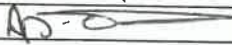




Marches Family Network

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Written By	Kerry Williams
Updated By	Megan Chambers
Owner	Trustees and Staff of Marches Family Network
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Date Approved by Trustees	22.7.24
Signed by Chair of Trustees	
Date for Review	June 2025

Introduction

Marches Family Network believes that a child or young person should never experience abuse of any kind. We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people and to keep them safe. We are committed to practice in a way that protects them. All concerns and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously by trustees, staff and volunteers and will be responded to appropriately.

This policy should be read alongside our policies and procedures on:

- Recruitment and training
- Whistleblowing
- Lone working
- Confidentiality
- Health and safety
- Equality and diversity
- Social media
- Working together and information sharing
- Play and inclusion
- Positive Behaviour

Scope

This policy applies to all trustees, employees, workers, volunteers and sessional workers working on behalf of Marches Family Network; safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. For the purposes of this policy all are referred to as staff.

Legally anyone over the age of 18 is an adult. Marches Family Network have a separate policy that covers adults at risk, please refer to the Safeguarding Adults Policy.

The purpose of this policy is:

- To protect children and young people who receive services from Marches Family Network. This includes the children of adults who use our services.
- To protect children and young people from maltreatment.
- To prevent impairment of children and young people's health and development.
- To ensure that children and young people grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.
- To take action to enable all children and young people to have the best outcomes.
- To provide staff with the overarching principles that inform our approach to safeguarding.

Legal Framework

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of law and guidance that seeks to protect children and young people, namely:

- Children Act 1989
- United Convention of the Rights of the Child 1991
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Children Act 2004
- Care Act 2014
- 'We Have the Right to be Safe' report 2014
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023

Marches Family Network recognise that:

- 'The welfare of children and young people is paramount' (Children Act, 1989).

- All children and young people, regardless of age, disability, gender, race and ethnicity, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have a right to equal protection from all types of harm and abuse and equal access to services which meet their particular needs.
- Some children and young people are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues.
- Working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.

We will seek to keep children and young people safe by:

- Valuing them, listening to them and respecting them
- Providing a safe environment
- Supporting them to make positive choices regarding safety and lifestyle choices.
- Ensuring they feel included and encouraged to fulfil their potential.
- Building open and honest relationships with parents, carers and families.
- Developing and implementing effective child protection and safeguarding practices and procedures that are easy to understand and to access.
- Informing children, young people and families of the policies and procedures as appropriate.
- Providing effective support and training for staff, so they are clear and confident about what is expected of them in relation to safeguarding children and young people.
- Recruiting staff safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made.
- Appointing a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) for children and young people.
- Ensuring that all staff receive regular safeguarding training
- Ensuring that all staff have been provided with the most up-to-date safeguarding policies
- Sharing concerns and relevant information about child protection, safeguarding and good practice with the people that need to know, including children, young people, parents, carers, staff, and other agencies.
- Responding to, recording and reporting concerns promptly and accurately.
- Responding to and recording complaints promptly and accurately.

Marches Family Network Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures

Purpose and Aim of this Procedure

We aim to ensure those children and young people who attend Marches Family Network sessions, and any other children and young people who may come to the attention of Marches Family Network, receive the protection and support they need if they are at risk of abuse.

This procedure provides clear direction to staff at Marches Family Network if they have concerns that a child or young person is in need of protection.

There are many different types of abuse and methods of abuse, including:

- Physical abuse
- Domestic violence or abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Psychological or emotional abuse
- Financial or material abuse
- Modern slavery
- Discriminatory abuse
- Child on child abuse
- Bullying
- Organisational or institutional abuse
- Neglect or acts of omission
- Self-neglect
- Sexual exploitation
- Abuse via online methods

- Radicalisation
- Trafficking
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- Fabricated or Induced Illness (FII)

This list is not exhaustive.

Indicators of Abuse in Children and Young People

The NSPCC website provides useful information about the signs and symptoms of abuse – <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/signs-symptoms-effects/>

Abuse is not always obvious, and there are many reasons why children and young people may not tell anyone that they are being abused. They might not even realise that what is happening to them is abusive.

Many of the signs that suggest abuse may also be caused by other issues, and often it is a case of investigating agencies needing to build up a picture of a child/young person's life by piecing together information held by different individuals and organisations.

It is also important to note that children and young people can experience various types of abuse at the same time.

Abuse can happen to anyone but children and young people with disabilities are more likely to be abused or neglected than their non-disabled peers (Jones et al, 2012).

Children and young people with disabilities are at increased risk of abuse due to:

- Communication barriers
- Increased social isolation
- Dependency on others, particularly for personal care
- Inadequate responses to disclosure
- Staff and volunteers missing the signs, including over-identifying with parents, carers and other family members and dismissing signs as a result
- Lack of education about staying safe
- Impaired capacity to recognise, resist or report abuse
- More frequently away from home

The different forms of abuse and indicators of abuse will be explored more thoroughly through safeguarding training.

The Prevent Duty

In 2011, the Government published the Prevent Strategy which raised awareness of the specific need to safeguard children, young people and families from extremism and radicalisation. People of any age, but in particular young people in the UK, are potentially vulnerable to engagement with extremist ideologies or to targeting by extremist organisations. The current threat from terrorism in the United Kingdom may include the exploitation of vulnerable people, to involve them in terrorism or in activity in support of terrorism. The normalisation of extreme views may also make children and young people vulnerable to future manipulation and exploitation. The Prevent Duty is not about preventing children and young people from having political and religious views and concerns but about supporting them to use those concerns or act on them in non-extremist ways.

Marches Family Network views exploitation and radicalisation as a safeguarding concern and therefore we have a safeguarding duty to protect children and young people from the risk of radicalisation. Radicalisation refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and forms of extremism leading to terrorism.

Any concerns about possible radicalisation and extremism should be referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and MFN safeguarding procedures will be followed. All suspicions and investigations will be kept confidential and shared only with those who need to know.

Marches Family Network's Safeguarding Procedures and Systems

Key Points

- The welfare of the child/young person is paramount.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously by staff and responded to appropriately.
- Marches Family Network has a duty to report to the relevant authority:
 - ❖ a child accident, injury or death on the premises while the child/young person is in our care,
 - ❖ death of, or serious accident or serious injury to, a child/young person or any other person on the premises, whether or not the child/young person is in our care.
- Marches Family Network has a process for recording incidents, concerns and referrals and will store these securely in compliance with current relevant legislation.
- In matters of data protection, confidentiality and information sharing, the protection of the child/young person is always the most important consideration.
- Marches Family Network is committed to safe recruitment, selection and vetting of all trustees, staff and volunteers.
- All trustees, staff and volunteers working with children and young people will have regular training with regard to safeguarding in accordance with their roles and responsibilities. A handbook provides general guidance for the conduct of staff members and all workers have access to a copy of the Safeguarding Policy, and other relevant policies, produced by the Charity.
- Children, young people, parents and carers are informed of the policy and procedures as appropriate.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) Roles and Responsibilities

- The Designated Safeguarding Lead is the first point of contact for all staff to go to for advice if they are concerned about a child or young person (this may also need to be out of hours so staff should always know how to contact them).
- They have a higher level of safeguarding training and knowledge than the rest of the staff.
- They are responsible for ensuring that their organisation's safeguarding policy is kept up to date.
- They ensure that staff and trustees comply with safe recruitment procedures for new staff members during the recruitment and induction process.
- They support staff to assist in gathering information regarding concerns and supports decision making about whether staff concerns are sufficient enough to notify Children's Social Care Services or whether other courses of action are more appropriate.
- They make formal referrals to the Children's Social Care Services.
- They ensure that concerns are logged and stored securely, including logging all concerns, disclosures and allegations to the Safeguarding Database held.
- They have joint responsibility with the management committee or Board of Trustees to ensure that the organisation's safeguarding policy and related policies and procedures are followed and regularly updated.
- They are responsible for providing an annual report to the Board of Trustees relating to all safeguarding matters within the organisation.
- They are responsible for promoting a safe environment for children and young people.
- They know the contact details of relevant statutory agencies e.g. Children's Social Care Services, Police, Local Safeguarding Children Board, and the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for allegations against staff.

It is not the responsibility of the Designated Safeguarding Lead to decide whether a child/young has

been abused or not. This is the responsibility of investigative statutory agencies such as children's social care services or the police.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is Megan Chambers. She can be contacted on 01568 614908 (during her office hours), 07821 624532 (outside of office hours), or contacted via email on leader@marchesfamilynetwork.oeg.uk

Megan is supported by a Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL). The DDSL is Rae Chambers. She can be contacted on 01568 614908, or 07512 146886 or via email on manager@marchesfamilynetwork.org.uk.

Trustee with the responsibility for Safeguarding and Child Protection

Marches Family Network will nominate a trustee who has a working knowledge of Safeguarding/Child Protection or who undertakes training in order to fulfil that role.

The role of the trustee is to:

- Provide a sounding board for the DSL/DDSL in order to consider the most appropriate course of action to take where there is a safeguarding or child protection concern
- Support the DSL/DDSL to use local procedures appropriately (e.g. referral, escalation)
- Sign off Safeguarding Concern Reports completed by the DSL
- Support the Board and DSL to monitor and review systems, policy and procedures to ensure good safeguarding/child protection practice

Trustee responsible for Safeguarding is Claire Wozencroft and is contactable on CW@marchesfamilynetwork.org.uk.

Concerns, Disclosures and Allegations

To keep children and young people safe, we need to be clear about the differences between concerns, disclosures and allegations because there are different procedures to follow.

What is a concern?

A concern is when someone is worried about a child or young person's wellbeing or safety and have reason to think they may have been harmed or may be at risk of being harmed.

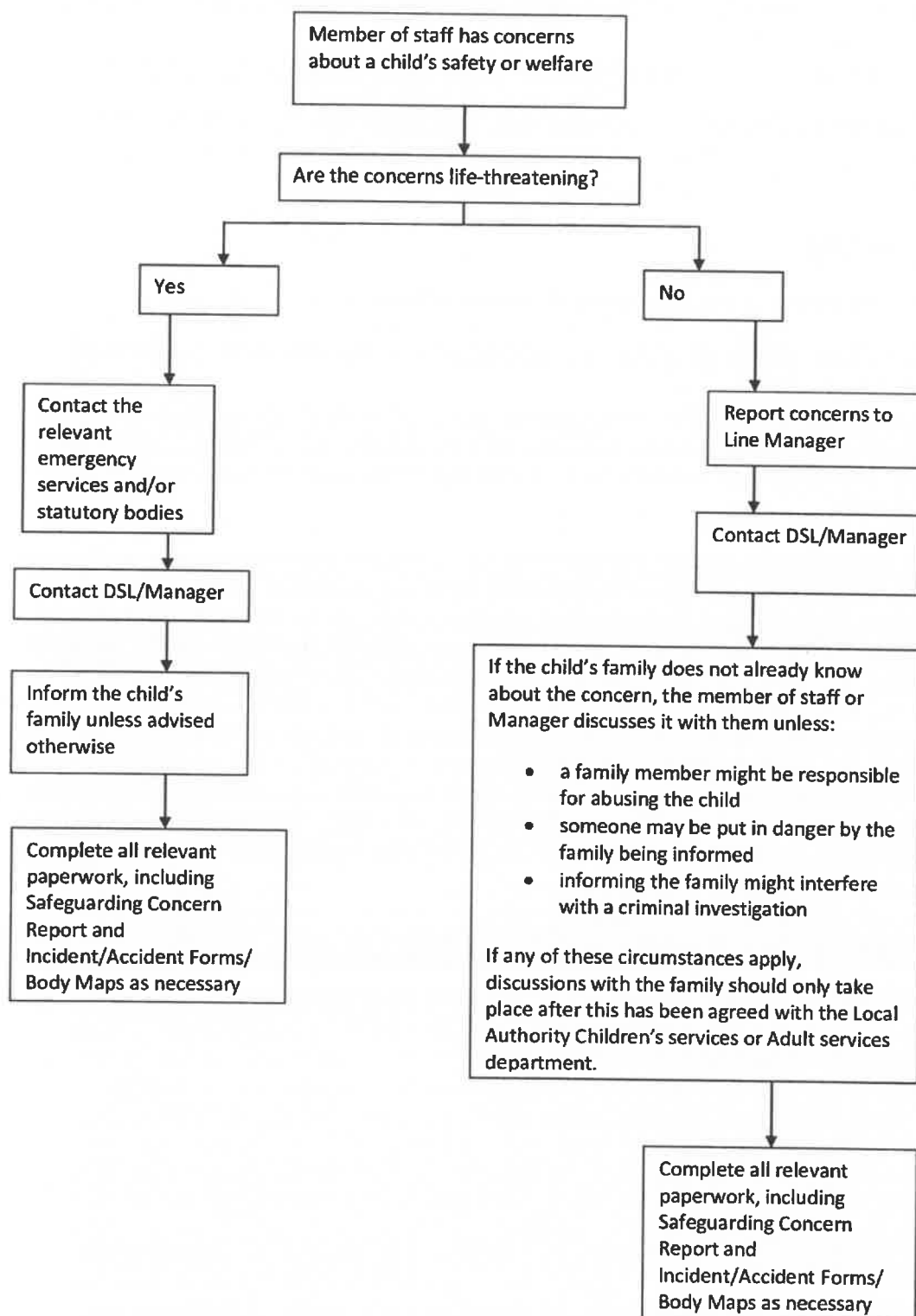
Reporting a Safeguarding Concern

Key Points:

- Keep clear and detailed records.
- Complete all paperwork fully, ensuring that it is legible.
- Wherever possible have a witness with you, this safeguards both the child/young person and the staff.
- If you are unsure about what to do contact your DSL, Manager or, if they are both unavailable, the local relevant social care team (See Useful Contacts).
- External contractors who have a safeguarding concern should contact their own Designated Safeguarding Lead as well as informing Marches Family Network's Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Please remember – it is not up to you to determine whether or not a child or young person has

experienced or is experiencing abuse, it is your job to report any concerns.

Reporting a Safeguarding Concern



What is a disclosure?

A disclosure is when a child or young person tells someone about the abuse that they have been experiencing. Disclosures can happen in many ways, including:

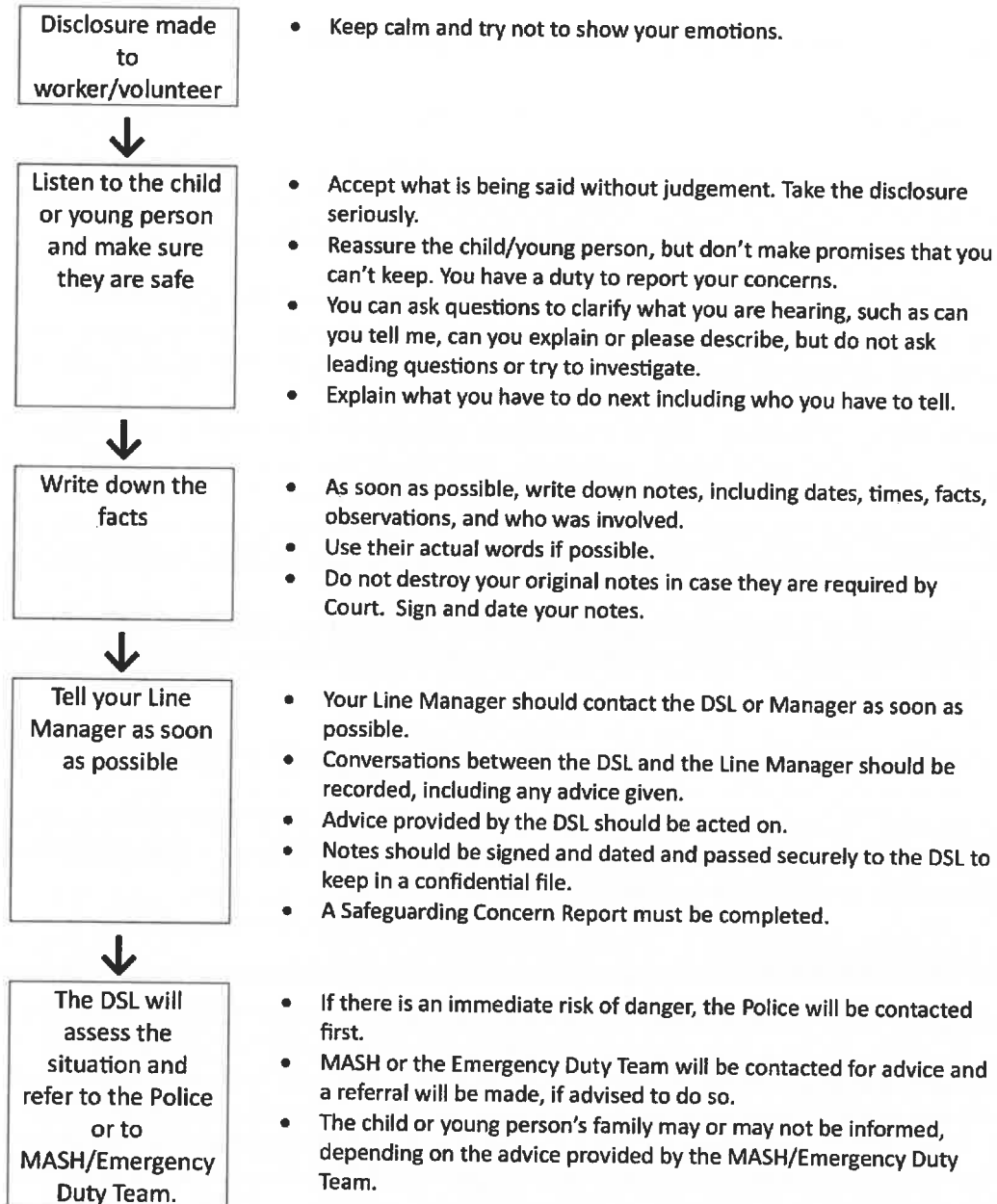
- **Direct disclosure:** this is a specific statement made by a child or young person about the abuse that is happening to them.
- **Indirect disclosure:** one or more ambiguous statements, which indicate that something is wrong.
- **Behavioural disclosure:** this is behaviour that indicates that something is wrong.
- **Non-verbal disclosure:** trying to communicate, in another way than verbally, to let someone know that something is wrong, this can include writing it down, using signs or symbols, or drawing pictures.

Disclosure Guidelines

If a child or young person wants to confide or disclose abuse –

- **Receive:** Accept what is being said without judgement. Take the disclosure seriously.
- **Reassure:** Reassure the child/young person, but don't make promises that you can't keep. Reassure the child/young person that they did nothing wrong and that you take what is said seriously. Don't promise confidentiality – never agree to keep secrets. You have a duty to report your concerns.
- **React:** Listen quietly, carefully and patiently. Do not make assumptions or jump to conclusions. Do not investigate, interrogate or decide if the child/young person is telling the truth. Remember that an allegation of abuse may lead to a criminal investigation, so don't do anything that may jeopardise a police investigation. Let the child/young person explain to you in his or her own words what happened, but don't ask leading questions. Communicate with the child/young person in a way that is appropriate to their age and level of understanding. This is especially important for children and young people with disabilities and for children/young people whose preferred language is not English. Do not ask the child/young person to repeat what they have told you to another member of staff. Explain what you have to do next including who you have to tell. Refer directly to your line Manager, followed by the DSL. Do not discuss the case with anyone who does not need to know. This includes other staff members who are not working directly with the child or young person.
- **Record:** Make some brief notes at the time and write them up in detail as soon as possible. Do not destroy your original notes in case they are required by Court. Record the date, time, place, words used by the child/young person and how the child/young person appeared to you – be specific. Record the actual words used. Record statements and observable things, not your interpretations or assumptions – keep it factual.

Disclosure Procedures



What is an allegation?

An allegation is when somebody informs someone in the organisation, or there is reasonable cause to believe, that a person who works with children or young people may have:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child/young person
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against children, or related to a child/young person, or
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates s/he may pose a risk to children

This includes actions taken outside of the Marches Family Network work role.

The Role of the LADO

In order to manage allegations against childcare professionals, every Local Authority appoints a Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). The LADO works within Children's Services and should be alerted to all cases in which it is alleged that a person who works with children has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child/young person
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against children, or related to a child/young person, or
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates s/he may pose a risk to children

In this context, the term "professional" includes paid employees, volunteers, casual/agency staff and self-employed workers who will have contact with children or young people as a part of their role. If the practice of a childcare professional does not fall into the above criteria but is or may be considered inadequate, then the line Manager must be made aware of this immediately so that appropriate action may be taken. Failure to report concerns may result in disciplinary action.

The LADO ensures that all allegations or concerns about professionals or adults working or volunteering with children or young people are recorded appropriately, monitored and progressed in a timely and confidential way.

The LADO is involved from the initial phase of the allegation through to the conclusion of the case.

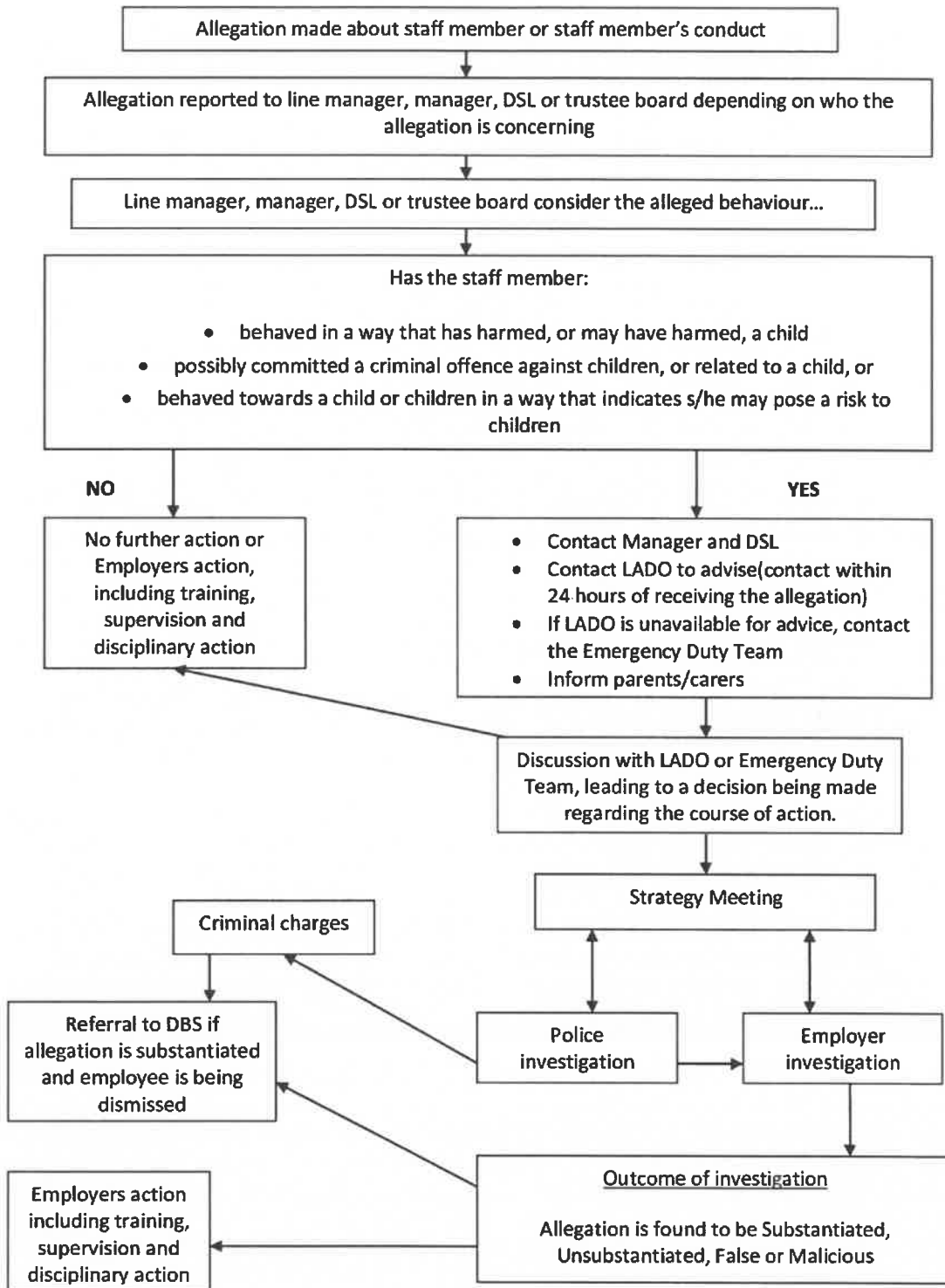
The LADO provides advice and guidance to employers and voluntary organisations, liaising with the police and other agencies and monitoring the progress of cases to ensure that they are dealt with as quickly as possible, consistent with a thorough and fair process.

Reporting Allegations/Concerns

- Any allegation should be reported immediately to the Manager and DSL. The Manager/DSL will advise on action to be taken; any action taken will take into account the wellbeing and safety of the child or young person as the top priority. The LADO should also be informed within one working day of all allegations that come to an employer's attention or that are made directly to the police. The LADO must also be informed of any assessments/allegations about the staff member's personal /family life which could suggest that they may be a risk to children with whom they are working.
- All cases will be subject to an initial joint evaluation between the LADO and referring agency, involving relevant sectors as and when appropriate including, the police, children's social care services, employers, and regulatory bodies. The assessment will focus on the nature of the concern, safeguarding for the particular child/children and appropriate consideration for the professional/volunteer involved.
- The protection of a child/young person will be the prime consideration in the process of managing an allegation. The child/young person's involvement in the process including support and feedback will be given careful consideration with the LADO ensuring that the child's voice is heard.

- For the professional involved, the assessment and subsequent action will be stressful whatever the outcome and support for each individual must be considered and provided where appropriate.
- If an organisation removes an individual (paid worker or unpaid volunteer) from work (or would have, had the person not left first) because the person poses a risk of harm to children, the organisation must make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service

Reporting Allegations about Staff Members



Action to be Taken if an Allegation of Abuse Leading to Serious Harm by a Member of Staff Has Been Recorded

If an allegation is made against a member of staff, the Manager will be IMMEDIATELY informed. The following action will then be taken by the Manager:

- The member of staff against whom the allegation is made will immediately be suspended.
- The police and relevant authorities will be notified immediately.

The following action will then be taken by the Manager:

- Immediate contact should also be made with MASH/ART/First Point of Contact Team and the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), or if outside normal office hours, the Emergency Duty Team, who will advise further on an appropriate course of action.
- No discussions are to be held at this stage with the member of staff concerned and the matter should not be discussed further with the child or other persons involved unless requested by the relevant authorities. Confidentiality should be maintained throughout this matter, in order that any subsequent investigation is not prejudiced.

In cases of physical or sexual abuse:

In cases of physical or sexual abuse, the police should be contacted **immediately**. Their advice should be gained about what to do to preserve any physical evidence.

As a guide:

- Where possible, leave things as and where they are. If anything has to be handled, keep this to an absolute minimum.
- Do not clean up.
- Do not touch anything that you do not have to.
- Do not throw anything away which could be evidence.
- Do not wash anything, or in any way, remove fibres, blood, etc.
- Preserve the clothing and footwear of the victim.
- Preserve anything used to comfort or warm the victim, e.g. a blanket.
- Note in writing the state of the clothing of both the victim and the alleged perpetrator.
- Note injuries in writing. As soon as possible, make full written notes on the conditions and attitudes of the people involved in the incident.
- Take steps to secure the room or area where the incident took place.
- Do not allow anyone to enter until the police arrive.

In addition, in cases of sexual assault:

- Preserve bedding and clothing where appropriate. Do not wash.
- Try not to have any personal or physical contact with either the victim or the alleged perpetrator.
- Offer reassurance and comfort as needed but be aware that anyone touching the victim or alleged perpetrator can cross contaminate evidence.

Positive Physical Intervention

Marches Family Network realise the need to use physical intervention in some circumstances.

- Staff must only use physical intervention as a last resort, and that at all times, it must be the minimal force necessary to prevent injury or damage to property.

For further information, refer to the Positive Behaviour Policy.

Information Sharing

Sharing the right information, at the right time, with the right people, is fundamental to good practice in adult safeguarding. Sharing information between organisations is covered in the common law duty of confidentiality, the Data Protection Act 2018, and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Organisations may need to share information with the right people at the right time to:

- Prevent death or serious harm
- Coordinate effective and efficient responses
- Enable early interventions to prevent the escalation of risk
- Reveal patterns of abuse that were previously undetected and that could identify others at risk of abuse
- Identify low-level concerns that may reveal people at risk

The law does not prevent the sharing of sensitive personal information within organisations. If the information is confidential, but there is a safeguarding concern, sharing it may be justified. In addition, the law does not prevent the sharing of sensitive, personal information between organisations where the public interest served outweighs the public interest served by protecting confidentiality – for example, where a serious crime may be prevented.

Safeguarding and Alcohol/Drugs Procedure

If a parent, carer or relative appears to be drunk or clearly under the influence of drugs (prescription or illegal) and it is apparent that s/he is:

- not fit to drive a vehicle
- or
- too incapacitated to take care of the vulnerable adult

Marches Family Network staff must NOT release the child/young person from their care and MUST do the following:

- Phone one of the other named contacts listed on the play information, to whom the parent/carer has previously given authorisation to collect their young person.
- If the emergency contacts are unavailable, contact both the police and the duty social worker (or if outside normal office hours, the Emergency Duty Team). The police and social care services are agencies with statutory powers, who will act quickly to secure the immediate safety of the child/young person where there is a risk to his/her life or a likelihood of serious immediate harm.

Marches Family Network's duty and responsibility is to prevent vulnerable adult from being harmed. In this situation we will ensure the child's/young person's safety by not releasing them from our care. This is not the same as removing them from their parent's or carer's care, which must NOT be done.

Safeguarding Code of Conduct

For staff

At Marches Family Network we believe that all staff share responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk. The Safeguarding Code of Conduct below sets out what is required. Please speak to your line manager or the Designated Safeguarding Lead if you are unclear or require further clarification on this, in relation to your role.

As a member of staff, this Safeguarding Code of Conduct forms part of your contract of employment. As a worker or volunteer it forms part of the agreement for your role. Everyone working at Marches Family Network, whether in a paid or unpaid role is expected to adhere to this Code and you will be asked to sign and return it as acceptance of your commitment to it. You will also be required to undertake training in safeguarding in accordance with charity policy.

The Safeguarding Code of Conduct:

- Makes clear what is required of all staff;
- Supports staff in meeting their obligations;
- Enables staff to raise concerns without fear of recrimination;
- Reduces the risk of misplaced or malicious allegations by clarifying responsibilities.

Staff Must Abide by the Following:

- Report any incidents or concerns that cause you to believe that a child, young person or adult at risk is, or is likely to be, at risk of harm. This includes a requirement under the Prevent duty to report if you suspect that a child/young person or adult at risk may be under the influence of radicalisation or extremism.
- Marches Family Network will support any member of staff who raises a legitimate concern about the actions of others;
- Refer to Marches Family Network's Whistleblowing policy if you feel an incident or concern cannot be reported to your Designated Safeguarding Lead, Manager or the Board of Trustees;
- Disclose any criminal record, caution, reprimand or warning (subject to filtering rules¹) whether received prior to or during the course of your work or volunteering for Marches Family Network;
- Inform the Manager of any ongoing or past child protection investigation(s) that have involved you, including any that you are aware of that relate to your own immediate family or any person that you are in a significant relationship with e.g. family members, partners, individuals who live in the same household;
- Inform the Manager of anyone living in your household or at your address who becomes disqualified from working with children e.g. as a result of offences against a child, against an adult e.g. rape, murder indecent assault, actual bodily harm etc. (This is a legal requirement to staff in England and Wales working in early years provision, later years provision up to 8 years and in the management of such early or later years provision).

It is not permissible (and in some instances may be unlawful) for you to:

- Use your position to intimidate, bully, threaten, discriminate against, coerce or undermine children and young people, adults at risk or staff.
- Behave or communicate with children, young people or adults at risk in ways which seek to build inappropriate relationships in order to abuse or put them at risk.
- Use a relationship with a service user or their family for personal gain. Gift-giving and the acceptance of presents should be discussed with your manager.
- Give special rewards or privileges in an attempt to build inappropriate relationships with children and young people or adults at risk.

¹ Certain spent convictions and cautions are "protected" (also known as filtered) and are not subject to disclosure to employers. Applicable in England and Wales and Northern Ireland. For further details, please refer to <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service> (England & Wales) or <http://www.dojni.gov.uk/index/accessni/disclosures/filtering.htm> (Northern Ireland).

- Engage in, or attempt to engage in, sexual or inappropriate relationships with children, young people or adults at risk for whatever reason, including the use of suggestive conversations, comments, texting or emails.
- Possess indecent images of children/young people; this will always be reported to the police regardless of the explanation provided.
- Carry out your duties or volunteering whilst adversely affected by alcohol, solvents or drugs.
- Encourage or assist others to break the law in any way.

Team/Contact	Contact Number	Availability
Marches Family Network		
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) for Marches Family Network	01568 614908 (ext 3) or 07821 624532	
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) for Marches Family Network	01568 614908 (ext 1) or 07512 146886	When DSL is unavailable (MFN sessions only)
Herefordshire Council		
Herefordshire Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)	01432 260800	Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm
Herefordshire Emergency Duty Team	01905 768020	Before 9am, after 5pm, and during weekends and public/bank holidays
Herefordshire Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) – Terry Pilliner	01432 261739	
Other Agencies		
NSPCC	0808 8005000	Available 24/7
Ofsted	0300 1231231	8 am – 6 pm, Mon-Fri

Declaration

You will conduct yourself in accordance with this Safeguarding Code of Conduct in all your work/volunteering with or for Marches Family Network. Any breach of the Safeguarding Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action including dismissal, or the termination of your working agreement or involvement as a volunteer with Marches Family Network, as appropriate. In certain circumstances, such action will also result in reports to Regulatory bodies, relevant Local Authorities and/or the police, as appropriate.

Please sign the declaration below and return this page to the office.

I confirm that I have read and understood Marches Family Network's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and agree to abide by its contents:	
Please PRINT name	
Signed	Date