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# Child Safeguarding Policy

<b>Department</b>	<b>Designated safeguarding officer</b>
<b>Policy Owner</b>	<b>Director (Legal and Governance)</b>
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<b>Equality Impact Assessment Date</b>	<b>28 October 2024</b>

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## Purpose

This Policy sets out Flagship’s approach to safeguarding children. We understand the importance of protecting a child’s right to live safely, free from abuse and neglect.

We recognise our position in working with households where children may be at risk of abuse or neglect, the importance of having mechanisms in place to minimise this and take appropriate steps when concerns arise.

We recognise safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility and anyone in our organisation can become aware of a child being at risk. We develop and implement training and procedures to ensure staff are aware of their responsibilities and know what to do in the event a safeguarding concern arises.

The key objectives of this policy are to:

- Demonstrate a commitment to safeguarding children throughout Flagship Group.
- To recognise and report safeguarding concerns regarding children.
- To record safeguarding concerns and referrals.
- To provide relevant safeguarding children information to local authorities when requested.
- To co-operate with relevant agencies on safeguarding children issues.

## Definitions

Safeguarding duties apply to any child. A child is defined as any person under the age of 18 yrs.

Working Together to Safeguard Children statutory guidance 2023 defines safeguarding children as:

- protecting children from maltreatment
- preventing impairment of children’s health and development
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

Abuse is defined as “the violation of an individual’s human and civil rights by another person”. It is behaviour that either deliberately or knowingly causes harm or endangers life or infringes on rights. It may be a single or repeated act. It may be deliberate or involve neglect, such as failing to take appropriate action. It can also involve a person being persuaded to do something that he or she has not consented to or cannot consent. It can often occur where there is an expectation of trust.

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Abuse and neglect can take the following forms:

### **Physical abuse**

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing significant 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.

### **Emotional abuse**

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children 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 opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including online bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone and feature at any age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children.

### **Sexual abuse**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving violence, whether or not the child 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 to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including online and through social media). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

### **Neglect**

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of 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 abandonment)
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers) or
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

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

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Examples of specific concerns may be:

- Children living away from home or gone missing
- Children living in households where domestic abuse is present
- Bullying, online safety or grooming
- Racism or other forms of hate related incidents
- Radicalisation
- Gang membership
- Sexual exploitation, county lines and cuckooing
- Female genital mutilation
- Forced marriage
- Concealed pregnancy
- Child trafficking
- Suicidal ideation or self-harm.

We take all concerns, whether current or historical seriously and will refer as appropriate.

## Principles

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 sets out principles in relation to safeguarding children. It indicates that providing early help is crucial in safeguarding children and requires all relevant staff to understand their role in identifying emerging problems and sharing information with other professionals.

Flagship will ensure relevant staff are particularly alert to the potential need for early help for a child who:

- Has a disability and has specific additional needs
- Has special educational needs
- Is a young carer
- Is showing signs of engaging in anti-social behaviour or criminal behaviour
- Is in a family circumstance which presents challenges for the child, such as substance abuse, adult mental health problems and/or domestic violence
- Has returned home to their family from care
- Is showing early signs of abuse or neglect

## Further detail

We will provide appropriate induction, role specific and refresher training on recognising and reporting abuse or neglect, to all relevant staff. Safeguarding leads will be in place in appropriate service areas who will receive enhanced training to support colleagues.

Staff will be aware of our “report a concern” process and will be able to do this easily. Where concerns are identified as safeguarding, a referral will be made to the appropriate agency through their referral mechanisms. Information about how to do this will be easily accessible for staff.

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We will share information with relevant agencies if we are concerned a child is being abused or neglected. We will not investigate child protection cases but will make referrals to the appropriate statutory agency. We will however continue to work with those agencies and that adult as part of a co-ordinated agency response and will participate in case conferences as required.

We will keep a record of all safeguarding concerns, referrals and outcomes.

In some cases, we may complete an internal safeguarding review in line with our value of continuous improvement.

Where a concern arises in respect of a person who works with children in a position of trust, an appropriate referral will be made to the Local Authority Designated Officer.

When recruiting staff, we select and vet new starters to the business by requesting appropriate disclosures during the recruitment process, utilising the UK's Disclosure and Barring Service where relevant.

## **EIA Statement**

An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken for this policy on 28 October 2024 and a number of positive impacts were identified. One negative impact was also identified which has been mitigated.

## **Review**

This Policy will be reviewed as necessary, and at least every three years by the Director (Legal and Governance) and any changes will be approved by the Governance, Audit and Risk Committee.

## **Measures**

The effectiveness of this policy will be measured through:

- Numbers of safeguarding referrals to assess demand and awareness of safeguarding
- Time frames for consideration of safeguarding concerns and onward referrals.
- Data which could indicate further training need for example categories of concerns.