Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Person responsible for the Policy:	Tina Woodward
Date Approved:	September 2026
Signed:	T.Woodward DSL/Childcare Manager
Date for Review:	September 27

At First Steps Kindergarten the named personnel with designated responsibility for Child Protection and Safeguarding are:

Designated Safeguarding Lead	**Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead**	**Safeguarding Owner / Committee Chair**
Tina Woodward	Julie Hassell Jemma O'Hare Tracey Dunley	Ian Jones

The named personnel with designated responsibility regarding allegations against staff/those working in the setting are:

Manager	**Deputy Manager**	**Owner / Committee (in the event of an allegation against the Manager)**
Ian Jones	Tina Woodward	

The named person with designated responsibility regarding Cared for children and Operation Encompass are:

Designated lead for cared for children
Tina Woodward
Operation Encompass Key Adult
Tina Woodward

1. Introduction:

At First Steps Kindergarten we recognise the duty we have under section 39(1)(b) of the Childcare Act 2006 to comply with the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS, 2026)

Early years and childcare providers must ensure that:

- Training must be renewed every two years. Providers may consider whether any staff need to undertake annual refresher training during any two-year period to help maintain basic skills and keep up to date with any changes to safeguarding procedures or as a result of any safeguarding concerns that occur in the setting.

- A practitioner must be designated to take lead responsibility for safeguarding children. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) is responsible for liaison with local statutory children's services agencies, and the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership (CESCP) as appropriate. The DSL must provide support, advice and guidance to all practitioners on an ongoing basis, and on any specific safeguarding issue as required. The DSL must attend a training course consistent with the criteria set out in Annex C.

This policy demonstrates the setting's commitment and compliance with safeguarding legislation; it should be read in conjunction with:

- Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership (CESCP) procedures
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026
- What to do if you are worried a child is being abused
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026
- Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2026
- Help for early years providers : Safeguarding
- Guidance for safer working practice for those working with children and young people in education settings February 2022
- Better hiring toolkit for education settings
- Setting online safety policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Staff use of mobile phones and Social Media Policy
- Safeguarding children and protecting professionals in early years settings: online safety considerations
- Preventing and Tackling Bullying
- Prevent Duty Guidance
- Protective security and preparedness for education settings - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- Emergency planning and response for education, childcare, and children's social care settings - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
- Mandatory reporting of FGM – procedural information
- Whistleblowing policy

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families and carers has a role to play in safeguarding children. In order to fulfil this responsibility effectively, all practitioners in this setting make sure

their approach is child centred. This means that we consider, at all times, what is in the best interests of the child. The term children includes everyone under the age of 18.

No single practitioner can have a full picture of a child's needs and circumstances. If children and families are to receive the right help at the right time, everyone who comes into contact with them has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information, and taking prompt action. Through our day-to-day contact with children and direct work with families, staff take notice of indicators of possible abuse or neglect and consult with Children's Services in Cheshire East (or in neighbouring authorities dependent upon the child's area of residence). We recognise that we form part of the wider safeguarding system for children. This responsibility also means that we are aware of the behaviour of staff in the setting; we maintain an attitude of **'it could happen here'** where safeguarding is concerned.

In our setting we ensure that:

- All children, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, are treated equally and have equal rights to protection
- All staff act on concerns or disclosures that may suggest a child is at risk of harm
- All staff are professionally curious and feel able to challenge decisions to ensure children receive the right support
- Children and staff involved in safeguarding issues receive appropriate support
- Staff adhere to a Code of Conduct/Staff Handbook/Code of Practice and understand what to do in the event of any allegations against any adult working in the setting
- All staff are aware of Early Help and ensure that relevant referrals, assessments and interventions take place
- All staff are aware that abuse, neglect and safeguarding issues are rarely standalone events that can be covered by one definition or label; they recognise that, in most cases, multiple issues will overlap with one another
- All staff understand that children's poor behaviour may be a sign they are suffering harm or that they have been traumatised by abuse
- Staff have received advice, support and training in regard to adverse childhood experiences and trauma informed practice

This policy is available on our setting website and printed copies of this document are available to parents upon request. We inform parents and carers about this policy when their children join our setting and through our setting newsletter.

The policy is provided to all staff (including temporary staff and volunteers) at induction, alongside our Staff Code of Conduct. Induction training must include information about emergency evacuation procedures, safeguarding, child protection, and health and safety issues. All staff are trained to understand the safeguarding policy and procedures and we ensure that their knowledge on safeguarding issues are kept up to date.

In addition, whilst it is not statutory for early years settings it is considered good practice that all staff are provided with Part One of the statutory guidance *'Keeping Children Safe in Education'*, DfE (2026) and are required to sign to indicate that they have read and understood it.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is able to support all staff in understanding their responsibilities and implementing it in their practice.

2.0 Aims of this document:

- To provide staff with the framework to promote and safeguard the wellbeing of children and in doing so ensure they meet their statutory responsibilities
- To ensure consistent good practice across the setting
- To demonstrate our commitment to protecting children
- To raise the awareness of all staff of the need to safeguard all children and of their responsibilities in identifying and reporting possible cases of abuse
- To emphasise the need for good communication between all members of staff in matters relating to child protection
- To promote safe practice and encourage challenge for poor and unsafe practice
- To promote effective working relationships with other agencies involved with safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, especially with Children's Social Care and the Police
- To ensure that all members of the setting community are aware of our procedures for ensuring staff suitability to work with children
- To ensure that staff understand their responsibility to support children who have suffered abuse in accordance with their agreed plan e.g., extra help/ Child in Need/ Child Protection Plan

3.0 Scope of this Policy

This policy applies to all members of the setting community including staff, children, volunteers, parents/carers, visitors, agency staff and students, or anyone working on behalf of First Steps Kindergarten

This policy is consistent with Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership (CESCP) child protection procedures.

4.0 Definitions of terms used in this document:

Child Protection: refers to the activity undertaken to protect specific children who are suspected to be suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm. This includes harm that occurs inside or outside the home, including in foster care and residential care, as well as online.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children: refers to the process of providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge, protecting children from maltreatment, whether that is within or outside the home, including online, preventing the impairment of children's mental and physical health or development, ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care, promoting the upbringing of children with their birth parents, or otherwise their family network through a kinship care arrangement, whenever possible and where this is in the best interests of the children and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes in line with the outcomes set out in the Children's Social Care National Framework.

Early Help: means providing support for children of all ages that improves a family's resilience and outcomes or reduces the chance of a problem getting worse.

Abuse: a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Harm can include ill treatment that is not physical as well as the impact of witnessing ill treatment of others. This can be particularly relevant, for example, in relation to the impact on children of all forms of domestic abuse, including physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional and psychological abuse, coercive and controlling behaviour and economic or financial abuse, where they see, hear, or experience its effects. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or extra-familial contexts by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children may be

abused by an adult or adults, or by another child or children. This includes in teenage relationships, and 'honour', faith- or belief-based abuse.

Staff: refers to all those working for or on behalf of the setting in either a paid or voluntary capacity, full time, or part time. This includes parents, Owners, Committee members and Trustees. It also includes child-minding assistants or co-childminders working together in a child-minding setting.

Child: refers to all children who have not yet reached the age of 18. On the whole, this will apply to children from our own setting; however, the policy will extend to visiting children from other establishments, teenage parents, students, and children on work experience placements.

Parent: refers to birth parents and other adults who are in a parenting role e.g., carers, stepparents, foster parents, grandparents, and adoptive parents.

5.0 Prevention:
Children's understanding of how to keep themselves safe is promoted. Staff support children in an age-appropriate way to recognise and manage risks in different situations, including when using the internet and social media, being able to judge what kind of physical contact is acceptable and unacceptable, recognising when pressure from others, including people they know, threatens their personal safety and well-being and supporting them in developing effective ways of resisting pressure.

The setting has established an ethos where:

- Children feel secure in a safe environment in which they can learn and develop.
- Children are encouraged to talk and are actively listened to. Staff consult, listen, and respond appropriately to all children, through key working, parent partnership and getting to know each individual child.
- Clear risk assessments are in place and staff respond consistently to protect young babies and children whilst enabling them to take age-appropriate and reasonable risks as part of their growth and development.
- Children know that there are adults in the setting whom they can approach if worried or in difficulty.
- Consistent approaches are in place to promote positive behaviour that is appropriate for individual children's stages of development.
- All adults recognise that safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility and are aware of the signs that children may be at risk of harm either within the setting or in the family or wider community outside the setting.
- Parents are partners in the setting and are encouraged to have an understanding of their obligations regarding Child Protection by intervention as and when appropriate
- Adequate signposting to external sources of support and advice is in place for staff, parents, and children in the office and through our links with Portage and Cheshire East

- There is always a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL in the setting who has the seniority and skills, undertakes appropriate safeguarding training, and is given the time to carry out this important role.

- All adults feel comfortable and supported to draw safeguarding issues to the attention of the manager and/or the Designated Safeguarding Lead and are able to pose safeguarding questions with "respectful uncertainty" as part of their shared responsibility to safeguard children.

- Staff are aware of the DfE guidance contained in 'What to do if you are worried a child is being abused' – guidance for practitioners March 2015.

- We comply with 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' 2026 and support the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership (CESCP) Continuum of Need, this document supports professionals to access the right help and support for children and their families at the right time.

- We systematically monitor children's welfare, keeping accurate records, speaking to parents, and notifying appropriate agencies when necessary.

- All staff are aware of children with circumstances which mean that they are more vulnerable to abuse/less able to easily access services and are proactive in recognising and identifying their needs

- There is a commitment to the continuous development of staff with regard to safeguarding training.

- The setting has procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse against any member of staff or adult on site, including an allegation of abuse against the DSL/Manager

- The setting carries out an annual review of the Safeguarding policy and procedures.

- All staff are aware of setting guidance for their use of mobile phones, cameras and other electronic devices with imaging and sharing capabilities and have discussed safeguarding issues around the use of mobile technologies and their associated risks.

- We ensure that appropriate filters and appropriate monitoring systems are in place for devices with internet access.

- All staff are aware that children may not feel ready or know how to tell someone that they are being abused, exploited, or neglected, and/or they may not recognise their experiences as harmful. For example, children may feel embarrassed, humiliated, or being threatened; this could be due to their vulnerability, disability and/or sexual orientation or language barriers. This should not prevent staff from having a professional curiosity and speaking to the DSL if they have concerns about a child. Staff determine how best to build trusted relationships with children and young people which facilitate communication whilst ensuring safer working practices.

6.0 Early Help:

All staff understand the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership (CESCP) 'Continuum of Need Guidance' and Child Protection procedures for children and families in Cheshire East to ensure that the needs of our children are effectively assessed; decisions are based on a child's development needs, parenting capacity and family & environmental factors. We ensure that the most appropriate referrals are made. We actively support multi agency planning for these children and, in doing so, provide information from the child's point of view; bringing their lived experience to life as evidenced by observations or information provided. Staff know how to pass on any concerns no matter how trivial they seem.

Staff members always act in the interests of the child and are aware of their responsibility to take action as outlined in this policy. In our setting staff are aware that they must be prepared to identify those children who may benefit from early help. The staff are alert to the potential need for early help for a child who:

- Has a disability or certain health conditions and has specific additional needs
- has special educational needs (whether or not they have a statutory Education, Health and Care Plan)
- has a mental health need
- is a young carer
- is showing signs of being drawn into anti-social or criminal behaviour, including gang involvement and association with organised crime groups and county lines
- is frequently missing/goes missing from education, care or from home
- is at risk of modern slavery, trafficking sexual or criminal exploitation
- is at risk of being radicalised or exploited
- has a family member in custody, or is affected by parental offending
- is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as drug and alcohol misuse, adult mental health issues and domestic abuse
- is misusing drugs or alcohol themselves
- has returned home to their family from care
- is a 'privately fostered child'
- is at risk of 'honour'-based abuse such as Female Genital Mutilation or Forced Marriage
- is persistently absent from education, including persistent absences for part of the day
- is a refugee
- are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

If there are concerns about a child's welfare that do not meet the thresholds of child abuse the setting will consider whether the Early Help approach should be considered. Staff are aware that early identification of concerns and the use of Early Help to develop a multi-agency plan for the child can reduce the risk of subsequent abuse.

The multi-agency Continuum of Need guidance is a tool that all agencies, professionals and volunteers can use to consider how best to meet the needs of individual children and young people. This support can be provided on a single agency basis or a multi-agency basis. The continuum aims to reduce risk and vulnerability and meet needs at the appropriate level of support and/or intervention. Access to effective early intervention and prevention services is essential to achieving this.

Our setting is an Operation Encompass setting which means that we are able to give proactive support to those children and their families where domestic abuse is

identified. Support is bespoke to each case but our children and families know they will be listened to and directed to agencies in the local area and beyond, to help them. We make parents aware that we are an Operation Encompass setting and we provide support for children, if they wish, through their key person who can spend time with the child and listen to their concerns. The DSL and DDSL's also complete the Key Adult Training.

If a member of staff has concerns about a child, they will need to decide what action to take. Where possible, there should be a conversation with the Designated Safeguarding Lead to agree a course of action, although any staff member can make a referral to children's social care / consult with Cheshire East Together for Families Integrated Front Door / contact the police. Other options could include referral to specialist services or early help services and should be made in accordance with the referral the level of need set by the Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership (CESCP).

The Family Hub model in Cheshire East will strengthen existing partnerships in each locality making it easier for practitioners to get support for families. Family hubs support children and young people from 0-19 (or up to 25 for young people with special educational needs and disabilities).

In the first instance staff should discuss 'Early Help' requirements with the Designated Safeguarding Lead. If early help is appropriate the Designated Safeguarding Lead will support the staff member in liaising with other agencies and setting up an inter-agency assessment as appropriate.

As staff may be required to support other agencies and practitioners and parents/carers and children in an extra help plan; all staff are aware of the relevant assessments and appropriate support is given to them when they undertake an early help assessment. We have a suite of screening tools which may also help to identify the level of need, the best pathway of support, and the interventions you can be provided for children, young people and families.
Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership - Our Priorities

Concerns assessed as being at **Extra Help** level for early help concerns will be delivered by partners supported by Partnership Family Help Officers. Our **Family Help** offer is centred around the presenting needs of the child and family. Following a referral to the Integrated Front Door we will assess the presenting needs and decide what services and help best meet the needs of the child and family. All families that present with multiple or complex needs will be eligible for our Family Help Offer.

Where early help and or other support is appropriate, we ensure that the situation for the child is kept under constant review. If the child's situation doesn't appear to be improving, we take appropriate action.

The children in our setting know that there are adults whom they can approach if worried or in difficulty.

There is adequate signposting to external sources of support and advice for staff, parents, and children, in rooms, staffroom and office and upon request.

7.0 Early Help, Child in Need and Child Protection

In our setting we ensure that we follow Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership - Policies & Guidance to ensure that our work, on behalf of our children, is of a consistently good standard. We use these standards to challenge other workers on behalf of children where the standards are

not being met. The DSL is aware of the Cheshire East Escalation Procedure Cheshire East Safeguarding Children's Partnership - New Escalation Learning Summary

8.0 Concerns about a child- recording and reporting:
Our recording procedures are in line with those outlined in Cheshire East's "Recording and Reporting Guidance."; the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the Deputy Lead are aware of this document.

We adhere to the Information sharing duty statutory guidance when making decisions about whether to share information.

Where a member of staff is concerned that a child is in immediate danger or is at risk of harm, they should report this to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, or their Deputy, without delay. A written record should be made of these concerns as soon as possible following the disclosure/concern being raised; this must be on the same working day.

Where staff have conversations with a child who discloses abuse, they follow the basic principles:

- listen rather than directly question, remain calm
- never stop a child who is recalling significant events
- never ask a child if they are being abused
- make a record of discussion to include time, place, persons present and what was said (child language – do not substitute words)
- advise you will have to pass the information on
- avoid coaching/prompting
- never take photographs of any injury
- never undress a child to physically examine them
- allow time and provide a safe haven / quiet area for future support
- At no time promise confidentiality to a child or adult
- All victims are reassured that they are being taken seriously, regardless of how long it has taken them to come forward and that they will be supported and kept safe
- Nor should a victim ever to be made to feel they are a problem or ashamed for making a report
- Where abuse has occurred online or outside of the setting it will not be downplayed and will be treated equally seriously

Staff are aware that they can use TED - **T**ell me what you mean by that, **E**xplain what you mean by that, **D**escribe that. Staff can also ask what, where, who, when, how questions but should not ask probing or leading questions.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will obtain key information and agree relevant actions after making a timely assessment of the information.

We recognise that parents may hold key information about incidents/allegations therefore, **in the majority of situations; the Designated Safeguarding Lead will speak to the parents and gain their consent** to discussing the situation with others. Staff are aware that there will be very few instances where, to speak to the parents, could further endanger the child. In those situations, they would still consult/refer but would have clearly recorded reasons as to why they had not gained parental consent.

The following situations are the instances in which parental consent would not be gained prior to a referral (this is not a definitive list):

- Discussion would impede a police investigation or social work enquiry
- Sexual abuse is suspected
- Organised or multiple abuse is suspected
- Fabrication or induced illness or perplexing presentations is suspected
- Honour Based Abuse e.g. forced marriage, FGM etc is a possibility/is suspected

Additional consideration re parental consent would be needed in the following circumstances, particularly if there are concerns around parental involvement or influence:

- Extremism or radicalisation is suspected
- County Lines activities are suspected

Staff are also aware that, even in situations where the parent does not give consent, the best interests of the child are paramount and therefore, they would share their concerns. In addition, the referral will not be delayed if it has not been possible to contact the parents/carers.

If you need to discuss a referral or report a concern about a child urgently, you can contact

Cheshire East Together for Families Integrated Front Door on 0300 123 5012 option 3 during office hours - Monday – Thursday, 8.30am 5.00pm Friday, 8.30am – 4.00 pm.

Outside of these hours, you can contact the **Cheshire East Emergency Out of Hours Duty Team (EDT) on** 0300 123 5022.

Anything you submit to the Integrated Front Door that is deemed as meeting the level of need for social care will be processed within either 2 hours or 24 hours as per statutory guidelines dependant on risk.

A consultation will take place with Cheshire East Together for Families Integrated Front Door and/or the police immediately. Where a child lives in a different authority the Designated Safeguarding Lead follows the procedures for that authority.

Where possible we ensure that contacts with outside agencies are through the Designated Safeguarding Lead or their Deputy; however, staff are aware that anyone can make this contact. Where a member of staff makes contact, they ensure that they make the Designated Safeguarding Lead aware as soon as possible.

Safeguarding Records are held electronically / as hard copies within a locked cupboard within the office or upon settings computer all secured and passworded. Reports relating to Safeguarding and Child Protection concerns are kept in a separate, confidential file, securely stored away from the child's main file. Authorisation to access these records is controlled by the Manager and Designated Safeguarding Lead, information should be kept confidential.

All records should be dated and signed, with the name of the signatory clearly printed, and filed in chronological order. For electronic record keeping systems a separate signature is not necessary if individuals have their own log in and any changes to a record are automatically logged.

The setting ensures that safeguarding information, including Child Protection information, is stored, and handled in line with the principles of the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) ensuring that information is:

- used fairly and lawfully

- for limited, specifically stated purposes
- used in a way that is adequate, relevant, and not excessive
- accurate
- kept for no longer than necessary
- handled according to people's data protection rights
- kept safe and secure.

The Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR do not prevent the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe. Fears about sharing information must not be allowed to stand in the way of the need to safeguard and promote the welfare and protect the safety of children.

We ensure that information is transferred safely and securely when a child with a Safeguarding Record transfers to another setting. We also ensure that Key workers or social workers are notified where a child leaves the setting (as appropriate). Where children leave the setting, the Designated Safeguarding Lead should ensure their safeguarding file is transferred to the new setting as soon as possible. Within 5 days for an in-year transfer or within the first 5 days of the start of a new term. This allows the new setting to have support in place for when the child arrives. See the Cheshire East Record Keeping Guidance.

9.0 Safe Working Practices
Use of mobile phones, cameras, and internet:
The setting and staff take safeguarding seriously and understand this policy is over-arching. We refer staff to the 'Staff use of mobile phones and Social Media Policy', 'Code of conduct' and Professional and Personnel Relationships (saferrecruitmentconsortium.org).

Personal mobiles and electronic devices:
Personal mobile phones, cameras and other electronic devices with imaging and sharing capabilities (tablets, cameras, laptops, smart watches etc) are never used by staff at the setting.

If staff have personal phones or devices, these are stored securely in the staff room, and will be switched off or on silent whilst during the day.

Electronic devices should be password protected so that content cannot be accessed by unauthorised users.

It is the responsibility of the staff member to ensure that there is no illegal or inappropriate content stored or used on their device when brought on to setting premises.

Mobiles belonging to visitors:
We request that mobiles belonging to visitors are either switched off and/or stored securely within the office on entering the setting.

Mobiles belonging to older children:
Have signed consent from their parents' giving permission for the child to have a mobile and agreeing that they will be stored securely and be switched off or on silent whilst in the setting.

(Please insert setting's procedure for all mobile phones)
Dedicated setting devices:
To protect children, we will ensure that the dedicated setting mobile phone and/or tablet:

- remains the property of First Steps Kindergarten and in using them staff will follow the Policy on setting devices and mobile phones
- is stored securely when not in use.
- has appropriate filters and appropriate monitoring systems are in place.
- is protected with a password, is clearly labelled and its use is open to scrutiny. All staff are vigilant and alert to any potential misuse.
- is only used by allocated people who have a clear understanding of what constitutes misuse and know how to minimise the risk. These staff are responsible for their own behaviour regarding the use of the phone and avoid putting themselves into compromising situations which could be misinterpreted and lead to potential allegations.
- is not used in areas such as toilets, changing rooms, nappy changing areas, and sleep areas.
- does not detract from the quality of supervision and care of children.

Cameras, photography, and images:
First Steps Kindergarten will obtain parents' and carers' written consent for photographs to be taken or published (for example, on our website or in newspapers or publications).

Staff will ensure the setting's designated camera or recording devices (tablets, cameras, laptops etc) is only used in the setting and any images taken will not be emailed as it may not be secure. (In some instances, it may be required to seek parental permission to email images, but the potential risks must be made clear to parents).

Staff will ensure that children are appropriately dressed, and that they do not use the child's name with an image on a photograph.

Staff will ensure that parents personal cameras are not used to take photographs, video, or audio recordings in our setting without prior explicit written consent from the setting, for example, for a special event, such as Christmas plays.

Staff will ensure that all images are stored securely, and password protected. Where images are stored, the setting will register with the Information Commissioners Office (ICO), in accordance with data protection laws.

Where professional photographers are used DBS, references and parental consent will be obtained prior to photographs being taken.

Ensure 'acceptable use' rules regarding the use of cameras by children are embedded in practice.

Staff will ensure that the use of cameras, webcams and CCTV is closely monitored and open to scrutiny. (Information on the use of CCTV can be found on the ICO website)
All settings tablets must not leave the setting and must remain in each room all images can only be uploaded to Tapestry.
Online safety:

On setting equipment, we ensure that appropriate filters and appropriate monitoring systems are in place.

Working off setting premises:
Where staff take setting computer/digital equipment / or records in paper form, off the setting site, they do so with the view that they abide by the staff First Steps kindergarten policy on Confidentially must seek permission before proceeding to do so.

Staff are reminded that information, both in paper or electric form, is sensitive and protected under data protection and GDPR and should be safe and securely stored off the premises and during transport.

10.0 Allegations against staff
"Registered providers must inform Ofsted, or the CMA with which a provider of CoDP is registered, of any allegations of harm or abuse by anyone living, working, or looking after children at the premises. This must happen whether the allegations of harm or abuse are alleged to have been committed on the premises or elsewhere, for example, on a visit. Registered providers must also notify Ofsted/ their CMA of the action they have taken in response to the allegations. Ofsted/the CMA must be notified as soon as is reasonably practicable, but in any event within 14 days of the allegations being made. A registered provider who, without a reasonable excuse, fails to do this, commits an offence."

Para.3.10. Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage 2026

Support and advice are sought from Children's Services or the Local Area Designated Officer (LADO), and our Personnel/Human Resources advisor whenever necessary.

At First Steps Kindergarten we recognise the possibility that adults working in the setting including; directly employed staff, volunteers and supply staff may harm children; that they may have:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children
- behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children

The last bullet point above includes behaviour that may have happened outside of school or college, that might make an individual unsuitable to work with children, this is known as transferable risk.

Any concerns of this nature, about the conduct of other adults, should be taken to the Manager without delay or, where that is a concern about the Manager, to the Chair of Committee/Owner and the LADO.

Staff are aware that this must be done on the same working day.

The setting will not internally investigate until instructed by the LADO.

We make all staff aware of their duty to raise concerns. Where a staff member feels unable to raise an issue or feels that their genuine concerns are not being addressed, other whistleblowing channels may be open to them:

- NSPCC whistleblowing advice line is available. Staff can call 0800 0280285 – 08:00 to 20:00, Monday to Friday and 09:00 to 18:00 at weekends. The email address is: help@nspcc.org.uk. Alternatively, staff can write to: National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), Weston House, 42 Curtain Road, London EC2A 3NH.
- Ofsted provides guidance on how to make complaints about a provider: Complaints procedure - Ofsted - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).
- General guidance on whistleblowing can be found via: Whistleblowing for employees.

As part of our whole setting approach to safeguarding we promote an open and transparent culture in which all concerns about adults working in or on behalf of the setting (including supply staff, volunteers, and contractors) are dealt with promptly and appropriately. This includes allegations which do not meet the harm threshold, also known as low level concerns.

Low level concerns

We understand that the term 'low-level' concern does not mean that it is insignificant. A low-level concern is any concern – no matter how small, and even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt' – that an adult working in or on behalf of the setting may have acted in a way that:

- is inconsistent with the staff code of conduct, including inappropriate conduct outside of work, and;
- does not meet the harm threshold or is otherwise not serious enough to consider a referral to the LADO.

Examples of such behaviour could include, but are not limited to:

- being overfriendly with children
- having favourites
- taking photographs of children on their mobile phone, contrary to setting policy
- engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door, or
- humiliating children

Such behaviour can exist on a wide spectrum, from the inadvertent or thoughtless, or behaviour that may look to be inappropriate, but might not be in specific circumstances, through to that which is ultimately intended to enable abuse.

Low-level concerns will be reported in the same way as a concern in relation to allegations and concerns that meet the harms test i.e. to the Manager or to the Chair of Committee/Owner if the concern is about the Manager.

Records of low-level concerns will be reviewed so that potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour can be identified and responded to.

Where a pattern of behaviour is identified, the Manager will decide on a course of action. This might be internal disciplinary procedures, or referral to the LADO if the harms threshold is met.

The Manager will consider if there are any wider cultural issues in setting that enabled the behaviour to occur and if appropriate policies could be revised or extra training delivered to minimise the risk of recurrence.

11.0 Safer Recruitment

The setting pays full regard to DfE guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' 2026 and with reference to the 'Position of Trust' offence (Sexual Offences Act 2003). We ensure that all appropriate measures are applied in relation to everyone who works in the setting who is likely to be perceived by the children as a safe and trustworthy adult. We do this by:

- Operating safe recruitment practices as outlined in the EYFS (2026); including highlighting the importance we place on safeguarding children in our recruitment adverts and interview questions, appropriate Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and reference checks, verifying identity, academic and vocational qualifications, obtaining practitioner references, checking previous employment history, and ensuring that a candidate has the health and physical capacity for the job. It also includes undertaking interviews and checking the Children's List and right to work in England checks in accordance with DBS and Department for Education procedures
- Providers should ensure that those involved with the recruitment and employment of staff to work with children have received appropriate safer recruitment training
- The early years employment reference template supports providers to give references for current or former staff.
- Ensuring that staff and volunteers adhere to a published code of conduct and other professional standards at all times, including after setting activities. Staff are aware of social media/ on-line conduct policies
- Ensuring that all staff and other adults on site are aware of the need for maintaining appropriate and professional boundaries in their relationship with children and parents, following our code of conduct
- Requiring all staff to disclose any arrests, charges, convictions, cautions, court orders, reprimands and warnings that may affect their suitability to work with children (whether received before or during their employment at the setting). Disqualification under the Child Care Act 2006 (amended following the 2018 Regulations)
- Providers must not allow individuals to begin working or volunteering at the setting until they have received the applicant's enhanced criminal records and barred list check.
- Maintaining an accurate, complete, up to date Single Central Record

12.0 Staff training and updates:

In our setting there is a commitment to the continuous development of all staff, regardless of role with regard to safeguarding training:

Providers must ensure that all practitioners are trained in line with the criteria set out in Annex C (EYFS 2026). Providers must ensure that practitioners are supported and confident to implement the setting's safeguarding policy and procedures on an ongoing basis. Providers should read 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused: Advice for practitioners'.

Basic Safeguarding Awareness training must be renewed every two years. Providers may consider whether any staff need to undertake annual refresher training during any two-year period to help maintain basic skills and keep up to date with any changes to safeguarding procedures or as a result of any safeguarding concerns that occur in the setting, (for example, via email, e-bulletins, and staff meetings).

DfE has developed online safeguarding training in collaboration with the NSPCC. The training is free for all early years educators. Log in to the early years safeguarding training.

All staff are required to complete Basic Safeguarding training before starting within the nursery and has to redo every 2 years, all staff must come to the annual safeguarding meeting and complete other relevant safeguarding courses in addition to this, for example safe sleep, Prevent etc.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and any Deputy must provide support, advice and guidance to all practitioners on an ongoing basis, and on any specific safeguarding issue as required. The DSL must attend a training course consistent with the criteria set out in Annex C (EYFS 2026).

The Designated Safeguarding Lead, and/or Deputy attend the Designated Safeguarding Leads Clusters held each term coordinated by the Early Years Team, therefore enabling them to remain up to date with Safeguarding practices and be aware of any emerging concerns/themes within Cheshire East.

The setting acknowledges findings from local and national practice learning reviews and shares lessons learned with all staff.

13.0 Cared for children (Looked after children) and previously cared for children
In First Steps Kindergarten we ensure that staff have the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to keep Cared for Children safe as we are aware that children often become cared for as a result of abuse and/or neglect. We have identified a designated lead for our Cared for Children; this person works closely with the Virtual school.

14.0 Children with special needs and disabilities
We ensure that staff are aware that children with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) or certain medical or physical health conditions can face additional safeguarding challenges both online and offline. We ensure that staff have knowledge and understanding of the additional barriers which can exist when recognising abuse and neglect in children with special needs/disabilities.
These barriers can include:

- assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's disability without further exploration
- these children being more prone to peer group isolation or bullying (including prejudice-based bullying) than other children
- children with SEN and disabilities being disproportionally impacted by things like bullying – without outwardly showing any signs; and
- communication barriers and difficulties in overcoming these barriers
- cognitive understanding – being unable to understand the difference between fact and fiction in online content and then repeating the content/behaviours in setting or the consequences of doing so.

We aim to build the necessary skills in staff so that they can safeguard and respond to the specific needs of this group of children.

15.0 The use of physical intervention
There are circumstances when it is appropriate for staff in settings to use physical intervention to safeguard children. Physical intervention is where practitioners use reasonable force to prevent children from injuring themselves or others or damaging property. The term 'reasonable force' covers the broad range of actions used by staff that involve a degree of physical contact to control or restrain children. This can range from guiding a child to safety by the arm, to more extreme circumstances such as breaking up a fight or where a child needs to be restrained to prevent violence or injury. 'Reasonable' in these circumstances means 'using no more force than is needed'.

We have a key emphasis on de-escalation and only use physical touch to prevent a child or others being harmed. If we do this, we ensure that it is for the shortest time necessary.

Settings will need to ensure staff are appropriately trained, that all incidents must be reported and fully recorded in a different way to the way in which safeguarding incidents are reported and recorded. Parents and/or carers must be informed on the same day, or as soon as reasonably practicable. This should be detailed in the settings Behaviour policy and/or Physical Intervention policy. All staff must read policy on reasonable force and have a good understanding what this means and how to keep children safe, extra training will be provided if needed for a particular child's needs.

16.0 Private Fostering

Private Fostering is a type of 'Kinship Care'. Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 provides further examples of this type of care and information and guidance around supporting children living in these arrangements. To support kinship carers, the role of virtual heads has been extended to supporting every child in the care of friends or family.

We recognise that our setting has a mandatory duty to report to the local authority when we become aware of, or suspect that, a child is subject to a private fostering arrangement. To aide our awareness we ensure that we establish parental responsibility for every child; we take steps to verify the relationship of the adults to the child when we register them.

A private fostering arrangement is one that is made privately (without the involvement of a local authority) for the care of a child under the age of 16 years (under 18, if disabled) by someone other than a parent or close relative, in their own home, with the intention that it should last for 28 days or more.

A close family relative is defined as a 'grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt' and includes half-siblings and stepparents (by marriage or where a legal order has been made, such as a Child Arrangement Order); it does not include great-aunts or uncles, great grandparents, or cousins.

Parents and private foster carers both have a legal duty to inform the relevant local authority at least six weeks before the arrangement is due to start; not to do so is a criminal offence.

Whilst most privately fostered children are appropriately supported and looked after, we recognise that they are a potentially vulnerable group who should be monitored by the local authority, particularly when the child has come from another country. In some cases, privately fostered children are affected by abuse and neglect, or are involved in trafficking, child sexual exploitation or modern-day slavery.

Where a member of staff becomes aware of private fostering arrangements, they are aware that they need to notify the Designated Safeguarding Lead. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will then speak to the family of the child involved to check that they are aware of their duty to inform Cheshire East. The setting would also inform Cheshire East of the private fostering arrangements.

17.0 Children who are absent from education

At First Steps Kindergarten we have a duty to follow up on absences in a timely manner especially as a child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect.

Even though it is not compulsory for a child to attend an early years setting, at the very least, good attendance practice promotes good outcomes for children and can lead to the early identification of more serious concerns for a child.

Our setting has an attendance policy that we share with parents and/or carers. This can be found on the setting website and is updated annually. Within that policy we ask for parents to let us know about a child's absence, if a child does not arrive by 11am on a day we will be calling/ Emailing to find out about the absence.

We ensure that we are rigorous in our attendance procedures which are in line with the EYFS (2026) All staff are aware that children going missing, particularly repeatedly, can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding possibilities. This may include abuse and neglect, which may include sexual abuse or exploitation and child criminal exploitation. It may indicate mental health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation, so called 'honour'-based abuse or risk of forced marriage. Early intervention is essential to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of a child going missing in future.

If children do not attend our setting, we have a duty of care to ensure they are safe. This may involve visiting the child's home to ensure their welfare and safety and will always be done in the best interests of the child. The setting will always endeavour that parents / carers and the child/ren themselves are involved in this process. If we are unable to be assured of the child's safety, we will, through our Designated Safeguarding Lead, seek advice from other agencies such as Cheshire East Together for Families Integrated Front Door or the Police, if deemed necessary.

We consider patterns and trends in a child's absences and their personal circumstances and use our professional judgement when deciding if the child's absence should be considered as prolonged. Consideration will be given to the child's vulnerability, parent's and/or carer's vulnerability and their home life.

Where a child's destination is unknown when they have left our setting, we ensure we carry out all necessary checks. Staff are aware of the trafficking of children and the importance of rigour around our attendance procedures to reduce this as a threat to our children's safety.

18.0 Children who need a social worker (Child in Need and Child Protection Plans)
Children may need a social worker due to safeguarding or welfare needs. Children may need this help due to abuse, neglect and complex family circumstances. A child's experiences of adversity and trauma can leave them vulnerable to further harm, as well as educationally disadvantaged in facing barriers to attendance, learning, behaviour, and mental health.

Our Designated Safeguarding Leads will be aware of the fact a child has a social worker and will use this information so that decisions can be made in the best interests of the child's safety, welfare, and educational outcomes.

Where children need a social worker, this will inform decisions about safeguarding (for example, responding to unauthorised absence or missing education where there are known safeguarding risks) and about promoting welfare.

19.0 Children requiring mental health support
We recognise that settings have an important role to play in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of their children.

Staff are aware of how experiences of children can affect emotional wellbeing, mental health and attendance. We acknowledge that mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation.

We ensure we have specific training and clear systems and processes in place for identifying possible mental health problems, including routes to escalate and clear referral and accountability systems, as outlined in our Mental Health and Well-being Policy. Regular supervision sessions are available to all staff as a confidential way to raise any concerns.

20.0 Educational Outcomes

Our Designated Safeguarding Lead ensures that staff know the children who have experienced or are experiencing welfare, safeguarding and child protection issues so that, as relevant, we know who these children are and understand their developmental progress; this means that we are able to make necessary adjustments to help these children to achieve. In this way we maintain a culture of high aspirations for this cohort. This includes children with a social worker and those previously known to social care; we ensure that staff are made aware of those children in this category.

21.0 Specific safeguarding issues

All staff have an awareness of safeguarding issues. They are aware that these safeguarding issues may not directly involve the child in our setting but could be happening to their siblings or parents. This includes the importance of understanding intra-familial harms and support for siblings where there is intra-familial harm.

They are also aware that some issues could be happening in the lives of staff members.

Staff are supported in accessing and completing the relevant screening tools CE SCP Multi-Agency Toolkit.

As a setting that promotes a strong culture of safeguarding and being alert to the signs and indicators of abuse and harm in children, staff would be aware of the following issues identified in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (Part One) and would know how to identify and respond to them:

- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse including sexual violence and sexual harassment
- Emotional Abuse
- Neglect
- Child abduction/community safety incidents
- Children and the Court System
- Children with family member in prison/custody
- Drug/substance/alcohol misuse (both child and parents)
- Child sexual exploitation / trafficked children
- Criminal Exploitation including county lines and serious violence
- Extremism and Radicalisation, including Prevent and Channel
- Children missing from education
- Domestic abuse
- Child-on-child relationship abuse/Teenage Relationship Abuse
- Child-on-child abuse (including harassment and violence)

- Risky behaviours
- Problematic and Harmful Sexual Behaviour
- Sexual health needs
- Obesity/malnutrition
- Online grooming
- Inappropriate behaviour of staff towards children
- Bullying, including homophobic, racist, gender and disability. Breaches of the Equality Act 2010
- Mental health issues including self-harm
- Honour based abuse including - Female Genital Mutilation, Breast Ironing, Forced Marriage
- Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children
- Modern Day Slavery
- Child Trafficking
- Homelessness
- Serious violence

Staff are aware that behaviours linked to issues such as drug taking, alcohol abuse, domestic abuse, deliberately missing education and sharing nudes or semi-nudes put children in danger.

22.0 Owner/Committee Responsibilities

Providers should ensure they facilitate a whole setting approach to safeguarding. This means involving everyone in the setting and ensuring that safeguarding and child protection are at the forefront and underpin all relevant aspects of process and policy development. Ultimately, all systems, processes and policies should operate with the best interests of the child at their heart. (KCSiE 2026)

As a setting we ensure that the Owners, Trustees or Committees ensure that all Trustees and Committee members receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection training at induction.

The Owner/Committee fully recognises its responsibilities with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in accordance with Government guidance.

The Owner/Committee have agreed processes which allow them to monitor and ensure that the setting:

- has robust safeguarding procedures in place
- operates safer recruitment procedures and appropriate checks are carried out on new staff and adults working on the setting site
- has procedures for dealing with allegations of abuse against any member of staff or adult on site
- has a member of the leadership team who is designated to take lead responsibility for dealing with Safeguarding and Child Protection issues
- takes steps to remedy any deficiencies or weaknesses regarding safeguarding arrangements
- is supported by the Owner/Committee nominating a member responsible for liaising with the LA and/or partner agencies in the event of allegations of abuse against the Manager; this is the Chair or Owner.
- carries out an annual review of the Safeguarding policy and procedures
- carries out an annual Safeguarding Audit (section 11) in consultation with the Owner/Committee and shared with the Early Years team.

Finally:

Staff in First Steps Kindergarten take the safeguarding of every child very seriously. This means that, should they have any concerns of a safeguarding nature about a child or adult, they are expected to report, record, and take the necessary steps to ensure that the child is safe and protected. This is never an easy action, nor one taken lightly. They are aware that it can lead to challenge from parents/carers, but at all times staff have the child at the heart of all their decisions and act in their best interests.

Further information on our safeguarding and related policy documents and procedures is available on request from the Manager or Designated Safeguarding Lead.

TOGETHER for Children and Young People
Together we will make Cheshire East a great place to be young

Cheshire East Council

Staying Safe

Designated Safeguarding Lead	**Tina Woodward**
Deputy Safeguarding Lead	**Julie Hassell, Jemma O'Hare, Tracey Dunley**
Senior person within organisation (e.g. Owner/Chair of Governors/ Director/Trustee/Committee Chair)	**Ian Jones**
Operation Encompass Key Adult	**Tina Woodward**

Our local contact numbers are:

Safeguarding of children concerns *(Children living in Cheshire East)*	**0300 123 5012 (option 3)** ***Cheshire East Together for Families Integrated Front Door*** **0300 123 5022** ***Emergency Duty Team***
Safeguarding of children concerns *(Children living in other Authorities)* *Please add in relevant authority contact numbers*	**Stockport: 0161 217 6028 out of hours: 0161 718 2118** **Manchester: 0161 234 5001**
Allegations against an adult working with children	LADO@cheshireeast.gov.uk *Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)*
Prevent referrals	http://www.stopadultabuse.org.uk/professionals/preventchannel-referral-process.aspx
Police *(Emergency)* **Police** *(Non Emergency)*	**999** **101**
Adult safeguarding	**0300 123 5010**
Ofsted	**0300 123 4666**

Managing Safeguarding Concerns and Allegations About Adults Working with Children

The setting has clear processes and procedures in place to manage any safeguarding concern or allegation about an adult working with children, including low-level concerns. This applies to all staff, including supply staff, volunteers, contractors, and anyone working on behalf of the setting.

If a member of staff has a concern or allegation about another adult working with children that they may have harmed a child, could harm a child, may pose a risk to a child, or has behaved in a way that is not in line with the staff code of conduct, they must report it immediately to the Manager.

If the concern or allegation is about the Manager, it must be reported to Owner / Chair.

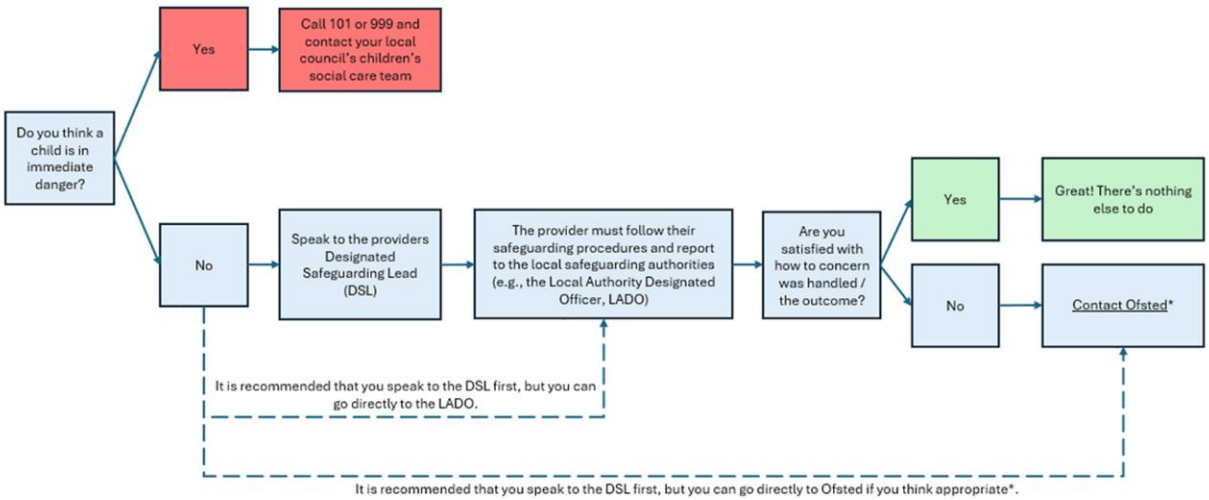
If the concern is about the Manager and they are also the sole proprietor of the setting, or if there is a conflict of interest, the concern should be reported directly to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

Where a staff member feels unable to raise an issue with their employer, or feels that their genuine concerns are not being addressed, they should use the other channels open to them: • NSPCC whistleblowing advice line is available. Staff can call 0800 0280285 – 08:00 to 20:00,Monday to Friday and 09:00 to 18:00 at weekends. The email address is help@nspcc.org.uk

Department for Education

How parents and carers can raise a safeguarding concern

If something doesn't feel right, it's important you know who to speak to and what to expect. Your provider should share their process with you but below summarises the steps to take.



Ofsted cannot resolve disputes between you and the provider; their roles is to make sure the provider is following all the registration requirements in order to meet the statutory requirements of the early years foundation stage (EYFS) framework.

Definitions of Abuse from Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026)

Emotional Abuse

The persistent emotional or psychological maltreatment of a child so as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them, or making fun of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber 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.

Neglect

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

- provide adequate food, clothing, and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers)
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment
- provide suitable education.

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

Physical Abuse

A form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child

Sexual Abuse

Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts, such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place in family settings, in institutional settings, online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Child sexual abuse material available online may have been generated in a family environment. Online abuse can also take the form of cyber grooming or self-generated sexual content under coercion. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children. A child of any age or gender can be a victim of sexual abuse.

Symptoms of Abuse

Physical

Bruises, black eye and broken bones
Unexplained or untreated injuries
Injuries to unusual body parts e.g. thighs, back, abdomen
Bruising that resembles hand/finger marks
Burns/scalds
Human bites/cigarette burns
Injuries that the child cannot explain or explains unconvincingly

Injuries in babies and non-mobile children

Neglect

Excessive hunger
Inadequate or insufficient clothing
Poor personal or dental hygiene
Untreated medical issues
Changes in weight or being excessively over or under weight
Low self-esteem, attachment issues, depression or self-harm
Poor relationships with peers

Self-soothing behaviours that may not be age appropriate (e.g. rocking, hair-twisting, thumb-sucking)

Changes to attendance

Behaviours

Marked change in general behaviour
Extremely passive/aggressive
Sleeping difficulties
Lethargy/tiredness
Poor social relationships
Disclosure
Withdrawn
Lack of self-confidence or self-esteem
Self-harm
Eating disorders
Fear of certain adults
Attendance difficulties

Sexual Abuse

Bruising, particularly to the thighs, buttocks and upper arms, and marks on the neck
Bleeding, pain or itching in the genital area
Difficulty in walking or sitting
Sudden change in behaviour
Displays of affection that are sexual or not age-appropriate
Use of sexually explicit language that is not age-appropriate
Alluding to having a secret that cannot be revealed
Bedwetting or incontinence
Infections, unexplained genital discharge or sexually transmitted diseases
Poor concentration, withdrawal, sleep disturbances

Emotional Abuse

Concerning interactions between parents or carers and the child (e.g. overly critical or lack of affection)
Lack of self-confidence or self-esteem
Sudden speech disorders
Self-harm or eating disorders
Lack of empathy shown to others (including cruelty to animals)

Drug, alcohol or other substance misuse

Change of appetite, weight loss/gain

Signs of distress: tearfulness, anger

TOGETHER for Children and Young People
Together we will make Cheshire East a great place to be young
Cheshire East Council

Receiving Disclosures

Receive

- Listen, be non-judgmental, try not to look shocked
- Reflect back what was said, using the child's language
- Believe what they say, accept what they say and take it seriously
- Don't make them feel bad by saying "you should have told me earlier"
- Don't 'interrogate' them – let them tell you, try not to interrupt
- Don't criticise the perpetrator
- Don't ask leading questions – use 'open' questions to clarify only- where, when, what etc
- T.E.D - Tell me what you mean, Explain that to me, Describe that...

Reassure

- Stay calm, tell the child they've done the right thing in telling you
- Reassure them they are not to blame
- Empathise – don't tell them how they should be feeling
- Don't promise confidentiality, explain who needs to know
- Explain what you'll do next
- Be honest about what you can do

Report and Record

- Make a brief, accurate, timely and factual record
- Discuss with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or their Deputy, without delay
- The DSL will assess the situation and decide on the next steps
  - Things to include:
- Time and full date of disclosure/incident and the time and full date the record was made
- An accurate record of what was said or seen, using the child's words as appropriate
- Whether it is 1st or 2nd hand information
- Whether the child was seen/spoken to
- Whether information is fact/ professional judgement
- Full names and roles/status of anyone identified in the report
- Sign the record with a legible signature.
- Record actions agreed with/by the Designated Lead (SMART)
- Avoid acronyms/jargon/abbreviations.
- Action for DSL: Review records regularly; add any new concerns, respond to these immediately and record evidence of actions taken and outcomes.
  DO NOT PHOTOGRAPH INJURIES OR MARKS EVEN IF REQUESTED TO DO SO

Further forms of Abuse

Contextual Safeguarding

Including Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) and County Lines

Both CSE and CCE are forms of abuse that occur where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance in power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into taking part in sexual or criminal activity, in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or through violence or the threat of violence. This can be committed or facilitated by an organised network or gang, and the victim may identify as being part of this group.

CSE and CCE can affect children, both male and female and can include children who have been moved (commonly referred to as trafficking) for the purpose of exploitation.

We know that different forms of harm often overlap, and that perpetrators may subject children and young people to multiple forms of abuse, such as criminal exploitation (including county lines) and sexual exploitation. In some cases, the exploitation or abuse will be in exchange for something the victim needs or wants (for example, money, gifts, or affection), and/or will be to the financial benefit or other advantage, such as increased status, of the perpetrator or facilitator.

Children can be exploited by adult males or females, as individuals or in groups. They may also be exploited by other children, who themselves may be experiencing exploitation – where this is the case, it is important that the child causing harm is also recognised as a victim.

Whilst the age of the child may be a contributing factor for an imbalance of power, there are a range of other factors that could make a child more vulnerable to exploitation, including,

- sexual identity
- cognitive ability
- learning difficulties
- communication ability
- physical strength
- status
- access to economic or other resources

Some of the following can be indicators of both child criminal and sexual exploitation where children:

- appear with unexplained gifts, money, or new possessions
- associate with other children involved in exploitation
- suffer from changes in emotional well-being
- misuse drugs and alcohol
- go missing for periods of time or regularly come home late
- regularly miss school or education or do not take part in education

Children who have been exploited will need additional support to help maintain them in education.

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

Some specific forms of CCE can include children

- being forced or manipulated into transporting drugs or money through county lines,
- working in cannabis factories,
- shoplifting or pickpocketing.
- They can also be forced or manipulated into committing vehicle crime
- or threatening/committing serious violence to others.

Children can become trapped by this type of exploitation as perpetrators can threaten victims (and their families) with violence or entrap and coerce them into debt. They may be coerced into carrying weapons such as knives or begin to carry a knife for a sense of protection from harm from others. Children who are criminally exploited should have their vulnerabilities recognised by adults and professionals (particularly older children) and should be treated as victims. It is not possible for a child to consent to be exploited, abused or trafficked, and they may not recognise that it is happening to them.

It is important to note that the experience of girls who are criminally exploited can be very different to that of boys. The indicators may not be the same, however professionals should be aware that girls are at risk of criminal exploitation too. It is also important to note that both boys and girls being criminally exploited may be at higher risk of sexual exploitation.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).

CSE is a form of child sexual abuse. Sexual abuse 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 clothing. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse including via the internet.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) can be a one-off occurrence or a series of incidents over time and range from opportunistic to complex organised abuse. It can involve force and/or enticement-based methods of compliance and may, or may not, be accompanied by violence or threats of violence. It may happen without the child's immediate knowledge, for example through others sharing videos or images of them on social media.

Some additional specific indicators that may be present in CSE are children who:

- have older boyfriends or girlfriends
- suffer from sexually transmitted infections
- display sexual behaviours beyond expected sexual development
- become pregnant

County lines

County lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of "deal line". This activity can happen locally as well as across the UK - no specified distance of travel is required. Children and vulnerable adults are exploited to move, store, and sell drugs and money. Offenders will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence)

OFFICIAL

and weapons to ensure compliance of victims. Children can be targeted and recruited into county lines in a number of locations including schools (mainstream and special), further and higher educational institutions, pupil referral units, children's homes, and care homes.

Children are also increasingly being targeted and recruited online using social media. Children can easily become trapped by this type of exploitation as county lines gangs can manufacture drug debts which need to be worked off or threaten serious violence and kidnap towards victims (and their families) if they attempt to leave the county lines network.

A number of the indicators for CSE and CCE as detailed above may be applicable to where children are involved in county lines. Some additional specific indicators that may be present where a child is criminally exploited through involvement in county lines are children who:

- go missing and are subsequently found in areas away from their home
- have been the victim, perpetrator or alleged perpetrator of serious violence (e.g., knife crime)
- are involved in receiving requests for drugs via a phone line, moving drugs, handing over and collecting money for drugs
- are exposed to techniques such as 'plugging', where drugs are concealed internally to avoid detection
- are found in accommodation that they have no connection with, often called a 'trap house or cuckooing' or hotel room where there is drug activity
- owe a 'debt bond' to their exploiters
- have their bank accounts used to facilitate drug dealing

Child abduction and community safety incidents

Child abduction is the unauthorised removal or retention of a minor from a parent or anyone with legal responsibility for the child. Child abduction can be committed by parents or other family members; by people known but not related to the victim (such as neighbours, friends and acquaintances); and by strangers.

Other community safety incidents in the vicinity of a setting can raise concerns amongst children and parents, for example, people loitering nearby or unknown adults engaging children in conversation.

It is important that lessons focus on building children's confidence and abilities rather than simply warning them about all strangers. Further information is available at: www.actionagainstabduction.org and www.clevernevergoes.org.

Child-on-child abuse

Children can abuse other children and this is often referred to as child-on-child abuse. This is most likely to include, but may not be limited to:

- bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying),
- abuse in intimate personal relationships between children (sometimes known as 'teenage relationship abuse'),

- physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse),
- sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence),
- sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be stand-alone or part of a broader pattern of abuse
- causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party
- consensual and non-consensual making or sharing of nudes and semi nudes
- upskirting which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress, or alarm, and
- initiation/hazing type violence and rituals (this could include activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element).

Staff are clear on our procedures with regards to child-on-child abuse and do not take it any less serious than adult to child abuse; they are aware that it should never be tolerated or passed off as "banter", "just having a laugh" or "part of growing up". We ensure that we apply the same thresholds.

Children Missing from Home or Care

Children who run away from home or from care can provide a clear behavioural indication that they are either unhappy or do not feel safe in the place that they are living. Research shows that children run away from conflict or problems at home or school, neglect, or abuse, or because they are being groomed by predatory individuals who seek to exploit them. Many run away on numerous occasions.

Our setting is aware of the Pan-Cheshire Joint Protocol on Children and Young People Who run Away or Go Missing from Home or Care 2023-2024.

The association of chief police officers has provided the following definition a missing person is: 'Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established will be considered as missing until located, and their well-being or otherwise confirmed'.

Within any case of children who are missing both push and pull factors need to be considered.

Push factors include:

- Conflict with parents/carers
- Feeling powerless
- Being bullied/abused
- Being unhappy/not being listened to
- is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as drug and alcohol misuse, adult mental health issues and domestic abuse

Pull factors include:

- Wanting to be with family/friends
- Drugs, money, and any exchangeable item
- Peer pressure
- For those who have been trafficked into the United Kingdom as unaccompanied asylum-seeking children there will be pressure to make contact with their trafficker

As a setting we will contact all parents of children who are absent (unless the parent has informed us).

If the parent is also unaware of the location of their child, and the definition of missing is met, we will either support the parent to contact the police to inform them, or we will take the relevant action.

Cyberbullying

Central to our Setting's anti-bullying policy is the principle that 'bullying is always unacceptable' and that 'all pupils have a right not to be bullied'.

The setting recognises that it must take note of bullying perpetrated outside of the setting which spills over into the setting and so we will respond to any bullying including cyber-bullying that we become aware of carried out by children when they are away from the site.

Cyber-bullying is defined as "an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual using electronic forms of contact repeatedly over time against a victim who cannot easily defend himself/herself."

By cyber-bullying, we mean bullying by electronic media:

- Bullying by texts or messages or calls on mobile phones
- The use of mobile phone cameras to cause distress, fear, or humiliation
- Posting threatening, abusive, defamatory, or humiliating material on websites, to include blogs, personal websites, social networking sites
- Using e-mail to message others
- Hijacking/cloning e-mail accounts
- Making threatening, abusive, defamatory, or humiliating remarks in on-line forums

Cyber-bullying may be at a level where it is criminal.

If we become aware of any incidents of cyberbullying, we will consider each case individually as to any criminal act that may have been committed. The setting will pass on information to the police if it feels that it is appropriate, or we are required to do so.

Domestic abuse/violence

First Steps Kindergarten believes that all our children have the right to be safe at our setting and also in their own homes. We are aware that all children can witness and be adversely affected by domestic abuse.

As an Operation Encompass setting, we are alert to the indicators of abuse, and we have a planned approach to supporting children in a proactive way. We do this by raising

awareness with parents, staff and children and intervention work to support children affected by domestic abuse. We seek to find the appropriate support for individual cases.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 introduced the statutory definition of domestic abuse (section 1 of the Act). The statutory definition is clear that domestic abuse may be a single incident or a course of conduct which can encompass a wide range of abusive behaviours, including a) physical or sexual abuse; b) violent or threatening behaviour; c) controlling or coercive behaviour; d) economic abuse; and e) psychological, emotional, or other abuse such as 'honour' abuse, faith- or belief-based abuse, forced marriage, female genital mutilation or reproductive coercion, harassment and stalking.

Types of domestic abuse include intimate partner violence, abuse by family members, teenage relationship abuse and child to parent abuse. Anyone can be a victim of domestic abuse, regardless of sexual identity, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexuality or background and domestic abuse can take place inside or outside of the home.

Domestic abuse can affect anybody; it occurs across all of society, regardless of age, gender, race, sexuality, wealth, or geography. Domestic abuse affects significant numbers of children and their families causing immediate harm as well as damaging future life chances. In some cases, a child may blame themselves for the abuse or may have had to leave the family home as a result. Young people can also experience domestic abuse within their own intimate relationships. This form of child-on-child abuse is sometimes referred to as 'teenage relationship abuse'.

Domestic abuse negatively affects children. We know that they are often more aware of what is happening than parents think. How they respond depends on their age, personality, and support network; but they recover best when they are helped to understand and to process what is happening/has happened to them. Their experiences will shape their self-worth, identity, and ability to relate to others in childhood and adulthood; making it much more difficult to succeed at school and develop friendships.

To support our children, we:

- Have an ethos which puts children's wellbeing at the heart of all that we do
- Create a predictable setting life with set routines
- Ensure that rules and expectations are clearly stated and understood by all
- Understand that oppositional and manipulative behaviours are not attempts to 'provoke us', but may be attempts by these children to control their world when so much feels out of control for them
- Model respectful and caring behaviour, positive conflict resolution and respectful interactions. Helping children learn not only what not to do, but what to do instead
- Use the language of choice, making clear the benefits and negative consequences of their choices. Ensuring that we follow through with any consequences or sanctions
- Support children to put feelings into words. We build up a vocabulary of emotional words with them so that they can begin to express their feelings more appropriately/accurately *(A child exposed to domestic abuse may have seen a lot of behaviours that express strong feelings but may not have heard words to appropriately express/ describe these feelings*)
- Understand that the child may experience conflicting and confusing emotions when thinking of or talking about their parents
- Create opportunities for children to feel successful. We let the child know that they matter, taking an active interest in them

- Accept that they may not be willing or able to talk about it right away (if ever)
- Provide effective, non-verbal, systems for children to access support
- Provide reassurance that only people who need to know about the incident will know
- Allow the child, where necessary, to safely store work in the setting or shred it after completion when providing interventions
- Have visible and accessible worry boxes/internal support systems /information regarding external sources of support e.g., Childline etc.
- Provide opportunities to teach about and discuss healthy and unhealthy relationships

Homelessness

Being homeless or being at risk of becoming homeless presents a real risk to a child's welfare. Our designated safeguarding lead (and any deputies) are aware of contact details and referral routes into the Local Housing Authority so they can raise/progress concerns at the earliest opportunity.

Indicators that a family may be at risk of homelessness include household debt, rent arrears, domestic abuse and anti-social behaviour, as well as the family being asked to leave a property. Whilst referrals and/or discussion with the Local Housing Authority should be progressed as appropriate, and in accordance with local procedures, this does not, and should not, replace a referral into local authority children's social care where a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm.

However, it should also be recognised in some cases 16- and 17-year-olds could be living independently from their parents or guardians, for example through their exclusion from the family home, and will require a different level of intervention and support. Local authority children's social care will be the lead agency for these children and our designated safeguarding lead (or a deputy) ensures appropriate referrals are made based on the child's circumstances.

Emotional abuse

Staff are all aware that emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child which can cause severe and adverse effects on the child's emotional development.

We understand that it may involve the following:

- Conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person
- It may include verbal abuse, such as persistent criticism, belittling, or name-calling, as well as not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate.
- Age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child from participating in normal social interaction
- Seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another

OFFICIAL

- Serious bullying (including cyberbullying), 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, although it may occur alone.

Honour or faith-based abuse including Breast ironing, FGM and Forced Marriage

Staff are aware of Honour or faith-based' Abuse (HBA) which encompasses incidents or crimes which have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or the community, including Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, and practices such as breast ironing. Abuse committed in the context of preserving honour often involves a wider network of family or community pressure and can include multiple perpetrators. It is important to be aware of this dynamic and additional risk factors when deciding what form of safeguarding action to take. All forms of so called HBA are abuse (regardless of the motivation), and staff will handle and escalate as such; they are alert to the possibility of a child being at risk of HBA, or already having suffered HBA.

Awareness raising has taken place around HBA; staff are alert to possible indicators. They are aware that forced marriage is an entirely separate issue from arranged marriage; that it is a human rights abuse and falls within the Crown Prosecution Service definition of domestic violence and that HBV and forced marriage can affect both young men and women.

As a setting we would never attempt to intervene directly; where this is suspected we would speak to Cheshire East before sharing our concerns with the family.

Breast ironing also known as Breast Flattening

Staff have been made aware of an act of abuse performed on girls (from around the age of 9 years old) in which their breasts are ironed, massaged and/or pounded, burned with heated objects, or covered with an elastic belt to prevent or delay the development of their breasts; the intention being to protect the child from rape, forced marriage, sexual harassment, or removal from education. It is a practice in Cameroon, Nigeria, and South Africa. It is often carried out by the girl's mother.

Staff are clear that they would follow our usual procedure for recording and reporting this abuse where it is suspected.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Staff are aware of Female Genital Mutilation (also known as female circumcision, cutting or Sunna) and that it is the partial or total removal of external female genitalia for non-medical reasons.

Staff are also aware that FGM

- Is child abuse; it's dangerous and it is a criminal offence. Religious, social, or cultural reasons are sometimes given for FGM however there is no valid reason for it.
- Is illegal in the UK. It's also illegal to take a British national or permanent resident abroad for FGM or to help someone trying to do this.

Indications that FGM may be about to take place:

- When a female family elder is around, particularly when she is visiting from a country of origin.
- Reference to FGM in conversation e.g., a girl may tell other children about it.
- A girl may confide that she is to have a 'special procedure' or to attend a special occasion to 'become a woman'.
- A girl may request help from a teacher or another adult if she is aware or suspects that she is at immediate risk.
- Parents state that they or a relative will take the child out of the country for a prolonged period.
- A girl may talk about a long holiday to her country of origin or another country where the practice is prevalent.
- A girl being withdrawn from PSHE or from learning about FGM (parents may wish to keep her uninformed about her body and rights)

Indications that FGM has taken place:

- Difficulty walking, sitting, or standing
- Spending longer than normal in the bathroom or toilet possibly with bladder or menstrual problems
- Unusual/a noticeable change in behaviour after a lengthy absence
- Reluctance to undergo normal medical examinations
- Asking for help, but may not be explicit about the problem due to embarrassment or fear
- Prolonged absences/ persistent unexplained absence from setting
- Seek to be excused from physical exercise without the support of their GP
- Child not allowed to attend extra-curricular activities
- Close supervision of child by family/carers

Staff in our setting are aware of their responsibilities under section 74 of the Serious Crime Act 2015 which says that "If a **teacher**, in the course of their work in the profession, discovers that an act of Female Genital Mutilation appears to have been carried out on a girl under the age of 18 the **teacher** must report this to the police".

Members of our setting community are alert to the possibility of a girl being at risk of FGM, or already having suffered FGM. They have been made aware that FGM typically takes place between birth and around 15 years old. Potential indicators that a child or young person may be at risk of FGM have been shared and the next steps have been identified, in that we take the same course of action as we would with any form of abuse; the Designated Safeguarding Lead plays a full part in the process of identification, recording and reporting. We are mindful that girls at risk of FGM may not yet be aware of the practice or that it may be conducted on them, so sensitivity is always shown when approaching the subject. All staff have taken part in enhanced training Free FGM Training Online | Recognising & Preventing FGM Free Course | Virtual College.

Forced Marriage

It is a crime to carry out any conduct whose purpose is to cause a child to marry before their eighteenth birthday, even if violence, threats or another form or coercion are not used. As with the existing forced marriage law, this applies to non-binding, unofficial 'marriages' as well as legal marriages. Staff are aware of Forced Marriage and that it is one entered into without the full and free consent of one or both parties and where violence, threats or any other form of coercion is used to cause a person to enter into a marriage. Threats can be physical or emotional and psychological.

Children, especially girls who are forced to marry, or those who fear they may be forced to marry, are frequently withdrawn from education, restricting their educational and personal development.

Forced marriage resource pack - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Indications that a Child is at risk of Forced Marriage:

Staff are aware that they need to be aware of significant changes in the child's presentation emotional and physical, in dress and behaviour.

- Appearing anxious, depressed, and emotionally withdrawn with low self-esteem
- Self-harming, self-cutting or anorexia
- Criminal activity e.g., shoplifting or taking drugs or alcohol
- Declining performance, aspirations, or motivation
- Not allowed to attend any extra-curricular or after school activities
- Girls and young women may be accompanied to and from school/college
- Attending school but absenting themselves from lessons
- Stopping attendance at school/college
- A family history of older siblings leaving education early and marrying early

Actions our setting takes in relation to take around Honour Based Abuse:

- When managing requests for absence, we use an absence request form which requests information on all siblings who attend other settings. Sometimes younger siblings tell teachers information that has a bearing on older members of the family, so it is important that we liaise with the other settings
- The Manager requires a meeting with parents to discuss applications for extended leave of absence during term time, as we feel this can provide an opportunity to gather important information. We ask for the precise location of where the child is going; the purpose of the visit; the return date and whether it is estimated or fixed
- We check in with the child/children to see if they know and corroborate the purpose of the visit.
- If a return date has been specified and a child has not returned to our setting, we would contact Cheshire East. We would never remove the child from the roll without first making enquiries about their disappearance in line with Cheshire East Children Missing Education Procedures and referring the case to the police and Children's Services as appropriate.

Modern Day Slavery including Trafficking

The Modern Slavery Act came into Force in 2015. Modern slavery encompasses human trafficking and slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour. Exploitation can take many forms, including sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery, servitude, forced criminality and the removal of organs.

Staff are aware that:

- a person commits an offence if they knowingly hold another person in slavery or servitude or if they knowingly require another person to perform forced or compulsory labour
- it is an offence to arrange or facilitate the travel of a person with a view to them being exploited. These are serious offences carrying a penalty of up to life imprisonment

- any consent victims have given to their treatment will be irrelevant where they have been coerced, deceived, or provided with payment or benefit to achieve that consent
- children (under 18 years) are considered victims of trafficking, whether or not they have been coerced, deceived, or paid to secure their compliance. They need only to have been recruited, transported, or harboured for the purpose of exploitation

Trafficked Children

Human trafficking is defined by the United Nations, in respect of children, as "the recruitment, transport, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a person by such means as threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud or deception for the purpose of exploitation."

Any child transported for exploitative reasons is considered to be a trafficking victim.

As a setting we are alert to the signs both for our children and for their families and are aware that this may be if they:

- Show signs of physical or sexual abuse, and/or has contracted a sexually transmitted infection or has an unwanted pregnancy
- Have a history with missing links and unexplained moves
- Are required to earn a minimum amount of money every day
- Work in various locations
- Have limited freedom of movement
- Appear to be missing for periods
- Are known to beg for money
- Are being cared for by adult/s who are not their parents and the quality of the relationship between the child and their adult carers is not good
- Are one among a number of unrelated children found at one address
- Have not been registered with or attended a GP practice
- Are excessively afraid of being deported
- Look malnourished or unkempt
- Are withdrawn, anxious and unwilling to interact
- Are under the control and influence of others
- Live in cramped, dirty, overcrowded accommodation
- Have no access or control of their passport or identity documents
- Appear scared, avoid eye contact, and can be untrusting
- Show signs of abuse and/or has health issues

For those children who are internally trafficked within the UK indicators include:

- Physical symptoms (bruising indicating either physical or sexual assault)
- Prevalence of a sexually transmitted infection or unwanted pregnancy
- Reports from reliable sources suggesting the likelihood of involvement in sexual exploitation / the child has been seen in places known to be used for sexual exploitation
- Evidence of drug, alcohol, or substance misuse
- Being in the community in clothing unusual for a child i.e., inappropriate for age/ borrowing clothing from older people
- Relationship with a significantly older partner
- Accounts of social activities, expensive clothes, mobile phones etc. with no plausible explanation of the source of necessary funding

- Persistently missing, staying out overnight or returning late with no plausible explanation
- Returning after having been missing, looking well cared for despite having not been at home
- Having keys to premises other than those known about
- Low self- image, low self-esteem, self-harming behaviour including cutting, overdosing, eating disorder, promiscuity
- Truancy / disengagement with education
- Entering or leaving vehicles driven by unknown adults
- Going missing and being found in areas where the child has no known links
- Possible inappropriate use of the internet and forming on-line relationships, particularly with adults.

These behaviours themselves do not indicate that a child is being trafficked but should be considered as indicators that this may be the case.

If staff believe that a child is being trafficked, this will be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and will be reported as potential abuse.

Neglect

Staff are aware that 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
- may occur during pregnancy, for example, as a result of maternal substance abuse
- once a child is born, 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
- may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs
- may potentially be fatal
- causes great distress to children and leads to poor outcomes in the short and long-term
- has possible consequences which may include an array of health and mental health problems, difficulties in forming attachment and relationships, lower educational achievements, an increased risk of substance misuse, higher risk of experiencing abuse as well as difficulties in assuming parenting responsibilities later in life. The degree to which children are affected during their childhood and later in adulthood depends on the type, severity, and frequency of the maltreatment and on what support mechanisms and coping strategies were available to the child

If we suspect neglect, we will use the CESCP Neglect Screening Tool

Online Safety

With the current speed of on-line change, some practitioners, parents, and carers have only a limited understanding of online risks and issues. Parents may underestimate how often their children come across potentially harmful and inappropriate material on the internet and may be unsure about how to respond.

Some of the risks could be:

- **content**: being exposed to illegal, inappropriate, or harmful content, for example: pornography, fake news, racism, misogyny, self-harm, suicide, antisemitism, radicalisation, extremism, extreme sexual or physical violence, misinformation, disinformation (including fake news) and conspiracy theories,
- **contact**: being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users or generative AI applications that simulate this; for example: peer to peer pressure, commercial advertising and adults posing as children or young adults with the intention to groom or exploit them for sexual, criminal, financial or other purposes
- **conduct**: online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm; for example, making, sending, and receiving explicit images, including those generated using AI and online bullying, and
- **commerce -** risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing and or financial scams. If you feel your pupils, students or staff are at risk, please report it to the Anti-Phishing Working Group (https://apwg.org/)

Our setting therefore seeks to provide information and awareness to staff, pupils, and their parents through:

- Acceptable use agreements for children, staff, parents/carers, trustees, and committee members
- Curriculum activities involving raising awareness around staying safe online
- Information included in letters, newsletters, website
- Parents evenings / sessions
- High profile events / campaigns e.g., Safer Internet Day
- Building awareness around information that is held on relevant web sites and or publications
- Social media policy

Cyber crime: Preventing young people from getting involved

Children are getting involved in cybercrime, many do it for fun without realising the consequences of their actions – but the penalties can be severe. Cybercrime is a serious criminal offence under the Computer Misuse Act. If we become aware of any incidents of cyber crimes, we will consider each case individually as to any criminal act that may have been committed. The setting will pass on information to the police if it feels that it is appropriate, or we are required to do so.

Risks associated with Gaming

Online gaming is an activity that the majority of children and many adults get involved in.

The setting raises awareness by:

- Talking to parents and carers about the games their children play and help them identify whether they are appropriate
- Supporting parents in identifying the most effective way of safeguarding their children by using parental controls and child safety mode
- Talking to parents about setting boundaries and time limits when games are played
- Highlighting relevant resources
- Making our children aware of the dangers including of online grooming and how to keep themselves safe
- Making our children aware of how to report concerns

Physical abuse

Staff are aware of the signs of potential physical abuse and that it might involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child.

They are also aware that physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Prevent, Radicalisation and Extremism

At First Steps Kindergarten we recognise that children may be susceptible to extremist ideology and radicalisation.

First Steps Kindergarten adheres to the Prevent Duty Guidance 2023, and seeks to protect children against the messages of all violent extremism and to prevent them being drawn into terrorism; including, but not restricted to, those linked to Islamist ideology, or to Far Right / Neo Nazi / White Supremacist ideology, Irish Nationalist and Loyalist paramilitary groups, and extremist Animal Rights movements.

Children may be susceptible to extremist ideology and radicalisation. Similar to protecting children from other forms of harms and abuse, protecting children from this risk should be a part of a settings safeguarding approach.

Terrorism is an action that endangers or causes serious violence to a person/people; causes serious damage to property; or seriously interferes or disrupts an electronic system. The use or threat must be designed to influence the government or to intimidate the public and is made for the purpose of advancing a political, religious, or ideological cause.

Our setting community has been made aware of the exploitation of vulnerable people, to involve them in terrorism or in activity in support of terrorism; they are also aware that the normalisation of extreme views may make children vulnerable to future manipulation and exploitation.

In order to raise awareness and reduce risks we ensure that our preventative work is specifically considered, outlined, and highlighted in all relevant policies and procedures, including those for Information technology, Special Educational Needs, attendance, assemblies, the use of school premises by external agencies, behaviour and anti-bullying and our curriculum.

Our taught curriculum includes educating children of how people with extreme views share these with others; we are committed to ensuring that our pupils are offered a broad and balanced curriculum that aims to prepare them for life in modern Britain. Teaching the setting's core values alongside the fundamental British Values supports quality teaching and learning, whilst making a positive contribution to the development of a fair, just, and civil society.

In our setting community we are aware of these specific issues, relevant to our setting's profile.

All staff have received training about the Prevent Duty and tackling extremism. This training is reinforced by ensuring the training is up to date, discussing in staff meetings and real-life scenarios.

Our setting has a Prevent risk assessment in place which all staff are aware of. First Steps Kindergarten is clear that this exploitation and radicalisation should be viewed as a

safeguarding concern; therefore, concerns need to be recorded and discussed with the DSL; with timely, appropriate action then being taken.

The **Prevent Duty** requires that all staff are aware of the signs that a child may be susceptible to radicalisation. The risks will need to be considered for political; environmental; animal rights; or faith-based extremism that may lead to a child becoming radicalised.

There is no single way of identifying whether a child is likely to be susceptible to an extremist ideology. Background factors combined with specific influences such as family and friends may contribute to a child's vulnerability. Similarly, radicalisation can occur through many different methods (such as social media or the internet) and settings (such as within the home).

However, it is possible to protect vulnerable people from extremist ideology and intervene to prevent those at risk of radicalisation being radicalised. As with other safeguarding risks, staff are alert to changes in children's behaviour, which could indicate that they may be in need of help or protection. Staff use their judgement in identifying children who might be at risk of radicalisation and act proportionately which may include the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) making a Prevent referral on the Cheshire East Safeguarding Adults Board - Stop Adult Abuse website (this could be about an adult and/or a child).

If we suspect a child to be suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, including being radicalised we would also contact:

Cheshire East Together for Families Integrated Front Door

on 0300 123 5012 (option 3)

and complete a Prevent referral on the stopadultabuse.org.uk website.

Where necessary individuals may be discussed at Channel:

Staff are aware of Channel being a partnership approach to support individuals vulnerable to recruitment by violent extremists. The Channel Duty Guidance: protecting people vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism, was updated in 2023.

In Cheshire East the Channel Co-ordinator is Sandra Murphy – Head of Adult Safeguarding.

The CE Channel Panel meets monthly. Attendees sign a Confidentiality Agreement and share case information. Discussion covers the vulnerabilities of individuals and their families, current support, and risks for the individual and community. Attendees agree if the case is appropriate for Channel and the support plan which is needed. Consent is then sought from the adult / parent with parental responsibility.

For those already open to Panel support plans are tailored, building on existing support, and may consist of help with family problems, mental health support, religious education, mentoring etc.

For those who are not Channel appropriate: a safe exit from Channel or a referral elsewhere is discussed.

The Safeguarding Children in Education Settings (SCiES) team represent education settings at these meetings. This means that SCiES may contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead before a meeting to request our view regarding the lived experience of the young person. They contact us afterwards to give us an update.

Serious violence

There are a number of indicators, which may signal children are at risk from, or are involved in committing serious violence. These may include:

- increased absence from school or college,
- a change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups,
- a significant decline in educational performance,
- signs of self-harm or a significant change in wellbeing, or signs of assault or unexplained injuries, and
- unexplained gifts or new possessions could also indicate that children have been approached by, or are involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs and may be at risk of criminal exploitation.

The likelihood of involvement in serious violence may be increased by factors such as:

- being male,
- having been suspended, spent time in Alternative Provision or permanently excluded from school,
- having experienced child maltreatment,
- having been involved in offending, such as theft or robbery,
- having used drugs or alcohol in early adolescence, and
- having previously been a victim or previously perpetrated violence

A fuller list of risk factors can be found in the Home Office's Serious Violence Strategy.

Professionals should also be aware that violence can often peak in the hours just before or just after school, when pupils are travelling to and from school and can concentrate in particular places. These times can be particularly risky for young people involved in serious violence. It is important that schools and colleges try to understand where these places are, with a view to working with partners to promote safety for children. Listening to children and consulting with staff can help establish when and where they feel unsafe. Working with wider partners can also help build understanding of the local context beyond the school or college and help co-ordinate a collective safeguarding response around the school day. Advice for schools and colleges is provided in the Home Office's Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: county lines guidance.

Sharing Nudes and Semi-nudes

This form of abuse means the sending or posting of nude or semi-nude images, videos, or live streams by young people under the age of 18 online. This could be via social media, gaming platforms, chat apps or forums. It could also involve sharing between devices via services like Apple's AirDrop which works offline.

Producing and sharing nudes and semi-nudes of under 18s is illegal, which causes considerable concern in education settings working with children and young people, and amongst parents and carers.

Although the production of such images will likely take place outside of education settings, sharing can take place and the impacts of an incident are often identified or reported here. Our school will respond swiftly and confidently to make sure children and young people are safeguarded, supported, and educated. We will follow the guidance set out in the following document: Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people (updated March 2024) - GOV.UK

Sexual abuse

Staff are aware of sexual abuse and that:

- It involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening
- The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and touching outside of clothing
- It may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse
- It can take place in family settings, in institutional settings, online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse.
- Child sexual abuse material available online may have been generated in a family environment. Online abuse can also take the form of cyber grooming or self-generated sexual content under coercion.
- It is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children
- A child of any age or gender can be a victim of sexual abuse.

The sexual abuse of children by other children is a specific safeguarding issue in education, see child on child abuse.