

Durham Youth Council Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedure

Policy Statement

Durham Youth Council (DYC) is fully committed to safeguarding the welfare of all Young People, by taking all reasonable steps to protect them from neglect, physical, emotional and sexual harm.

DYC believe that safeguarding and protecting the welfare of all the Young People we work with is the responsibility of everyone, this includes, but is not exhaustive of, paid staff (full and part-time) voluntary staff, sessional or contractual staff, trustee board and Young People.

DYC staff and volunteers must at all times show respect and understanding for the rights of Young People, their safety and welfare, and conduct themselves in a way that reflects this.

DYC will support anyone, (children, Young People, staff, volunteers, parents, key workers) who raises any concerns regarding the welfare or protection of Young People. Any concerns raised will be taken seriously.

DYC accepts that the best interests of the Young Person must be paramount when considering any action concerning matters of child protection and safeguarding the welfare of Young People.

DYC commit to doing this by:

- ❖ Ensuring that all our staff and volunteers are carefully selected trained and supervised. (*refer to Durham County Council (DCC) Recruitment Policies, and Diversity and Equality Policies*)
- ❖ Assessing all risk carefully and taking all necessary steps to minimise and manage the risk. (*DCC Health and Safety Policies*)
- ❖ Letting Young People, children, parents and key workers know how to voice concerns or complaints about anything that they may not be happy with. (*DCC Complaints Procedure*)
- ❖ Giving Young People, children, parents and key workers information about what we do and what can be expected from us. (*General DYC information materials*).

DYC will review this policy and the relevant procedures regularly; together with all other policies and procedures DYC and DCC has in place.

DYC Definitions for this policy:

- ❖ **Young People / Person:** All safeguarding and child protection legislation and guidance recognises a child or young person as anyone up to the age of 18, this policy is in place to safeguard all the Young People that DYC works with, which in some cases will be up to the age of 25 years. Some aspects of this policy, such as, code of conduct will be in place to protect all Young People, regardless of age.
- ❖ **Vulnerable Adult:** is someone over the age of 18, who is considered 'vulnerable' for one reason or another. However, there is no simple definition based on age or disability; not all those with a physical or other disability should be classed as 'vulnerable', some Young People may experience periods of vulnerability.
- ❖ **DYC Staff:** This policy applies to all full and part-time paid staff as well as volunteers at BYC, any contract or sessional paid staff or volunteers, all trustee board members and Young People. For the purpose of this document any reference to BYC staff will include all those mentioned above.

Roles and Responsibilities

The designated safeguarding officer(s) have the following responsibilities:

- ❖ To ensure that this policy and procedure is disseminated, implemented and adhered to at all times.
- ❖ To be familiar with and have an understanding of relevant legislation and guidance relating to safeguarding and child protection.
- ❖ To receive all information from staff, Young People, parents or carers about any child protection concern or issue, to assess this information promptly and take any appropriate actions and maintain records.
- ❖ To liaise with and be familiar with relevant staff in external child protection agencies, and to make referrals as and when necessary. When making a referral to do so having spoken to relevant member staff/CEO and the Young Person involved.
- ❖ To arrange appropriate training and support for all relevant staff.
- ❖ To provide support during and after incidents involving child protection.
- ❖ To monitor and maintain records to provide feedback to BYC on the number of safeguarding concerns and incidents, and the outcomes of these.

**Designated Safeguarding Lead for Durham Youth Council:
Participation & Engagement Officer**
youthvoice@durham.gov.uk

All staff have the following responsibilities:

- ❖ To adhere to all the points and procedures outlined within this policy.
- ❖ To report any incidents, concerns, suspicions and/or allegations they have regarding a young person's wellbeing and/or safety, in-line with DYC reporting procedures (see later section), which include concerns about the conduct of staff / volunteers.
- ❖ To attend induction or any training courses including on-going training in relation to safeguarding and child protection.
- ❖ To use support sessions, such as supervision, to discuss any child protection or safeguarding concerns or issues.

Recruitment and selection

We practice safer recruitment, which involves taking up references for all staff and undertaking DBS checks where applicable. Please refer to DCC's recruitment and selection and also Diversity and equality policies and procedures.

Training and support

- ❖ All new DYC staff, during their induction period, will receive information and briefing on this and other policies and any child protection issues.
- ❖ All existing staff will receive up to-date training and information regarding changes in legislation, guidance and procedures regularly from the designated safeguarding officer(s), including refresher training.

Visitors and External Organisations

Any visitors or external organisations working with DYC should be made aware of this policy and follow it as any member of staff would be expected to.

Where possible, any visitors or external organisations who will come into contact with our Young People should provide evidence of relevant and appropriate checks, for example; a valid DBS. It is the responsibility of DYC staff to check this. In the event that visitors or external organisations do not have the appropriate evidence, then it is the responsibility of DYC staff to ensure the appropriate measures are taken to safeguard our Young People, for example; the visitor or external agency are never to be left unsupervised with a Young Person(s).

It is important that the visitor / external organisation are made aware that during their consultation time with Young People, there could be a situation where there is a disclosure made. In the event that a Young Person(s) makes a disclosure to a visitor or external organisation, the visitor is to refer to our procedure as

described later in this policy. They are to report this disclosure to the relevant member of DYC staff who can support further.

Code of conduct

All members of its staff at DYC should have a clear understanding of the responsibilities and powers their positions of trust carry. Staff are expected to follow the Code of Conduct of DCC. This code of conduct has clearly outlined what is acceptable behaviour and what is not, and how to behave appropriately when working for DCC.

In addition to DCC's Code of Conduct, DYC will follow the below to ensure that when working with Young People, we are ensuring that the 'position of trust' is not abused. This will not only protect those in the positions of trust but also safeguards those being cared for.

DYC code of conduct

Staff must always:

- ❖ Treat everyone with respect and dignity.
- ❖ Respect and be sensitive to individual's beliefs and religions.
- ❖ Act as a good role model.
- ❖ Dress appropriately for the role.
- ❖ Respect a Young Person's right to privacy.
- ❖ Assess the risks likely to be incurred in all situations, activities, building and trips to ensure all potential dangers have been identified and the risk minimised.
- ❖ Plan to have more than one adult present on activities/trips.
- ❖ Take any allegations, suspicions or concerns about abuse which a young person makes seriously (including those made against staff) and report them following appropriate procedures.
- ❖ Provide an opportunity and environment for Young People to talk to the relevant staff member about any concerns they may have.
- ❖ Provide an environment that encourages Young People and adults to feel comfortable and confident in challenging any attitudes, behaviours or language that may be discriminatory or inappropriate in any way. (i.e. racial, sexual, bullying, homophobic, disability, refugee/asylum status etc.).
- ❖ Remember that others may misinterpret behaviour and actions regardless of how well-intentioned they may be.
- ❖ Show understanding and sensitivity when dealing with emotional issues.

Staff must never:

- ❖ Permit or accept any abusive and/or discriminatory behaviour or by individuals or as peer-led activities, (e.g. initiation ceremonies, bullying, taunting).
- ❖ Engage in inappropriate behaviour, contact or language (e.g. physical, verbal, sexual, including horseplay).
- ❖ Allow or encourage others (staff, volunteers, trustee board or Young People) to engage in inappropriate behaviour/contact (as above).
- ❖ Use inappropriate or demeaning language, via any method of communication, i.e. writing, phoning, texting, email and or via the Internet.
- ❖ Engage in any form of sexual relationship with a Young People.
- ❖ Make sexually suggestive comments towards a Young People.
- ❖ Give personal money to any young person they are working with.
- ❖ Invite Young People (they are working with) to their homes or into their rooms whilst away on residential.
- ❖ Show favouritism to anyone.
- ❖ Jump to conclusions without checking facts.
- ❖ Use alcohol, drugs or other substances when working with Young People.
- ❖ Undermine or criticise others.
- ❖ Deliberately put themselves or others in compromising or potentially dangerous situations.
- ❖ Promote their religious or political ideas and beliefs.
- ❖ Believe it could never happen, or trivialise abuse.
- ❖ Rely on just their good name and or reputation to protect them against situations which could lead to allegations.

- ❖ Promise to keep secrets.
- ❖ Be alone with a young person unless necessary for the task and having let others know of the arrangement and the reason for it.

NB: some of the team building activities carried out by DYC might involve physical contact amongst participants and staff (adult workers), for example; games of tag, or football, this is fine so long as they are carried out in an open environment, (i.e. not in a situation where there is one adult worker alone with participant engaging in physical activities) and a risk assessment is completed to ensure these activities are safe and well planned. Young People must be given the choice to not participate in an activity, should they not wish to.

Compliance with the provisions of this code of code is a requirement of all staff to ensure the highest standards of integrity, honesty and appropriate behaviour in all our work with children and young people.

If any members of staff are uncertain concerning any particular situation, advice should be obtained in the first instance from their line manager.

Staff should read the Standards of Conduct carefully, as a breach of any part of the code may lead to disciplinary proceedings or dismissal. In the event of any criminal offence being committed, staff may be liable to prosecution.

Staff should be aware they are required to be positive role models for children and young people and therefore;

- ❖ Never create or develop an inappropriate relationship with any individual or group of children and young people. Staff must be aware that as adults they have a powerful influence over young people and any of that power should not be used in an inappropriate manner.
- ❖ Must not use unacceptable language when engaging with children and young people. Staff should not swear, use or tell inappropriate jokes, or use racist, sexist, homophobic or other discriminatory language. Staff should never “put down” children and young people when they are talking to them. Staff should actively encourage the use of positive language and praise when working with children and young people.
- ❖ Should be aware that whilst casual dress is often vital for work with children and young people, their choice of clothes should be appropriate for the work they are undertaking.
- ❖ In addition to the health and safety issues addressed above staff must also be aware that that young people growing into adulthood are undergoing physical changes which might make them vulnerable to certain suggestions and aware of the visual appearance of others.
- ❖ Staff should not force their views and opinions on children and young people but give them the space and time to work things out in their mind; challenge should lead to their learning and growth, rather than conflict or tension.
- ❖ Personal grievances and personal issues between staff should on no account be discussed with children or young people. Any grievance between staff should be resolved by following the grievance procedures.
- ❖ Staff should not become overly familiar, with respect to physical contact or a sexual relationship, with children and young people and must be aware of the dangers of leaving themselves open to accusations. Care must be taken to ensure adequate adult supervision and staff gender balance in relation to activities. All staff must consider situations where they could be in vulnerable one to one situations and try and avoid them or implement control measures, e.g. being alone with a child or young person at the end of an event, where the child or young person is of the opposite gender to the staff member.

DYC recognise that there may be a time when they come into contact with Young People outside of the working environment.

- ❖ Staff must be alert to situations outside of work. Where a worker may meet a Young Person in a social context, who is known to them through work, the worker must remember that they are never off-duty i.e. they are still working and must adhere to code of conduct.
- ❖ Any inappropriate relationship with Young People where a worker arranges to be alone with Young Person (whether in work or outside) is an abuse of power and a dismissible and/or criminal offence.
- ❖ Dealing with conflict- never use physical force against Young People. Staff should be aware of tensions building up and potential situations at the earliest possible point. Sanctions and restraint may be necessary in extreme situations; however, staff will receive training during the induction period in dealing with conflict. It is important to remember that the protection of other children/young people, staff and volunteers and the designated officer's own safety is a priority in situations of conflict.

Lone Working

DYC recognise that in most situations it is best practice to have at least 2 responsible adults or members of staff present when working with children and Young People. However, DYC also recognise that in some circumstances, it may be appropriate or necessary for a staff member to have one-to-one contact with a Young Person or supervise a small group of Young People on their own. An example of this might be if a Young Person in our group becomes ill or asks to speak to a trusted adult alone or our work involves one-to-one mentoring or consultation/project work with a group of Young People.

Where working alone with a Young Person(s) is unavoidable the staff member must;

- ❖ ensure that other staff are aware of their meeting, date, its purpose and duration. Where possible, rooms offering privacy from being overheard but where individuals are visible to others e.g. through glass doors, windows, are always used where possible.
- ❖ The 'contact/meeting' needs to be logged and recorded via our systems. This includes the use of DCC Lone Worker logging system when appropriate.
- ❖ Sessions should not be for extensive lengths of time.
- ❖ Where appropriate or possible, parents and carers need to be informed of the 'contact/meeting', and consent needs to be given.
- ❖ Parents/carers and Young People need to be made aware of what they need to do if they have any concerns. Safeguarding Policy should have been shared prior.
- ❖ When lone working, staff ensure they have a charged mobile phone with them at all times, that somebody knows where they are and for how long, and they are aware of the following contact numbers – line manager, lone worker, 24 hour emergency telephone number, emergency contacts for Young People.
- ❖ If during a lone working session a Young Person makes any allegations about the member of staff present or another staff member, the member of staff must ensure the Young Person is safely returned home in the most appropriate manner and then immediately informs Line Managers. This needs to be clearly logged on our systems.
- ❖ If a Young Person becomes distressed or angry in a lone working situation, this must immediately be reported to the Line Manager who will take appropriate risk assessment action.
- ❖ If the purpose of this 'meeting/contact' is a disclosure, then a disclosure form must be completed and safeguarding steps described later in this policy must be followed.

The use of Virtual Meetings and TEAMS

DYC have recognised a growing need to incorporate the use of digital media platforms, an example of which is TEAMS, in order to communicate and hold virtual meetings with our colleagues, Young People and parents/carers/guardians.

It might be appropriate for Young People to be invited to join virtual meetings in order for them to be able to engage in or access the work we carry out. In this case, an email address needs to be provided, this can be either a parent or Young Person's email address, in the event this is a Young Person's email address and

the Young Person is under the age of 18, parental permission must be given for us to use this. This is obtained through our parent consent form.

Parents/carers and Young People must be made aware that these meetings will involve a group invitation and that other members of staff, partners and Young People/parents will be able to view the provided email address and invitation list. This will be made clear in consent forms and be reflected in our Privacy Notice.

During virtual meetings organised by DYC, Youth Council members will be under the supervision of a suitably qualified and experienced member of staff and every care will be taken to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the Young People.

DYC will also host what is called a 'channel' within TEAMS, this is a platform similar to that of social media whereby members can post, access documents and discuss topics. This is a private channel and members must be added into this via a moderator or admin in order to access its content. This will be managed/monitored in the same way any social media platforms would be, as identified in this policy.

There may come a time when DYC Young People will have to access external virtual meetings arranged by an external partner organisation. Where appropriate, a DYC member of staff will also be available to supervise and attend, in the event there are no DYC members of staff available, Young People will only be encouraged to attend these meetings if there will be another adult (possibly from another organisation) attending and supervising with the relevant clearance, qualifications etc. expected of our DYC staff. The platforms being used might differ to that of TEAMS, for example; Zoom. These platforms might be an 'open arena' and not have the same level of securities enforced by DYC. In order to keep everyone safe, it's important that Young People are advised not to give any personal information in this environment, and to treat any event like that as if they would their personal social platforms, for example; not disclosing addresses, which school they attend, telephone numbers etc.

It is expected that everyone participating in Virtual Meetings adhere to the same expectations described in our Code of Conduct, for example; to be appropriately dressed, respectful and good role models.

It is also asked that when participating in Virtual Meetings, attendees consider their choice of venue. It is not recommended that attendees access these meetings in a public place, for example; a café or public park etc. this is because of the nature of some of the things that might be discussed. If this is unavoidable, then proper measures need to be taken to ensure confidentiality. In this situation, attendees are recommended to use the 'chat function' rather than communicating verbally and suitable headphone equipment be used in order to access the discussion. It is also recommended that when attending these meetings virtually from home, the attendee takes into account their setting and what might be visible in the background, for example; personal items, family photos etc. It's advised that the attendee 'risk assess' this and consider using the 'background' or 'blurring' tool if available. When using the background function, the appropriateness of the background needs to be considered. If it is deemed inappropriate, they attendee will be asked to change this by DYC staff member. If the device the attendee is using, doesn't have these feature, then they may want to consider having their 'camera' function turned off.

DYC recognise that managing and monitoring virtual meetings can be more challenging than managing face-to-face meetings. There is a potential risk of unwanted/uninvited guests attending, DYC will do everything to ensure this does not happen at any of our virtual events, for example; sending out individual invites via TEAMS or Outlook, making use of the 'lobby' tool which means we control who enters and leaves the meeting etc. but we cannot guarantee that partner organisations or externally planned virtual meetings will follow the same guidance. In the event that something does happen, for example; there are in appropriate comments made, verbal abuse, or any participates feel uncomfortable etc. All attendees are advised to end the call and leave the meeting immediately. Incidents need to be recorded and logged on our systems and risk assessment will need to be reviewed.

Transporting Young People

- ❖ Car journeys are an example of a setting which may unavoidably require a secluded one-to-one situation. Where possible, 2 members of staff should be present in the vehicle. Car journeys should be undertaken only with a specific purpose relevant to the work of DYC, by prior arrangement and with the permission of the Young Person and their parent/carer.

- ❖ In the case of a Young Person urgently needing a lift without prior arrangement, the journey and the reason for it should be immediately reported to Line Managers and parent/carer.
- ❖ Staff who use their own vehicles for transporting Young People must ensure that the vehicle is roadworthy, appropriately insured, that the maximum capacity is not exceeded, and that they are fit to drive. The driver is legally responsible for ensuring all passengers wear seat belts and that younger / shorter children use car seats where required under current legislation. Currently a child must use a booster seat until they are 12 years old or 135cm in height, whichever comes first, but check for any updates.
- ❖ If behaviour by a young person is sufficiently inappropriate to be putting staff, or other passengers at risk whilst driving, the driver should park the car at the first safe opportunity, take the keys out of the car, and step out of the car in order to call Line Manager and take their instructions.
- ❖ Only staff can transport more than one Young Person to and from group sessions. Under these circumstances staff may drive a maximum of three Young People. If a car can accommodate more e.g. a 7-seater, an additional adult must also be present throughout the time the Young People are being transported.

Staff should be aware that in respect of their work with children and young people they are never “off duty” during events as a child or young person may require their assistance at any time during the event. To ensure the safety and protection of children and young people staff must be alert and aware of potential risk, harm or danger at all times.

Confidentiality

Whilst DYC staff will ensure that Young People’s rights to privacy and confidence is respected, there may be times when this confidence is breached. If a Young Person discloses information about themselves or another Young Person, which raises child protection concerns, then these concerns will be reported in line with DYC and DCC reporting concerns procedure available from DYC / DCC. DYC will ensure that the Young Person is involved, consulted and kept informed about what action, if any, is to be taken, and during each step of the reporting procedure.

Any personal information gathered about a young person will be stored in a safe and confidential place, only those who need to know will have access to this information, (i.e. staff member involved, designated safeguarding officer and line manager/chief executive). It may be necessary to pass this information on to the relevant authorities, such as, social services, police, NSPCC, and either parents/guardians or carers when a child protection concern has been raised. When doing so, DYC will, where possible, ensure that the young person is involved and gives consent in making that decision, however there may be occasions where this is not possible as information has to be passed on against the young person’s will and without their consent. The only situation when a referral can and will be made without the consent of the young person will be if that young person, or someone else, is at serious risk of harm (e.g. significant harm). DYC staff will ensure that any information gained or given will be treated with the strictest of confidence. Young People will be consulted and involved in the decision-making process. For further details please refer to DYC confidentiality policy.

Confidentiality Issues with Children and Young People:

Staff must never indicate to a child or young person that you would keep secrets. A feature of sexual abuse in particular is the secrecy that exists between perpetrator and young person. Staff/Volunteers can find themselves pulled into this relationship in a destructive way. Consequently, support workers must discuss their concerns with BYC’s designated staff member with responsibility for Child Protection at the earliest opportunity.

Approaches from young people along the lines of, “If I tell you something, you won’t tell anyone else will you?”- should be met with a firm but gentle explanation, for example “I can’t promise that I won’t share this with anybody else, if I feel that there is a situation that may put you or anybody else in danger. What I can promise is that I will not do so without letting you know” The child or young person may then choose not to tell, but usually they are looking for someone to help them break out of their secret. For children and young people who do not tell, the Staff / volunteer should make sure the young person knows of organisations that may operate in confidence. (E.g. child line, incest survivors groups).

Child protection

What is abuse?

Child abuse occurs when a child or young person has suffered from, or is at significant risk of suffering from ill-treatment or impairment of development, by any persons who knowingly collude with or fail to prevent the ill-treatment of the child by ensuring reasonable standards of care and protection.

- ❖ All staff and volunteers should be aware that abusers are not just strangers; they can include parents, carers, family members, friends, people in positions of trust/authority, other children and Young People, anyone who has contact with children and Young People.
- ❖ It is also important to remember that although most abusers are men, women also abuse. Abusers come from all backgrounds, races, classes and professions.
- ❖ Children and Young People who are abused are often abused by an adult they know and trust.
- ❖ Disabled children and Young People are more vulnerable to abuse. They are more dependent on intimate care and occasionally they may be less able to tell someone about or escape from abusive situations.
- ❖ Misunderstandings and misinterpretations of different cultural and religious beliefs and practices often means that children and Young People from these communities may be more vulnerable to abuse going undetected and often statutory services fail to meet the needs or deliver appropriate services to these children and Young People.

Types of abuse

There are four defined categories of abuse, although it is important to remember that abuse will often fall into more than one category at any one time:

- ❖ Neglect – the persistent or severe neglect of the child/young person, including failure to meet the child's basic physical and psychological needs, i.e. food, warmth, shelter, clothing, care and protection.
- ❖ Physical – any form of non-accidental injury, or failure to protect from injury to a child/young person, this may involve, hitting, shaking, poisoning, throwing, burning/scalding.
- ❖ Emotional – severe or persistent rejection or emotional ill treatment of the child/young person, which would negatively affect the emotional or behavioural development of the child/young person.
- ❖ Sexual – the actual or likely sexual exploitation of the child/young person by any person, whether or not that child/young person is aware of what is happening. This would include physical contact (penetrative or non-penetrative) and non-physical contact (looking at pornographic materials, watching sexual activities).

It is accepted that in all forms of abuse there are elements of emotional abuse, and that some are subjected to more than one form of abuse at any one time.

Attention must be drawn to other sources of stress Young People and their families can experience, such as, social exclusion, domestic violence, and mental illness or drug/alcohol misuse. These areas may have a negative impact on the young person's health and development, if your notice that a young person's wellbeing is being adversely affected, then the same procedures must be followed.

Recognising abuse

The following information is designed for you to use as a guide to help you become more alert to and aware of the signs of possible abuse, ***it isn't intended to turn you into an expert.***

Recognising possible abuse is a complex and complicated procedure and **it is not your responsibility** to decide whether a young person has been abused or is at significant risk. However, **you do have a responsibility to act on any concerns and report them** in accordance with your reporting procedures.

- ❖ **Neglect** – this can be a difficult form of abuse to recognise, and yet it can have some of the most lasting and damaging effects.

The physical signs and changes in behaviour that may indicate neglect may include:

- Constantly hungry, perhaps food being stolen from others

- Constantly dirty or in an unkempt, unwashed state
- Inappropriately dressed for the weather conditions
- A loss of weight or being constantly underweight
- Being tired all the time
- Failure to attend medical appointments or not requesting them
- Mentioning of being left alone or unsupervised

- ❖ **Physical abuse** – it's quite normal for Young People to get cuts and bruises as part of their daily life, however, some Young People will have bruising or cuts that could only have been caused non-accidentally. Important indicators are where on the body the bruises or injuries occur, whether an explanation was given or the lack of explanations fits the injury, and also whether there was a delay in seeking medical treatment when treatment may be quite necessary.

The physical signs and changes in behaviour that may indicate physical abuse may include:

- Injuries that cannot be explained on any part of the body
- Bruises which reflect hand marks or fingertips from slapping or pinching
- Cigarette burns, bite marks, broken bones, scalds
- A fear of approaching parents for an explanation
- Aggressive behaviour or severe temper outbursts
- Flinching when touched or approached
- Depression, withdrawn behaviour
- Running away from home
- Reluctance to get changed

- ❖ **Emotional abuse** – again this can be very difficult to identify, often those who appear well cared for may be emotionally abused by being put down or belittled. Also, some Young People may be receiving little or no love, affection and/or attention from their parents/guardians/carers. Also, those not allowed to mix/play with others may be experiencing emotional abuse.

The physical signs and changes in behaviour that may indicate emotional abuse may include:

- A failure to thrive or grow
- Sudden speech disorders
- Delayed development either physically or emotionally
- Exhibiting neurotic behaviour such as hair twisting or rocking
- Reluctance to have their parents/guardians contacted or approached regarding their behaviour
- Exhibiting a lack of confidence or the need for approval or attention
- Fear of making mistakes
- Exhibiting self-harming behaviour

- ❖ **Sexual abuse** – adults who exploit their power and use Young People to gratify their own sexual needs abuse both girls and boys of all age's cultures and abilities, including babies, toddlers and Young People. More often than not the young person's behaviour will cause you to become concerned; however, there are physical signs which highlight concerns. In all cases Young People who talk about sexual abuse do so because they want it to stop. Therefore, it is vitally important that they are listened to and taken seriously.

The physical signs and changes in behaviour that may indicate sexual abuse may include:

- Stomach pains, discomfort when walking or sitting down
- Bruising or injuries to parts of the body that are not normally seen
- Pregnancy
- Sudden or unexplained changes in behaviour and/or mood, e.g. becoming aggressive or withdrawn
- Nervousness or fear of being left with specific persons or groups
- Acting in a sexually inappropriate way with peers/adults

- Sexual knowledge/drawings/language which are beyond their development age or level
- Running away
- Self-harm/mutilation, suicide attempts
- Eating disorders such as bulimia or anorexia
- Indicating that they have secrets which cannot be told to anyone
- Bedwetting
- Substance abuse (drug and alcohol)

It is important to know and remember that these lists are not definitive but should act as a guide to assist you in becoming more aware. Young People may show some of these indicators at some time, but the presence of one or more should not be taken as proof that abuse is occurring or has occurred. As mentioned, it is not your responsibility to determine whether abuse has/is taking place, your responsibility lies with reporting any and all concerns to the relevant and appropriate people.

There may be other factors (within the family) for reasons in sudden or noticeable changes in behaviour, such as death, the birth of a new sibling etc.

Responding to any suspicions, concerns or allegations

Concerns about a staff member's behaviour, volunteers, or Young Person(s) (whistle-blowing)

Action to be taken

- ❖ Any concerns must be raised with the staff members' line manager and/or the safeguarding designated officer, immediately.
- ❖ All staff has the right to report any concerns or suspicions they may have about another member of staff in confidence and free from harassment, being treated unfairly or being penalised.
- ❖ Where an allegation has been made about a member of staff they will receive support throughout the process and thereafter is necessary, as agreed with their line manager.
- ❖ All procedures will adhere to DYC disciplinary policy, support mechanisms put in place by DYC must not jeopardise any investigation or put young people at risk.

Concerns about a young person and responding to disclosure

Action to be taken if you have a concern about a young person's safety and well-being:

- ❖ Act immediately.
- ❖ Follow the steps outlined in the section below 'if a young person confides in you, you must'.
- ❖ Inform the designated safeguarding officer and your line manager with as much information/details as soon as possible.
- ❖ Keep a detailed record of what you witnessed, heard or were told.

Action to be taken by the safeguarding designated officer and or manager:

- ❖ Act immediately.
- ❖ Consider if the young person is in immediate danger, if so; contact the police, social services and or parents. Follow procedure as above.
- ❖ If the young person is not in immediate danger, find out as much as possible about the situation or incident from the young person, do not ask interrogating questions, and just ask questions for clarification only as further questioning may jeopardise any future investigation.
- ❖ Allegations or suspicions made about a member of staff must be dealt with in accordance with DYC disciplinary policy and procedure.
- ❖ Contact the local safeguarding team. In the case of DCC, First Contact should be called. Details available at www.durham.gov.uk You can obtain details of other social services from www.direct.gov.uk.
- ❖ You may also need to agree with the local social services team about ongoing support for the young person, once any concerns have been made.

- ❖ Make records of the disclosure as soon as practical on an incident recording form, in as much detail as possible and in the young person's words rather than interpreting them. Ensure these records are kept securely and confidentially.

Action to be taken if the young person is in immediate danger:

- ❖ Contact the police by dialling 999.
- ❖ Get medical help if necessary.
- ❖ Refer the young person to the local social services team or emergency duty team (if out of normal office hours). Give them as many details as you know, and what any future action may be.
- ❖ Contact parents or carers. DO NOT contact them if this will place the young person or others in the household at further risk of harm. If this is the case contact the police.
- ❖ As soon as possible inform the safeguarding designated officer and your line manager.
- ❖ Record all the details on the relevant incident/disclosure forms.

If a young person confides in you, you must:

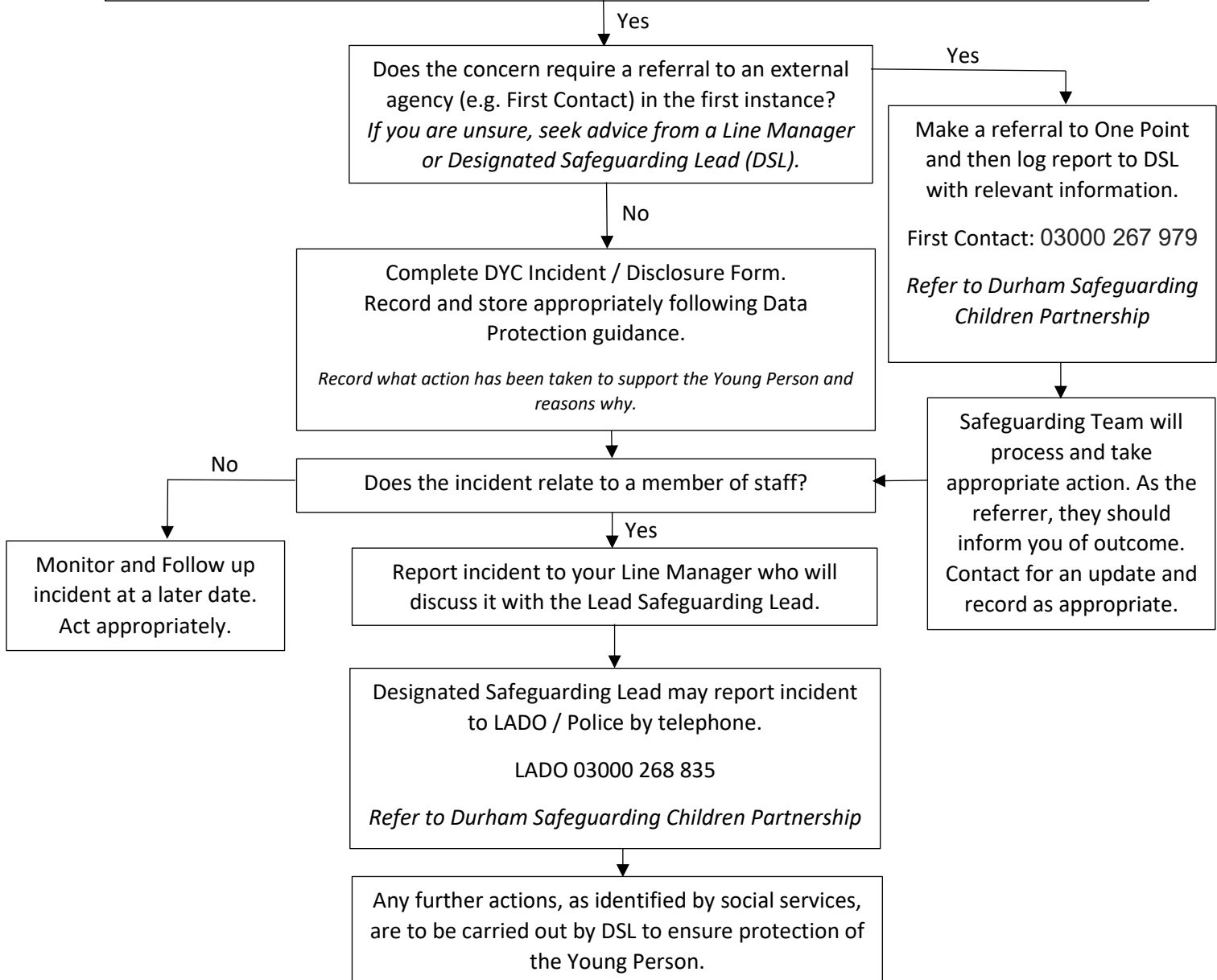
- ❖ Stay calm and approachable; do not let your shock show.
- ❖ Listen very carefully to what is being said without interrupting.
- ❖ Explain at an appropriate time as early as possible that the information being given by the young person will need to be shared and passed on to others – but stress only to those who need to know. Do not in any circumstances promise to keep it a secret.
- ❖ Make it clear that you are taking them seriously and acknowledge how difficult this must be.
- ❖ Allow the young person to speak at their own pace.
- ❖ Reassure the young person that they are doing the right thing in telling you.
- ❖ If you need to ask questions, then only ask questions for clarification, avoid asking questions that suggest particular answers, avoid asking probing questions – you do not need to know all the details that is the job of the experts and you might jeopardise a future investigation.
- ❖ Let the young person know what will happen next, who you will report the information to, what will happen once it has been reported.
- ❖ Record all the details of what was said, use the exact wording used by the young person, do not try to interpret any of the information yourself, record details such as names mentioned, dates, times, who the information went to, what action was taken next, don't forget to sign and date the form (see incident/disclosure form).

DYC staff will always ensure that the young person's welfare is paramount when considering what action will be taken. DYC will also take into account the age and maturity of the young person, involving them in any decisions being made concerning them.

Flowchart of What to do in the event of an allegation/disclosure/suspicion of harm

If you are concerned that the Young Person is at immediate risk of harm, contact emergency services without delay 999 or 101

You have a concern that a Young Person is being harmed, at risk of potential harm or a disclosure has been made.
If you are an external worker to DYC – report this to appropriate member of staff. They will complete the next steps of this flow chart with your input.



This policy mirrors and is adapted from The British Youth Council's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and amended to reflect the way we Safeguard in Durham Youth Council and Durham County Council. These can be found on the www.byc.org.uk and www.durham.gov.uk websites. Information and guidance on Lone Working is from <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/>. This policy was further informed with information and guidance from Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership <https://durham-scp.org.uk/> and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020 www.gov.uk.