



Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Key information	
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1. Policy statement

In delivering our services safeguarding children is always paramount. The Catholic Children's Society (CCS) recognises that our responsibilities are not limited to child protection; we are committed to ensuring our safeguarding approach encompasses positive action to promote children's wellbeing and prevent harm.

2. The scope and purpose of this policy

This policy acknowledges that our services are delivered in various contexts and with a wide range of ages and stages and is developed to ensure that safeguarding is at the heart of everything we do. It applies to all CCS staff, volunteers and consultants/contractors. It aims to set out clear standards and expectations about our roles and responsibilities to keep children safe. Our key objective is to embed an ethos of positive, proactive and responsive practice towards child protection and safeguarding.

This policy is accompanied by detailed guidance documents setting out child protection procedures for each area of our work. These can be accessed here:

- [Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures: Schools Services \(including Rainbows and Connect-Ed\)](#)
- [Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures: Early Years Provision \(including St Francis Family Centre and St Mark's Stay & Play\)](#)

This policy stands alongside the other CCS policies listed below:

- [Safer Recruitment](#)
- [Whistleblowing](#)
- [Disciplinary](#)
- [Health and Safety](#)
- [Suicide and Self-harm](#)

3. Our commitment to safeguarding children

CCS is committed to safeguarding children. To this end we will ensure that:

- The safety and welfare of children is paramount at all times and in all aspects of our work.
- We take a child centred approach and take all concerns about safeguarding seriously.
- Safeguarding is embedded throughout governance, leadership and culture.
- Children and young people have the right to equal protection from all types of harm whatever their protected characteristics, as set out in the Equality Act 2010.
- We will have regard to the Equality Act 2010 whenever applying this policy. We understand that some children may be more vulnerable to abuse and neglect due to their characteristics or their history/previous experiences.
- Children are respected, empowered and supported to be safe and their voices help inform and shape activities and practices around safeguarding.

- Recruitment, induction, training, management and supervision procedures support staff, volunteers and consultants/contractors to implement best practice.
- The statutory and legal framework to keep children safe is complied with.
- Procedures for reporting, recording and monitoring safeguarding concerns are reviewed regularly.
- We expect high standards from organisations we work with and take a systems approach to safeguarding children.
- This policy also applies where children report non-recent abuse.

4. Definitions

Children: This policy defines children as between the ages of 0 and 18. Please refer to our Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy for concerns relating to people over the age of 18.

A child centred approach: This is defined as keeping the child in focus when making decisions about their lives and working in partnership with them and their families (Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2018).

Safeguarding concerns: Definitions of some key safeguarding concerns and how to recognise them are set out in Appendix B of this document.

Significant harm: This is the threshold which justifies compulsory intervention in the best interests of the child. The Children's Act (1989) states that ascertaining whether harm is 'significant' can be determined by comparing the health and wellbeing of the child with "that which could reasonably be expected of a similar child".

Early identification and help: Statutory guidance emphasises the importance of children accessing early help and support in order to avoid child or adult protection interventions at a later time. Early help strengthens the role of education and childcare settings in supporting children and keeping them safe.

5. Our responsibilities

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility at CCS and all staff, volunteers and consultants/contractors must have a good working knowledge of this policy, together with the procedure documents relevant to their area of work. In addition, specific responsibilities for safeguarding children sit within various roles as follows:

(i) Trustees

Safeguarding is a key governance priority for trustees. Our trustees will:

- Appoint a Trustee with lead responsibility for Safeguarding.
- Act within this policy at all times.
- Assess and manage risk.
- Ensure robust safeguarding policies and procedures are in place and are reviewed annually.

- Work with the Senior Management Team (SMT) to monitor and review whether safeguarding policy and procedures are being implemented and are effective, including reviewing regular quality assurance reports.
- Respond appropriately to allegations of abuse and whistleblowing cases.
- Have at least one designated trustee who has specialist knowledge of safeguarding and supports best practice within the organisation.

(ii) Senior Management Team

CCS's Senior Management Team (SMT) includes the CEO, Head of Finance, Head of Services and Head of Partnerships and Communication. They will ensure:

- Regular oversight of safeguarding practice within CCS is maintained.
- Clear and effective safeguarding policy and procedures are in place, are reviewed at least annually and are made available to all staff, volunteers, consultants/contractors and service users.
- CCS has effective procedures to manage the reporting, recording and monitoring of safeguarding concerns and actions.
- Sufficient resources are directed to this area of work.
- CCS follows robust safer recruitment procedures.
- All staff and volunteers have access to high quality safeguarding children training, at a level and frequency appropriate to their role and responsibilities.
- Safeguarding allegations against staff, volunteers and consultants/ contractors are dealt with appropriately.

(iii) Senior Designated Safeguarding Lead (SDSL)

The SDSL is the Head of Services. This member of staff will:

- Ensure staff working with safeguarding across CCS have adequate management and supervision to enable them to be effective.
- Ensure there is at least one Designated Safeguarding Lead for each service who is adequately trained, managed and supported to be the initial point of contact for staff/volunteers when sharing any concerns and seeking advice and support.
- Advocate for the needs of, and resources for, safeguarding within CCS.
- Check that safeguarding referrals, incident reports and actions taken are securely recorded, reviewed and followed up as necessary.
- Develop guidance and ensure training is available to increase expertise and knowledge around safeguarding within CCS.
- Ensure regular meetings take place with DSLs to maintain clear oversight and understanding of the concerns being managed.
- Report to the SMT (and trustees as required) regarding safeguarding activities, trends and emerging issues.
- Report any significant safeguarding concerns or activity to the CEO immediately and support with managing risk.

- Keep up to date with relevant law, guidance and case examples.
- Proactively engage with other agencies and external experts to ensure that CCS's approach is informed by, and contributes to, best practice within the sector.

(iv) Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs)

Each service will have one or more DSLs who will:

- Be the main point of contact for the staff they line-manage and provide safeguarding advice and support.
- Ensure all concerns are recorded, monitored and followed up appropriately.
- Immediately highlight any concerns they have about a case to the SDSL.
- Discuss safeguarding cases with the SDSL, and other DSLs, in regular meetings.
- Contact the CEO if there are any concerns about the practice of the SDSL.
- Ensure safeguarding referrals to schools and/or local authorities are of a high quality and are followed up as required.
- Help disseminate information on any changes to CCS's safeguarding policy and procedures to ensure all staff, volunteers and consultants/contractors are up to date with current policy and practice.
- Signpost teams to relevant resources to promote best practice and support the continuous improvement of safeguarding with their service area and the wider organisation.

(v) Staff and Volunteers

All staff are responsible for:

- Ensuring they know and adhere to CCS's safeguarding policy and procedures.
- Maintaining up to date knowledge of the safeguarding policies and procedures of the settings in which they operate (schools, early years settings etc.).
- Working within their specific professional ethical and competency framework.
- Completing the safeguarding children training required for their role.
- Immediately raising any safeguarding concern they identify with the DSL.
- Immediately contacting appropriate services in an emergency situation (police, ambulance, social services etc.).

(vi) Contractors and Consultants

CCS may consult or contract with organisations or independent professionals, such as trainers or clinical supervisors. All consultants or contractors must:

- Ensure they are familiar with and adhere to CCS's safeguarding policy and procedures.
- Contact the relevant DSL if they have any concerns about CCS staff/volunteers or escalate their concerns to the SDSL or CEO as appropriate.

CCS is committed to ensuring that all staff/volunteers who work with children access suitable safeguarding training on an annual basis. This will be delivered internally and/or externally, depending on the training needs and requirements of the role. In addition to this, further training will be provided on an ad hoc basis as required to ensure all staff/volunteers are confident in their safeguarding practice and are working to the highest standards.

6. Safer recruitment

CCS will adhere to safer recruitment principles by:

- Ensuring that all staff who work directly with children have an enhanced DBS check and their DBS status is reviewed (either via a new check or via the DBS Update Service) at least every three years.
- Ensuring that two satisfactory references are received for all appointments.
- Training staff with responsibility for recruitment in safer recruitment practice.
- Providing a thorough induction for all new staff/volunteers before they start working with children, including providing safeguarding children training and information on key policies and procedures.
- Ensuring all staff/volunteers have read our Code of Conduct.
- Applying the BACP ethical and competency framework for all counsellors and therapists to assess their suitability for working therapeutically with children.

7. Dealing with child protection and safeguarding concerns

All safeguarding or child protection concerns should be reported to a DSL at CCS on the day that disclosure is made or the concern is noted. The following documents provide detailed guidance on the procedures to follow for each area of our work:

- [Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures: Schools Services \(including Rainbows and Connect-Ed\)](#)
- [Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures: Early Years Provision \(including St Francis Family Centre and St Mark's Stay & Play\)](#)

All safeguarding concerns must be reported immediately and written up by the end of the same working day. If any of actions outlined in these procedure documents have not been completed they MUST be handed over to either your line manager or another manager.

If the concern is being raised by a member of staff who is not linked to a specific service, or if a DSL is unavailable, the SDSL should be informed immediately. If the SDSL is not available the Deputy SDSL should be contacted. If neither are available, the CEO should be informed. All contact numbers and roles are set out in the [📄 Safeguarding Contact Sheet.docx](#)

All disclosures and concerns will be taken seriously and, where appropriate, passed to the relevant safeguarding lead within the school or statutory authority. When dealing with safeguarding concerns:

- CCS will not investigate disclosures, allegations or suspicions of harm to children, although clarification will be sought where appropriate.
- All disclosures and concerns will be followed up and actions by schools and statutory authorities will be monitored and reviewed.
- Where schools/statutory authorities are not taking action deemed appropriate CCS reserves the right to escalate the concern.

8. Allegations against staff, volunteers and consultants/contractors

Anyone working, volunteering or consulting/contracting with CCS has a duty to raise any concerns they may have about any adult working or volunteering with children. These concerns may include instances where the adult has:

- Behaved in a way that has, or may have, harmed a child.
- Potentially committed a criminal offence against, or related to, a child.
- Behaved in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children (This may also include the way that they are actioning safeguarding concerns which are raised with them).

Concerns relating to CCS staff

In the event of the safeguarding concern/allegation (whether current or non-recent) being about a member of CCS staff or volunteer this should be reported to the SDSL who may in turn refer to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

If the staff concern or allegation (whether current or non-recent) is about the SDSL, the member of staff should contact the CEO who may then refer to the LADO.

Recommendations regarding any suspension of a member of staff will be made to CCS at the point of referral to the LADO or at the initial LADO strategy meeting. Any recommendation by the LADO to suspend a member of staff will be kept under review.

Concerns relating to other adults working or volunteering with children

If an allegation is made or concern is raised about any other adult working or volunteering with children, including school staff, the concern should be passed to the DSL or SDSL.

For our school-based services, the DSL or SDSL will raise the concern with the headteacher. Where the headteacher is the subject of an allegation, the chair of governors or chair of the management committee will be informed (in an independent school it will be the proprietor). The DSL or SDSL will then agree the next steps with this person. Where a referral to the LADO is deemed necessary we will agree with the school who will inform the LADO of the concern. Where there is disagreement about what to do, CCS reserves the right to make a referral to the LADO directly and will inform the school of any referral made.

For non-school services the DSL or SDL will refer directly to the LADO for advice.

The role of the LADO is set out here: <https://national-lado-network.co.uk/the-role-of-the-lado-local-authority-designated-officer/>

9. Confidentiality and information sharing

All work with children and parents/carers should be framed with a contract which makes the limits of confidentiality explicitly clear. This is in line with Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023) Keeping Children Safe in Education and Information Sharing Advice for Safeguarding Practitioners (2024) Staff should have particular regard to the '7 Golden Rules' set out in the latter.

The duty to protect children takes priority over all other considerations when sharing information.

10. Legal and statutory frameworks

The CCS Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy is underpinned by the following key legislation, statutory guidance and documents:

The Children Act 1989 and 2004

This provides the main legislative foundation for the care and protection of children. It outlines how children's welfare is paramount and that delays in reporting safeguarding concerns are likely to prejudice a child's welfare.

The Equality Act 2010

This legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society.

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)

This provides a national framework within which agencies and professionals should work together to put the Children Acts into practice.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

Keeping Children Safe in Education

This document is updated annually and sets out what schools and colleges in England must do to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people under the age of 18.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

The Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage

This sets the standards for the learning, development and care of children from birth to 5 years old.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>

Information Sharing Advice for Safeguarding Practitioners (2024):

This document provides advice for practitioners who provide services to children on sharing information to help keep children safe.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/721581/Information_sharing_advice_practitioners_safeguarding_services.pdf

London Child Protection Procedures:

<https://www.londoncp.co.uk/>

Professionals working or volunteering for CCS must also adhere to relevant professional guidelines for safeguarding and child protection. This includes (but may not be limited to):

BACP:

Safeguarding children and young people within the counselling profession:

<https://www.cathchild.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/BACP-Safeguarding-children-and-young-people-within-the-counselling-professions.pdf>

Social Work England: Professional standards:

<https://www.socialworkengland.org.uk/standards/professional-standards>

Early Years Alliance: Safeguarding in the early years:

<https://www.eyalliance.org.uk/safeguarding-early-years>

11. Definitions of key child protection and safeguarding concerns and how to recognise them

Those working with children must be aware of signs of abuse. When considering potential abuse it is helpful to take a contextual approach to safeguarding. This means understanding and responding to young people's experiences of significant harm beyond just their families (known as 'extra-familial harm'). It recognises that the different relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. Contextual safeguarding facilitates looking at these areas when assessing a child's needs. The areas considered are:

- Home
- Peer group
- School
- Neighbourhood

Below are some definitions to support staff with identifying various categories of abuse.

Emotional abuse: The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve:

- Conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person.
- 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
- 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.
- Seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another.
- 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.

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.

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 care-givers)
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

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

Sexual abuse: This 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.
- 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 online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse.

Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children. Non-recent abuse should be treated in the same way as recent abuse.

Grooming: A process that involves the offender building a relationship with a child, and sometimes with their wider family, gaining their trust and a position of power over the child, in preparation for abuse. Grooming can happen anywhere including online, in organisations in public spaces. Children and young people can be groomed by a stranger or by someone they know – such as a family member, friend or professional. Grooming techniques can be used to prepare children for abuse, exploitation and radicalisation.

Mental Health: Issues with mental health can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation. Where children have suffered abuse and neglect, or other potentially traumatic adverse childhood experiences, this can have a lasting impact throughout childhood, adolescence and into adulthood. It is key that staff are aware of how these children's experiences can impact on their mental health, behaviour and education.

Domestic Abuse: The government definition of domestic violence and abuse is:

“Any incident or patterns of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those over 16, who are, or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional”.

Child-on-child Abuse: Adults should be aware that children can abuse other children (often referred to as peer-on-peer abuse). It can happen both inside/outside of school and online. It is important that adults working with children recognise the indicators and signs of peer-on-peer abuse and know how to identify it. All adults should understand that even if there are no reports in their environment, it does not mean it is not happening; it may simply be that it is not being reported. Peer-on-peer abuse 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 peers; 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 standalone or part of a 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 sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery)
- 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.
- 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).

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE): This is defined by the Home Office Serious Violence Strategy as instances where an individual or a group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control or manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into any criminal activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or (c) through violence or threats of violence. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. CCE does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE): This is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control or manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually

exploited even if the activity appears consensual. As with CCE, CSE does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

County Lines is defined by the Home Office 'Serious Violence Strategy' as a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas within the UK, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other forms of 'deal line'. They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store the drugs and money, and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons.

Extremism and 'Prevent' Duty: "Extremism goes beyond terrorism and includes people who target the vulnerable – including the young – by seeking to sow division between communities on the basis of race, faith or denomination; justify discrimination towards women and girls; persuade others that minorities are inferior; or argue against the primacy of democracy and the rule of law in our society. Extremism is defined in the Counter Extremism Strategy 2015 as the vocal or active opposition to our fundamental values, including the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also regard calls for the death of members of our armed forces as extremist" (Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023).

Any concerns about radicalisation and extremist views or behaviours in children and young people must be reported as a safeguarding concern. CCS works in line with Prevent Duty 2015 guidance and will consult with local Prevent Coordinators where necessary (see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance/revised-prevent-duty-guidance-for-england-and-wales>).

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM): This is defined by the NHS as:

"A procedure where the female genitals are deliberately cut, injured or changed, but there is no medical reason for this to be done. It is also known as female circumcision or cutting, or by other terms, such as sunna, gudaniin, helalays, tahur, megrez and khitan"
(<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/female-genital-mutilation-fgm/>)

FGM is usually carried out on young girls between infancy and the age of 15. It is illegal and is child abuse. It must always be reported as a safeguarding concern.

Forced Marriage: In forced marriage, one or both spouses do not consent to the marriage and some element of duress is involved. Duress includes both physical and emotional pressure and abuse. Forced marriage is primarily, but not exclusively, an issue of violence against females. Most cases involve young women and girls aged between 13 and 30, although there is evidence to suggest that as many as 15 per cent of victims are male.

So-called 'Honour' Based Violence: The term "honour crime" or "honour-based violence" embraces a variety of crimes of violence (mainly but not exclusively against women), including assault, imprisonment and murder where their family or their community is punishing the person. They are being punished for (actually or allegedly) undermining what the family or community believes to be the correct code of behaviour. In transgressing this correct code of behaviour, the person shows that they have not been properly controlled to conform by their family and this is to the "shame" or "dishonour" of the family.

Self – Harm: This is when somebody intentionally damages or injures their body. It is a way of expressing emotional feelings such as low self-esteem, or a way of coping with traumatic events. It can take many forms and signs of self-harm among children can include covering up, unexplained bruises, cuts, burns or bite-marks on their body, blood stains on clothing, becoming withdrawn, feeling down, low self-esteem or blaming themselves for things,

outbursts of anger, or risky behaviour like drinking or taking drugs. (see [5.2 Connect-Ed Suicide and Self-Harm Guidance - Working with CYP.pdf](#))

Suicidal Ideation: This is when someone has suicidal feelings or thoughts, this maybe when someone thinks about ending their life or doesn't want to be alive anymore. Multiple child safeguarding reviews have found that children are not always taken seriously when disclose thoughts around suicide and that this can lead to them not getting the support they need. Risks associated with suicidal ideation are complex and will change over time. (see [5.2 Connect-Ed Suicide and Self-Harm Guidance - Working with CYP.pdf](#))

Online Harm: Children and young people may be exposed to or engage with many types of harmful content online. Some harmful content is illegal, like child sexual abuse images or content promoting terrorism. Material might not be illegal but can still cause children harm, such as content promoting certain behaviours or it may be the material is not age/stage appropriate. Signs of exposure to harmful content maybe fear for self or others' safety, confusion, worry, upset, excitement and compulsion to share the content.

Young Carers: A young carer is someone under the age of 18 who helps to care for a family member, relative or friend. A young person aged 16-25 with caring responsibilities can be known as a young adult carer. As many as 1 in 5 children and young people are young carers in the UK. Young carers take on caring responsibilities as part of their everyday lives, meaning they often miss out on opportunities that other children have. Many struggle to focus at school, they can be overwhelmed by other worries or can be bullied for being 'different'. 1 in 3 young carers say that caring makes them feel stressed.