concerns with parents/carers before approaching other agencies; and will seek their consent to making a referral to another agency. Appropriate staff will approach parents/carers after consultation with the Designated Safeguarding Lead. However, there may be occasions when Birmingham Community Hosting Network will contact another agency before informing parents/carers because it considers that contacting them may increase the risk of significant harm to the child or young person.

Parents/carers will be informed about our safeguarding policy through: the website of Birmingham Community Hosting Network.

Multi-agency work

We work in partnership with other agencies to promote the best interests of the children and young people we support. Partnership working is a priority in all decisions and actions that affect our client group. Birmingham Community Hosting Network will, where necessary, liaise with these agencies and make requests for support from children's social care. These requests will be made by the Designated Safeguarding Lead or a paid member of staff to the Children's Advice Support Service (CASS) - 0121 303 1888.

When invited the DSL will participate in a MASH strategy meeting, usually by conference phone, adding organisation held data to the discussion so that the best interests of the child or young person are met.

We will co-operate with any child protection enquiries conducted by children's social care: Birmingham Community Hosting Network will ensure representation at appropriate inter-agency meetings such as integrated support plan meetings initial and review child protection conferences, and core group meetings.

We will provide a report as required for these meetings. If Birmingham Community Hosting Network is unable to attend, a written report will be sent to Children's Social Care.

Responding to an allegation about a member of staff

See also Birmingham Safeguarding Children Board Procedures on Allegations against Staff and Volunteers.

This procedure should be used in any case in which it is alleged that a member of staff, member of the Steering Group, Trustee, volunteer or visiting professional has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child/young person or may have harmed a child/young person;
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child/young person; or
- Behaved in a way that indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children/young people.

Although it is an uncomfortable thought, it needs to be acknowledged that there is the potential for staff and volunteers in Birmingham Community Hosting Network to abuse children/young people.

All staff and volunteers working within our organisation must report any potential safeguarding concerns about an individual's behaviour towards children and young people immediately.

- Allegations or concerns about staff, volunteers and visitors must be reported directly to the Designated Safeguarding Lead who will liaise with Birmingham City Council's Designated Officer (LADO) Team in children's social care who will decide on any action required.
- If the concern relates to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, it must be reported to the Birmingham City Council's LADO team and they will decide on any action required.
- If the safeguarding concern relates to the proprietor of the building then the concern must be made directly to the Birmingham City Council's LADO team who will decide on any action required.

Children or young people with additional needs

Birmingham Community Hosting Network recognises that all children and young people have a right to be safe, some children and young people may be more vulnerable to abuse, for example young refugees displaced and unaccompanied, children/young people with a disability or special educational need, and those living with domestic violence, poverty or drug/alcohol abusing carers, etc.

In the event of a one-off serious incident resulting in an immediate decision to exclude a child, young person or family, the case should be brought for whole team discussion to consider the factors contributing to troubling behaviour, risks and protective factors.

Children in private fostering arrangements

Many people find themselves looking after someone else's child/young person without realising that they may be involved in private fostering. A private fostering arrangement is one that is made privately (that is to say without the involvement of a local authority) for the care of a child /young person under the age of 16 (under 18, if disabled) by someone other than a parent or immediate relative. If the arrangement is to last, or has lasted, for 28 days or more it is private fostering.

The Children Act 1989 defines an immediate relative as a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (whether of full blood or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership), or a step parent.

People become involved in private fostering for all kinds of reasons. Examples of private fostering include:

- Unaccompanied asylum seeking and refugee children and young people;
- Children/young people sent from abroad to stay with another family, for instance to improve their educational opportunities or keep them safe from hostilities in their home country;
- Children/young people who need alternative care because of parental illness;
- Children/young people whose parents cannot care for them because their work or study involves long or antisocial hours or travel;
- Young people who stay with friends (or other non-relatives) because they have fallen out with their parents or carers;

- Children/young people staying with families while attending a school away from their home area.

If you know or suspect that a child is being privately fostered, you should notify Children's Services and inform the carer or parent of the referral. If you have any concerns about a child's welfare, you should notify the local children's social care immediately.

All enquiries and referrals, including Private Fostering notifications are to be made to CASS team on **0121 303 1888 (Mon-Fri office hours)** or you can email **CASS@birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk.**

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Definitions and indicators of abuse

1. Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child or young person's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child or young person's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

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

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

The following may be indicators of neglect (this is not designed to be used as a checklist):

- Constant hunger;
- Stealing, scavenging and/or hoarding food;
- Frequent tiredness or listlessness;
- Frequently dirty or unkempt;
- Often poorly or inappropriately clad for the weather;
- Poor school attendance or often late for school;
- Poor concentration;
- Affection or attention seeking behaviour;
- Illnesses or injuries that are left untreated;
- Failure to achieve developmental milestones, for example growth, weight;
- Failure to develop intellectually or socially;
- Responsibility for activity that is not age appropriate such as cooking, ironing, caring for siblings;
- The child is regularly not collected or received from school; or
- The child is left at home alone or with inappropriate carers.

2. Physical Abuse

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 or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child or young person.

The following may be indicators of physical abuse (this is not designed to be used as a checklist):

- Multiple bruises in clusters, or of uniform shape;
- Bruises that carry an imprint, such as a hand or a belt;
- Bite marks;
- Round burn marks;
- Multiple burn marks and burns on unusual areas of the body such as the back, shoulders or buttocks;
- An injury that is not consistent with the account given;

- Changing or different accounts of how an injury occurred;
- Bald patches;
- Symptoms of drug or alcohol intoxication or poisoning;
- Unaccountable covering of limbs, even in hot weather;
- Fear of going home or parents being contacted;
- Fear of medical help;
- Fear of changing for PE;
- Inexplicable fear of adults or over-compliance;
- Violence or aggression towards others including bullying; or
- Isolation from peers.

3. Sexual Abuse

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

The following may be indicators of sexual abuse (this is not designed to be used as a checklist):

- Sexually explicit play or behaviour or age-inappropriate knowledge;
- Anal or vaginal discharge, soreness or scratching;
- Reluctance to go home;
- Inability to concentrate, tiredness;
- Refusal to communicate;
- Thrush, persistent complaints of stomach disorders or pains;
- Eating disorders, for example anorexia nervosa and bulimia;
- Attention seeking behaviour, self-mutilation, substance abuse;
- Aggressive behaviour including sexual harassment or molestation;
- Unusual compliance;
- Regressive behaviour, enuresis, soiling;
- Frequent or open masturbation, touching others inappropriately;
- Depression, withdrawal, isolation from peer group;
- Reluctance to undress for PE or swimming; or
- Bruises or scratches in the genital area.

4. Sexual Exploitation

Child sexual exploitation occurs when a child or young person, or another person, receives “something” (for example food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of the child/young person performing sexual activities, or another person performing sexual activities on the child/young person.

The presence of any significant indicator for sexual exploitation should trigger a referral to children’s social care. The significant indicators are:

- Having a relationship of concern with a controlling adult or young person (this may involve physical and/or emotional abuse and/or gang activity);
- Entering and/or leaving vehicles driven by unknown adults;
- Possessing unexplained amounts of money, expensive clothes or other items;
- Frequenting areas known for risky activities;
- Being groomed or abused via the Internet and mobile technology; and
- Having unexplained contact with hotels, taxi companies or fast food outlets.

5. Emotional Abuse

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

The following may be indicators of emotional abuse (this is not designed to be used as a checklist):

- The child or young person consistently describes him/herself in very negative ways – as stupid, naughty, hopeless, ugly;
- Over-reaction to mistakes;
- Delayed physical, mental or emotional development;
- Sudden speech or sensory disorders;
- Inappropriate emotional responses, fantasies;
- Neurotic behaviour: rocking, banging head, regression, tics and twitches;
- Self-harming, drug or solvent abuse;
- Fear of parents being contacted;
- Running away;
- Compulsive stealing;
- Appetite disorders - anorexia nervosa, bulimia; or
- Soiling, smearing faeces, enuresis.

N.B.: Some situations where children stop communicating suddenly (known as "traumatic mutism") can indicate maltreatment.

6. Responses from Parents or Carers

Research and experience indicates that the following responses from parents may suggest a cause for concern across all four categories:

- Delay in seeking treatment that is obviously needed;
- Unawareness or denial of any injury, pain or loss of function (for example, a fractured limb);
- Incompatible explanations offered, several different explanations or the child or young person is said to have acted in a way that is inappropriate to her/his age and development;
- Reluctance to give information or failure to mention other known relevant injuries;
- Frequent presentation of minor injuries;
- A persistently negative attitude towards the child or young person;
- Unrealistic expectations or constant complaints about the child or young person;
- Alcohol misuse or other drug/substance misuse;
- Parents/carers request removal of the child or young person from home; or
- Violence between adults in the household;
- Evidence of coercion and control.

7. Disabled Children or young people

When working with children or young people with disabilities, practitioners and volunteers need to be aware that additional possible indicators of abuse and/or neglect may also include:

- A bruise in a site that might not be of concern on an ambulant child/young person such as the shin, might be of concern on a non-mobile child;
- Not getting enough help with feeding leading to malnourishment;
- Poor toileting arrangements;
- Lack of stimulation;
- Unjustified and/or excessive use of restraint;
- Rough handling, extreme behaviour modification such as deprivation of medication, food or clothing, disabling wheelchair batteries;
- Unwillingness to try to learn a child or young person's means of communication;
- Ill-fitting equipment. For example, callipers, sleep boards, inappropriate splinting;
- Misappropriation of a child or young person's finances; or
- Inappropriate invasive procedures.

APPENDIX 2

Dealing with a disclosure of abuse

Staff and volunteers at Birmingham Community Hosting Network need to be alert to the potential abuse of children/young people both within their families/care systems and also from other sources including abuse by members of the organisation.

Staff and volunteers at Birmingham Community Hosting Network should know how to recognise and act upon indicators of abuse or potential abuse involving children. There is an expected responsibility for all members of the organisation to respond to any suspected or actual abuse of a child in accordance with these procedures.

A. *When a child or young person tells me about abuse s/he has suffered, what must I remember?*

- Stay calm.
- Do not communicate shock, anger or embarrassment.
- Reassure the child or young person. Tell her/him you are pleased that s/he is speaking to you.
- Never enter into a pact of secrecy with the child or young person. Assure her/him that you will try to help but let the child or young person know that you will have to tell other people in order to do this. State who this will be and why.
- Tell her/him that you believe them. Children or young people very rarely lie about abuse; but s/he may have tried to tell others and not been heard or believed.
- Tell the child or young person that it is not her/his fault.
- Encourage the child tor young person to talk but do not ask "leading questions" or press for information.
- Listen and remember.
- Check that you have understood correctly what the child or young person is trying to tell you.
- Praise the child or young person for telling you. Communicate that s/he has a right to be safe and protected.
- Do not tell the child or young person that what s/he experienced is dirty, naughty or bad.
- It is inappropriate to make any comments about the alleged offender.
- Be aware that the child or young person may retract what s/he has told you. It is essential to record all you have heard.
- At the end of the conversation, tell the child or young person again who you are going to tell and why that person or those people need to know.
- As soon as you can afterwards, make a detailed record of the conversation using the child or young person's own language. Include any questions you may have asked. Do not add any opinions or interpretations.
- If the disclosure relates to a physical injury do not photograph the injury. Instead, record in writing as much detail as possible.

NB It is not staff and volunteer's role to seek disclosures. Their role is to observe that something may be wrong, ask about it, listen, be available and try to make time to talk.

B. *Immediately afterwards*

- You must not deal with this yourself. Clear indications or disclosure of abuse must be reported to children's social care without delay, by a member of staff or the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Children or young people making a disclosure may do so with difficulty, having chosen carefully to whom they will speak. Listening to and supporting a child/young person who has been abused can be traumatic for the adults involved. Support for you will be available from your Designated Safeguarding Lead or staff member.

APPENDIX 3

Allegations about a member of staff, trustee, steering group member, volunteer or visitor

1. Inappropriate behaviour by staff/volunteers could take the following forms:

    a. Physical
    For example, the intentional use of force as a punishment, slapping, use of objects to hit with, throwing objects or rough physical handling.
    b. Emotional
    For example, intimidation, belittling, scapegoating, sarcasm, lack of respect for children/young people's rights, and attitudes that discriminate on the grounds of race, gender, disability or sexuality.
    c. Sexual
    For example, sexualised behaviour towards children/young people, sexual harassment, inappropriate phone calls, and texts, images via social media, sexual assault and rape.
    d. Neglect
    For example, failing to act to protect a child/young person or children/young people, failing to seek medical attention or failure to carry out an appropriate risk assessment.
    e. Spiritual Abuse
    For example, using undue influence or pressure to control individuals or ensure obedience, follow religious practices that are harmful such as beatings or starvation.

2. If a child or young person makes an allegation about a member of staff, trustee, steering group member, volunteer or visitor

The Designated Safeguarding Lead should be informed immediately.

The DSL should carry out an urgent initial consideration to establish whether there is substance to the allegation. The DSL should not carry out the investigation him/herself or interview children/young people.

The DSL must exercise, and be accountable for, their professional judgement on the action to be taken, as follows –

If the actions of the member of staff, and the consequences of the actions, raise credible child protection concerns the DSL will notify Birmingham City Council's Designated Officer (LADO) Team[1] (Tel: 0121 675 1669). The LADO Team will liaise with the Designated Safeguarding Lead and advise about action to be taken; and may initiate internal referrals within children's social care to address the needs of children/young people likely to have been affected.

If the actions of the member of staff, and the consequences of the actions, do not raise credible child protection concerns, but do raise other issues in relation to the conduct of the member of staff/volunteer or the child/young person(s), these should be addressed through Birmingham Community Hosting Network's own internal procedures.

If the DSL decides that the allegation is without foundation and no further formal action is necessary, all those involved, including the Steering Group/Trustee group should be informed of this conclusion, and the reasons for the decision should be recorded on the child/young person safeguarding file.

[1] In other authorities the LADO service is referred to as the Position of Trust Team (POT)

Where an allegation has been made against the Designated Safeguarding Officer

In such a case, a paid member of staff should then take on the role of liaising with the LADO Team directly to determining the appropriate way forward. For details of this specific procedure see the Section on Allegations against Staff and Volunteers in the procedures of Birmingham Safeguarding Children Board.

Where an allegation is made against the sole proprietor of the building

The referral should be made to the LADO team directly.

APPENDIX 4

Indicators of vulnerability to radicalisation

1. Radicalisation refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and forms of extremism leading to terrorism.

2. Extremism is defined by the Government in the Prevent Strategy as:
Vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also include in our definition of extremism calls for the death of members of our armed forces, whether in this country or overseas.

3. Extremism is defined by the Crown Prosecution Service as:
The demonstration of unacceptable behaviour by using any means or medium to express views which:

- Encourage, justify or glorify terrorist violence in furtherance of particular beliefs;
- Seek to provoke others to terrorist acts;
- Encourage other serious criminal activity or seek to provoke others to serious criminal acts; or
- Foster hatred which might lead to inter-community violence in the UK.

4. There is no such thing as a "typical extremist": those who become involved in extremist actions come from a range of backgrounds and experiences, and most individuals, even those who hold radical views, do not become involved in violent extremist activity.

5. Children/Young people may become susceptible to radicalisation through a range of social, personal and environmental factors - it is known that violent extremists exploit vulnerabilities in individuals to drive a wedge between them and their families and communities. It is vital that staff and volunteers at Birmingham Community Hosting Network can recognise those vulnerabilities.

6. Indicators of vulnerability include:

- Identity Crisis – the child/young person is distanced from their cultural/religious heritage and experiences discomfort about their place in society;
- Personal Crisis – the child/young person may be experiencing family tensions; a sense of isolation; and low self-esteem; they may have dissociated from their existing friendship group and become involved with a new and different group of friends; they may be searching for answers to questions about identity, faith and belonging;

  Personal Circumstances – migration; local community tensions; and events affecting the child/young person's country or region of origin may contribute to a sense of grievance that is triggered by personal experience of racism or discrimination or aspects of Government policy;
- Unmet Aspirations – the child/young person may have perceptions of injustice; a feeling of failure; rejection of civic life;
- Experiences of Criminality – which may include involvement with criminal groups, imprisonment, and poor resettlement/reintegration;
- Special Educational Need – child/young person may experience difficulties with social interaction, empathy with others, understanding the consequences of their actions and awareness of the motivations of others.

However, this list is not exhaustive, nor does it mean that all young people experiencing the above are at risk of radicalisation for the purposes of violent extremism. Many children/young people with a refugee or migrant background experience many of the factors listed above and are not susceptible to radicalisation.

7. More critical risk factors could include:

- Being in contact with extremist recruiters;
- Family members convicted of a terrorism act or subject to a Channel intervention;
- Accessing violent extremist websites, especially those with a social networking element;
- Possessing or accessing violent extremist literature;
- Using extremist narratives and a global ideology to explain personal disadvantage;
- Justifying the use of violence to solve societal issues;
- Joining or seeking to join extremist organisations;
- Significant changes to appearance and/or behaviour; and
- Experiencing a high level of social isolation resulting in issues of identity crisis and/or personal crisis.

APPENDIX 5

PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND ADULTS SAFEGUARDING POLICY STATEMENT

Birmingham Community Hosting (BIRCH) Network

The following statement was agreed by the organisation and updated September 2025.

1. This organisation is committed to the safeguarding of children and adults with care and support needs and ensuring their well-being.
2. We recognise that we all have a responsibility to help prevent harm or abuse to children and adults with care and support needs in all their recognised forms.
3. We recognise the personal dignity and rights of adults and children and will ensure all our policies and procedures will reflect this.
4. We believe all people should enjoy and have access to every aspect of the life of the organisation.
5. We undertake to exercise proper care in the appointment and selection of those who will work with children and adults with care and support needs.
6. We believe every child and adult should be valued, safe and happy. We want to make sure that all those we have contact with know this and are empowered to tell us if they are experiencing significant harm.

We are committed to:

1. Following statutory denominational and specialist guidelines in relation to safeguarding children and adults and will ensure that as an organisation all workers will work within the agreed procedure of our safeguarding policy.
2. Implementing the requirements of all relevant legislation including, but not limited to; Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018, the Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 and 2005, Equality Act 2010 and referring concerns about adults with care and support needs to the local authority under the Care Act 2014. (Please amend this list for appropriate legislation in N. Ireland and Scotland)
3. Supporting, resourcing and training those who undertake this work.
4. Ensuring that we are keeping up to date with national and local developments relating to safeguarding.
5. Ensuring that everyone agrees to abide by these recommendations and the guidelines established by this organisation.
6. Supporting all in the organisation affected by abuse.

We recognise:

1. Children's Social Services has lead responsibility for investigating all allegations or suspicions of abuse where there are concerns about a child. Adult Social Care has lead responsibility for investigating all allegations or suspicions of abuse where there are concerns about an adult with care and support needs.
2. Where an allegation suggests that a criminal offence may have been committed then the police should be contacted as a matter of urgency.
3. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

We will review this statement and our policy annually.
If you have any concerns for a child or adult, then speak to one of the following who have been approved as safeguarding co-ordinators for this organisation.

Safeguarding Lead: Joy Robinson Tel: 07816587522 Email: joy@birchnetwork.org
Deputy Safeguarding Lead: Helen Hibberd Tel:07376600423 Email: helen@birchnetwork.org
A copy of this organisation's policy can be seen www.birchnetwork.org/policies