

## **Introduction**

All children and young people at risk regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious beliefs, or sexual orientation/identity, have the right to protection from harassment, harm, or abuse.

In line with mandatory and statutory requirements, The PCS Group is committed to ensuring that it:

- Identifies young people at risk of harm who are suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm.
- Takes appropriate action to ensure that such young people at risk of harm are kept safe.

This policy provides guidance to all staff to ensure the safety and well-being of all children or young people present at sites we are contracted to work at.

This policy has been developed in accordance with the following guidance and legislation:

- The Children Act 1989
- The Children Act 2004
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020 and draft update 2021
- What to do if you are worried a child is being abused 2015
- The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- The Care Act 2014
- The Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Keeping Learners Safe 2015
- Safeguarding Children: Working Together Under the Children Act 2004
- Prevent duty guidance.
- The Modern Slavery Act 2015.

A child is defined as someone under the age of 18 years unless they have defined special needs.

## **Definition of abuse and wider abuse concerns**

### Sexual abuse

Forcing or enticing a child, young person, or vulnerable adult not necessarily involving a high level of violence, to take part in sexual activities, whether the child is aware of what is happening or not. 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 the clothing. They may 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 via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males – women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

### Sexual Harassment

Online sexual harassment and peer on peer online abuse can threaten a young person or vulnerable adult's self-esteem and mental health and impact their achievement and progression. Up-skirting is a form of sexual harassment which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing

their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm.

Under the Voyeurism Act, up-skirting offenders can now be arrested, face up to two years in prison and have their name placed on the Sex Offenders Register if caught up-skirting. This includes instances where culprits say the images were taken in jest, as what may seem harmless fun can have deeper consequences for both the victim and the perpetrator.

## Neglect

The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs is likely to result in serious impairment of the child's health and 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 or 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 the neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

## Physical abuse

May involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child or adult at risk.

Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

## Emotional abuse

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, unloved or 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 and how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children.

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 from participating in normal social interaction.

It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of others. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children to frequently 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.

## Sexual exploitation

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs when an individual or the group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child, young person under the age of 18, or vulnerable adult 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.

The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) does not always involve physical contact; it

can also occur through the use of technology.

## Radicalisation and extremism

The Counterterrorism and Security Act, which received Royal Assent on 12 February 2015, places a duty on specified authorities, including local authorities and childcare, education and other children's services providers, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard for the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism ('the Prevent duty').

Extremism: The holding of extreme political or religious views e.g., animal welfare rights, environmentalists, EDL/white supremacy groups, anti-gay groups, Islamic/Christian ideology.

All staff are required to undertake mandatory Toolbox Talks and face-to-face training; providing employees with information on how to refer a concern using the processes set up at the client's site. All employees will follow the Prevent Procedures (following below).

## Belief in Spirit Possession

The term 'belief in spirit possession' is the belief that an evil force has entered a child and is controlling their actions/words. Sometimes the term 'witch' is used and is the belief that a child is able to use an evil force to harm others. There is also a range of other languages connected to such abuse. This includes black magic, kindoki, ndoki, the evil eye, djinns, voodoo, obeah, demons, and child sorcerers. In all these cases, genuine beliefs can be held by families, carers, religious leaders, congregations, and the children themselves that evil forces are at work. Families and children can be deeply worried by the evil that they believe is threatening them and abuse often occurs when an attempt is made to 'exorcise', or 'deliver' the child. Exorcism is the attempt to expel evil spirits from a child. The belief in 'possession' or 'witchcraft' is widespread. It is not confined to countries, cultures or religions, nor is it confined to new immigrant communities in this country. Any concerns about a child which arise in this context must be taken seriously.

## Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Professionals in all agencies, and individuals and groups in relevant communities, need to be alert to the possibility of a girl being at risk of FGM, or already have experienced FGM. FGM comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injuries to the female genital organs. It is illegal in the UK and a form of child abuse with long-lasting harmful consequences.

There is a range of potential indicators that a child, young person, or vulnerable adult may be at risk of FGM. Individually, they may not indicate risk. However, if two or more indicators are present, this could signal a risk to the child, young person, or vulnerable adult.

Victims of FGM are likely to come from a community that is known to practise FGM.

Professionals should note that girls at risk of FGM may not yet be aware of the practice or that it may be conducted on them, so sensitivity should always be shown when approaching the subject. If a member of staff, in the course of their work, discovers that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out on an individual under the age of 18, this must be reported to the police and to the client's Safeguarding Lead immediately.

## Forced Marriage

A clear distinction must be made between a forced marriage and an arranged marriage. In arranged marriages, the families of both spouses take a leading role in choosing the marriage partner but the choice of whether to accept the arrangement remains with the young people.

In forced marriage, one or both spouses do not consent to the marriage or consent is extracted under duress. Duress includes both physical and emotional pressure.

## Bullying

All incidents of bullying are taken seriously, and staff should refer to the Preventing and Tackling Bullying Procedures for further guidance.

## Peer-on-peer abuse

Peer-on-peer abuse is most likely to include, but may not be limited to, bullying (including cyber bullying), gender-based violence/sexual assaults, up-skirting, initiations and hazing, and sexting.

Peer on peer abuse is harassment and aggression in which a young person intentionally threatens, harms or causes distress to another young person. This behaviour is intentional, repeated and designed to hurt or threaten. Peer abusers seek to abuse and terrorise defenceless others who may not have the ability or resources to help themselves. Thus, peer abuse requires a power imbalance. Peer abuse can be direct, in physical or verbal forms, or indirect, in such forms as exclusion, gossiping, and rumours.

Signs of peer-on-peer abuse include:

- Torn clothing.
- Physical injury such as bruises, cuts, scratches without a natural explanation
- Loss of money or damaged property
- Unwillingness to go to college.
- Change in eating habits.
- Moody outbursts or withdrawn behaviour.

Peer abuse has serious effects. Victims can suffer injury, depression and lowered self-esteem, and many contemplate suicide. Peer abusers are also at risk of alcohol and drug abuse, delinquency, and criminal behaviour.

Peer abuse affects many people, and victims and bystanders are often afraid to report abuse and feel unsafe or unsupported.

## Domestic abuse or violence

Includes an incident or a pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse, by someone who is, or has been, an intimate partner or family member, regardless of gender or sexual orientation. This includes psychological/emotional, physical, sexual and financial abuse, so-called 'honour'-based violence, forced marriage or Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). The government has recently consulted on a proposal to introduce a mandatory reporting duty on forced marriage. If implemented, this will mirror the duty already in place to report known cases of FGM.

## Serious violence

All staff members should be aware of the indicators that may signal that an individual is at risk from or involved with serious violent crime. Indicators may include increased absence from school/work, a change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups, a significant decline in educational or workplace performance, signs of self-harm, or significant changes in well-being/signs of assault. Unexplained gifts or new possessions could also indicate that an individual has been approached by, or is involved with, criminal networks or gangs.

When an individual begins to show signs of exploitation or vulnerability to exploitation, we should be able to intervene as early as possible to help reduce the risk factors.

## Modern slavery and Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

Encompasses slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude. Traffickers and slave masters use whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment.

## Homelessness

Homelessness is lacking stable and appropriate housing. People can be categorised as homeless if they are:

- Being homeless
- Moving between temporary shelters, including houses of friends, family and emergency accommodation
- Living in private boarding houses without a private bathroom or security of tenure.

## Missing from Education or Home

Children missing education are defined as those who are not on a school roll or receiving suitable education other than at school. Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character, or the context suggests the person may be subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another is missing from home.

## Stalking

Stalking can be defined as persistent and unwanted attention that makes someone feel pestered and harassed. It includes behaviour that happens two or more times, directed at or towards a person by another person, which causes them to feel alarmed or distressed or to fear that violence might be used against them.

## Substance abuse

Substance abuse refers to the abuse of illegal substances, such as marijuana, heroin, cocaine, or methamphetamine. Or it may be the abuse of legal substances, such as alcohol, nicotine, or prescription medicines. Alcohol is the most common legal drug of abuse.

## Discriminatory abuse

Includes forms of harassment, bullying, slurs, isolation, neglect, denial of access to services or similar treatment; because of race, gender and gender identity, age, disability, religion or because someone is lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. This includes racism, sexism, ageism, homophobia or any other form of hate incident or crime.

## Self-neglect

Includes a person neglecting to care for their personal hygiene; health or surroundings; or an inability to provide essential food, clothing, shelter or medical care necessary to maintain their physical and mental health, emotional well-being and general safety. It includes behaviour such as hoarding.

## Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) can face additional safeguarding challenges. PCS acknowledges that additional barriers can exist when recognising abuse and neglect in this group of children and young people. These can include:

- Assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's disability without further exploration.

- The potential for children with SEND being disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs; and communication barriers and difficulties in overcoming these barriers.

## **Prevent Procedure**

‘The aim of the Prevent duty is to reduce the threat to the UK from terrorism by stopping people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. Terrorist groups often draw on extremist ideology,

developed by extremist organisations. The government has defined extremism 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’.

-Counterterrorism and Security Act 2015 (‘the Act’)

## **Safeguarding and the Prevent Duty**

The document ‘Keeping Children Safe in Education 2021’ identifies radicalisation as one of the additional safeguarding concerns. It is important that, as part of safeguarding, all individuals are protected from radicalisation.

The PCS Group recognises that all staff have a role to play in preventing radicalisation. All complaints, allegations, or suspicions relating to radicalisation must be taken seriously and communicated with the client’s Safeguarding and Prevent Lead.

## **Definition of Radicalisation**

Radicalisation is the process where someone has their vulnerabilities or susceptibilities exploited towards crime or terrorism – most often by a third party who have their own agenda.

## Concerns related to Radicalisation.

Where there are concerns that an individual is being radicalised or where there are concerns that an individual is expressing extremist views, then, in line with the government Prevent duty guidance, these concerns must be raised in the same way that any other safeguarding concern would be raised.

## **People responsible for Safeguarding and Prevent**

The PCS Group recognises that safeguarding and prevent is everyone’s responsibility. However, there are specific staff with responsibility for safeguarding within the client site. Further information regarding who is responsible at the client site will be presented to each PCS operative during their induction and will be updated through Toolbox Talks at a minimum of yearly.

## **The Referral Process**

The following ‘5R’ process MUST be followed by all staff:

1. Recognise the signs of abuse.
2. Respond and react accordingly.
3. Record the facts of the disclosure.
4. Report the disclosure to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), or Deputy/Safeguarding Officers, immediately. All SRFs must be forwarded to the DSL within 24 hours.
5. Refer (to the emergency services or social services or through the Channel process) in situations where an individual may be at risk of immediate harm – and ensure that

the information is reported to the DSL (or Deputy/Safeguarding Officers) immediately. All SRFs must be forwarded to the DSL within 24 hours.

## **Confidentiality**

The safety and well-being of the individual at risk is paramount. Staff may have access to confidential information about individuals in order to undertake their everyday responsibilities. In some circumstances, staff may be provided with highly sensitive or private information. They should never use confidential or personal information about an individual or their family for their own or others' advantage. Information must never be used to intimidate, humiliate, or embarrass them. The DSL (or Safeguarding Manager/Deputy/Safeguarding Officers) will disclose personal information about an individual to other employees on a need-to-know basis only. The DSL (or Safeguarding Manager/Deputy/Safeguarding Officers) will make a judgement in each individual case about who needs and has a right to access particular information.

All staff must be aware that they have a professional responsibility to share information with other agencies in order to safeguard children/young people and adults at risk, in consultation with the local DSL (or Safeguarding Manager/Deputy/Safeguarding Officers).

- All safeguarding records are subject to the Freedom of Information Act and the Data Protection Act. If there is any doubt as to the rights of any party to access information, PCS may seek legal advice prior to releasing any information.
- PCS complies with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018. The Data Protection Act 2018 does not prevent staff from sharing information where this is necessary to protect the safety and well-being of the child or adult at risk.
- All staff must be aware that they cannot promise a child/young person or vulnerable adult confidentiality, which might compromise the safety or well-being of the individual, or that of another.

## **Safer recruitment**

PCS will prevent people who pose a risk of harm from working with children and young people by adhering to statutory responsibilities and obligations in line with safe recruitment practices.

We have created a culture of safer recruitment and, as part of that, have adopted recruitment procedures that help deter, reject, or identify people who might abuse children or young people.

We will act reasonably in making decisions about the suitability of the prospective employee/volunteer-based on checks and evidence, including criminal record checks (DBS checks), barred list checks and prohibition checks, together with references and interview information.

The level of DBS required, and whether a prohibition check is required, will be Enhanced for any member of the PCS team who will step foot in an education setting.

## **Equal opportunities statement**

This policy will be implemented in accordance with The PCS Group's Equal Opportunities Policy.

## **Malicious allegations**

Where it is subsequently found that an allegation was made with malice and forethought the Administration Director will determine an appropriate course of action. This may include disciplinary action against the accuser, acceptance of a written apology (subject to an agreement about future behaviour), or other such sanctions as are deemed appropriate.

# SAFEGUARDING AND PREVENT

## Responsibility

It is the responsibility of all operatives to understand and be aware of the Safeguarding and Prevent Policy and to follow actions contained herein.

It is the responsibility of the Contract Managers to ensure all operatives are up-to-date with their Safeguarding and Prevent training and are aware of the correct course of action for identification and reporting.

It is the responsibility of Administration to ensure this policy remains up-to-date with regional legislations.

Amendments may be added for local guidelines, where this policy is displayed in client site folders. If an amendment is required, it will follow directly from this document.

## Date

This policy was last updated on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2023

This policy will next be updated on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2024



Director



ISO 9001  
ISO 14001  
ISO 45001

