

Safeguarding Procedures at CCS Adoption

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1. POLICY STATEMENT

The Trustees, management and staff of the Clifton Children's Society – hereinafter referred to as CCS – recognise that the safety and welfare of children and young people is of the utmost importance and that we must do everything we can to safeguard them from harm. This policy covers all activity that happens through The Centre For Adoption Support and Education, which merged with CCS in April 2018.

CCS is committed to putting the needs of children first. Any allegation of abuse, actual or suspected, will therefore be regarded very seriously, and acted upon. CCS will co-operate closely with those agencies which have the statutory responsibility to investigate child protection matters, i.e. the Police, Social Services/or Children's Services Departments and the NSPCC.

The management and staff of CCS acknowledge that child protection issues are complex and stressful for everyone involved – but emphasise that the child's welfare must always be the paramount consideration. CCS will ensure through its management structures that appropriate support is offered to children, families and staff who are involved in these matters.

2. AIMS

- To ensure that all staff/volunteers maintain vigilance which enables them to notice signs and symptoms associated with child abuse and to take appropriate action.
- To ensure that all staff/volunteers have not been the subject of enquiries about previous relevant convictions which may make them unsuitable to care for children.
- To provide appropriate support systems for children, families and staff/volunteers who are involved in child abuse concerns.

3. SOURCE OF DETAILED GUIDANCE

A website containing South West Child Protection Procedures has been created in a partnership which includes all the following authorities:

- BANES
- Bristol City
- Devon
- Gloucestershire
- Plymouth
- North Somerset
- Somerset
- South Gloucestershire
- Swindon
- Torbay
- Wiltshire
- Cornwall and Isles of Scilly

<http://www.proceduresonline.com/swcpp>

This site is regularly updated, please consult for latest information.

CCS is based in Bristol. Bristol's Safeguarding Board's website and procedures can be found here:

www.bristolsafeguarding.org

4. Bristol Safeguarding Procedures (correct as of January 2018)

Report a concern

If you have any concerns about a child **please do not ignore them.**

If the child is at immediate risk call the Police on 999. If there is no immediate risk but you still need help, call 101.

Safeguarding

If you're concerned that a child (under 18) is at risk of being abused or neglected contact the First Response Team on **0117 903 6444**.

Outside of working hours call the **Emergency Duty Team** on 01454 615 165.

First Response will only receive information regarding children based within the Bristol local authority area. Use this tool to ensure that you are contacting the correct local authority.

See website to Download the following leaflets:

- 1) Information on how Children's Services can help
- 2) Information about First Response

Support and advice

A list of support and advice services available for young people can be found on the website.

For professionals working with children

Anyone who works with children has a role in safeguarding and child protection.

Fill in the First Response online form if you're concerned about a child.

https://www.bristol.gov.uk/en_US/social-care-health/report-concern-about-child-for-professionals

Other numbers you can call:

- NSPCC 24 hour Helpline: 0800 800 5000 (free from a landline)
- NSPCC Asian Languages Helpline: 0808 800 5000 (free from a landline)
- NSPCC Text helpline: 88858 (service is free and anonymous)
- Police: 101 (non-emergency calls)

Concerns about an adult working with children

If you have any concerns about an adult who works with children, contact the Local Authority Designated Officer, Nicola Laird, on 0117 903 7795.

Ofsted Whistleblower hotline

If you are concerned about the safeguarding practices and procedures of professionals / volunteers working with children you should follow the complaints policy of the organisation you are working with in the first instance.

For professionals within an organisation you should first read your employer's whistleblowing policy and then raise your concerns with your employer. If your employer does not have a whistleblowing policy, or if you are still not sure how to raise your concerns with your employer or someone else, it is suggested that you first get free,

confidential advice from the independent whistleblowing charity **Public Concern at Work** ; they can help you to decide whether and/or how to raise your concern.

You can call on **020 7404 6609** or email helpline@pcaw.co.uk

For further information, go to the Public Concern at Work website www.pcaw.co.uk which includes guidance on whistleblowing legislation.

If it is not possible to reach a satisfactory conclusion with the above processes you may wish to consider contacting Ofsted.

You can contact the Ofsted hotline in three ways.

- Call on 0300 123 3155 (Monday to Friday from 8.00am to 6.00pm).
- Email at whistleblowing@ofsted.gov.uk
- Write: WBHL, Ofsted, Piccadilly Gate, Store Street, Manchester M1 2WD

5. DEFINITION OF CHILD ABUSE

The Department of Health, in its publication Working Together to Safeguard Children (2015) defines child abuse under four categories:

- **Neglect**

The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health and development. Neglect may occur in 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, shelter or clothing (including exclusion from home or abandonment);*
- *protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;*
- *ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care givers); or*
- *ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.*

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

- **Physical Abuse**

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

- **Sexual Abuse**

Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

- **Emotional Abuse**

The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may involve not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capacity, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing the children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

These categories have been accepted by the Agency and are intended to provide professionals with a guide when considering potential situations of abuse. In some instances, more than one category of abuse may be evidenced. This will need to be taken into account when a child protection plan is being prepared.

Additional areas of abuse (see section 12 onwards)

- Child sexual exploitation
- Online abuse
- Female genital mutilation

6. CCS's SAFEGUARDING PROCEDURES

6A. Noticing and Acting

- CCS staff should note any unexpected changes in the appearance or behaviour of a child, particularly one who is very young and cannot use words to signify that s/he has been abused. CCS Staff should also recognise that children with disabilities may be more vulnerable to suffer abuse or may not have the means to effectively communicate what is happening.

- If the situation is urgent, e.g. an injury has been observed, or abuse disclosed, immediate action must be taken
- Otherwise, the member of staff should inform their Line Manager and also discuss the circumstances with any other colleagues who may have additional information or relevant expertise. Whilst such consideration is being given, steps must be taken to monitor the child's situation.
- If there is reason to believe that abuse has occurred, a manager will take responsibility for ensuring that the relevant statutory agencies are informed.
- Where there is a potential Safeguarding issues the agencies safeguarding office must be notified, who will then lead on decision making around actions.

6B. Where suspicions concern a member of staff, volunteer or carer

- If there is concern about the conduct of a member of the Agency's staff, a volunteer, or prospective adopters/carers, the individual(s) will be temporarily suspended from further duties whilst an investigation is conducted by the Police and Social Services Department.
- Any staff member/volunteer so suspended will be required immediately to hand her/his diary and office keys to a manager, and will not be allowed access to CCS premises, (electronic or paper) files or emails until the investigation has been completed and a decision made about future employment status. The staff member/volunteer will be notified of the progress of the outcome of the investigation.
- When the concern is about a child being looked after by a CCS Carer, the welfare and safety of the child/ren must always be the primary consideration. A decision must be made as to whether or not the removal of the child should be sought, and an agreement made with the Local Authority as to the best course of action. The safety of all other children in the household, including birth children, must also be considered.
- CCS needs to ensure the correct and all relevant Local Authorities are informed of any allegations of abuse. This may include informing the Placing Local Authority as well as the Local Authority in which the child (or birth child of the adopters currently lives).
- During a statutory investigation, no further placements will be made with a CCS Carer until the process is complete and a decision reached about the Carer's future status.
- CCS will co-operate with the statutory agencies during an investigation, and be represented at Strategy Meetings/Case Conferences.

- CCS will follow the relevant Safeguarding Board procedures which may include informing the Local Authority Designated officer, if the allegation is against a professional, which includes prospective/adopters.

6C. What should I do if I am concerned about a child?

If any member of the Agency's staff has a concern regarding the abuse of a child, they should;

- Immediately inform and take advice from their Line Manager, or alternative manager if their line manager is not immediately available.
- Write up their concerns and any concerns expressed by others, within 12 hours of having received them.
- Depending on the seriousness of the concern, and with the agreement of their Line Manager– contact their local Children's Services and/or the Police.
- If the concerns involve a carer or a professional person, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for the area where the child lives should be contacted.
- If the child has not yet been adopted, after discussing the situation with their Line Manager, report their concerns to the Placing Agency. At the point of initial investigation, they should not discuss the matter with the prospective adopter(s) (if they are the person(s) about whom there is concern).
- The link worker should not take part in the investigation process, but may support the prospective adopter, at an agreed point, in the investigation process.
- Initial agreements about the investigation process should be made at an Inter-Agency meeting, and/or followed up at the Planning Meeting – a copy of the Placing Agency's Child Protection Procedures should be obtained and noted.
- In cases where the adoption is being contested, it is particularly important to address the possibility that genuine or fallacious allegations of abuse may be made.
- If non social work staff (i.e. clerical, administrative or managerial staff) receive a concern about child abuse, they must report it immediately to their Line Manager, Safeguarding Officer or the CEO. They should make a note of what their concerns are as soon as possible after the event and keep that in a safe place until a decision has been made about its future retention.
- CCS social worker should ensure all recordings regarding any allegations/investigations and fully written up and recorded on file. The Social Worker's line manager has a responsibility to ensure it is put in the CCS's Safeguarding Log, showing recordings and evidencing Management oversight of the situation.

6D. If a child discloses that they have been abused.

When a child discloses abuse, the need for a criminal investigation may not immediately be apparent and it is possible that some initial questioning of a child may have taken place before the Police and Social Services/or Children's Services Department are involved. Any early discussions with a child should, wherever possible, adhere to the following basic principles;

- Listen to the child, rather than directly question him or her.
- Never stop a child who is freely recalling significant events.
- Make a note of the discussion, taking care to record the timing, setting and personnel present as well as what was said.
- Record all subsequent events up to the time of the substantive interview.

Your Line Manager must be kept informed of all developments as they occur.

7. The Agency's policy on working with children

The Agency recognises that the number of people seeking to harm children is probably quite small and in making the following policy statements, it in no way wishes to imply that its staff cannot be trusted with the care of children. These guidelines are as much to protect our staff from fallacious allegations of abuse, as to protect children from any individual who is intent on seeking opportunities to harm a child.

- Wherever possible, ensure that two staff members are always available to jointly work with, or to engage in any activity (e.g. transporting a child) with a child. There may be situations where this is not possible such as when social work staff or therapeutic staff are meeting with children individually as part of their work.
- Where this is not possible or practical, staff should attempt to make use of other adults that are available, e.g. volunteers or carers.
- Staff should pay attention to the gender of staff/child in their activities and maintain a balance that is comfortable for the child, if the child/carer has expressed a preference.
- Staff should think and act carefully to avoid situations which could lead to embarrassment, accusation or temptation. The staff member should consider what is known about the young person and whether there is an increased risk of the child making an allegation, and if so, precautions should be taken to ensure that a situation where this could occur is minimised.

- Where it is felt necessary to engage in one to one activity with a child, either because the child requests this, or where it is felt to be professionally necessary, staff should, wherever possible, ensure that another adult is available (not necessarily in the same room), so that the activity can be observed and so that others are aware that you are with the child. However this may not be necessary or practical for example when social workers are seeing children one to one at their home or in the community or when therapists are doing a therapeutic session with a child or young person.
- Where it is considered necessary to regularly engage in activities with a child, using one member of staff, those activities should be subject to periodic scrutiny by a member of the Agency's management to ensure that the protection of children and the protection of staff are maintained. This review process must be recorded, signed and dated by the manager and staff members concerned.
- To ensure that the Agency does not avoidably appoint a member of staff, or recruit a volunteer who is a potential abuser, the Agency will require all staff and volunteers who have access to children to provide evidence that they do not have a police record of offences against children or other concerning offences. This will be achieved via a safer recruitment process, including taking up two personal references and enquires to the Disclosure and Barring Service.

8. Working with Children in Media

Guidelines on use of children in promotional materials

8A. Featuring children in video clips and online profiling

- Helps parents connect with the children and participate in the matching process.
- Is well established, works and is growing as people increasingly go online for information.
- BAAF has a range of published guidelines to help you (see below).
- BAAF's Be My Parent has been using online profiling successfully since 2007, with skilled editors. Ensuring guidelines are met and profiles optimised.
- Adoption Link and Adoption Match also now use online profiling of children, through highly secure internet log ins/portals.

8D. Useful sources of stock photos currently being used by CCS Adoption (2018)

www.pixabay.com

www.unsplash.com

www.pexels.com

8E. Publications:

- BAAF Practice Note 48 – Featuring Children in the Mainstream Media
- BAAF Good Practice Guide – Profiling Children on the internet
- Be My Parent's Seeing the Difference? Using video clips to help families find children

9. Children, Staff and the Independent Person.

CCS recognises that it is a sad but common feature of situations where children have been abused that an adult (or young person) has exploited power over the child in order to gain submission or silence. Whilst some of this power may derive from superior physical strength, it may also stem from the power relationship inherent in the situation.

By virtue of its business, CCS is engaged in making major decisions about children's lives, and necessarily holds much of the power. This means that people working for CCS could potentially abuse power.

In order to redress this power imbalance, as far as this is possible, CCS requires the children with and for whom its staff work to be empowered in the following ways:

- By the social work staff explaining to all children and young people with whom they work (taking into account age and level of understanding) that they have the right, if they wish, to talk with an Independent Person – particularly if they feel they have been abused or unfairly treated by a CCS representative. (See also Children's leaflet Who we are...How we can help)
- By the Agency providing such children with the means to access an Independent Person.

It is also possible that a member of staff or volunteer may wish to discuss a concern about possible child abuse by a colleague. S/he may have observed the colleague acting in a suspicious manner and be unsure how to deal with the situation. S/he should, in the first instance, discuss the situation with the Line Manager. Should this not be appropriate, because of the particular circumstance, CCS will extend the facility of speaking with an Independent Person to the staff member/volunteer. (See also Whistleblowing Policy).

CCS will ensure that the Independent Person is provided with a clear brief for the task, and a copy of these Guidelines, with a view to stopping any abuse disclosed by a child or staff member/volunteer. The Independent Person will be told how to make a referral to the statutory services if s/he deems that to be necessary.

10. Staff replacement, recruitment and Job Descriptions

This Agency will treat all people wishing to work for it, whether paid or voluntary, as applicants for a particular post. All applicants will be asked to complete an application form, which seeks the following basic information:

- Their full name, date of birth, current address and any recent changes of address.

- Details of previous experience, voluntary or paid, of working with children, if any.
- Permission to contact, in writing, and in person, at least two referees who have experience of their work or contact with children.
- Details of any convictions for criminal offences against children, including any "spent" convictions under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.
- The outcome of a Disclosure and Barring Service check.

The Agency will periodically review the job descriptions of all its staff to ensure that each individual has their main tasks identified and that they are aware of the Agency's child protection policy.

All job descriptions will include information for the post holder indicating to whom they are accountable, who will supervise their work and to whom they should report any concerns about the actual or suspected abuse of children.

In addition, employment contracts will outline the frequency of supervision sessions and the need for the supervisor to periodically explore with the post holder their relationship with any child they are working with. Supervisors will maintain brief written records of each supervision session and any other issues of note, which are observed. This Agency recognises that good supervision is a useful way of ensuring that its staff are working effectively, that they are gaining the most from their paid work and that it is an integral part of ensuring that children are protected from abuse.

Staff will be made aware of the availability of an independent person to whom they may go if they have concerns, suspicions or evidence that abuse by a colleague or manager has occurred. They will be advised to make use of this facility in situations where they are unable to seek advice and guidance through normal supervisory or management channels.

Staff must inform themselves of the Agency's Safeguarding policy and their own role within those procedures to prevent the abuse of all children, especially those children who are in contact with the Agency.

At interview, or as soon afterwards as possible, new post holders/volunteers, will be asked to produce some form of identification which gives the individual's full name and address, together with his/her signature or photograph; for example, a driving licence or passport. They will also be asked to provide original certificates, diplomas and/or degrees for qualifications. These checks are to reduce the risk of the Agency has not appointing an individual who has assumed a false identity.

The Agency, having been assured that a prospective employee or volunteer does not represent a known risk to children and has the right ability and commitment to prevent the abuse of children, will require post holders and/or volunteers to complete a probationary period of 6 months.

The Agency will ensure that the new employee will receive induction and any other training that enables them to perform their duties satisfactorily, and which informs them of the need to protect children from all forms of abuse. Staff will attend the Bristol Local Safeguarding Children Board Multi Agency training regularly, to refresh their knowledge in this area. This will be updated no less frequently than every 3 years.

Throughout the period of probation, their identified supervisor will supervise the work of the post holder. Notes of these sessions, along with any observations, will be made during the probationary period. On the set date for the probationary period to end, the post holder will meet with their supervisor to review the post holder's performance. The meeting will consider the supervision notes taken and observations made during the probationary period. There will be no assumption that the post holder has automatically completed their probationary period successfully by merely surviving in the post until the review date.

The supervisor must have no doubt as to the post holder's suitability for the post, their commitment to prevent the abuse of children and their commitment to work within these child protection procedures, before confirming the successful completion of the probationary period.

Safeguarding training will be undertaken by all staff and volunteers at CCS, this includes adoption panel members and trustees. This training will need to be updated no less frequently than every three years.

Notification

The Disclosure and Barring Service will be notified of the instigation and outcome of any child protection enquiries.

11. Historical Abuse

11A. INTRODUCTION

CCS recognises that in the provision of services for children over many decades there may have been instances of children suffering abuse whilst in the care of the Agency. This policy and these procedure guidelines have been formulated to assist in the management of allegations of such abuse.

The Agency's Policy in relation to allegations of historical abuse is underpinned by the Statement of Core Values.

11B PRINCIPLES

The underlying principles of CCS's policy are in line with those which were devised by five major child care agencies, Barnardos, NCH, NSPCC, Save the Children and The Children's Society.

▪ **Principle 1**

The Agency listens to, takes seriously and acts responsibly towards allegations of historical abuse.

▪ **Principle 2**

The Agency seeks to promote the welfare of former service users who allege historical abuse.

▪ **Principle 3**

The Agency promotes the protection of children who may be at risk from alleged perpetrators of historical abuse.

11C DEFINITION OF HISTORICAL ABUSE

Historical abuse is the actual abuse reported by an adult that s/he was abused as a child or young person whilst receiving a service from the Agency.

- An adult is defined as anyone aged 18 or over.
- Abuse includes emotional abuse, neglect, physical injury and sexual abuse as defined in “Working Together” under the Children Act 1989 (England and Wales).
- Abuse does not include care of a standard that was commonly accepted at the time but would not be accepted now.

11D POLICY STATEMENT

It is the policy of CCS to pass information to the police about any allegations of historical abuse where it appears a crime may have been committed.

11E PROCEDURES

Dealing with Initial Referral

- In commencing work with former service users, it shall be made clear that the policy of CCS is to pass information to the police about any allegations of abuse where it appear a crime may have been committed.
- Allegations of historical abuse may be made by service users currently known, who referred themselves in order to obtain access to records and/or advice on tracing family members. Allegations may be made by former service users, who are not currently known, whose reason for contacting the Agency is for the purpose of making the allegation.

- All allegations, whether made during an initial referral or later, must be recorded in detail and passed immediately to the Head of Adoption or, if she is not available, the CEO or other Social Work Manager.
- The person making the allegation will be reminded of CCS's policy of passing to the police information about abuse where it appears a crime may have been committed.
- The Head of Adoption, on receiving details of the allegation, will check the records of the former service user to see if there is any relevant information.

11F Decision regarding informing Police of allegations

- The Head of Adoption will decide, on the basis of the details of the allegation, and any additional relevant information from the records (or any information on previous allegations made by the same person or about the same perpetrator) whether information should be passed to the police on the assumption that a crime may have been committed.
- When details are passed to the police, the Head of Adoption will inform (in writing) the person making the allegations. It may be appropriate for the social worker to whom the allegation was made also to tell the person verbally.
- Should the Head of Adoption decide that the criteria for informing the police are not met, they must record on the client's file why the decision has been made. The individual making the allegation will be informed.
- Whether or not the police are informed the Head of Adoption will notify the CEO and Chairperson of Trustees.
- A separate file shall be kept containing copies of all allegations of historical abuse, so that any patterns can be studied.

11G Counselling regarding historical abuse

- Whether or not the police become involved, all persons making allegations of historical abuse are to be offered guidance regarding appropriate support and advice. For some, the opportunity to speak to a social worker from CCS may be sufficient but others may require more intensive and independent counselling.
- If independent counselling is requested, the Agency will provide information about appropriate sources, and advise the client how to involve her/his G.P. in any referral.
- Any requests for the Society to fund independent counselling will be considered by the Head of Adoption. Normally, such consideration will be given only when allegations have been substantiated.

11H Apologies and Legal Action

- Any letters expressing apologies must be signed by the Chairperson of Trustees, who will first have the draft contents checked with the relevant insurers and legal advisers.
- In any situation where it is anticipated that a former service user is considering taking legal action against the Society, it is important that the relevant insurers are kept informed of the situation.

12. Child Sexual Exploitation

Child sexual exploitation is, to a great extent, a hidden problem. However, campaigners are working hard to raise awareness of this form of child abuse. Children, both girls and boys, are groomed and forced, pressured or tricked into engaging in sexual activities or the taking of sexual images.

What is child sexual exploitation?

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is an illegal activity by people who have power or influence over young people. It is a form of sexual abuse in which a young person is manipulated into taking part in sexual acts. It can happen directly face to face, as well as over the internet and via mobile phones.

The young person may not recognise what is happening because the abuser makes them think they are in a relationship and are special. Child Sexual Exploitation can also happen as a result of violence, threats or intimidation. Therefore it is important that professionals don't rely on the young person disclosing their abuse in order to identify that CSE is taking place.

CSE can happen to anyone, regardless of their gender, age, ethnicity or background.

Sexual exploitation of children and young people under eighteen involves exploitative relationships, violence, coercion and intimidation being characterised in the main by the child or young person's limited availability of choice resulting from social and economic and/or emotional vulnerability. It is essential all agencies stringently do all they can to reduce incidents of missing young people and when a child does runaway robust efforts should be made to locate the individuals.

Sexual abuse can be very difficult to identify. Children who have been sexually abused may show a variety of signs and symptoms.

Warning signs

- Going missing or absent for periods of time, or regularly returning home late without reasonable explanation
- Regularly missing school

- Being secretive about where they are and who they are with
- Secretive use of the internet
- Being in contact with older people online that are not part of their usual peer network
- Having unexplained new possessions, for example a mobile phone
- Having older boyfriends or girlfriends
- Isolation from peer group, family and friends
- Drug and alcohol misuse
- Displaying inappropriate sexualised behaviour, including how they dress
- Mood swings or changes in behaviour
- Changes in physical appearance such as weight loss or appearing tired all of the time or anal or vaginal soreness or an unusual discharge, and pregnancy
- Having unexplained injuries
- Frequent STI's or unwanted pregnancies
- suddenly starts to behave differently
- thinks badly, or does not look after, him or herself
- avoids being alone with a particular family member
- fears an adult or is reluctant to socialise with them
- tries to tell you about abuse indirectly, through hints or clues
- describes behaviour by an adult that suggests they are being 'groomed' for future abuse

For a few children these effects may be relatively short-term, depending on the individual child, the nature of the abuse and the help they receive. However, for many the effects can last into adulthood and cause a long list of problems, especially mental health problems and drug or alcohol misuse.

13. Online Abuse

Modern communication technology; including the internet and social media, mobile phones and game consoles have become part of our everyday lives.

Young people are more at risk of exposure to inappropriate or criminal behaviour if they are unaware of the dangers which include:

- viewing unsuitable content e.g. hate material, adult pornography and/or extreme forms of obscene material, sites that endorse unhealthy behaviour
- internet chat rooms, discussion forums and bulletin boards being used to contact and groom children for inappropriate or abusive relationships, which may include requests to make and transmit pornographic images of themselves (Contacts made initially in a chat room are likely to be carried on via email, instant messaging services, mobile phone or text messaging)
- giving out personal information
- arranging to meet an online 'friend'
- becoming involved in, or the victim of, bullying, using text messaging and/or mobile phone cameras
- spending too much time online (internet addiction), which can effect concentration, sleep and health
- Sexting and inappropriate content sharing
- becoming susceptible to recruitment by violent extremists

Read more about online safety at UK Safer Internet Centre where you will find e-safety advice, tips and resources to help children and young people stay safe online.

<https://www.betterinternetforkids.eu/>

<https://www.saferinternet.org.uk>

14. Female Genital Mutilation

Female genital mutilation (sometimes referred to as female circumcision) refers to procedures that intentionally alter and cause injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. The practice is illegal in the UK.

However, it has been estimated that over 20,000 girls under the age of 15 are at risk of female genital mutilation (FGM) in the UK each year, and that 66,000 women in the UK are living with the consequences of FGM (NHS, 2014). The true extent is unknown due to the 'hidden' nature of the crime.

The girls may be taken to their country of origin so that FGM can be carried out during the summer holidays, allowing them time to 'heal' before they return to school. There are also worries that some girls may have FGM performed in the UK.

FGM is usually carried out on young girls between infancy and age 15, most commonly before puberty starts. The procedure is traditionally carried out by a woman with no medical training. Anaesthetics and antiseptic treatments are not generally used and girls may have to be forcibly restrained.

FGM can cause severe pain, bleeding, wound infections, inability to urinate, injury to vulval tissues, damage to other organs and sometimes even death. Other complications can arise later with the onset of puberty. If you may come into contact with girls and women at risk of FGM, you can visit the SWCPP website (see below) or read the Multi-Agency Practice Guidelines on Female Genital Mutilation, see below (HMG 2016).

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/multi-agency-statutory-guidance-on-female-genital-mutilation>

<https://bristolsafeguarding.org/children-home/news/statement-on-fgm/>