



Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy

1. Policy Statement

For the protection of children, and to justify public trust and confidence, School Food Matters (SFM) is required to ensure that only suitable staff, trustees, volunteers and freelancers are allowed to undertake work that brings them into regular contact with children. School Food Matters uses the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) to assess the suitability of staff, trustees, volunteers and freelancers.

Duty of care:

School Food Matters believes that anyone working with children or young people has a legal and moral duty of care to do all they can to protect them from harm. We believe it is always unacceptable for a child or young person to experience abuse of any kind and we recognise our responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all children and young people, by operating within practice that protects them as outlined in the reporting process below.

We recognise that:

- In everything we do, the welfare of the child/young person is paramount
- All children, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse
- All staff, trustees, volunteers and freelancers at School Food Matters have a responsibility for child protection and safeguarding in the delivery of our services
- Working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare
- Safeguarding decisions should be made in a timely manner and should not be subject to unnecessary delay
- Information should be managed confidentially and only shared without consent where the duty to protect children from harm supersedes an individual's right to privacy

The purpose of this policy is:

- To provide protection for the children and young people who participate in our programmes
- To provide staff, trustees, volunteers and freelancers with guidance on procedures they should adopt should they suspect a child or young person may be experiencing, or be at risk of, harm

We will seek to safeguard children and young people by:

- Valuing, listening to, and respecting children and young people
- Adopting child protection guidelines through procedures and a code of conduct for staff and volunteers
- Recruiting staff, trustees, volunteers and freelancers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made
- Sharing information about child protection and good practice with staff and volunteers
- Sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents and children appropriately
- Providing appropriate support to staff and volunteers through supervision and training

- Protecting the identity of children and young people by anonymising data and not attributing names to photos used in our press and communications.

We will always assess risk in relation to our activities, focussing on prevention and minimising risk. We will put in place plans that safeguard the people participating in our programmes through processes which include:

- Always working in an open environment, where possible avoiding private or unobserved situations
- Treating all young people fairly with respect and dignity
- Being excellent role models for example, not smoking, drinking alcohol or eating unhealthy food in the company of young people
- Keeping a written record of any injury or incident that caused harm (including verbal attacks) along with any steps taken

2. Procedures for referral

All action is taken in line with:

- Children's Act 2004
- Working Together to Safeguard Children: July 2018 (updated July 2022)
- What to do if you're worried a child is being abused: Advice for practitioners: March 2015
- Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership Procedures
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023

Any member of staff, trustee, volunteer or freelancer who receives a disclosure of abuse or suspects that abuse may have occurred must report it immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, in the case of School Food Matters, the Chief Executive or if unavailable the Finance & HR Manager.

The member of staff, trustee, volunteer or freelancer must then complete a Reporting Form which must be signed and dated and sent to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will immediately inform the relevant local authority children's social care Initial Response Team (IRT) and will follow up in writing, detailing what was discussed and any actions arising.

If you think a child is in immediate danger of harm phone 999.

Confidentiality must be maintained and information relating to individual children and young people/families shared with staff on a strictly need to know basis.

If the member of staff, volunteer or freelancer is concerned about how child protection issues are being handled by the Designated Safeguarding Lead, they can contact the [NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-we-do/our-services/whistleblowing-advice-line/) on 0800 028 0285 or email help@nspcc.org.uk

3. Allegations or complaints made against SFM staff, trustees, volunteers or freelancers

When an allegation or a complaint is made against a member of School Food Matters staff, trustee, volunteer or freelancer, then the allegation or complaint must be passed to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead must then make a referral to the relevant local authority's Designated Lead (LADO). The local authority Lead will record a note of the consultation and will advise on the appropriate action that needs to be taken.

If an allegation is made against the Designated Safeguarding Lead, then the allegation must be passed to the Chair of Trustees.

Please refer to Whistleblowing Policy in the Staff Handbook.

4. School involvement

Our Safeguarding Policy, which includes contact details for the Designated Safeguarding Lead, is displayed on the School Food Matters website and will be made available to schools for review on request.

Concerns will always be reported to the child's school, however the Designated Safeguarding Lead must also make a referral to the relevant local authority children's social care team (see point 2).

5. Lone working unexpectedly

It is best practice for there to be more than one adult present when working or volunteering with children and young people. There may be some situations where you are working alone with children and young people unexpectedly. If this happens, there are things you can do to keep this as safe as possible.

- Make sure you are somewhere with the child where other people can see and hear you
- Tell another adult that you are alone with a child or children
- Make a record as soon as possible afterwards of why you were alone with a child or children and what happened
- Tell your line-manager and SFM's Designated Safeguarding Lead

6. Prevent Referrals

Radicalisation means someone is being encouraged to develop extreme views or beliefs in support of terrorist groups and activities.

If there is immediate danger call 999.

If you are worried about someone visit the [ACT Early website](#) or [Educate against Hate](#) website for advice. After getting advice you may need to make a Prevent referral to the police via the DSL. Details of how to do this will be on the relevant Local Authority website.

6. Training

The Designated Safeguarding Lead and at least one other staff member from School Food Matters will receive training every year in child protection. The course (Designated Safeguarding Lead Level Three) is delivered online by High Speed Training.

All staff, volunteers and freelancers must receive appropriate training on a regular basis, at least every three years. The course (Online Safeguarding Level One) is delivered by Kingston and Richmond Safeguarding Children Partnership.

All staff, trustees, volunteers and freelancers must read "Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022 - Part One" in the Staff Handbook.

7. Review

The policy will be reviewed on an annual basis and updated where appropriate.

8. Confidentiality, Consent and Information Sharing

We recognise that all matters relating to Safeguarding are confidential. The Designated Safeguarding Lead or deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead will disclose any information about a child to other members of staff on a need-to-know basis only. All staff members must be aware that they cannot promise a child to keep key information secret as this might compromise the child's safety or well-being.

We will ensure that our Designated Safeguarding Leads are confident about what they can and should do under the law. Staff should not assume a colleague or another professional will take action and share information that might be critical in keeping children safe. They should be mindful that early information sharing is vital for effective identification, assessment, and allocation of appropriate service provision.

If in any doubt about sharing information, staff should speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or a deputy. Fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of the need to promote the welfare and protect the safety of children. (KCSIE 2023)

9. Definitions

For more information see [Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023](#) or [NSPCC](#).

“Designated Safeguarding Lead” refers to the member of staff responsible for child protection issues. In the case of School Food Matters this is the Chief Executive or, if they are unavailable, the Finance & HR Manager.

At the date of policy review the contact details for the “Designated Safeguarding Lead” are as follows:

Stephanie Slater Chief Executive School Food Matters stephanie@schoolfoodmatters.org 020 8878 8333	Sarah Mountcastle Finance & HR Manager School Food Matters sarah@schoolfoodmatters.org 020 8878 8333
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“Physical Abuse” refers to when a child is hurt or injured by a child or an adult. Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. It also includes giving a child harmful drugs or alcohol. Female genital mutilation is a form of physical abuse which is illegal in the UK. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health to a child they are looking after. A person might do this because they enjoy or need the attention they receive by having a sick child.

“Emotional Abuse” is when adults deny children love or affection, or constantly threaten or humiliate them. Sarcasm, degrading punishments and ignoring a child are also forms of emotional abuse and undermine a child's confidence and sense of self-worth. 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 serious 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.

“Sexual Abuse” is when a child is used sexually by an adult or young person. Sexual abuse can include kissing, touching the child's genitals or breasts, vaginal or anal intercourse and oral sex. Encouraging a child to look at pornographic magazines or videos is also sexual abuse. Bullying, racism and other types of discrimination are forms of child abuse. Like other kinds of abuse, they can harm a child physically and emotionally. Sexual abuse includes sexual exploitation, such as forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution. Boys and girls can be sexually abused by males and/or females, by adults and by other young people.

“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 it may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, failure to ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care givers) or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

“Child Sexual Exploitation” is a type of sexual abuse. Young people may be coerced or groomed into exploitative situations and relationships. They may be given things such as gifts, money, drugs, alcohol, status or affection in exchange for taking part in sexual activities. Young people may be tricked into believing they're in a loving, consensual relationship. They often trust their abuser and don't understand that they're being abused. They may depend on their abuser or be too scared to tell anyone what's happening. They might be invited to parties and given drugs and alcohol before being sexually exploited. They can also be groomed and exploited online. Some children and young people are trafficked into or within the UK for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Sexual exploitation can also happen to young people in gangs. Child sexual exploitation can involve violent, humiliating and degrading sexual assaults and involve multiple perpetrators.

“Harmful Sexual Behaviour” is developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour which is displayed by children and young people and which may be harmful or abusive. It may also be referred to as sexually harmful behaviour or sexualised behaviour. Harmful Sexual Behaviour encompasses a range of behaviour, which can be displayed towards younger children, peers, older children or adults. It is harmful to the children and young people who display it, as well as the people it is directed towards. Harmful Sexual Behaviour can include using sexually explicit words and phrases, inappropriate touching, using sexual violence or threats, sexual activity with other children or adults. Sexual behaviour between children is considered harmful if one of the children is much older – particularly if there is more than two years' difference in age or if one of the children is pre-pubescent and the other isn't. However, a younger child can abuse an older child, particularly if they have power over them – for example, if the older child is disabled.

“Domestic Abuse” is any type of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between people who are, or who have been in a relationship, regardless of gender or sexuality. It can include physical, sexual, psychological, emotional or financial abuse. Exposure to domestic abuse is child abuse. Children can be directly involved in incidents of domestic abuse or they may be harmed by seeing or hearing abuse happening. Children in homes where there is domestic abuse are also at risk of other types of abuse or neglect.

“Bullying and Cyberbullying” is when individuals or groups seek to harm, intimidate or coerce someone who is perceived to be vulnerable. Bullying includes verbal abuse, such as name calling, non-verbal abuse, such as hand signs or glaring, emotional abuse, such as threatening, intimidating or humiliating someone, exclusion, such as ignoring or isolating someone, undermining, by constant criticism or spreading rumours, controlling or manipulating someone, racial, sexual or homophobic bullying, physical assaults, such as hitting and pushing, making silent, hoax or abusive calls. Bullying can happen anywhere – at school, at home or online. When bullying happens online it can involve social networks, games and mobile devices. Online bullying can also be known as cyberbullying. Cyberbullying includes sending threatening or abusive text messages, creating and sharing embarrassing images or videos, 'trolling' - sending menacing or upsetting messages on social networks, chat rooms or online games, excluding children from online games, activities or friendship groups, setting up hate sites or groups about a particular child, encouraging young people to self-harm, voting for or against someone in an abusive poll, creating fake accounts, hijacking or stealing online identities to embarrass a young person or cause trouble using their name.

“Child Trafficking” involves recruiting and moving children who are then exploited. Many children are trafficked into the UK from overseas, but children can also be trafficked from one part of the UK to another. Children who are trafficked experience many forms of abuse and neglect. Physical, sexual and emotional abuse is often used to control them and they're also likely to suffer physical and emotional neglect. Child trafficking can require a network of organised criminals who recruit, transport and exploit children and young people. Some people in the network might not be directly involved in trafficking a child but play a part in other ways, such as falsifying documents, bribery, owning or renting premises or money laundering. Child trafficking can also be organised by individuals and the children's own families. Traffickers trick, force or persuade children to leave their homes. They use grooming techniques to gain the trust of a child, family or community. Modern slavery is another term which may be used in relation to child trafficking. Modern slavery encompasses slavery, servitude, forced and compulsory labour and human trafficking. The Modern Slavery Act passed in 2015 in England and Wales categorises offences of slavery, servitude, forced or compulsory labour and human trafficking.

“Female Genital Mutilation” is the partial or total removal of external female genitalia for non-medical reasons. It's also known as female circumcision or cutting. The age at which FGM is carried out varies. It may be carried out when a child is new-born, during childhood or adolescence, just before marriage or during pregnancy (Home Office et al, 2016). FGM is child abuse. There are no medical reasons to carry out FGM. It's dangerous and a criminal offence.

“Breast Ironing” (also called breast flattening) is when young girls' breasts are damaged over time to flatten them and delay their development. Sometimes, an elastic belt, or binder, is used to stop them from growing. Breast ironing usually starts with the first signs of puberty and is most often done by female relatives. In most cases, the abuser incorrectly thinks they're behaving in the best interests of the child. They believe flattening the breasts will make the child less 'womanly'. They hope this will protect the girl from harassment, rape, abduction and early forced marriage, and help them stay in education.

“Radicalisation” is when someone starts to believe or support extreme views, and in some cases, then participates in terrorist groups or acts. It can be motivated by a range of factors, including ideologies, religious beliefs, political beliefs and prejudices against particular groups of people. People may be radicalised in many different ways, and over different time frames from as little as a few days or hours, or it may take several years.

“Child” is a person under the age of 18 years old.

“Safeguarding” is a broad term that refers to all the policies, procedures and actions that an organisation takes and puts in place to ensure that anyone working on their behalf, and anyone benefitting from the work they are doing, does not come to any harm, either intended or unintended, as a result of this work taking place. It includes both policies and procedures and the culture within the organisation that either promotes or hinders best safeguarding practice.

“Child Safeguarding” refers to

- a. protecting children from maltreatment
- b. preventing impairment of children’s mental and physical health or development
- c. ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- d. taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes all the actions we take to keep all children we come into contact with safe. It includes the proactive measures we put in place to ensure children do not come to harm as a result of our contact with them.

“Child Protection” refers to the actions we take when we have specific concerns that a particular child is suffering, or at risk of suffering, significant harm.

Appendix 1

The following non-exhaustive list may be signs of physical abuse

- Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them or refusal to explain injuries
- Injuries which occur to the body in places which are not normally exposed to falls or games
- Unexplained bruising, marks or injuries on any part of the body
- Bruises which reflect hand marks or fingertips (from slapping or pinching)
- Cigarette burns, bite marks, broken bones, scalds, bald patches
- Injuries which have not received medical attention
- Neglect-under nourishment, failure to grow, constant hunger, stealing or gorging food, untreated illnesses, inadequate care
- Recurrent injuries

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate physical abuse:

- Fear of parents being approached for an explanation
- Aggressive behaviour or severe temper outbursts
- Flinching when approached or touched
- Reluctance to get changed, for example, wearing long sleeves in hot weather
- Depression
- Withdrawn behaviour
- Running away from home

The following non-exhaustive list may be signs of emotional abuse

- A failure to thrive or grow particularly if a child puts on weight in other circumstances, for example, in hospital or away from their parents' care
- Sudden speech disorders
- Persistent tiredness
- Development delay, either in terms of physical or emotional progress

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate emotional abuse include:

- Obsessions or phobias
- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration
- Inappropriate relationships with peers and/or adults
- Being unable to play
- Attention seeking behaviour
- Fear of making mistakes
- Self-harm
- Fear of parent being approached regarding their behaviour

The following non-exhaustive list may be signs of sexual abuse

- Pain or itching in the genital/anal area
- Bruising or bleeding near genital/anal areas
- Sexually transmitted disease
- Vaginal discharge or infection
- Stomach pains
- Discomfort when walking or sitting down
- Pregnancy

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate sexual abuse include:

- Sudden or unexplained changes in behaviour, for example becoming withdrawn or aggressive
- Fear of being left with a specific person or group of people
- Having nightmares
- Running away from home
- Sexual knowledge which is beyond their age or developmental level
- Sexual drawings or language
- Bedwetting
- Eating problems such as over-eating or anorexia
- Self-harm or mutilation, sometimes leading to suicide attempts
- Saying they have secrets they cannot tell anyone about
- Substance or drug abuse
- Suddenly having unexplained sources of money or expensive gifts
- Not allowed to have friends (particularly in adolescence)
- Acting in an inappropriate sexually explicit way with adults

The following non-exhaustive list may be signs of neglect

- Constant hunger, sometimes stealing food from other children
- Constantly dirty or smelly
- Loss of weight or being constantly underweight
- Inappropriate dress for the conditions

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate neglect include:

- Complaining of being tired all the time
- Not requesting medical assistance and/or failing to attend appointments
- Having few friends
- Mentioning being left alone or unsupervised

The following non-exhaustive list may be signs of child sexual exploitation

- Pain or itching in the genital/anal area
- Bruising or bleeding near genital/anal areas
- Sexually transmitted disease
- Vaginal discharge or infection
- Stomach pains
- Discomfort when walking or sitting down
- Pregnancy

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate child sexual exploitation include:

- Being afraid of particular places or making excuses to avoid particular people
- Knowing about or being involved in 'adult issues' which are inappropriate for their age or stage of development, for example alcohol, drugs and/or sexual behaviour
- Having angry outbursts or behaving aggressively towards others
- Becoming withdrawn or appearing anxious, clingy or depressed
- Self-harming or having thoughts about suicide
- Showing changes in eating habits or developing eating disorders
- Regularly experiencing nightmares or sleep problems

- Regularly wetting the bed or soiling their clothes
- Running away or regularly going missing from home or care
- Not receiving adequate medical attention after injuries

Changes in behaviour which can indicate harmful sexual behaviour include:

It is normal for children to show signs of sexual behaviour at each stage in their development. Children also develop at different rates and some may be slightly more or less advanced than other children in their age group. Behaviours which might be concerning depend on the child's age and the situation.

Changes in behaviour which can indicate domestic abuse include:

- Becoming aggressive
- Displaying anti-social behaviour
- Suffering from depression or anxiety
- Not doing as well at school - due to difficulties at home or disruption of moving to and from refuges

The following non-exhaustive list may be signs of bullying and cyberbullying

- belongings getting 'lost' or damaged
- physical injuries such as unexplained bruises
- problems with eating or sleeping

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate bullying and cyberbullying include:

- being afraid to go to school, being mysteriously 'ill' each morning, or skipping school
- not doing as well at school
- asking for, or stealing, money (to give to a bully)
- being nervous, losing confidence or becoming distressed and withdrawn
- bullying others

The following non-exhaustive list may be signs of child trafficking

- not having any documents (or have falsified documents)

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate child trafficking include:

- having to do excessive housework chores
- rarely leaving the house and have limited freedom of movement
- giving a prepared story which is very similar to stories given by other children
- being unable or reluctant to give details of accommodation or personal details
- not being registered with a school or a GP practice
- having a history with missing links and unexplained moves
- being cared for by adults who are not their parents or carers
- not having a good quality relationship with their adult carers
- being one among a number of unrelated children found at one address
- receiving unexplained or unidentified phone calls whilst in a care placement or temporary accommodation

The following non-exhaustive list may be signs of female genital mutilation

- having difficulty walking, standing or sitting
- a female relative being cut – a sister, cousin or an older female relative such as a mother or aunt
- spending longer in the bathroom or toilet

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate female genital mutilation include:

- having a long holiday abroad or going 'home' to visit family
- a relative or cutter visiting from abroad
- a special occasion or ceremony to 'become a woman' or get ready for marriage
- missing school repeatedly or running away from home
- appearing withdrawn, anxious or depressed
- having unusual behaviour after an absence from school or college
- being particularly reluctant to undergo normal medical examinations
- asking for help, but may not be explicit about the problem due to embarrassment or fear

The following non-exhaustive list may be signs of breast ironing

- difficulty lifting their arms as the breast area will be tender to move and touch
- walking or sitting hunched over

Changes in behaviour which can also indicate breast ironing include:

- avoiding medical examinations
- not wanting to get undressed in front of anyone
- maybe asking for help, but may not say exactly what the problem is because they're embarrassed or scared
- unusual behaviour after time away from school or college including depression, anxiety, aggression and withdrawal
- being withdrawn from PE and/or sex and relationship education classes

The following non-exhaustive list may be signs of radicalisation

- expressing an obsessive or angry sense of injustice about a situation, and blaming this on others
- expressing anger or extreme views towards a particular group – such as a different race or religion
- suggesting that violent action is the only way to solve an issue
- sharing extreme views or hatred on social media

Safeguarding Policy for School Food Matters: Updated November 2023