Dacorum Education Support Centre

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Policy Type	Statutory
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Agreed on	
Author	Naomi Walker

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September 2025	September 2025	Y
September 2026	September 2026	Y

DESC values the mental health and wellbeing of every member of its community.

Our policies reflect the core values of respect and support for each other in every aspect of life. Our aim is that all in our community, through working together, to feel safe and secure in an environment, which enables and equips every individual to thrive and be respectful of each other's strengths and differences.

Dacorum Education Support Centre

Author (of this model policy): Child Protection Centre Liaison Service, Quality Assurance Improvement and Practice, Children's Services, Hertfordshire County Council

Issue Date September 2026

Reference CSF0034 25-26 V1

Review Date (September 2027) The Dacorum Education Support Centre (DESC) Child Protection Policy is in line with the quality and standards expected from Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) and will be monitored by the DESC Management Committee. This policy will also be reviewed annually or when new legislation requires changes, whichever is the soonest. This policy is approved by the DESC Management Committee.

Date approved: Click or tap to enter a date.
Co-Headteachers: Clare Winter & Naomi Walker

Date approved: Click or tap to enter a date.
Chair of Management Committee –

Date approved:
Safeguarding Link of Management Committee Hannah Lloyd

Date of Last Review (to be used when policy is updated during the academic year in response to legislative/policy changes): 30/09/2026

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1. Safeguarding Policy Statement

DESC is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and all staff must act in the best interests of the child at all times.

A whole-Centre, child-centred approach is fundamental to all aspects of everyday life at our Centre. At DESC we strive to create a culture which enables children to express their wishes and feelings and talk about anything that is of importance to them. We believe that every child deserves to receive an education within an environment where they feel safe to learn and develop. We want our learners, staff, parents and carers to have confidence and trust in our goals and know that collaborative working is fundamental to create and maintain a child-centred approach to safeguarding.

In practice this means we endorse the key principle that the welfare of a child is paramount, keeping them at the Centre of all decision making in our partnership working with them, their families, and those supporting them.

In line with our duties set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE September 2026), The Children Act (1989, 2004) and Working Together (2026). We are committed to providing support and help as soon as possible. We are also committed to ensuring that we work with agencies, including the Local Authority, to access support and targeted interventions for families when we consider that a child is, or may be, at risk of harm.

DESC recognises the statutory Information Sharing Duty contained within section 16LA of the Children Act 2004 (as amended by the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act). Where information held by the Centre may assist another organisation or practitioner to assess need, understand risk, make decisions, provide support or take action to safeguard and promote the welfare of a child, DESC will share relevant information in accordance with statutory guidance, unless sharing would be more detrimental to the child

We hope that parents, carers and families will support us to undertake our statutory duties to offer Family Help support and to liaise with agencies to protect children who have suffered or otherwise likely to suffer significant harm without doing so. The core objective of Family Help support is to prevent any child from being harmed or placed at risk of harm and therefore halt any escalation where possible. Family Help includes preventative and targeted intervention before statutory thresholds are met. DESC will contribute meaningfully to Family Help assessments, Family Networks and Family Group Decision Making processes when requested.

This policy outlines the commitment to our legal duties to safeguard children, the responsibilities for all our staff and the specific roles and responsibilities for our key Designated Safeguarding Leads and Governance.

2. Important Safeguarding Contacts

Centre's In-House Contacts

Organisation / Role	Name	Contact details
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	**Naomi Walker**	01442 247476 (option 2) nwalker@desc.herts.sch.uk
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)	**Kathryn Girdlestone**	01442 247476 (option 1) kgirdlestone@desc.herts.sch.uk
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)	**Karen Rackley**	01442 247476 (option 2) krackley@desc.herts.sch.uk
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)	**Jade Dixon (Maternity Leave)**	01442 247476 (option 2) jdixon@desc.herts.sch.uk
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)	**Faye Ewen**	01442 247476 (option 1) fewen@desc.herts.sch.uk
Designated Teacher for Children Looked After (DT for CLA)	**Naomi Walker**	01442 247476 (option 2) nwalker@desc.herts.sch.uk
Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO)	**Jade Dixon (KS4) (Maternity Leave)** **Clare Winter (KS1-3)**	01442 247476 jdixon@desc.herts.sch.uk cwinter@desc.herts.sch.uk
Mental Health Lead	**Elaine McWilliams**	01442 247476 emcwilliams@desc.herts.sch.uk
DSL Prevent Lead	**Naomi Walker**	01442 247476 (option 2) nwalker@desc.herts.sch.uk
Chair of Governors		admin@desc.herts.sch.uk
Vice Chair of Governors	**Dave Fisher**	admin@desc.herts.sch.uk
Link Safeguarding Governor	**Hannah Lloyd**	admin@desc.herts.sch.uk

3. Legislation and Guidance

This policy reflects the requirements of KCSIE 2026, including the strengthened expectations relating to Family Help, safeguarding children who may be experiencing multiple harms, online safety, filtering and monitoring, artificial intelligence, anti-discriminatory practice and safeguarding support for gender questioning children.

Keeping children safe in education 2026 2026 (KCSIE) which sets out the legal duties that all Centres and colleges in England must follow to safeguard and promote the welfare of children under the age of 18.

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002,places a duty on Centres and Local Authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of learners.

The Centre Staffing (England) Regulations 2009, which sets out what must be recorded on the single central record and the requirements of safer recruitment techniques.

Maintained Centres governance guide - 7. Compliance - Guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) (2024) provides guidance for governing bodies on how to meet their legal and regulatory responsibilities with regards to compliance.

This policy also meets requirements relating to safeguarding and welfare in the Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage for group and Centre providers (publishing.service.gov.uk)

The Childcare (Disqualification) and Childcare (Early Years Provision Free of Charge) (Extended Entitlement) (Amendment) Regulations 2018 (referred to in this policy as the "2018 Childcare Disqualification Regulations") and Childcare Act 2006,

Children Act 1989 (and 2004 amendment), which provides a framework for the care and protection of children

Working together to safeguard children 2026

Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership | Hertfordshire County Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (HSCP) The three partners (Hertfordshire County Council, Police and Health)

Serious Crime Act 2015, Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 which places a statutory duty on teachers to report to the police where they discover that female genital mutilation (FGM) appears to have been carried out on a girl under 18

Statutory guidance on FGM, which sets out responsibilities with regards to safeguarding and supporting girls affected by FGM

The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, which outlines when people with criminal convictions can work with children

Schedule 4 of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, which defines what 'regulated activity' is in relation to children

Statutory guidance on the Prevent duty, Prevent duty guidance: England and Wales (2023) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

The Human Rights Act 1998,

The Equality Act 2010,

Information sharing advice for safeguarding practitioners produced by the DfE, outlines the importance of sharing information about children, young people, and their families in order to safeguard children.

Information Sharing Duty: Statutory Guidance for Safeguarding Organisations and their Practitioners (DfE, September 2026) issued under section 16LA Children Act 2004 (as amended by the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act), which places a statutory duty on relevant safeguarding agencies to share information where it may assist another agency to safeguard or promote the welfare of a child

Working together to Improve Centre Attendance

4. Definitions: Safeguarding and Child Protection

All our staff at DESC are expected to be familiar with the wide range of policies and procedures we have to keep our children safe and promote their wellbeing at all times.

Safeguarding as defined in KCSIE (2026), means:

- 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 impairment of children's mental and physical health or development
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026) further extends this definition to include:

- 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
- 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
- Child/ren: The legal definition of a child in the UK includes everyone under the age of 18.

5. Equality Statement, children with Protected Characteristics

DESC adopts the statutory definition of safeguarding as set out in KCSIE 2026 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026.

DESC is committed to anti-racist, anti-discriminatory safeguarding practice.

We recognise that discrimination, racism, unconscious bias, prejudice and stereotyping can impact how safeguarding concerns are recognised, interpreted and responded to.

All staff are expected to identify, challenge and respond appropriately to discrimination and to ensure that safeguarding decisions are equitable, evidence-based and child-centred.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Role and Responsibilities of the Whole Centre

- The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) - Naomi Walker, takes lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection.
- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility at DESC. This policy applies to all of our staff including permanent, temporary and supply, volunteers, governors and contractors. It also applies to our safeguarding arrangements for extended Centre and off-site activities.
- DESC plays a crucial role in preventative education. This is in the context of a whole-Centre approach to preparing learners for life in modern Britain, and a culture of zero tolerance of sexism, misogyny/misandry, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and sexual violence/harassment. This will be underpinned by our:
- Behaviour Policy
- pastoral support system
- planned programme of relationships, sex and health education (RSHE), which is inclusive and delivered regularly, tackling issues such as:
- healthy and respectful relationships
- boundaries and consent
- stereotyping, prejudice, and equality
- body confidence and self-esteem
- how to recognise an abusive relationship (including coercive and controlling behaviour)
- the concepts of, and laws relating to, sexual consent, sexual exploitation, abuse, grooming, coercion, harassment, rape, domestic abuse, so-called honour-based violence such as forced marriage and FGM and how to access support
- what constitutes sexual harassment and sexual violence and why they're always unacceptable

- Full details of the RSHE Curriculum can be found here: CE2B658E5315D1372A3945B19858D562.pdf)

Role and Responsibility of all staff (permanent, temporary and supply), volunteers and contractors

All staff regardless of role will be required to:

- read Part One of Keeping Children Safe in Education, and the reviewed version of this guidance at least annually. All members of Senior Leadership Team, Safeguarding Team and Key Stage leads must also read Annex B.
- sign confirmation that they have read the expected sections according to their role, have understood the content and their roles and responsibilities in our whole Centre approach to safeguarding. All staff will be required to complete a review of their understanding of roles and responsibilities via our online training portal SSS Learning
- promote and raise awareness about the importance of online safety when communicating with parents and carers. This includes making parents and carers aware of what we ask children to do online (e.g. sites they need to visit or who they'll be interacting with online)
- contribute to creating a culture for learners who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or gender questioning to speak out and share their concerns
- contribute to creating a culture for any child defined as having a protected characteristic to speak out and share their concerns (see Section 5)

All staff will be aware of:

- our Centre's safeguarding arrangements and systems which is explained to staff as part of their induction and annual update training. As part of staff induction new staff/ volunteers are provided with the following key guidance and information provided by our Centre senior leadership team:
    - Child Protection Policy
    - Staff Behaviour Policy/Code of Conduct
    - the role and identity of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and deputies
    - the Behaviour Policy
    - E-Safety and ICT Policy
- our expected safeguarding response to children who are absent from education, particularly on repeat occasions and/or prolonged periods
- signs of vulnerabilities to look out for in children who may benefit from Family Help support
- what to do if they identify a safeguarding issue or a child tells them they are being abused or neglected, including specific issues such as FGM, and how to maintain an appropriate level of confidentiality while liaising with relevant professionals

- the process for recording and sharing information internally to DSLs and on children's safeguarding records
- the statutory Information Sharing Duty and the expectation that relevant safeguarding information should be shared promptly with appropriate agencies where this may support safeguarding, assessment, intervention, support or protection of a child
- the process of making referrals to the Local Authority Children's Social Care and/or Police where required and the statutory processes that may follow
- the signs of specific safeguarding issues, such as child-on-child abuse, child sexual exploitation (CSE), child criminal exploitation (CCE), indicators of being at risk from or involved with serious violent crime, FGM, radicalisation and serious violence (including that linked to county lines) See Annex B *Keeping Children Safe in Education*
- how to support and speak to children when they may share their worries or make disclosures of abuse, neglect or exploitation and contribute to creating a culture where children feel able to speak with the relevant safeguarding leads. Staff should share any concerns they have about a child with a member of the Safeguarding Team. However, it should be remembered that sometimes children will 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. This should not prevent staff from having a professional curiosity and speak to a member of the Safeguarding Team'
- the importance of reassuring children that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe
- the importance of supporting families and providing a culture of support to encourage parents/carers to seek support and engage with our Centre and professionals when issues emerge or become a concern
- children can be at risk of harm inside the home (familial harm) and outside of their home (extra familial harms) and that any form of harm can happen directly or online
- the fact that children who are (or who are perceived to be) lesbian, gay, bisexual (LGBTQ+) can be targeted by other children
- DESC recognises that children may experience multiple harms simultaneously. These harms may be interrelated and include exploitation, domestic abuse, online abuse, mental ill-health, serious violence, criminal exploitation, poverty and neglect. Staff must consider the cumulative impact of these experiences when assessing risk and identifying appropriate support.
- what to look for to identify children who need help or protection in accordance with statutory procures under the children act section 17 (child in need) and section 47 (significant harm).
- Safeguarding updates will be provided throughout the academic year where legislation, local procedures or emerging risks change.

Children who are Gender Questioning

- DESC recognises that a child who is gender questioning may experience additional vulnerability, including bullying, harassment, social isolation, exploitation, mental health difficulties and online harms.

- Any request relating to social transition, changes to name, pronouns, facilities or other arrangements will be considered on an individual basis and with the child's welfare as the paramount consideration.
- The DSL will be involved in decisions where safeguarding, welfare or vulnerability issues arise.
- Parents/carers will normally be involved unless doing so would place the child at risk of significant harm.
- Any safeguarding concerns relating to gender questioning children will be managed in accordance with KCSIE 2026 and relevant Department for Education guidance.

Role and Responsibilities of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

Our DSL team includes a member/s of our senior leadership team. DESC's DSL is Naomi Walker. We also have a number of Deputy DSLs (DDSL). There is always at least 1 member of the Safeguarding team present at each site.

- The DSL takes lead responsibility for our Centre's child protection and wider safeguarding arrangements. This includes online safety and understanding our filtering and monitoring processes on Centre devices and Centre networks to keep learners safe online
- The DSL or delegated member of the Safeguarding Team will act as the main contact in our Centre when a child and their family are receiving support from the Centre, external agencies and statutory services
- Where children experience multiple harms, safeguarding assessments will consider cumulative impact and interaction between vulnerabilities.
- During term time, the DSL and wider Safeguarding Team will be available during Centre hours for staff to discuss any safeguarding concerns
- In the event that non-urgent matters arise out of Centre hours, our DSL can be contacted via work email and mobile
- A member of staff can raise safeguarding concerns with any member of the Safeguarding Team
- A rota of safeguarding cover operates during holiday periods and arrangements are shared with relevant agencies where necessary.
- Contact should be made via the following email: info@desc.herts.sch.uk.
- Robust cover arrangements are in place to ensure DSL availability at all times.
- Ensure compliance with the Information Sharing Duty and provide advice and challenge where information sharing decisions may affect safeguarding outcomes for children.

The DSL will be given the time, funding, training, resources and support to:

- provide advice and support to other staff on child welfare and child protection matters

- take part in strategy discussions / support meetings or other supportive measures organised by the Local Authority's Children's Social Care and inter-agency meetings and/or support other staff to do so when required
- refer suspected cases, as appropriate, to the relevant body (Local Authority Children's Social Care, Channel Programme, Disclosure and Barring Service, and/or Police), and support staff who make such referrals directly
- have a good understanding of the filtering and monitoring systems and processes in place at our Centre
- assist the Co-Headteachers to review and respond to low-level concerns that may arise regarding staff
- share information and/or take part in statutory processes that involve reviewing and analysing of safeguarding practice and policies

The DSL will also:

- keep the Co-Headteachers informed of any issues, the conversations with children and their families, universal services and referrals to external agencies and statutory services
- liaise with universal, targeted and statutory agencies, Local Authority workers (Children's Services and other key practitioners) when there are safeguarding concerns as appropriate (includes Family Help and child protection)
- share information about incidences of sexual violence and sexual harassment with statutory colleagues such as Police and Children's Social Care colleagues in order to prepare and implement the Centre's policies
- be confident about what local specialist support is available to support all children involved (including victims and alleged perpetrators) in sexual violence and sexual harassment
- be aware that children are entitled to have an 'Appropriate Adult' to support and help them in Police investigations or if there is threshold met for them to be searched

The full responsibilities of the DSL and deputy(s) are set out in their job description,

see Annex C KCSiE

Role and Responsibilities of the Governance

DESC Management Committee have a strategic role within our leadership and management team and must ensure that all staff comply with legislation and local guidance at all times.

The Management Committee will:

- facilitate a whole-Centre approach to safeguarding, ensuring that safeguarding and child protection are at the forefront of, and underpin, all relevant aspects of process and policy development for the setting

- evaluate and approve this child protection policy along with other policies related to safeguarding at each review, ensuring they comply with the law, and hold the Co-Headteachers to account for their implementation
- evaluate and approve recommendations/action plans identified through quality assurance activity that the Senior team / DSL undertakes to review safeguarding practice through audits and annual/termly governing reports to ensure that they have regular oversight and hold the Co-Headteachers accountable for the practice improvement
- appoint a senior body level (or equivalent) lead (or link governor) to monitor the effectiveness of the Centre's safeguarding arrangements including policies and their implementation, in conjunction with the full governing body. This is always a different person from the DSL. The Safeguarding Governor is Hannah Lloyd
- ensure all staff undergo safeguarding and child protection training, including online safety according to their roles, and that such training is regularly updated and is in line with statutory guidance and Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children's Partnership
- ensure that all members of the Management Committee:
    - read Keeping Children Safe in Education in its entirety, and review compliance of this task at least annually
    - sign a declaration at the beginning of each academic year to say that they have reviewed the above guidance
- ensure that the Centre has appropriate filtering and monitoring systems in place and review their effectiveness. This includes:
    - making sure that the leadership team and staff are aware of the provisions in place, and that they understand their expectations, roles and responsibilities around filtering and monitoring as part of safeguarding training
    - reviewing the DfE's filtering and monitoring standards and discussing with IT staff and service providers what needs to be done to support the Centre in meeting these standards.

The Management Committee will make sure:

- the DSL has the appropriate status and authority to carry out their job, including additional time, funding, training, resources and support
- the DSL has lead authority for safeguarding, including online safety and understanding the filtering and monitoring systems and processes in place
- the Centre has effective procedures to manage any safeguarding concerns (no matter how small) that arise. This includes those related to child welfare concerns, low level concerns and allegations made against staff
- make sure that safeguarding requirements are a condition of using the Centre premises, and that any agreement to use the premises would be terminated if the other body fails to comply.

- the Chair of Management Committee will act as the 'case manager' in the event that an allegation is made against the Co-Headteachers where appropriate (see Section 11 Managing Concerns and Allegations)

Role and Responsibilities of the Co-Headteachers

The Co-Headteachers will:

- implement this policy and ensure that all staff:
    - are informed of our Centre's systems which support safeguarding, including reading and understanding this policy, as part of their induction
    - follow the procedures included in this policy, what they should know and do in relation to information sharing and referrals of cases of suspected abuse and neglect
- make this policy available to parents/carers, professionals and the community to ensure there is transparency and clear expectations about the Centre's duty to safeguarding and promote the welfare of children and the arrangements for responding to children presenting with needs that may require Family Help or support to protect them. A copy of our policy can be found on our website or a printed can be requested from reception on either site
- ensuring that the DSL has appropriate time, funding, training and resources, and that there is always adequate cover if the DSL is absent
- act as the 'case manager' representing the Centre in the event of an allegation of abuse made against another member of staff or volunteer
- managing cases where there are low-level concerns regarding the conduct of staff, or oversee delegation to the DSL

Role and Responsibilities of the Designated Teacher

Our Designated Teacher (Naomi Walker) takes leadership of promoting the educational attainment of Children with a Social Worker which includes:

- working closely with Virtual Centre Heads to ensure that funding is best used to support the child's educational achievement and development needs that are identified in their personal education plans
- to carry out their duties in line with Designated teacher for looked-after and previously looked-after children - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) and extended duties as outlined Promoting the education of children with a social worker and children in kinship care arrangements: virtual Centre head role extension - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

7. Working with Families

Alongside KCSIE, DESC adopts the fundamental principal of ***working in a child-centred approach within a whole family focus*** as promoted in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026.

DESC recognises that effective Family Help relies upon timely and appropriate information sharing between agencies and will contribute relevant information to Family Help assessments and planning processes in line with statutory guidance.

We endeavour to work in partnership and collaboration with children and their families so that they are supported from an early stage by being a part of and leading the conversations about change and aims for their children. We are keen to support families in a strength and solution-based approach, encouraging motivation and confidence to improve their own agency to make safe and positive decisions for themselves and their children.

DESC recognises the importance of Family Group Decision Making and family-led planning when working with children and families.

Where appropriate, families will be supported to identify solutions, strengths and support networks that can improve outcomes and reduce safeguarding risks.

Our principles include, but are not limited to:

Promoting effective partnership working with parents and carers e.g. build strong, positive, trusting, and co-operative relationships

Communicating effectively verbally and non-verbally

Empowering our parents and carers to participate in decision-making to help, support and protect children.

8. Confidentiality and Sharing Information

Trusted relationships are at the heart of working with children and their families at DESC. We strive to uphold good practice and work in partnership with children and families, communicating effectively and listening well so that we have sufficient information to understand and be able to meet their needs.

Our Centre understands the lawful basis in which our DSLs can share information with other people, agencies and organisations about the children and families we are supporting.

If we feel that we need to share information with services due to concerns about a child's safety or welfare to provide the family with specific support, we will be upfront, transparent and honest about our concerns and the ways in which such services could help the family. We will endeavour to support and encourage the family to consent and engage with such support.

If we have a concern about a child's safety and have decided to share information to protect them from a risk of harm, we will endeavour to gain cooperation and understanding from parents and carers. We will strive where possible to always gain consent and where we believe

our concerns have increased and warrant the sharing of information to statutory services such as Police and Children's Social Care, we will have made efforts to discuss, explore and provide support to address these with families in a collaborative way beforehand; concerns should not be a surprise to families unless in situations where a one off or unprecedented incident occurs.

Information should be shared where it may assist another organisation or practitioner to safeguard or promote the welfare of a child, unless a lawful exemption applies or a practitioner determines that sharing would be more detrimental than beneficial to the child.

Information sharing decisions will be evidence-based, proportionate and free from discrimination, stereotyping or bias.

Fears about data protection must not prevent information being shared where this is necessary to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Where information is shared without consent, the rationale for doing so will be clearly recorded.

For a small number of children, seeking parental consent is not always possible and may place a child or others at risk of harm, for example:

- the child would be placed at increased risk of significant harm through the action of gaining this consent
- there would be an impact on a criminal investigation
- a delay in making the referral would impact on the immediate safety of the child.

In situations where our professional or legal duty is exercised to share certain information in the absence of consent, we will inform them as soon as possible if it is safe and appropriate to do so. We will be clear about what we have shared, with whom, the reasons why and how the information will be used.

In any situation where a child or their parent/carer object to consent or particular information sharing and we decide that it is proportionate to do so, a clear rationale, outlining our decisions and the reasons why, will be recorded on the child's file.

In situations where there are allegations of child-on-child abuse, we will notify the parents or carers of all the children involved. If a child or group of children have suffered significant harm or are considered at risk of harm either directly or online, we will have a duty to consider making a referral to Children's Social Care and the Police if a crime has been committed. The process for this can be found in Section 9 and our principles for information sharing and consent will apply, unless we have a legal obligation to report the incident.

In addition to sharing information, our DSLs will endeavour to arrange a meeting with the parents and carers of all children to share information about the incident, plan safety strategies and/or risk management plans. Our DSLs will endeavour to keep families up to date and provide reassurance on any measures being taken, whilst respecting the privacy of each individual child involved.

For the purposes of this policy, the term "data protection laws" refers collectively to the Data Protection Act 2018, the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data (Use and Access) Act 2025, in line with KCSIE 2026. These laws do not prevent or limit the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe
The following principles apply to DESC confidentiality agreement:

- timely information sharing is essential to effective safeguarding.
- Data protection laws do not prevent, or limit, the sharing of information for the purposes of keeping children safe
- if staff need to share 'special category personal data', the DPA 2018 contains 'safeguarding of children and individuals at risk' as a processing condition that allows practitioners to share information without consent if: it is not possible to gain consent; it cannot be reasonably expected that a practitioner gains consent; or if to gain consent would place a child at risk
- staff should never promise a child that they will not tell anyone about a report of abuse, as this may not be in the child's best interests
- if a victim asks the Centre not to tell anyone about the sexual violence or sexual harassment:
    - even if a victim doesn't consent to sharing information, staff may still lawfully share it if there is another legal basis under the Data Protection Act and Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 that applies
- the DSL will have to balance the victim's wishes against their duty to protect the victim and other children
- the DSL should consider the following points:
- parents or carers should normally be informed (unless this would put the child at greater risk)
- the basic safeguarding principle is: if a child is at risk of harm, is in immediate danger, or has been harmed, a referral should be made to Children's Social Care where the child resides
- where a report of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault is made, this should be referred to the Police. While the age of criminal responsibility is 10, if the alleged perpetrator is under 10, the starting principle of referring to the Police remains

    - regarding anonymity, all staff will:
- be aware of anonymity, witness support and the criminal process in general where an allegation of sexual violence or sexual harassment is progressing through the criminal justice system
- do all they reasonably can to protect the anonymity of any children involved in any report of sexual violence or sexual harassment, for example, carefully considering which staff should know about the report, and any support for children involved

    - Relevant information includes current, historical, contextual, partial and pattern-based information where it may help another agency understand risk, assess need, make decisions, provide support or take safeguarding action.

If staff are in any doubt about sharing information, they can seek advice from our Co-Headteachers, DSL or any person in a position of senior leadership.

9. Information Sharing Duty

- DESC recognises the statutory Information Sharing Duty introduced through section 16LA Children Act 2004.
- When acting for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, staff and safeguarding leads will:
- share relevant information promptly where it may support another organisation's safeguarding functions;
- share information that assists with identifying need, assessing risk, making decisions or planning support;
- consider whether historical, contextual, cumulative or seemingly low-level concerns form part of a wider safeguarding picture;
- record decisions to share or not share information and the rationale for the decision;
- only withhold information in the limited circumstances set out in statutory guidance where sharing would be more detrimental to the child.

10. Recognise and Respond to Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation (what all staff must know and do if they have concerns)

Professional Curiosity

All staff are expected to exercise professional curiosity.

This means respectfully exploring concerns, asking appropriate questions, considering wider family circumstances and understanding possible barriers to disclosure.

Staff should remain professionally curious where there are indicators of: persistent absences, disguised compliance, neglect, unexplained behavioural changes, exploitation, repeated low-level concerns.

No single concern should be considered in isolation.

Abuse, neglect and exploitation

All our staff are aware of what abuse, neglect and exploitation is and have an understanding of the different types of indicators as outlined in Appendix 3 which could suggest a child is suffering or likely to suffer harm.

We encourage our staff to be professionally curious about what to look out for as this is vital for the early identification of abuse, neglect and exploitation so that we are able to identify children who may be in need of help or protection at the earliest opportunity.

Abuse is 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 where they see, hear or experience its effects. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting 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.

Our staff are aware that children may be abused by an adult or adults or by another child or children.

Physical Abuse
Physical abuse is 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 (Fabricated Induced Illness FII).

Emotional Abuse
The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and 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. 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
- a child seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another
- serious bullying (including cyberbullying)
- causing a child to feel frightened or in danger
- 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. It can be difficult to recognise emotional abuse and children may not always realise they are experiencing it. However, there may be indicators in the way a child behaves and reacts to certain situations.

Sexual Abuse
Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving 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
- **Online Safety and AI Risks:** sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. DESC recognise the safeguarding risks associated with AI, including deepfake imagery and online exploitation.

Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males, women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Neglect

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

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

Exploitation

Exploitation in relation to children refers to the use of children for someone else's advantage, gratification, or profit often resulting in unjust, cruel, and harmful treatment of the child. These activities are to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, education, moral or social-emotional development. It covers situations of manipulation, misuse, abuse, victimization, oppression or ill-treatment.

Our staff are aware that there are several types of child exploitation, including, but not limited to:

- **Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE):** this is a type of sexual abuse where children are sexually exploited for money, power, or status. It can involve contact and non-contact activities and can occur without the child's immediate recognition; this is due to their grooming by the abuser

- **Child Labor Exploitation:** this involves the use of children in work that is harmful to their physical and mental development. It deprives them of their childhood, potential, and dignity

- **Child Trafficking:** children are recruited, moved, or transported and then exploited, forced to work, or sold. They are often used for forced labour, sexual exploitation, or illegal activities

- **Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE):** this is where children are involved in activities of a criminal nature, often in gangs. They may be forced or manipulated into committing crimes, such as selling drugs or stealing

Safeguarding Issues and Specific Forms of Abuse

All our staff understand that children can be at risk of abuse or exploitation in situations outside their families. They are aware that extra familial harms take a variety of different forms and children can be vulnerable to multiple harms including (but not limited to) sexual abuse (including harassment and exploitation), domestic abuse in their own intimate relationships (teenage relationship abuse), drug taking and/or alcohol misuse, criminal exploitation, child sexual exploitation, serious youth violence, county lines, radicalisation, consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as youth produced sexual imagery) and can put children in danger.

Staff are aware that Extra Familial Harms can present online, in a child's environment/neighbourhood, Centre and any place/space that children occupy or access such as:

- Child abduction
- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)
- Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)
- County Lines
- Children and the Court system
- Children absent from education
- Children with family members in prison
- Cybercrime
- Domestic abuse
- Homelessness
- Mental health
- Modern Slavery and the National Referral Mechanism
- Preventing radicalization
- The Prevent Duty
- Channel
- Sexual violence and Sexual harassment between children in Centre
- Serious Violence
- FGM and the mandatory reporting duty for teachers
- Forced marriage

Child-on-Child Abuse

At DESC, we know that children can cause harm to other children. As a Centre we have a zero acceptance of child-on-child abuse and create a culture of keeping an open mind and attitude that "it could happen here". Our staff are aware that even if no reports are being made in our Centre, it does not mean it is not happening.

Our staff understand that it is important to challenge inappropriate behaviours between children that are abusive in nature, and we have clear expectations that incidents are not

downplayed or suggested to be jovial or part of growing up as this can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours and unsafe environments for children and young people.

Child-on-child 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 children (sometimes known as 'teenage relationship abuse')
- physical abuse which can include hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm
- sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault
- sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment
- 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)

Education regarding understanding, preventing and recognising child-on-child abuse is covered within our Personal Development curriculum

Domestic Abuse

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (Part 1) defines domestic abuse as any of the following behaviours, either as a pattern of behaviour, or as a single incident, between two people over the age of 16, who are 'personally connected' to each other: (a) physical or sexual abuse; (b) violent or threatening behaviour; (c) controlling or coercive behaviour; (d) economic abuse (adverse effect of the victim to acquire, use or maintain money or other property; or obtain goods or services); and (e) psychological, emotional or other abuse. The definition of Domestic Abuse applies to children if they see or hear, or experience the effects of, the abuse; and they are related to the abusive person.

Our staff understand that these experiences can have a detrimental and long-term impact on their health, well-being, development, and ability to learn. The statutory definition of domestic abuse, based on the previous cross-government definition, ensures that different types of relationships are captured, including ex-partners and family members.

Our staff are aware that domestic abuse can include intimate partner violence, abuse by family members, teenage relationship abuse and child to parent abuse and that 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.

Types of Domestic Abuse:

- Controlling or coercive behaviour
- Violent or threatening behaviour
- Physical or sexual abuse
- Economic abuse
- Technology-facilitated abuse
- Psychological, emotional, or other abuse
- Stalking

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
Keeping Children Safe in Education (2026) explains that FGM includes *'all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs.'*

FGM is illegal in the UK and is considered as a form of child abuse that has significantly harmful and long-lasting consequences. It can also be referred to as 'female genital cutting', 'circumcision' or 'initiation'.

Our staff are aware of their mandatory reporting duty and the requirement to immediately contact the Police if they are

- informed by a girl under 18 that an act of FGM has been carried out on her
- observes physical signs which appear to show that an act of FGM has been carried out on a girl under 18 (and they have no reason to believe that the act was necessary for the girl's physical or mental health or for purposes connected with labour or birth)

Honour Based Abuse

Our Staff are aware of So-called 'honour-based' abuse (HBA) encompasses crimes which have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or the community. These include Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, and practices such as breast ironing. Staff understand that all forms of so-called HBA are abuse and should be immediately escalated.

Prevent

DESC recognises that extremist ideology may be encountered online, through social media, gaming platforms, artificial intelligence tools and peer networks.

Staff will remain vigilant to emerging forms of radicalisation and extremist content.

The Prevent Duty is concerned with all forms of terrorism and extremism. It also includes some forms of nonviolent extremism. For example:

- Right Wing extremism
- Religious extremism
- Environmental and Animal Rights extremism
- Centre Massacre ideology

- Involuntary Celibate (Incel) ideology

DESC is aware of our duty under section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, in the exercise of our functions, to have "*due regard to the need to prevent people from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism or extremism*".

Our staff are aware that children may be susceptible to radicalisation. Similar to protecting children from other forms of harms and abuse, protecting children from this risk is a part of our Centre's safeguarding approach.

Concerns about mental health

Mental health difficulties can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation. Poor or deteriorating mental health can also be a safeguarding concern in its own right. Our staff know to be alert to behavioural signs that suggest a child may be experiencing mental health or be at risk of developing one.

If a staff member has a concern about a child's mental health, no matter the level of the child's emotional difficulties, they must speak to the Centre's DSL who will evaluate if the child is at risk of immediate harm, and if so, will escalate to the appropriate level of support which includes speaking to the Centre lead for Mental Health.

Children Absent or Missing from education

DESC recognises that regular attendance is a safeguarding issue and is committed to following the Department for Education's statutory guidance, Working Together to Improve Centre Attendance.

All staff are required to proactively monitor pupil attendance and punctuality, identify patterns of persistent or unexplained absence, and follow the Centre's procedures for early intervention and support. Particular attention will be given to children who are persistently absent, severely absent or subject to patterns of unexplained absence because these may indicate abuse, neglect, exploitation, criminal involvement or other safeguarding concerns.

Where concerns about attendance persist, or where absence may indicate a safeguarding risk, staff must refer the case to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and, where appropriate, make referrals to the Local Authority in line with statutory requirements.

DESC will work in partnership with families and external agencies to ensure that all children are safe, accounted for, and supported to attend Centre regularly. We monitor attendance carefully and address poor or irregular attendance without delay. We will always follow up with parents/carers when learners are not at Centre. (For further information regarding our attendance monitoring procedures please refer to the Engagement and Access to Learning Attendance policy)

Missing Centre can be an indicator of abuse and neglect and may also raise concerns about others safeguarding issues, including the criminal exploitation of children.

This means we need to have a least two up to date contacts numbers for parents/carers. Parents should remember to update the Centre as soon as possible if the numbers change

In response to the guidance in KCSIE (2026) DESC has:

1. Staff who understand what to do when children do not attend regularly

2. Appropriate policies, procedures and responses for learners who go missing from education (especially on repeat occasions).

3. Staff who know the signs and triggers for travelling to conflict zones, FGM and forced marriage

4. Procedures to inform the local authority when we plan to take learners off-roll when they:

A) leave Centre to be home educated

B) move away from the Centre's location

C) remain medically unfit beyond compulsory Centre age

D) are in custody for four months or more (and will not return to Centre afterwards)

or are permanently excluded

We will ensure that learners who are expected to attend the Centre, but fail to take up the place will be referred to the local authority. When a learner leaves the Centre, we will record the name of the learner's new Centre and their expected start date.

What all staff need to do to respond if abuse, neglect and exploitation is suspected or been disclosed.

At DESC we adopt a whole Centre approach and safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Staff and volunteers, and governors must comply with our safeguarding procedures as set out below:

Concerns about child-on-child abuse

In most circumstances, incidences of learners hurting other learners will be dealt with under our Centre's Behaviour policy and guide desc.herts.sch.uk/policies. Our child protection policy will apply to all incidents that raise safeguarding concerns where the alleged behaviour:

- is serious, and potentially a criminal offence
- could put learners in the Centre at risk
- is violent
- involves learners being forced to use drugs or alcohol
- involves sexual exploitation, sexual abuse or sexual harassment, such as indecent exposure, sexual assault, upskirting or sexually inappropriate pictures or videos (including the sharing of nudes and semi-nudes)

If a learner makes an allegation of abuse against another learner:

- staff must record the allegation via our CPOMS system and report to the DSL, staff should not investigate the matter
- the DSL will assess and consider the relevant next steps which may include, speaking with the child and parents, accessing relevant consultation lines provided to Centres by the Local Authority, making a request for support to Children's Services as well as the Police if the allegation involves a potential criminal offence or the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), if appropriate
- the DSL will consider whether a risk assessment or a safety and support plan would be beneficial for any children involved, including the victim(s), the child(ren) against whom the allegation has been made and any others affected, with a named person they can talk to if needed. This should include consideration of all aspects and areas of the Centre environment and beyond, for example off-site activities and Centre transport
- the DSL will speak to the child and their parent/s or carers to share the concerns, gain their views and consent to liaise with other agencies if there are any identified risks and unmet needs
- if the incident is a criminal offence Centre have a duty to report this and thereafter work closely with the Police (and other agencies as required) while protecting children and/or taking any measures to manage risk. For incidences which involve significant harm and/or a potential criminal offence, the DSL will endeavour to gain consent but may override this should not gaining consent increase the risk to a child
- our DSLs are committed to ensuring that where concerns are raised about child-on-child abuse, incidences are taken seriously and dealt with fairly. DSLs will consider all information available to them and ensure that any action or decision is proportionate for all children involved, and that such decisions do not disproportionately impact on their access to education, although at times some restrictions or adaptations may be required to manage identified risk

If a child makes a disclosure to a member of staff or volunteer

All staff are aware they should always be prepared as children can disclose spontaneously to anyone anywhere.

All staff know that we place the voice of children at the centre of everything we do and endeavour to place their best interests at heart. We ensure we know who our children are, staff are encouraged to be curious by speaking and listening to children whilst respecting any protected characteristics. We hope our children have confidence and trust in our staff, believing they will be taken seriously and be supported with their issues or concerns sensitively.

Staff also know that children may not always feel ready or know how to tell someone that they are being abused, neglected or exploited and do not always recognise their experiences as harmful.

Recording concerns

Our staff know that reporting concerns is a procedural requirement when safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. Our staff receive regular training and updates in the use of our recording system CPOMS. Our staff are clear that they must:

- record all conversations relating to any level of concerns on our recording systems; ensuring that the record is as detailed as possible, is factual, does not contain assumptions or personal judgement and captures the child's account in their own words
- inform the DSL about their concern as soon as possible; where the concern involves a disclosure or concern that the child is at risk of harm, they must inform the DSL immediately
- all information should be recorded on CPOMS immediately in addition to speaking to a member of the Safeguarding Team

Our staff are aware that such information is confidential and should be shared with the DSL or Safeguarding Team only who may hold additional information about the child and their family, and therefore can form a view on its significance and whether any action is required. Staff will not share information amongst themselves and will not share the information outside of the formal reporting process unless asked to by the DSL. This ensures that information is shared without delay enabling the DSL to carry out any necessary functions of their role whilst upholding confidentiality for the child and their family.

Where a child is removed from DESC roll, their child protection files (CPOMS files) will be transferred within 5 working days (in-year) or first 5 days of term.

What Centre staff should do if they have concerns about a child

DESC is committed to ensuring that all children feel safe and comfortable to share and report any concerns and/or allegations about their personal experiences at home, in the community, online or regarding a member of staff or other children in the Centre. As outlined above, all our staff are clear on the importance of listening to and supporting children when making disclosures, and the need to reassure them.

Our staff are aware that children can share information with anyone in our Centre but there are clear reporting processes when such information sharing raises concern about their welfare.

Any member of staff, including supply teachers, contract workers, volunteers, governors/trustees and visitors at DESC who has any concerns about a child's welfare should:

- maintain an attitude of 'it could happen here' where safeguarding is concerned and always act in the best interests of the child. Never promise a child confidentiality
- reassure the child they have done nothing wrong and if appropriate explain to them how they will be supported and who you will need to share information with
- record what the child or others have disclosed using their language - or describe what you have seen or suspect and your rational for this. Also ensure you make a note of any injuries observed or described by the child (*if it is the latter two*)

- consider if the child needs medical attention and if so, prioritise ensuring they receive this

- you must never delay reporting your concerns about the welfare of a child and always act immediately by reporting/speaking to the Centre's DSL/deputies

- record what the child or other has disclosed in their language or describe what you have seen or suspect and your rational for this (*if it is the latter two*)

Operation Encompass

Operation Encompass operates in all police forces across England. It helps police and Centres work together to provide emotional and practical help to children. Operation Encompass does not replace statutory safeguarding procedures. Where appropriate, the police and/or Centres should make a referral to local authority children's social care if they are concerned about a child's welfare.

If DESC receives information regarding a young person via Operation Encompass it will follow normal Centre procedures for providing support for the young person and contact professionals where necessary.

Risk management and safety planning

The DSL, with support from deputy DSLs, will take the lead role in managing any proposed risk by the alleged perpetrator(s) and will provide support at the same time, it is not our intention to villainise children, but it is everyone's responsibility to uphold the Behaviour Policy and standards within the Centre to maintain a safe environment. Such assessments or plans will be robust but sensitive to the individual needs of the children to ensure any identified risk is managed as effectively as possible whilst also supporting them to continue accessing a satisfactory level of education.

Risk management strategies can be put in place while other investigations are going on, e.g., by the Police. Although another agency such as the Police or Children's Services is or has investigated an incident, it is our duty here at DESC to ensure we identify and implement our own assessment and management of the concerns, informed by the needs of our Centre and the children we care for and the advice and outcomes of those agency's actions. This is to ensure that all children and staff are supported and always protected. We will consider these matters on a case-by-case basis, considering whether:

- taking action would prejudice an investigation and/or subsequent prosecution – we will liaise with the Police and/or Children's Services to determine this
- there are circumstances that make it unreasonable or inappropriate for us to reach our own view about what happened while an independent investigation is ongoing

Risk Management Plan (RAMP) and Safety and Support Plan (S&SP)

RAMP - When there has been a report of sexual violence, or and harassment, the DSL (or a deputy) will make an immediate Risk and Needs Assessment for both the alleged victim and the perpetrator. The RAMP is to enable the DSL to use their critical thinking and consider what

the needs of any child/ren are, analyse what are the risks and what measures can be put in place to protect children and keep them safe from further harm. Risk assessments will be recorded (paper or electronic) and kept under review.

The Centre risk assessment is not intended to replace the detailed assessments of other expert specialist assessments, but the DSL will seek and share information from other agencies where required to inform the Centre's understanding form a multi-agency perspective so that a holistic approach in supporting and protecting children can be strengthened.

We are aware that children who are victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment will find the experience stressful and distressing, this can also impact on the family and can cause the child adverse effect on their educational attainment and can be exacerbated if the alleged perpetrator(s) attends the same Centre. The RAMP will take this into account and plan accordingly on the gravity of a situation on treat incidents on a case-by-case situation.

Keeping Children Safe in Education, Part Five Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment provide statutory duty for Schools and colleges.

The RAMP is the responsibility of DESC and its Leadership team, and it is critical that parents and cares place confidence and trust in our Centre by working with us and supporting the plan.

All Schools and colleges are at liberty to adopt any form of risk management and safety planning protocols, at DESC we use the following types of risk management to not only support children presenting with Harmful Sexual Behaviour but more commonly we experience a range of specific safeguarding issues that vulnerable children and young people are faced with, examples of these cited in Part one and Annex B KCSiE.

Risk Assessment Management Plan (RAMP) for Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB)

The RAMP framework provides DSLs in our Centre the means to:

· Assess the needs and risk of children and young people when they have presented with Harmful Sexual Behaviour (for age-appropriate exploratory sexual behaviours, use Safety and Support Plan framework).

- Guidance and evidenced based resources to support DSLs critical thinking and analysis using a multi-agency approach to identify risk and strengths.
- Template to support and manage risk by developing a day-to-day plan to safeguard and promote the welfare of Children and Young People (CYP), monitor and review their progress.
- Safety and Support Plan (S&SP) for all safeguarding issues and specific forms of abuse and harm
- The S&SP framework provides DSLs in our Centre to:

  1. Assess the needs and risk of children and young people when they have presented with vulnerabilities associated with themes set out part one and Annex B KCSIE this includes all forms of child-on-child abuse. (If CYP is presenting with high problematic and Harmful Sexual Behaviour use the RAMP framework).

2. Guidance and evidenced based resources to support DSLs critical thinking and analysis using a multi-agency approach to identify risk and strengths.

3. Template to manage risk by with a day today support plan therefore safeguard and promote the welfare of CYP, monitor and review their progress.

11. Online Safety and Filtering

We recognise the importance of safeguarding children from potentially harmful and inappropriate online material, and we understand that technology is a significant component in many safeguarding and wellbeing issues.

To address this, our Centre aims to:

- have robust processes (including filtering and monitoring systems) in place to ensure the online safety of learners, staff, volunteers and governors
- protect and educate the whole Centre community to be safe and responsibly use technology, including mobile and smart technology
- set clear guidelines for the use of mobile phones for the whole Centre community
- establish clear mechanisms to identify, intervene in, and escalate any incidents or concerns, where appropriate

Our approach to online safety is based on addressing the following 4 categories of risk as identified in Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026:

Content – being exposed to illegal, inappropriate or harmful content, for example: pornography, fake news, racism, misogyny, self-harm, suicide, anti-Semitism, radicalisation and extremism. Misinformation: disinformation, including fake news, and conspiracy theories.

Contact – being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users, for example: child-on-child 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 (e.g. consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes and/or pornography), sharing other explicit images and online bullying; and

Commerce – risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing and/or financial scams

- **Misinformation, disinformation and conspiracy theories** – DESC recognises that exposure to misinformation, disinformation, and conspiracy theories online can pose significant safeguarding risks to children and young people.

  In line with KCSIE 2026, these are identified as specific online harms that can impact pupils' wellbeing, safety, and decision-making. DESC is committed to proactively identifying these risks and addressing them through a whole-centre approach. This includes:

- Embedding education about misinformation, disinformation, and conspiracy theories within the curriculum, particularly through Pod, Personal Development and Hub Curriculums
- Providing regular staff training to ensure all staff can recognise, respond to, and support learners affected by online misinformation and conspiracy content.
- Equipping learners with critical thinking skills and strategies to identify, question, and report harmful or misleading online content.
- Engaging parents and carers through communication and guidance on supporting children's safe and informed use of technology at home.

All staff have a responsibility to remain vigilant to the risks posed by online misinformation and conspiracy theories and to report concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) in accordance with centre procedures.

To meet our aims and address the risks above, we will educate learners about online safety as part of our curriculum.

We will also:

- train staff, as part of their induction, on how to keep themselves safe online as well as children, in line with the Centre's online safety policy. All staff members will receive refresher training as required at least once each academic year
- educate parents/carers about online safety through letters and emails sent directly to them. We will also share clear procedures with them so they know how to raise concerns about online safety
- make all learners, parents/carers, staff, volunteers and governors aware that they are expected to sign an agreement regarding the acceptable use of the internet in Centre, use of the Centre's ICT systems and use of their mobile and smart technology
- explain the sanctions we will use if a learner is in breach of our policies on the acceptable use of the internet and mobile phones
- make sure all staff, learners and parents/carers are aware that appropriate staff designated by the Co-Headteachers, have the power to search learner's phones, as set out in the DfE's guidance on searching, screening and confiscation if there is a concern regarding a child's safety or a crime in which case the Police will be contacted
- provide regular safeguarding and child protection updates including online safety to all staff, at least annually, in order to continue to provide them with the relevant skills and knowledge to safeguard effectively
- review the child protection and safeguarding policy, including online safety, annually and ensure the procedures and implementation are updated and reviewed regularly

To support us in maintaining a safe and secure environment for all learners, DESC utilises SENSO filtering and monitoring software.

The SENSO system is deployed on all computers within the premises and devices loaned to learners. This facilitates a real-time monitoring of learner's online activities. This

system is inline with our dedication to proactively address risks related to online content and behaviour.

Generative AI and Cybersecurity

DESC recognises both the opportunities and risks presented by emerging technologies, including generative artificial intelligence (AI). In line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 and the Department for Education's guidance, DESC is committed to ensuring the safe, ethical, and responsible use of AI within the DESC community.

DESC will:

Regularly assess and monitor the use of generative AI tools to ensure they are used safely, appropriately, and in ways that support teaching, learning, and learner wellbeing.

Provide staff and learners with guidance and training on the safe use of AI, including recognising and mitigating risks such as misinformation, data privacy, and inappropriate content.

Implement robust cybersecurity measures in line with DfE Cyber Security Standards to protect Centre systems, data, and users from cyber threats, including regular reviews of filtering, monitoring, and incident response procedures.

Work with IT providers (Intern IT) and the local authority to ensure all digital platforms and AI tools meet safeguarding and data protection requirements.

Staff are aware that artificial intelligence may be used to create synthetic images, audio, video and text.

These technologies may increase risks relating to bullying, exploitation, sexual harassment, blackmail, misinformation and reputational harm.

Any concerns regarding AI-generated content involving children will be treated as a safeguarding concern and managed through the Centre's safeguarding procedures.

Alternative Provision Oversight

DESC is committed to ensuring the highest standards of safeguarding for all pupils placed in Alternative Provision (AP). In line with KCSIE 2026, the following procedures are in place:

Recording of Location: DESC maintains up-to-date records of the exact location and address of every learner placed in AP, including details of any subcontracted or satellite sites. DESC also maintains records of when learners are expected to attend provision.

Attendance Confirmation: For every session, DESC requires written confirmation from the AP provider that the pupil has arrived safely, with attendance to be confirmed within 30 minutes of the agreed start time. Any unexplained absence or delay is treated as a potential safeguarding concern and escalated immediately in line with Centre procedures.

Safer Recruitment Checks: DESC obtains written confirmation from all AP providers that they have carried out all required safer recruitment checks (including enhanced DBS and barred list checks) on staff working with our learners. This written assurance is held on file and reviewed annually

Placement Reviews: All AP placements are formally reviewed at least half-termly to ensure they continue to meet the pupil's needs and that safeguarding arrangements remain robust. Reviews include feedback from the learner, parents/carers, and the AP provider.

Regular Onsite Visits: Designated staff conduct regular onsite visits to AP settings, both announced and unannounced, to monitor the quality of provision, pupil welfare, and safeguarding practices.

DESC will only continue AP placements where there is clear evidence of effective safeguarding, high-quality provision, and positive learner outcomes. Any concerns identified will be acted upon immediately, including withdrawal of the placement if necessary. DESC retains ultimate responsibility for safeguarding pupils placed in alternative provision.

Filtering and Monitoring Arrangements

The effectiveness of filtering and monitoring systems will be formally reviewed at least annually by the named senior leader responsible for filtering and monitoring, supported by the DSL and IT provider. A written record of the review and any actions taken will be maintained.

Named filtering and monitoring lead: Stephen Peach

Frequency of monitoring reports: Daily reports via Schools Broadband (Broadband supplier)

Automatic Flags Via Senso Alerting system

Governor scrutiny arrangements: Hannah Lloyd

Escalation route for breaches:

Any safeguarding concerns identified through DESC's filtering and monitoring systems will be reviewed promptly by the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and relevant senior leaders. Concerns may include attempts to access harmful, inappropriate or illegal content, breaches of the Acceptable Use Policy, or online activity that places a child at risk. Where a safeguarding concern is identified, it will be recorded on CPOMS and managed in accordance with this Child Protection Policy. Serious concerns will be escalated to external agencies, including Children's Social Care, the Police, Prevent, or other specialist services, where appropriate. Significant incidents, emerging trends, and recurring concerns will be reported to the Head of Centre and Safeguarding Governor. Any weaknesses identified in filtering and monitoring arrangements will be acted upon immediately and reported to the Management Committee to ensure that systems remain effective, proportionate, and compliant with statutory safeguarding requirements.

12. Managing Safeguarding Concerns or Allegations made about staff, including supply teachers, volunteers and contractors

Section 11 of the 2004 Children's Act places an expectation on our Centre to have a clear policy in line with HSCP for dealing with allegations against staff who work with children. All staff based within our Centre will be considered to be in either a position of trust or working with children.

In addition to robust Safer Recruitment processes and checks, DESC uses the Department for Education's "Check a teacher's record" service to verify teacher prohibitions, sanctions, and restrictions as required by KCSIE 2026. All relevant checks are completed prior to appointment and at appropriate intervals. (Access the service here: https://teacherservices.education.gov.uk/)

Data Protection in Recruitment

DESC follows the Information Commissioner's Employment Practices Code to ensure the lawful and fair processing of personal data during recruitment and employment checks, in line with KCSIE 2026. All recruitment activities are conducted in accordance with data protection legislation and best practice guidance.

Further information: ICO Employment Practices Code

A 'position of trust' is one in which a teacher or other member of staff/volunteer is in a position of power or influence over a child, by virtue of the work or nature of activity being undertaken. The Sexual Offences Act 2003 (ss.16-24) and/or Crown Prosecution Service Website sets out detailed definitions and a range of criminal offences associated with abuse of such a position.

A person aged 18 or over is said to be in a position of trust in relation to learners at the Centre/college if they:

- look after children at the Centre/college. "Looking after" is defined as regularly involved in caring for, training, supervising or being in sole charge of such persons
- a professional who has power and authority in a child's life and may have a key influence on their future is regarded as being in a 'position of trust'
- such a person will have regular contact with the child and may be acting in loco parentis

On receipt of any information which raises a concern about any of our staff, the Co-Headteachers, or Chair of The Management Committee, will consider whether the information suggests it is the following:

Allegation is a claim or assertion that someone has done something illegal or wrong, typically one made without proof. The threshold for an allegation that is considered by the LADO is wider than those in which there is reasonable cause to suspect a child is suffering, or likely to suffer, harm. The LADO threshold is, in respect of all people working or volunteering with children in a position of trust, where they 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 he or she 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

Any information or concern which meets the above threshold should be referred to the LADO service prior to the Centre taking any action.

The two levels of Concerns and Allegations are:

1. Concerns/Allegations that may MEET the harm threshold.	2. Concerns/Allegations that DO NOT meet the harm threshold.
An allegation may relate to a person who works with children who has: • behaved in a way that has harmed a child or may have harmed a child. ***(Harm threshold)*** • possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child; ***(criminal threshold)*** • behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children, ***(suitability threshold)*** • behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children (***transferable risk threshold***).	**Behaviours that are inconsistent with Centre's staff code of conduct and other associated policies, or is otherwise not considered serious enough to consider a referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), therefore low-level concerns LLC) e.g.** • being over friendly with children • having favourites • taking photographs of children on their mobile phone, contrary to Centre policy • engaging with a child on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door, or • humiliating children.

When concerns/allegations meet the harm threshold DESC are required to comply with both Part Four of KCSiE and also Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership procedures manual section 5.1.5 Managing Allegations Against Adults Who Work With Children and Young People (proceduresonline.com)

All staff and volunteers at DESC are required to immediately report any level of concerns about behaviour and/or conduct of adult working/volunteering with children towards a child to leadership and management. This includes reporting adults who are providing out of Centre activities/leasing DESC facilities.
Records of low-level concerns will be reviewed periodically by leaders to identify patterns, trends or repeated behaviour that may require escalation.
A culture of openness and transparency will be promoted to encourage early reporting.

It is important for staff or any person associated with DESC to know who to report concerns to:



Confidentiality - information about an allegation must be restricted to those who have a need to know.

Support - parents/carers of a child(ren) involved should be:

- informed of the allegation as soon as possible, provided provision of information and advice at that stage does not impede the enquiry, disciplinary or investigative processes, and may need to be told immediately, e.g. a child requires medical treatment

- helped to understand the process involved and kept informed about the progress of the case

- told that there has been an enquiry or disciplinary process (but no detail is to be provided in relation to any internal HR processes)

- when necessary, helped to understand the outcomes reached (but see above proviso in relation to the provision of advice)

- the employer should keep the subject of the allegation informed of progress in the case and arrange to provide appropriate support (via Occupational Health or equivalent). If the person is suspended, (s)he should be kept informed of development in the workplace and if a member of a Trades Union or professional association

Reporting Concerns and Allegations

Concern/Allegation about	**Report to**
Member of staff (including volunteers, supply staff and contractors)	**Co-Headteachers** If the allegation is against supply staff or contractor, leadership, management will pass on report to the adult's employer at their agency/company.
Co-Headteachers	**Chair of Management Committee**
Chair of Management Committee / Vice Chair of Management Committee	**Local Authority Designated Officer LADO** *(for staff only)* LADO.Referral@hertfordshire.gov.uk and/or Report to the police on 101 or if urgent 999
If you are worried that the concerns raised have not been taken seriously or escalated.	**Chair of Management Committee** **Police** 101 **Children Services** 0300 123 4043 **NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline** 0800 028 0285 **NSPCC Whistleblowing Email** help@nspcc.org.uk
Concerns/Allegations relating to an incident that happened when an individual or organisation has used Centre premises for	**Co-Headteachers**

running activities for children e.g. community groups, sports and faith associations, or service providers that run extra-curricular activities)	As with any safeguarding allegation, DSL will follow the Centre's safeguarding policies and procedures, including informing the LADO. Out-of-Centre settings: safeguarding guidance for providers - GOV.UK

Ongoing Safeguarding and Legal Reporting Duties

DESC recognises that safeguarding is not limited to safer recruitment practices but is a continuous responsibility for all staff and leaders. In line with KCSIE 2026, the Centre is committed to the ongoing monitoring of staff suitability, regular review of safeguarding arrangements, and prompt action where concerns arise.

All staff and employers have a legal duty to report safeguarding concerns, allegations, or incidents in accordance with statutory guidance and local procedures. DESC ensures that all safeguarding concerns, including those relating to staff conduct, are managed and reported appropriately, and that safeguarding remains at the forefront of all aspects of Centre life.

After-Centre clubs, community activities and tuition: safeguarding guidance for providers

DESC have a legal duty of care to ensure we maintain a safe environment for children. If we receive an allegation or concern relating to an incident that has happened when an outside individual or organisation are using our premises, we will ensure that we follow our Centre's safeguarding and child protection procedures, which includes reporting allegations to the LADO, Children's Social Care and Police if a crime has been committed.

It is the role of DESC's Management Committee to ensure any organisation that hires the Centre premises is compliant with the guidance set out in After-Centre clubs, community activities and tuition: safeguarding guidance for providers – GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) In particular we have embedded within our lease agreement with external organisations the standards and expectations for them to provide evidence and assurance of their safeguarding and child protection procedures.

Whistleblowing

At DESC we strive to create a culture of openness, trust and transparency to encourage all staff to confidentially share any concerns they have about poor or unsafe practice, concerns or allegations against staff or the Centre's safeguarding practice and arrangements so they can be addressed appropriately.

All staff and volunteers should feel able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and potential failures in the Centre's or college's safeguarding procedures and arrangements.

13.Record Keeping

DESC will hold records confidentially, safely, securely and in line with our records retention schedule.

All safeguarding concerns, discussions, decisions made and the reasons for those decisions, must be recorded in writing. If you are in any doubt about whether to record something, discuss it with the DSL.

Records will include:

- a clear and comprehensive summary of the concern
- details of how the concern was followed up and resolved
- a note of any action taken, decisions reached, and the outcome

Concerns and referrals will be kept in a separate child protection file for each child (either paper recorded or electronically).

Records should clearly evidence decisions relating to information sharing, including what information was shared, with whom, for what purpose, and where relevant, the reasons for a decision not to share information.

The DSL will ensure that all safeguarding records are managed in accordance with the Education (Pupil Information) (England) Regulations (2005)

14.Safeguarding Training and Development

All staff receive approved safeguarding and child protection training (including online safety) so that everyone understands the expectations, applicable to their role and responsibilities. We ensure that all staff and volunteers' continuous professional development (CPD) is maintained and keep a record of this. In addition to statutory training all staff receive regular updates and CPD via email, e-bulletins, and staff meetings.

At DESC we access training in line with our statutory requirements in KCSIE, local expectations set out by Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership and recommendations of good practice by HCC's Child Protection Centre Liaison Service.

15.Additional Associated Safeguarding Policies and Procedures

See below additional associated safeguarding polices for DESC

Staff Code of Conduct

Behaviour Policy and Guide

Complaints

Health and Safety

Engagement & Access to Learning Attendance

Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity

Relationships and Sex Education

Privacy Notices

Staff disciplinary procedures, which will be used if staff breach this code of conduct. It also sets out examples of what we will deem as misconduct and gross misconduct.

Grievance

E-Safety & ICT

Whistleblowing

Appendix 1: Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation

Indicators of Physical Abuse	Indicators of Emotional Abuse
Bruises: • Commonly on the head but also on the ear, neck or soft areas (abdomen, back and buttocks) • Defensive wounds commonly on the forearm, upper arm, back of the leg, hands or feet • Clusters of bruises on the upper arm, outside of the thigh or on the body • Bruises with dots of blood under the skin • A bruised scalp and swollen eyes from hair being pulled violently • Bruises in the shape of a hand or object • Bruises on non-mobile babies **Burns or scalds:** • Can be from hot liquids, hot objects, flames, chemicals, or electricity • These may be on the hands, back, shoulders or buttocks. Scalds in particular may be on lower limbs, both arms and/or both legs • A clear edge to the burn or scald • Sometimes in the shape of an implement, for example, a circular cigarette burn • Multiple burns or scalds **Bite marks:** • Usually oval or circular in shape • Visible wounds, indentations or bruising from individual teeth. **Fractures or broken bones:** • Fractures to the ribs or the leg bones in babies • Multiple fractures or breaks at different stages of healing • Risks and vulnerability factors • Physical abuse can happen in any family, but babies and children who have a disability are at a higher risk of suffering physical abuse (Jones et al, 2012) *This list is non-exhaustive and covers the more typical indicators*	• 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. 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 • A child seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another • Serious bullying (including cyberbullying) • Causing a child to feel frightened or in danger • Exploitation or corruption of children. • Lack confidence • Struggle to control strong emotions • Struggle to make or maintain relationships • Display behaviour that is inappropriate to their stage of development (for example not being able to play, developing language late or using language you may not expect of a child their age **Older children may:** • Struggle to control strong emotions or have extreme outbursts • Seem isolated from their parents • Lack social skills or have few, if any, friends • Use language, act in a way or know about things that you wouldn't expect them to know for their age • Risk and vulnerability factors • Children from any background can be at risk of emotional abuse. But some are more vulnerable than others *This list is non-exhaustive and covers the more typical indicators*

Indicators of Sexual Abuse	Indicators of Neglect
Not all children will realise they are being sexually abused, particularly if they have been groomed, but there may be physical, behavioural and emotional signs that indicate a child has experienced sexual abuse. **Physical indicators include:** • Bruising • Bleeding • Discharge • Pain or soreness in the genital or anal area • Sexually transmitted infections (Lindon and Webb, 2016) • Girls who are being sexually abused may become pregnant at a young age **Emotional and behavioural indicators include:** • Being afraid of and/or avoiding a particular person (including a family member or friend) • Having nightmares or bed-wetting • Being withdrawn • Alluding to 'secrets' • Self-harming • Running away from home • Developing eating problems • Displaying sexualised behaviour or having sexual knowledge that is inappropriate for their stage of development • Misusing drugs or alcohol *This list is non-exhaustive and covers the more typical indicators*	Neglect can be difficult to spot. Having one of the signs doesn't necessarily mean a child is being neglected. But if you notice multiple signs that last for a while, they might show there is a serious problem. Children and young people who are neglected might have: • Poor appearance and hygiene, being smelly or dirty (unkempt) • Being hungry or not given money for food • Having unwashed clothes, the wrong clothing, such as no warm clothes in winter • Health and development problems, regular illness or infections • Anaemia • Body issues, such as poor muscle tone or prominent joints • Medical or dental issues • Missed medical appointments, such as for vaccinations • Not given the correct medicines • Poor language or social skills *This list is non-exhaustive and covers the more typical indicators*

Indicators of Child Criminal Exploitation CCE	Indicators of Child Sexual Exploitation CSE
• Having money or things they can't or won't explain • Being found or stranded in other locations • Committing petty crimes like shoplifting/vandalism • Exclusion/unexplained absences from Centre • Self-harm or significant changes in emotional well-being • Missing episodes • Being secretive about time online • Taking drugs and abusing alcohol • Being withdrawn or showing volatile behaviour	• Self-harm • Being secretive • Sharp changes in mood or character • Having money or things they can't or won't explain (i.e.: clothes/food/jewellery/drugs) • Having an older boyfriend or girlfriend • Associating with older people who don't appear to be parent/carer/family • Involved in criminal activities like selling drugs or shoplifting. • Looking dishevelled or tired

• Carrying weapons • Relationships with controlling or significantly older individuals or groups • Unexplained injuries and refusing to seek medical help • Making more calls/texts, having multiple or new phones • Gang-association and/or isolation from peers/social networks *This list is non-exhaustive and covers the more typical indicators*	• Physical signs of abuse • Seen out late when they should be at Centre. • Spending a lot of time in one area • Others speaking on their behalf • Alcohol/Drug use • Sexually transmitted infections • Pregnancy *This list is non-exhaustive and covers the more typical indicators*

Appendix 2: Safeguarding Issues and Specific Forms of Abuse

The DSL and leadership team should ensure that there are safeguarding arrangements in place to recognise and respond to children in these circumstances. To achieve this effectively the DSL should:

Ensure that all staff understand that children and young people (CYP), in these circumstances, could be susceptible to risk and harm from these safeguarding issues and specific forms of abuse and know what to look out for and how to respond (report to DSL).

DESC requires all staff, including support staff, premises staff and administrative staff, to read and understand Part One of KCSIE 2026 annually.

Ensure that all staff at DESC adopt whole Centre approach for example share the belief that 'it can happen here'.

Reassure and be clear to all staff, children, parents and carers what arrangements you have in place to safeguard CYP if affected by these specific forms of harm.

Consider how Centre's curriculum teaches CYP to keep themselves safe from these specific harms both directly and online.

Safeguarding Issues, Child-on-child abuse	**Safeguarding descriptor, links for further learning**
Bullying	Including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying. Cyber Aware - NCSC.GOV.UK Helping Children Deal with Bullying & Cyberbullying | NSPCC cyberbullying_teachers.pdf (proceduresonline.com) 5.1.13 Bullying (proceduresonline.com) Cyberbullying Guidance | Childnet
Abuse in intimate personal relationships between children	Sometimes known as 'teenage relationship abuse'. Teenage Relationship Abuse | The Children's Society (childrenssociety.org.uk) Expect Respect - Women's Aid (womensaid.org.uk) Controlling-Behaviour-in-Relationships-talking-to-young-people-about-healthy-relationships.pdf (womensaid.org.uk)
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) Centre strategies for preventing and tackling bullying No place for bullying Ofsted publication (publishing.service.gov.uk) How to talk to your children about bullying | UNICEF 5.1.7 Children Who Abuse Others (proceduresonline.com)
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 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. Sexual violence and sexual Harassment KCSiE Harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) or peer-on-peer sexual abuse | NSPCC Learning 5.3.10 Online Safety (proceduresonline.com) harmful-sexual-behaviour-pathway-2021.docx (live.com) brooks traffic light tool - Search (bing.com) harmful-sexual-behaviour-strategy-2021-23.docx (live.com) Review of sexual abuse in Centres and colleges - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) Overview | Harmful sexual behaviour among children and young people | Guidance | NICE
Consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos	Also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery. Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people (publishing.service.gov.uk) Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: how to respond to an incident (overview) (updated March 2024) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: how to respond to an incident (overview) (publishing.service.gov.uk)
Upskirting	This 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. Upskirting: know your rights - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
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. Who, what, why: Why is hazing so common? - BBC News
	***Please note**: CSE, CCE, domestic violence, mental FGM, forced marriage, serious violence are set out below.*

Specific Forms of Abuse	Safeguarding descriptor and links for further learning
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 Centre can raise concerns also, for example, people loitering nearby or unknown adults engaging children in conversation. Home - Action Against Abduction 5.3.6 Safeguarding Children from Abroad (including Children who are Victims of Trafficking and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children) (proceduresonline.com)
Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)	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

	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 5.3. 11 Children and young people affected by exploitation and serious violence (HSCP Procedures on line)
Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)	CCE can include children being forced or manipulated into: • transporting drugs or money through county lines • working in cannabis factories, shoplifting, or pickpocketing • committing vehicle crime • threatening/committing serious violence to others • becoming trapped by exploitation, as perpetrators can threaten victims (and their families) with violence or entrap and coerce them into debt • coerced into carrying weapons such as knives/carry a knife for self-protection • children involved in CCE often commit crimes themselves, their vulnerability as victims is not always recognised by adults and professionals, (particularly older children), and not treated as victims despite the harm they have experienced • the experience of girls can be very different to that of boys and the indicators may not be the same, especially as they are at higher risk of CSE: girls are at risk of CCE too Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: county lines - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) Child exploitation disruption toolkit - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) Child sexual and criminal exploitation - Hertfordshire Grid for Learning (thegrid.org.uk) Criminal exploitation and gangs | NSPCC
Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)	CSE is a form of child sexual abuse and may involve: • physical contact, assault by penetration (rape or oral sex) or nonpenetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and touching outside clothing • non-contact activities like 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 • can occur over time or be a one-off and may happen without the child's immediate knowledge for example through others sharing videos or images of them on social media • includes 16- and 17-year-olds who can legally consent to have sex. Some children may not realise they are being exploited as they believe they are in a genuine romantic relationship CEOP Education (thinkuknow.co.uk) Child exploitation disruption toolkit - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) 5.3.4 Hertfordshire's Strategy to Prevent Child Sexual Exploitation (proceduresonline.com)

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 are exploited to move, store and sell drugs and money. Offenders will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons to ensure compliance of victims • Children can be targeted and recruited into county lines in a number of locations including any type of Centre (including special Centres), 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 See CCE resources above Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: county lines - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
Children and the Court System	• Children are sometimes required to give evidence in criminal courts, either for crimes committed against them or for crimes they have witnessed • Making child arrangements via the family courts following separation can be stressful and entrench conflict in families. This can be stressful for children • The Ministry of Justice has launched an online child arrangements information tool with clear and concise information: may be unusual for parents and carers Get help with child arrangements - GOV.UK (justice.gov.uk) Our resources for professionals | Cafcass
Children who are absent from education	All staff should be aware that children being absent from Centre or college, particularly repeatedly and/or for prolonged periods, and children missing education can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding possibilities. This may include: • abuse and neglect such as sexual abuse or exploitation and can also be a sign of child criminal exploitation including involvement in county lines • 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. It is important that staff are aware of their Centre's or college's unauthorised absence procedures and children missing education procedures

	Children missing from education - Hertfordshire Grid for Learning (thegrid.org.uk)
Children missing from home ***(NB** this is not in Annex B but to illustrate the separate processes)*	Use Centre's CP procedures to escalate to Children's Services/Police. Operation Encompass for MISSING CYP is Hertfordshire's system for sharing information quickly with Centres to safeguard children following the success of supporting children who have witnessed Domestic Abuse. 5.4 Children and young people who go missing form home / care
Children with family members in prison	Approximately 200,000 children in England and Wales have a parent sent to prison each year. These children are at risk of poor outcomes including poverty, stigma, isolation and poor mental health. The National Information Centre on Children of Offenders (NICCO) provides information designed to support professionals working with offenders and their children, to help mitigate negative consequences for those children. NICCO (National Information Centre on Children Offences) 5.6.5 Children Visiting Prisons (proceduresonline.com)
Cybercrime	Cybercrime is criminal activity committed using computers and/or the internet. It is broadly categorised as either: • 'cyber-enabled' (crimes that can happen off-line but are enabled at scale and at speed on-line) • 'cyber dependent' (crimes that can be committed only by using a computer) Cyber-dependent crimes include: • unauthorised access to computers (illegal 'hacking'), for example accessing a Centre's computer network to look for test paper answers or change grades awarded • 'Denial of Service' (Dos or DDoS) attacks or 'booting'. These are attempts to make a computer, network, or website unavailable by overwhelming it with internet traffic from multiple sources • making, supplying or obtaining malware (malicious software) such as viruses, spyware, ransomware, botnets and Remote Access Trojans with the intent to commit further offence, including those above Meeting digital and technology standards in Centres and colleges - Guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) Cyber Choices - National Crime Agency Test Your Internet Filter Verify that your Internet Filter is blocking illegal, harmful, and inappropriate content.

	when-to-call-the-police--guidance-for-Centres-and-colleges.pdf (npcc.police.uk)
Domestic Abuse (DA)	• DA encompass a wide range of behaviours and may be a single incident or a pattern of incidents • Abuse can be psychological, physical, sexual, financial, or emotional • Children can be victims of DA abuse e.g. see, hear, or experience the effects of abuse at home and/or suffer domestic abuse in their own intimate relationships (teenage relationship abuse) • DA can have a detrimental and long-term impact on their health, well-being, development, and ability to learn Domestic abuse: recognise the signs - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) Helplines briefing: The impact of domestic abuse on children and young people from the voices of parents and carers (nspcc.org.uk) 5.1.9 Domestic Abuse (proceduresonline.com) 5.1.9 Domestic abuse (HSCP procedures on line)
Homelessness	Being homeless or being at risk of becoming homeless presents a real risk to a child's welfare. The DSL (and deputies) should be 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 • the family being asked to leave a property This is also a safeguarding issue and DSL should seek advice from Children's Social Care where a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm. Homelessness - Citizens Advice Stats and facts | Centrepoint Professional Resources - Shelter England
Mental Health (MH)	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, attendance, and progress at Centre. Mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering exploitation. Only appropriately trained professionals should attempt to make a diagnosis of a MH problem. Education staff are well placed to observe children day-to-day and identify those whose behaviors that suggest they may be experiencing a MH problem or be at risk of developing one. Mental Health First Aid Kit | Childline

	Introducing the Sandbox: New online mental health digital advice and guidance service for 10-25s - Hertfordshire Grid for Learning (thegrid.org.uk)
Modern Slavery and the National Referral Mechanism	Modern slavery encompasses human trafficking and slavery, servitude and forced or compulsory labour. Exploitation can take many forms, including: • sexual exploitation • forced labour, slavery and servitude • forced criminality • the removal of organs Further information on the signs that someone may be a victim of modern slavery, the support available to victims and how to refer them to the NRM is available in Statutory Guidance. Modern slavery: how to identify and support victims - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) Hertfordshire Modern Slavery Partnership - Hertfordshire Grid for Learning (thegrid.org.uk) Safeguarding Children from Abroad (including Children who are Victims of Trafficking and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking
The Prevent duty/ Preventing Radicalisation and Channel	Children may be susceptible to extremist ideology and radicalisation. • Extremism is the vocal or active opposition to our fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. This also includes calling for the death of members of the armed forces • Radicalisation refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and extremist ideologies associated with terrorist groups • 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 Channel is a voluntary, confidential support program which focuses on providing support at an early stage to people who are identified as being susceptible to being drawn into terrorism. The Prevent duty should be seen as part of Centre's and college's wider safeguarding obligations. Prevent duty guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) Prevent in Education - Hertfordshire Grid for Learning (thegrid.org.uk) 5.3.9 Prevent Guidance (HSCP procedures) Channel and Prevent Multi-Agency Panel (PMAP) guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between children in Centres and colleges	Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex. It can also occur: • online • through a group of children sexually assaulting • sexually harassing a single child or group of children Children who are victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment will likely find the experience stressful and distressing. This will, in all

	likelihood, adversely affect their educational attainment and will be exacerbated if the alleged perpetrator(s) attends the same Centre or college. Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap, they can occur online and face to face (both physically and verbally) and are never acceptable. Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) [Title] (publishing.service.gov.uk) brooks traffic light tool - Search (bing.com)
Serious Violence	Indicators, which may signal children are at risk from, or are involved with, serious violent crime: • increased absence from Centre • change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups • significant decline in performance • signs of self-harm • significant change in wellbeing • signs of assault or unexplained injuries • unexplained gifts or new possessions Anything which could also indicate they have been approached by, or are involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs and may be at risk of criminal exploitation. Advice to Centres and colleges on gangs and youth violence - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) Hertfordshire Serious Violence Strategy & Delivery Plan
Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) *So-called 'honour' based abuse (includes both Female Genital Mutilation and Forced Marriage)*	FGM comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs. It is illegal in the UK and a form of child abuse with long-lasting harmful consequences. Whilst all staff should speak to the DSL (or a deputy) any concerns about FGM, there is a specific legal duty on teachers they must report this to the Police. Multi-agency statutory guidance on female genital mutilation - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) Child Abuse Linked to Faith or Belief – National FGM Centre Female genital mutilation, honor based violence and forced marriage - Hertfordshire Grid for Learning (thegrid.org.uk)
Forced Marriage	Forcing a person into a marriage is a crime in England. A forced marriage is: • one entered into without the full and free consent of one or both parties • 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

	A lack of full and free consent can be where a person does not consent or where they cannot consent (if they have learning disabilities, for example). Nevertheless, some perpetrators use perceived cultural practices to coerce a person into marriage. Centres and colleges can play an important role in safeguarding children from forced marriage. Apply for a forced marriage protection order: Overview - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) Multi-agency practice guidelines: Handling cases of Forced Marriage (proceduresonline.com) Forced marriage | Childline

Appendix 3: Equality Statement, Children with Protected Characteristics

Some children are at greater risk of harm, both online and offline, and additional barriers can exist for some children with respect to recognising or disclosing it. At DESC we are committed to anti-discriminatory practice and ensuring that all children are provided with the same protection regardless of any additional needs, barriers or protected characteristics they may have. As stated in the Equality Act 2010, we recognise the protected characteristics and additional vulnerabilities that may be applicable to our learners. DESC recognises protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 as relevant to children and young people.

Protected Characteristics	Additional Vulnerabilities
Age	Children who are gender questioning
Disability	Children who experience racism or discrimination
Gender reassignment	Children experiencing multiple vulnerabilities simultaneously
Marriage and civil partnership	Children affected by online harms
Pregnancy and maternity	
Race	
Religion or belief	
Sexual Orientation	
Sex	

DESC actively identifies, challenges and addresses racism, discrimination and disproportionality within safeguarding practice.

All staff and volunteers understand the importance of recognising that a child may benefit from Family Help intervention, and it is integral to our whole Centre approach to look and listen out particularly for children:

- who have a special educational need and/or disabilities (SEND) or health conditions
- who are a young carer
- who could experience discrimination due to their race, ethnicity, religion, gender identification or sexuality
- have English as an additional language
- are known to be living in difficult situations – for example, temporary accommodation or where there are issues such as substance abuse or domestic violence
- are at risk of FGM, sexual exploitation, forced marriage, or radicalisation
- are asylum seekers

- are at risk due to either their own or a family member's mental health needs
- are looked after or previously looked after (see Section 11)
- who have ongoing unexplainable and/or persistent absences from education
- whose parent/carer has expressed an intention to remove them from Centre to be provided with elective home education (EHE)
- Who have parental offending
- Who are under a private fostering arrangement
- Who are involved with substance misuse

Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

We know who our learners are with special educational needs, disabilities, or additional health needs and recognise that they may face additional barriers, that can include:

- assumptions that indicators of possible abuse, such as behaviour, mood and injury, relate to the child's impairment without further exploration
- these children being more prone to peer group isolation or bullying (including prejudice-based bullying) than other children
- assumptions that children with SEND can be disproportionally impacted by things like bullying - without outwardly showing any signs
- communication barriers and difficulties in managing or reporting these challenges
- cognitive understanding – being unable to understand the difference between fact and fiction in online content and then repeating the content/behaviours in Centres or colleges or the consequences of doing so.
- reluctance to challenge carers (professionals may over-empathise with carers because of the perceived stress of caring for a disabled child)
- disabled children often rely on a wide network of carers to meet their basic needs and therefore the potential risk of exposure to abusive behaviour can be increased
- a disabled child's understanding of abuse
- lack of choice/participation

Children Looked After (CLA)

The most common reason for a child to become looked after is as a result of abuse and/or neglect. We therefore ensure that the appropriate arrangements are in place to support these children and keep them safe from further harm. This includes:

- appointment of a Designated Teacher (DT) for CLA
- appropriate staff made aware of a child's looked after status
- ensure that necessary staff have the skills, knowledge and understanding of the child's needs

- ensure the child's record contains a clear understanding of their legal status and care arrangements, including the levels of authority delegated to their carer and contact arrangements with birth parents or those with parental responsibility
- keep contact details of the child's social worker, carer(s) and name and contact details of the virtual Centre head for DT to liaise with

Children with a Social Worker (CWASW)

Virtual Centre Heads have a responsibility for the strategic oversight of the educational attendance, attainment, and progress of:

- **children looked-after**,
- **children previously looked-after**; and
- **children with a social worker** – defined as any child who has been assessed as being in need under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 and currently has a social worker; it also includes those who have been assessed as needing, or previously needing, a social worker within the past 6 years due to safeguarding or welfare reasons

In line with Promoting the education of children with a social worker and children in kinship care arrangements: virtual Centre head role extension - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) this has been extended to include:

- **children who have previously had a social worker** – the cohort of children with a social worker and those who have previously had a social worker who are aged from 0 to 18; and
- **children in kinship care arrangements** - this means any friend or family member, who is not a child's parent but raising them for a significant amount of the time, either as a temporary or permanent arrangement

Kinship care - Kinship Care refers to a type of care where a child who cannot be looked after by their birth parents is cared for by relatives or friends. The government in England has launched a Championing kinship care: the national kinship care strategy to improve kinship carers' financial stability, education, training, and partnership with local authorities and other agencies.

- Legal Care Arrangements:
- Informal Kinship Care
- Special Guardianship Order (SGO)
- Child Arrangements Order (CAO)
- Kinship Foster Care
- Private Fostering
- Adoption by a Family Member or Friend

DESC ensures that our Designated Teacher has the appropriate training, so they are able to take the leadership of this crucial area of our safeguarding arrangements.

Appendix 4: Reporting concerns

Concern/Allegation about	Report to
Member of staff (including volunteers, supply staff and contractors)	Co-Headteachers. If the allegation is against supply staff or contractor, leadership, management will pass on report to the adult's employer at their agency/company.
Co-Headteachers	Chair of Governors / Vice Chair of Governors / Trustee board Your Centre website or Child Protection policy will have details of your Chair/Vice Chair of Governors.
Chair of Governors / Vice Chair of Governors / Trustee board Or Manager who is the sole proprietor	Local Authority Designated Officer LADO (for staff only) LADO.Referral@hertfordshire.gov.uk and/or Report to the police on 101 or if urgent 999
If you are worried that the concerns raised have not been taken seriously or escalated.	Chair of Governors Police 101 Children Services 03001234043 NSPCC Whistleblowing Helpline 0800 028 0285 NSPCC Whistleblowing Email help@nspcc.org.uk
Concerns/Allegations relating to an incident that happened when an individual or organisation has used Centre premises for running activities for children e.g. community groups, sports and faith associations, or service providers that run extra-curricular activities)	Co-Headteachers. As with any safeguarding allegation, DSL will follow their Centres' safeguarding policies and procedures, including informing the LADO. Out-of-Centre settings: safeguarding guidance for providers - GOV.UK