



SAFEGUARDING & CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Reviewed by Jamie McManus

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Safeguarding & Child protection policy

Introduction

This document outlines UniqMinds child protection / safeguarding policy. It applies to all adults, including volunteers working in or on behalf of UniqMinds.

A child centred and coordinated approach to safeguarding

Our students come from a variety of backgrounds and localities, with various experiences of education and the wider world that impact on who they are and how they negotiate challenges in life. Students are placed with us because we provide a provision and experience better fitting to student needs than other settings in the mainstream offer. Many, if not all of them, are vulnerable in different ways, and as a Special Centre it is our remit to protect, educate and develop our children and young people to secure the best possible life chances for them, no matter the difficulties they have previously encountered. Our students require the best specialist educational and developmental support, and they deserve a high-quality experience to overcome gaps in their previous education and cultural journey. Safeguarding in this context is imperative and fundamental; it is implicit and explicit in everything we do. Our students may not always possess the communication skills that enable many children to discuss or disclose incidents that upset or frighten them. It is of the utmost importance therefore that we create a sensitive, proactive environment in which children, parents, carers and staff members are secure and confident in the agreed procedures that put children's safety first. We will also ensure that our students are taught the skills and are given the means to communicate effectively.

Through the Personal Development with PSHE and working collaboratively we aim to teach students how to recognise when they are at risk and how to get help when they need it. Child abuse occurs in all groups within society, across all cultural, ethnic and religious communities and all socio-economic groups. We know that it is an under-reported and ever-present issue. We have a core belief that "it can happen here."

We appreciate that safeguarding incidents and/or behaviours can be associated with factors outside of UniqMinds, and/or can occur between children outside the centre. All staff, but especially the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) consider the context within which such incidents and/or behaviours occur. This is known as contextual safeguarding, which simply means assessments of children should consider whether wider environmental factors are present in a child's life that are a threat to their safety and/or welfare. Children's social care assessments should consider such factors, so it is important that we are able to provide as much information as possible as part of the referral process. This will allow any assessment to consider all the available evidence and the full context of any abuse. This policy sets out the key factors relating to this, and how we address them.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children **is everyone's** responsibility and staff at UniqMinds will always maintain the attitude '**it could happen here**'. **Everyone** who comes into contact with children and their families has a role to play. In order to fulfil this responsibility effectively, all practitioners will make sure their approach is child centred. This means that they will consider, **at all times**, what is in **the best interests** of the child.

No single practitioner can have a full picture of a child's needs and circumstances. If children and families are to receive the right help at the right time, **everyone** who comes into contact with them has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information, and taking prompt action.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined for the purposes of this guidance as:

- Protecting children from maltreatment.
- 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.

Children includes everyone under the age of 18.

Everyone working in, or for UniqMinds, shares an objective to help keep children and young people safe by contributing to:

- Providing a safe environment for children and young people to learn and develop in education and therapeutic settings.
- Identifying children who may need extra help, or are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, and taking the appropriate action, working with other services as needed.

Here at UniqMinds, we will ensure that parents and our partner agencies are aware of our safeguarding and child protection policy by ensuring that it is displayed at our site, by raising awareness at initial meetings with new students and ensuring that it is on the UniqMinds website.

Equality Statement

In addition to the above understanding, we acknowledge that some children have an increased risk of abuse, and additional barriers can exist for some children with respect to recognising or disclosing it. We are committed to anti-discriminatory practice and recognise children's diverse circumstances. We ensure that all children have the same protection, regardless of any barriers they may face.

We give special consideration to children who:

- Have special educational needs (SEN) or disabilities
- Are young carers
- May 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

Policy Aims

The aim of this policy is to outline how UniqMinds will:

- Promote a positive ethos where children can learn, develop, feel secure and be safe.
- Prevent unsuitable people working with children and young people.
- Promote safe practice and challenge poor and unsafe practice.
- Identify instances in which there are grounds for concern about a child's welfare and initiate or take appropriate action to keep them safe.
- Contribute to effective partnership working between parents and all those involved with providing services for children and young people.

The policy will be reviewed annually, unless an incident or new legislation or guidance suggests the need for an earlier date of review.

Context

This policy enables UniqMinds to carry out our functions with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children under sections 175 and 157 of the Education Act (2002). The policy is in line with the following legislation and guidance:

- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)
- Children Act 1989 and 2004
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023)
- Information Sharing: Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents, and carers (2015)
- Protection of Freedoms Act (2012)

Safeguarding the welfare of children is more than purely child protection, it will permeate all activity and functions. This policy therefore complements and supports a range of other company policies, such as, but not exclusively;

- Health and Safety
- Behaviour Policy
- Providing first aid (see Health and Safety policy)
- Staff behaviour
- Complaints procedure
- Information sharing

Principles

Safeguarding arrangements within UniqMinds are underpinned by the 2 key principles:

Everyone who comes in to contact with children and their families has a role to play in safeguarding children. All staff and volunteers have a responsibility and role to play to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Staff members will maintain an attitude of **“it could happen here” where safeguarding is concerned, and we expect a vigilant and robust approach from and all staff at UniqMinds.**

When concerned about the welfare of a child, staff will always act in the best interests of the child. UniqMinds operates a child centred approach considering child's views and voices. The child's wishes and feelings will be considered when determining what action to take and services to provide

to protect individuals' children through ensuring there are systems in place for children to express their views and give feedback.

Safeguarding Roles and Responsibilities of Staff

All adults working in, or on behalf of UniqMinds have a responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This includes:

- Responsibility to provide a safe environment in which children can learn and develop.
- To identify children who may need extra help or who are suffering or are likely to suffer significant harm. All staff then have a responsibility to take appropriate action, working with services as needed.

Staff induction will include organisation vision, aspirations, and expectation of all staff as well as what is considered acceptable and what is not. They will also receive information about systems within UniqMinds which support safeguarding. This includes the child protection/safeguarding policy, behaviour policy and the role of the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) at UniqMinds.

Roles and Responsibilities of the UniqMinds Advisory Board

Members of the Advisory Board have the responsibility to ensure that UniqMinds complies with safeguarding duties under legislation. Safeguarding is a standing item at all management and staff meetings.

Members will ensure that UniqMinds contributes to inter-agency working in line with Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023) by:

- Providing a co-ordinated offer of early help when low level or emerging needs of children are identified.
- Contributing to inter-agency support to children subject to child in need or child protection plans.
- Allowing access for Children's Social Care to conduct or consider conducting an assessment.
- UniqMinds safeguarding arrangements consider procedures and practice of the local authority as part of the inter-agency safeguarding procedures. This includes co-operation between partner agencies and providing information them to allow it to perform its functions.
- When a young person comes from another local authority then the first point of call would be to contact the duty social care team or local safeguarding board for direction/guidance
- Members will liaise with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) (also known as Designated Officer) and partner agencies in event of any allegations of abuse made against the Management.
- There is an effective child protection policy which is consistent with procedures, along with a staff behaviour policy (code of conduct). This will be provided to all staff on induction, will be updated annually and available on UniqMinds website.
- All policies and procedure adopted by the Members, particularly concerning referrals of suspected abuse and neglect, are followed by staff.
- A member of the Management team is appointed to the role of Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL); this will be explicit in the role holder's job description, have the appropriate

authority and given time, funding, training, resources, and support to fulfil their role effectively.

- The DSL will undergo training at a minimum every two years. The Management and other staff will undergo child protection training regularly. Staff training will be consistent with the guidance Training Pathways for Education Provider's.
- People who pose a risk of harm are prevented from working with children by:
 - Adhering to statutory responsibilities to check staff working with children, taking proportionate decisions on whether to ask for checks beyond what is required and ensuring volunteers are appropriately supervised.
- There are procedures in place to handle allegations of abuse against staff and volunteers and that such allegations are referred to the LADO/Designed Officer at the local authority and that procedures are in place to make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service when the criteria have been met. There are also procedures in place to handle allegations against other children.
- There are systems in place for children to express their views and feedback. Staff will not agree confidentiality and will always act in the best interests of the child.
- There are appropriate safeguarding responses to children who go missing from UniqMinds, particularly on repeat occasions.
- Any deficiencies or weaknesses regarding safeguarding arrangements that are brought to their attention are addressed without delay.

The Roles and Responsibilities of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The DSL is a senior member of staff who co-ordinates UniqMinds safeguarding and child protection arrangements by providing advice and support to other staff on child welfare and child protection matters, to take part in strategy meetings and inter-agency meetings – and /or to support other staff to do so - and to contribute to the assessment of children.

The DSL liaises with the local authority and works with other agencies in line with Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023). Where there are serious/complex needs or child protection concerns, this includes referrals to Children's Social Care. In exceptional circumstances, i.e., in an emergency or concern that appropriate action hasn't been taken, staff members can speak directly to Children's Social Care.

Roles and Responsibilities of other UniqMinds Staff

Any concerns must be discussed with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). If staff members are unsure, they will always speak to the DSL to clarify the situation and agree if any action is needed. Staff have a responsibility to record all concerns (using UniqMinds concerns form) and forward this to the DSL. All staff will work with the DSL and where appropriate support Social Workers to take decisions about individual children. All staff, including volunteers must understand how UniqMinds safeguards and promotes the welfare of children, including UniqMinds child protection policy, their role, and responsibilities in this and how to report any concerns.

UniqMinds staff with specific safeguarding responsibilities

Name of Designated Safeguarding Lead: Charlie O'Neill

Safe Environment - children are safe and feel safe

UniqMinds adopts an open and accepting attitude towards children as part of our responsibility. Children, parents, and staff will be free to talk about any concerns and will see UniqMinds as a safe place when there are difficulties. Children's worries and fears will be taken seriously.

UniqMinds will therefore ensure that:

- An ethos where children feel secure and are encouraged to talk and are listened too, taken seriously, and responded to appropriately is established and maintained.
- Children are involved in the decision-making which affects them.
- Children know that there are staff whom they can approach if they are worried or have difficulties and UniqMinds has well developed listening systems.
- Posters are displayed which detail contact numbers for appropriate support services and child protection helplines i.e., NSPCC and Childline.
- There is a clear written statement of the standards of behaviour and the boundaries of appropriate behaviour expected of staff and clients (see behaviour policy) that is understood and endorsed by all.
- Positive and safe behaviour is encouraged among students and staff are alert to changes in child's behaviour and recognise that challenging behaviour may be an indicator of abuse.
- Effective working relationships are established with parents and colleagues from partner agencies.
- There is an awareness that personal and family circumstances and lifestyles of some children lead to an increased risk of neglect and or abuse.
- Staff are appropriately trained in safeguarding according to their roles and responsibilities, have regular opportunities for safeguarding briefings and records are kept of all training undertaken.
- Safer recruitment procedures are used to make sure that all appropriate checks are carried out on staff (and volunteers) who work with children.
- Volunteers are appropriately supervised.
- Any groups using UniqMinds premises for the provision of services to children have their own safeguarding policies, or adopt Uniqminds policy, and have satisfactorily completed all appropriate checks.

Early Help

Any child may benefit from early help, but all staff at UniqMinds will be particularly alert to the potential need for early help for a child who:

- is disabled and has specific additional needs.
- has special educational needs (whether or not they have a statutory education, health, and care plan)
- is a young carer.
- is showing signs of being drawn in to anti-social or criminal behaviour, including gang involvement and association with organised crime groups.

- is frequently missing/goes missing from care or from home.
- is misusing drugs or alcohol themselves.
- is at risk of modern slavery, trafficking or exploitation.
- is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as substance abuse, adult mental health problems or domestic abuse.
- has returned home to their family from care.
- is showing early signs of abuse and/or neglect.
- is at risk of being radicalised or exploited
- is a privately fostered child.

Special consideration, where possible, includes the provision of safeguarding information, resources and support services in community languages and accessible formats.

Specific forms of abuse and safeguarding issues

We recognise that some children will be at increased risk of neglect and or abuse. Many factors can contribute to an increase in risk, including prejudice and discrimination, isolation, social exclusion, communication issues and reluctance on the part of some adults to accept that abuse happens, or who have a high level of tolerance in respect of neglect.

Abuse and neglect

Knowing what to look for is vital to the early identification of abuse and neglect. All staff will be aware of indicators of abuse and neglect so that they are able to identify cases of children who may need help or protection. If staff are unsure, they will always speak to the designated safeguarding lead. All staff will be aware that abuse, neglect, and safeguarding issues are rarely stand-alone events that can be covered by one definition or label. In most cases, multiple issues will overlap with one another. All staff will be aware that safeguarding incidents and/or behaviours can be associated with factors outside of UniMinds and/or can occur between children outside of these environments. All staff, but especially the designated safeguarding lead will consider whether children are at risk of abuse or exploitation in situations outside their families. Extra-familial harms take a variety of different forms and children can be vulnerable to multiple harms including (but not limited to) sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, and serious youth violence. Indicators of abuse and neglect

Abuse: a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. 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. Children may be abused by an adult or adults or by another child or children.

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.

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. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning or preventing the child from participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone.

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 nonpenetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing, and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse.

Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children. The sexual abuse of children by other children is a specific safeguarding issue in education also known as peer-on-peer abuse.

Neglect: the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy, for example, 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); or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Safeguarding issues: All staff will have an awareness of safeguarding issues that can put children at risk of harm. Behaviours linked to issues such as drug taking, alcohol abuse, deliberately missing education, and sexting (also known as youth produced sexual imagery) put children in danger.

Mental Health: All staff will also be aware that mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation. Only appropriately trained professionals will attempt to make a diagnosis of a mental health problem. Staff, however, are well placed to observe children day-to-day and identify those whose behaviour suggests that they may be experiencing a mental health problem or be at risk of developing one.

Where children have suffered abuse and neglect, or other potentially traumatic adverse childhood experiences, this can have a lasting impact throughout childhood, adolescence and into adulthood. It is key that staff are aware of how these children's experiences, can impact on their mental health, behaviour, and education.

If staff have a mental health concern about a child that is also a safeguarding concern, immediate action will be taken, following their child protection policy, and speaking to the designated safeguarding lead.

The Department for Education The department has published advice and guidance on [Preventing and Tackling Bullying](#), and [Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools](#) . In addition, Public Health England has produced a range of resources to support the promotion positive health, wellbeing and resilience among young people including its guidance [Promoting children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing](#). Its resources include social media, forming positive relationships, smoking and alcohol. See [Rise Above](#) or links to all materials and lesson plans.

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. There are two age appropriate guides to support children [5-11 year olds](#) and [12-17 year olds](#).

The guides explain each step of the process, support and special measures that are available. There are diagrams illustrating the courtroom structure and the use of video links is explained.

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 link](#) with clear and concise information on the dispute resolution service. This may be useful for some parents and carers.

Children Missing Education (CME): All UniqMinds staff will be aware that children going missing, particularly repeatedly, can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding possibilities. This may include abuse and neglect, which may include sexual abuse or exploitation and child criminal exploitation. It may indicate mental health problems, risk of substance abuse, risk of travelling to conflict zones, risk of female genital mutilation or risk of forced marriage. Early intervention is necessary to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of a child going missing in future. UniqMinds staff will be aware of the procedures for dealing with children that go missing from the centre, particularly on repeat occasions, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of their going missing in future.

It is critical that all UniqMinds staff are alert to signs to look out for and the individual triggers to be aware of when considering the risks of potential safeguarding concerns such as travelling to conflict zones, FGM and forced marriage.

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. NICCO provides information designed to support professionals working with offenders and their children, to help mitigate negative consequences for those children.

Child sexual exploitation: CSE occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. CSE does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology. CSE can affect any child or young person (male or female) under the age of 18 years, including 16- and 17-year-olds who can legally consent to have sex. It can include both contact (penetrative and non-penetrative acts) and non-contact sexual activity and may occur without the child or young person's immediate knowledge (e.g., through others copying videos or images they have created and posted on social media).

The above CCE indicators can also be indicators of CSE, as can:

- children who have older boyfriends or girlfriends.
- children who suffer from sexually transmitted infections or become pregnant.

The Department for Education provide: [Child sexual exploitation: guide for practitioners](#)

Child criminal exploitation: CCE is where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child into any criminal activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or (c) through violence or the threat of violence. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. CCE does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

CCE can include children being forced to work in cannabis factories, being coerced into moving drugs or money across the country (county lines see further for more information), forced to shoplift or pickpocket, or to threaten other young people.

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

County Lines: County lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs (primarily crack cocaine and heroin) into one or more importing areas [within the UK], using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of “deal line”.

Exploitation is an integral part of the county lines offending model with children and vulnerable adults exploited to move [and store] 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 several locations including schools, further and higher educational institutions, pupil referral units, special educational needs schools, children’s homes, and care homes.

Children are often recruited to move drugs and money between locations and are known to be exposed to techniques such as ‘plugging’, where drugs are concealed internally to avoid detection. Children can easily become trapped by this type of exploitation as county lines gangs create drug debts and can threaten serious violence and kidnap towards victims (and their families) if they attempt to leave the county lines network.

One of the ways of identifying potential involvement in county lines are missing episodes (both from home and school), when the victim may have been trafficked for the purpose of transporting drugs and a referral to the National Referral Mechanism¹⁰³ should be considered. If a child is suspected to be at risk of or involved in county lines, a safeguarding referral should be considered alongside

consideration of availability of local services/third sector providers who offer support to victims of county lines exploitation.

Further information on the signs of a child's involvement in county lines is available in guidance published by the Home Office.

Serious violence: All UniqMinds staff will be aware of indicators, which may signal that child are at risk from, or are involved with serious violent crime. These may include increased absence from school, a change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups, a significant decline in performance, signs of self-harm or a significant change in wellbeing, or signs of assault or unexplained injuries. Unexplained gifts or new possessions could also indicate that children have been approached by, or are involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs.

All UniqMinds staff will be aware of the associated risks and understand the measures in place to manage these. Advice is provided in the Home Office's Preventing youth violence and gang involvement and its Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: county lines guidance.

Domestic abuse: The cross-government definition of domestic violence and abuse is: any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence, or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass but is not limited to: psychological; physical; sexual; financial; and emotional.

All children can witness and be adversely affected by domestic abuse in the context of their home life where domestic abuse occurs between family members. Exposure to domestic abuse and/or violence can have a serious, long lasting emotional and psychological impact on children. In some cases, a child may blame themselves for the abuse or may have had to leave the family home as a result.

National Domestic Abuse Helpline; Refuge runs the National Domestic Abuse Helpline, which can be called free of charge and in confidence, 24 hours a day on 0808 2000 247. Its website provides guidance and support for potential victims, as well as those who are worried about friends and loved ones. It also has a form through which a safe time from the team for a call can be booked.

Additional advice on identifying children who are affected by domestic abuse and how they can be helped is available at:

- [NSPCC - Domestic abuse](#)
- [Refuge what is domestic violence/effects of domestic violence on children](#)
- [Safelives: young people and domestic abuse](#)

Homelessness: Being homeless or being at risk of becoming homeless presents a real risk to a child's welfare. The designated safeguarding lead will 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, as well as the family being asked to leave a property. Whilst referrals and or discussion with the Local Housing Authority will be progressed as appropriate, this does not, and will not, replace a referral into children's social care where a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 places a new legal duty on English councils so that everyone who is homeless or at risk of homelessness will have access to meaningful help including an assessment of their needs and circumstances, the development of a personalised housing plan, and work to help them retain their accommodation or find a new place to live.

In most cases, UniqMinds staff will be considering homelessness in the context of children who live with their families, and intervention will be on that basis. However, it will also be recognised in some cases 16- and 17-year-olds could be living independently from their parents or guardians, for example through their exclusion from the family home, and will require a different level of intervention and support. Children's services will be the lead agency for these young people and the designated safeguarding lead will ensure appropriate referrals are made based on the child's circumstances. The department and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government have published joint statutory guidance on the provision of accommodation for 16- and 17-year-olds who may be homeless and/ or require accommodation.

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

A close family relative is defined as a 'grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt' and includes half-siblings and step parents; it does not include great-aunts or uncles, great grandparents, or cousins.

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

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

UniqMinds staff will notify the designated safeguarding lead when they become aware of private fostering arrangements. The designated safeguarding lead will speak to the guardians of the child involved to check that they are aware of their duty to inform the LA. UniqMinds itself has a duty to inform the local authority of the private fostering arrangements.

So-called 'honour-based' abuse (including Female Genital Mutilation and Forced Marriage): So-called 'honour-based' abuse (HBA) encompasses incidents or crimes which have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or the community, including female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, and practices such as breast ironing. Abuse committed in the context of preserving "honour" often involves a wider network of family or community pressure and can include multiple perpetrators. It is important to be aware of this dynamic and additional risk factors when deciding what form of safeguarding action to take. All forms of HBA are abuse (regardless of the motivation) and should be handled and escalated as such. Professionals in all agencies, and individuals and groups in relevant communities, need to be alert to the possibility of a child being at risk of HBA, or already having suffered HBA.

If staff have a concern regarding a child that might be at risk of HBA or who has suffered from HBA, they should speak to the designated safeguarding lead. As appropriate, they will activate local safeguarding procedures, using existing national and local protocols for multi-agency liaison with police and children's social care.

FGM: 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.

FGM mandatory reporting duty: Section 5B of the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (as inserted by section 74 of the Serious Crime Act 2015) places a statutory duty upon regulated health and social care professionals in England and Wales, to report to the police where they discover (either through disclosure by the victim or visual evidence) that FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl under 18. Those failing to report such cases will face disciplinary sanctions. It will be rare for staff to see visual evidence, and they will not be examining clients, but the same definition of what is meant by “to discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out” is used for all professionals to whom this mandatory reporting duty applies.

Staff must personally report to the police cases where they discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out. Unless the staff member has good reason not to, they will still consider and discuss any such case with the designated safeguarding lead and involve children’s social care as appropriate. The duty does not apply in relation to at risk or suspected cases (i.e., where the staff member does not discover that an act of FGM appears to have been carried out, either through disclosure by the victim or visual evidence) or in cases where the woman is 18 or over. In these cases, staff will follow local safeguarding procedures.

Forced marriage: Forcing a person into a marriage is a crime in England and Wales. A forced marriage is one entered into without the full and free consent of one or both parties and where violence, threats or any other form of coercion is used to cause a person to enter into a marriage. Threats can be physical or emotional and psychological. 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 communities use religion and culture as a way to coerce a person into marriage. UniqMinds can play an important role in safeguarding children from forced marriage.

Preventing radicalisation: Children are vulnerable to extremist ideology and radicalisation. Similar to protecting children from other forms of harms and abuse, protecting children from this risk should be a part of an organisation’s safeguarding approach.

- **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. The use or threat must be designed to influence the government or to intimidate the public and is made for the purpose of advancing a political, religious, or ideological cause.

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

However, it is possible to protect vulnerable people from extremist ideology and intervene to prevent those at risk of radicalisation being radicalised. As with other safeguarding risks, staff should be alerted to changes in children’s behaviour, which could indicate that they may need help or

protection. Staff should use their judgement in identifying children who might be at risk of radicalisation and act proportionately which may include the designated safeguarding lead) making a Prevent referral.

Additional support

The Home Office has developed three e-learning modules:

- [Prevent awareness e-learning](#) offers an introduction to the Prevent duty.
- [Educate Against Hate](#) is a government website designed to support leaders to help them safeguard young people from radicalisation and extremism. The platform provides free information and resources to help staff identify and address the risks, as well as build resilience to radicalisation.
- [Prevent referrals e-learning](#) supports staff to make Prevent referrals that are robust, informed and with good intention.
 - Channel awareness e-learning is aimed at staff who may be asked to contribute to or sit on a multiagency Channel panel.

Peer on peer abuse: All UniqMinds staff will be aware that children can abuse other children (often referred to as peer-on-peer abuse). This is most likely to include, but may not be limited to:

- bullying (including cyberbullying)
- physical abuse such as 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, which may be stand-alone or part of a broader pattern of abuse
- upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress, or alarm
- sexting (also known as youth produced sexual imagery)
- initiation/hazing type violence and rituals

Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children: Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex. It can also occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or 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, likely, adversely affect their educational attainment

Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap, they can occur online and offline (both physical and verbal) and are never acceptable. It is important that all victims are taken seriously and offered appropriate support. UniqMinds staff will be aware that some groups are potentially more at risk. Evidence shows girls, children with SEND and LGBT children are at greater risk.

UniqMinds staff will be aware of the importance of:

- making clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment is not acceptable, will never be tolerated and is not an inevitable part of growing up
- not tolerating or dismissing sexual violence or sexual harassment as “banter”, “part of growing up”, “just having a laugh” or “boys being boys”

- challenging behaviours (potentially criminal in nature), such as grabbing bottoms, breasts, and genitalia, flicking bras, and lifting up skirts. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them.

Sexual violence: It is important that UniqMinds staff are aware of sexual violence and the fact children can, and sometimes do, abuse their peers in this way. When referring to sexual violence we are referring to sexual offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 as described below:

- Rape: A person (A) commits an offence of rape if: he intentionally penetrates the vagina, anus, or mouth of another person (B) with his penis, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.
- Assault by Penetration: A person (A) commits an offence if: s/he intentionally penetrates the vagina or anus of another person (B) with a part of her/his body or anything else, the penetration is sexual, B does not consent to the penetration and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.
- Sexual Assault: A person (A) commits an offence of sexual assault if: s/he intentionally touches another person (B), the touching is sexual, B does not consent to the touching and A does not reasonably believe that B consents.

What is consent? Consent is about having the freedom and capacity to choose. Consent to sexual activity may be given to one sort of sexual activity but not another, e.g. to vaginal but not anal sex or penetration with conditions, such as wearing a condom. Consent can be withdrawn at any time during sexual activity and each time activity occurs. Someone consents to vaginal, anal, or oral penetration only if s/he agrees by choice to that penetration and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice.

Sexual harassment: When referring to sexual harassment we mean ‘unwanted conduct of a sexual nature’ that can occur online and offline. When we reference sexual harassment, we do so in the context of child-on child sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is likely to: violate a child’s dignity, and/or make them feel intimidated, degraded, or humiliated and/or create a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment.

Whilst not intended to be an exhaustive list, sexual harassment can include:

- sexual comments, such as: telling sexual stories, making lewd comments, making sexual remarks about clothes and appearance, and calling someone sexualised names
- sexual “jokes” or taunting
- physical behaviour, such as: deliberately brushing against someone, interfering with someone’s clothes, and displaying pictures, photos, or drawings of a sexual nature
- online sexual harassment. This may be standalone, or part of a wider pattern of sexual harassment and/or sexual violence. It may include:
 - non-consensual sharing of sexual images and videos
 - sexualised online bullying
 - unwanted sexual comments and messages, including, on social media
 - o sexual exploitation; coercion and threats
 - upskirting

Upskirting: The Voyeurism (Offences) Act, which is commonly known as the Upskirting Act, came into force on 12 April 2019. 'Upskirting' is where someone takes a picture under a person's clothing (not necessarily a skirt) without their permission and or knowledge, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks (with or without underwear) to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress, or alarm. It is a criminal offence. Anyone of any gender, can be a victim.

The response to a report of sexual violence or sexual harassment: The initial response to a report from a child is important. It is essential that all victims are reassured that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. A victim will never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting sexual violence or sexual harassment. Nor will a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report.

If UniqMinds staff have a concern about a child or a child makes a report to them, they will follow the referral process. As is always the case, if UniqMinds staff are in any doubt as to what to do, they will speak to the designated safeguarding lead.

Working with parents and carers

We recognise the importance of working with together with parents/carers to educate as well as safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

UniqMinds will ensure that:

- We work with parents positively, openly, and honestly.
- Parents are encouraged to discuss their issues or concerns about safety and welfare of children, and they will be listened to and taken seriously.
- We will provide parents with information about the support available to keep children safe within therapy, locally and nationally.
- Up to date and accurate information is kept about clients i.e., names and contact persons with whom the child normally lives, those with parental responsibility, emergency contact details, if different from the above those authorised to collect the child from UniqMinds, name and contact details of GP, any relevant court orders or any other factors which may impact on the safety and welfare of the child.
- Information about clients given to us by children themselves, their parents, or carers or by other agencies will remain confidential. Staff will be given relevant information on a 'need to know' basis in order to support the child.
- It is made clear to parents and carers that UniqMinds has a duty to share information when there are any safeguarding concerns. Also, that there is a duty to keep records which relate to safeguarding work by UniqMinds, or partner agencies. These will be kept securely, kept apart from the main client record and only accessible to key members of staff. Copies of these records will be deleted once they have been securely sent to the referring UniqMinds DSL.
- Where we have reason to be concerned about the welfare of a child, we will always seek to discuss this with the child's parents or carers first, however there may be occasions where we are not able to do this.
- There may be specific times through the work of the police and/or social care where we are instructed not to contact parents will their child be required for interview or investigation. When a child is to be removed from UniqMinds under these circumstances

then full ID and other checks will be made on behalf of the parent to ensure the safety of their child.

Acting on Concerns

If UniqMinds staff have any concerns about a child's welfare, they will act on them immediately. See end of this policy for a flow chart setting out the process for staff when they have concerns about a child.

If UniqMinds staff have a concern, they will follow UniqMinds safeguarding & child protection policy and speak to the designated safeguarding lead.

Options will then include:

- managing any support for the child internally via our support processes
- an early help assessment
- a referral for statutory services, for example as the child might be in need, or is suffering or likely to suffer harm.

The designated safeguarding lead will always be available to discuss safeguarding concerns. If in exceptional circumstances, the designated safeguarding lead is not available, this will not delay appropriate action being taken. UniqMinds staff will consider taking advice from local children's social care. In these circumstances, any action taken will be shared with the designated safeguarding lead as soon as is practically possible.

UniqMinds staff will not assume a colleague, or another professional will act and share information that might be critical in keeping children safe. Early information sharing is vital for effective identification, assessment, and allocation of appropriate service provision.

Children in need

A child in need is defined under the Children Act 1989 as a child who is unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable level of health or development, or whose health and development is likely to be significantly or further impaired, without the provision of services; or a child who is disabled. Local authorities are required to provide services for children in need for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting their welfare.

Children in need may be assessed under section 17 of the Children Act 1989.]

What will the local authority do?

The local authority will decide, within one working day of a referral being made, about the type of response that is required and will let the referrer know the outcome. This will include determining whether:

- the child requires immediate protection and urgent action is required
- whether the child is in need, and will be assessed under section 17
- there is reasonable cause to suspect the child is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm, and whether enquiries must be made, and the child assessed under section 47

- any services are required by the child and family and what type of services
- further specialist assessments are required in order to help the local authority to decide what further action to take.

UniqMinds will follow up if this information is not forthcoming.

If social workers decide to carry out a statutory assessment, UniqMinds staff will do everything they can to support that assessment (supported by the designated safeguarding lead as required).

If, after a referral, the child's situation does not appear to be improving, UniqMinds will follow local escalation procedures to ensure their concerns have been addressed and, most importantly, that the child's situation improves.

Record keeping

All concerns, discussions and decisions made, and the reasons for those decisions, will be recorded in writing using the Safeguarding Report form.

Key points to remember for acting are.

In an emergency take the action necessary to help the child, for example, call 999.

- Report your concern to the DSL as soon as you can and by the end of the day at the latest.
- If the DSL is not around, ensure the information is shared with the Deputy DSL, and the most senior person in UniqMinds that day and ensure action is taken to report complex/serious or child protection concerns to Children's Social Care.
- Do not start your own investigation.
- Share information on a need-to-know basis only – do not discuss the issue with colleagues, friends, or family.
- Complete a record of the concerns.
- Seek support for yourself if you are distressed.

All staff will follow the Safeguarding Children Procedures (when a young person comes from another local authority then the first point of call would be to contact the duty social care team or local safeguarding board for direction/guidance). This will support the DSL and staff in their decision making about the child's needs and the appropriate assessment and interventions.

It is not the responsibility of UniqMinds staff to investigate welfare concerns or determine the truth of any disclosure or allegation; this is the responsibility of Children's Social Care. All staff however have a duty to recognise concerns and maintain an open mind. Accordingly, all concerns regarding the welfare of clients will be recorded and discussed with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or another senior member of staff in the absence of the designated lead) prior to any discussion with parents.

There will be occasions when you suspect that a child may be at risk, but you have no 'real' evidence. The child's behaviour and or appearance may have changed, their attendance to the centre may have reduced, their ability to concentrate and focus may have altered, or you may have noticed other physical but inconclusive signs. In these circumstances, you will try to give the child the opportunity to talk. The signs you have noticed may be due to a variety of factors and it is fine to ask the child if they are alright or if you can help in any way.

Ensure you record these early concerns. If a child or adult does begin to reveal that a child is being harmed, you will follow the advice in the safeguarding & child protection policy.

If information is disclosed to you:

It takes a lot of courage for a child, parent, carer, or other significant adult to disclose that they are worried or have concerns. They may feel ashamed, the abuser may have threatened what will happen if they tell, they may have lost all trust in adults, or they may believe, or have been told, that the abuse is their own fault.

If a child or adult talks to you about any risks to a child's safety or wellbeing you will need to let them know that you must pass the information on – you are not allowed to keep secrets.

The point at which you do this is a matter for professional judgement. If you jump in immediately the child or adult may think that you do not want to listen, if you leave it till the very end of the conversation, they may feel that you have misled them into revealing more than they would have otherwise.

During your conversation with the child or adult:

Allow them to speak freely, listen to what is being said without interruption and without asking leading questions.

Keep questions to a minimum and of an open nature i.e., 'can you tell me what happened?' rather than 'did x hit you?'

Remain calm and do not overreact – the child or adult may stop talking if they feel they are upsetting you.

Give reassuring nods or words of comfort – 'I'm so sorry this has happened', 'I want to help', 'This isn't your fault', 'You are doing the right thing in talking to me'.

Do not be afraid of silences – remember how hard this must be for the child or adult.

Under no circumstances ask investigative questions – such as how many times this has happened, whether it happens to siblings too, or what do other family members think about all this.

At an appropriate time tell the child or adult that in order to help them you must pass the information on.

Do not automatically offer any physical touch as comfort; it may be anything but comforting to a child who has been abused.

Avoid cautioning the child or adult for not disclosing earlier. Saying 'I do wish you had told me about this when it started' or 'I can't believe what I'm hearing' maybe your way of being supportive but they may interpret it that they have done something wrong.

Tell the child or adult what will happen next. The child or adult may agree to go with you to see the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Otherwise let them know that someone will come to see or contact them before the end of the day.

Report verbally to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

Write up your conversation as soon as possible and hand it to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Seek support if you feel distressed.

If you are unsure, you will always have a discussion with the Designated Safeguarding Lead to agree the best way forward.

Staff must always immediately inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) if there is:

Any suspicion that a child is injured, marked, or bruised in a way which is not readily attributable to the normal knocks or scrapes received in play.

Any explanation given which appears inconsistent or suspicious.

Any behaviours which give rise to suspicions that a child may have suffered harm.

Any concerns that a child may be suffering from inadequate care, ill treatment, or emotional maltreatment.

Any concerns that a child is presenting signs or symptoms of abuse or neglect.

Any significant changes in a child's presentation, including non-attendance.

Any hint or disclosure of abuse about or by a child / young person.

Any concerns regarding person(s) who may pose a risk to children e.g., living in a household with children present.

Information which indicates that the child is living with someone who does not have parental responsibility for them (private fostering).

Any concerns that a child is at risk of forced marriage, honour-based violence, or female genital mutilation (FGM).

Role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead following identification of needs or concerns:

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will:

Assess any urgent medical needs of the child.

Consider whether the child has low level, emerging needs, or complex/serious needs or if there are child protection concerns.

Check whether the child is currently subject to a child protection plan, or has previously been subject to a plan, is looked after.

Confirm whether any previous concerns have been raised by staff.

Consider whether the matter will be discussed with the child's parents or carers or whether to do so may put the child a further risk of harm.

If unsure that a child protection referral will be made, seek advice from Children's Social Care.

Information sharing

Information sharing is vital in identifying and tackling all forms of abuse and neglect. As part of meeting a child's needs, the Advisory Board recognise the importance of information sharing between practitioners and local agencies. This will include ensuring arrangements are in place that set out clearly the processes and principles for sharing information within UniqMinds, with the safeguarding partners, other organisations, agencies, and practitioners as required. Staff will be proactive in sharing information as early as possible to help identify, assess, and respond to risks or

concerns about the safety and welfare of children, whether this is when problems are first emerging, or where a child is already known to the local authority children's social care.

UniqMinds are aware that among other obligations, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the GDPR place duties on organisations and individuals to process personal information fairly and lawfully and to keep the information they hold safe and secure.

The Advisory Board will ensure relevant staff have due regard to the relevant data protection principles, which allow them to share (and withhold) personal information, as provided for in the Data Protection Act 2018 and the GDPR. This includes:

being confident of the processing conditions which allow them to store and share information for safeguarding purposes, including information, which is sensitive and personal, and should be treated as 'special category personal data'.

Understanding that 'safeguarding of children and individuals at risk' is a processing condition that allows practitioners to share special category personal data. This includes allowing practitioners to share information without consent where there is good reason to do so, and that the sharing of information will enhance the safeguarding of a child in a timely manner, but 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.

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

Notifying parents

UniqMinds will normally seek to discuss any needs or concerns about a child with their parents or carers. This must be handled sensitively. Where an early help assessment would benefit the child and their family the most appropriate member of staff will approach the parent/carer to take this forward. In situations where there are serious/complex needs or child protection concerns the DSL will contact the parent or carer.

However, if UniqMinds believes that notifying parents could increase the risk to the child or exacerbate the problem, then advice will first be sought from Children's Social Care.

Confidentiality, sharing information and record keeping

Information sharing is vital in identifying and tackling all forms of abuse. Fears about sharing information cannot be allowed to stand in the way of the need to promote the welfare and protect the safety of children.

UniqMinds will operate with regard to HM Government Information Sharing; Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers (2015) and Local Authorities Safeguarding Children Boards' Information Sharing Agreement and Guidance for Practitioners.

Staff will only discuss concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Manager or Advisory Board (depending on who is the subject of the concern). That person will then decide who else needs to have the information and they will disseminate it on a 'need-to-know' basis.

Wherever possible consent will be sought to share information however where there are safeguarding concerns about a child, information will be shared with the appropriate organisations such as Children's Social Care. In most cases concerns will be discussed with parents and carers prior to the referral taking place unless by doing so would increase risk.

UniqMinds policy on confidentiality and information-sharing is available to parents and children on request.

Record keeping

Records of concerns documentation and other written information will be stored in a locked facility and any electronic information will be password protected and only made available to relevant individuals.

Safeguarding information will be stored separately from the students work/progress file.

Copies of these records will be securely sent to any referring UniqMinds partnerships and confirmation of receipt obtained.

Support for those involved in a safeguarding/child protection issue:

Child neglect and abuse is devastating for the child and can also result in distress and anxiety for staff who become involved. We will support the children and their families and staff by:

- Taking all suspicions and disclosures seriously.
- Nominating a link person who will keep all parties informed and be the central point of contact.
- Where a member of staff is the subject of an allegation made by a child, a separate link person will be nominated to avoid any conflict of interest.
- Responding sympathetically to any request from a child or member of staff for time out to deal with distress or anxiety.
- Maintaining confidentiality and sharing information on a need-to-know basis only with relevant individuals and agencies.
- Storing records securely.
- Offering details of helplines, counselling, or other avenues of external support.
- Following the procedures laid down in our whistle blowing, complaints and disciplinary procedures.
- Co-operating fully with relevant statutory agencies.

Allegations against staff (including volunteers)

Safe recruitment practices are vital whenever someone is recruited to work with children however this is not the end of the matter. UniqMinds settings are a safe environment for the majority of children and the majority of people who work with children have their safety and welfare at heart.

Everyone at UniqMinds will be mindful that some individuals seek access to children in order to abuse them and that the nature of abuse means that children often don't disclose. It is crucial that everyone is aware of these issues, and the need to adopt ways of working and appropriate practice to help reduce allegations. It is also important that everyone can raise concerns about what seems to be poor or unsafe practice by colleagues.

These concerns and concerns expressed by children, parents and others are listened to and taken seriously. Where appropriate, action is taken in accordance with procedures for dealing with allegations against staff.

It is essential that any allegation against a member of staff, or volunteer is dealt with quickly, in a fair and consistent way that provides effective protection for the child and at the same time supports the person who is subject to the allegation.

Where an allegation is made against a member of staff (including volunteers) that 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.

UniqMinds will always comply with the local Authorities Safeguarding Children Procedures and adhere to them as a strict policy.

There are also procedures in place to make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) if a person in regulated activity has been dismissed or removed due to safeguarding concerns or would have been had they not resigned. This is a legal duty and failure to refer when the criteria are met is a criminal offence.

If you have concerns about a colleague:

Staff who are concerned about the conduct of a colleague towards a child are undoubtedly placed in a very difficult situation. They may worry that they have misunderstood the situation, and they will wonder whether a report could jeopardise their colleague's career. All staff must remember that the welfare of the child is paramount. All concerns of poor practice or concerns about a child's welfare brought about by the behaviour of colleagues will be reported.

Duty to refer to DBS:

UniqMinds will uphold our legal duty to refer to the DBS anyone who has harmed, or poses a risk of harm, to a child or vulnerable adult; where the harm test is satisfied in respect of that individual; where the individual has received a caution or conviction for a relevant offence, or if there is reason to believe that individual has committed a listed relevant offence; and that individual has been removed from working (paid or unpaid) in regulated activity, or would have been removed had they not left.

Initial actions following an allegation.

The person who has received an allegation or witnessed an event will immediately inform the Director and make a record which will include time, date, place of incident, persons present, what was witnessed, what was said etc; this will then be signed and dated.

The Director where appropriate will take steps to secure the immediate safety of children and urgent medical needs.

The member of staff will not be approached at this stage unless it is necessary to address the immediate safety of children.

The Director may need to clarify any information regarding the allegation; no person will be interviewed at this stage.

Some allegations will be so serious as to require immediate intervention by Children's Social Care and/or police.

The Director, or Advisory Board, will immediately discuss the allegation with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). This will take place within one working day; The discussion will consider the nature, content and context of the allegation and agree a course of action.

The Director will inform the Advisory Board of any allegation.

Consideration will be given throughout to the support and information needs of clients, parents, and staff.

If consideration needs to be given to the individual's employment, advice will be sought from ACAS for HR.

Whistleblowing:

All UniqMinds staff and volunteers will feel able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice and potential failures in UniqMinds safeguarding regime and know that such concerns will be taken seriously. Where a staff member feels unable to raise an issue with their employer, or feels that their genuine concerns are not being addressed, other whistleblowing channels may be open to them:

- general guidance on whistleblowing can be found via: [Advice on Whistleblowing](#)
- the NSPCC's what you can do to report abuse dedicated helpline is available as an alternative route for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally or have concerns about the way a concern is being handled. Staff can call 0800 028 0285 – line is available from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM, Monday to Friday and email: help@nspcc.org.uk.

Referral Flowchart

Actions where there are concerns about a child

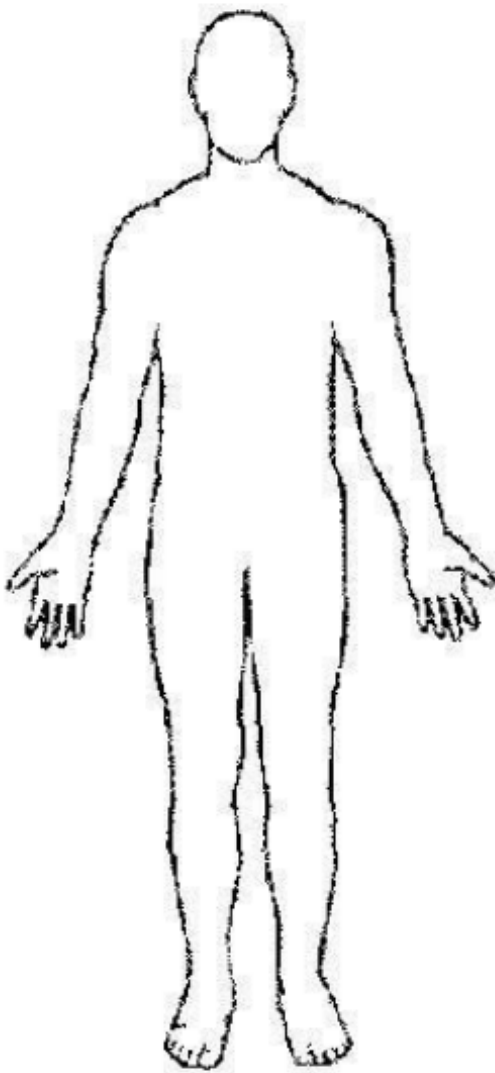


Reporting a Safeguarding Concern

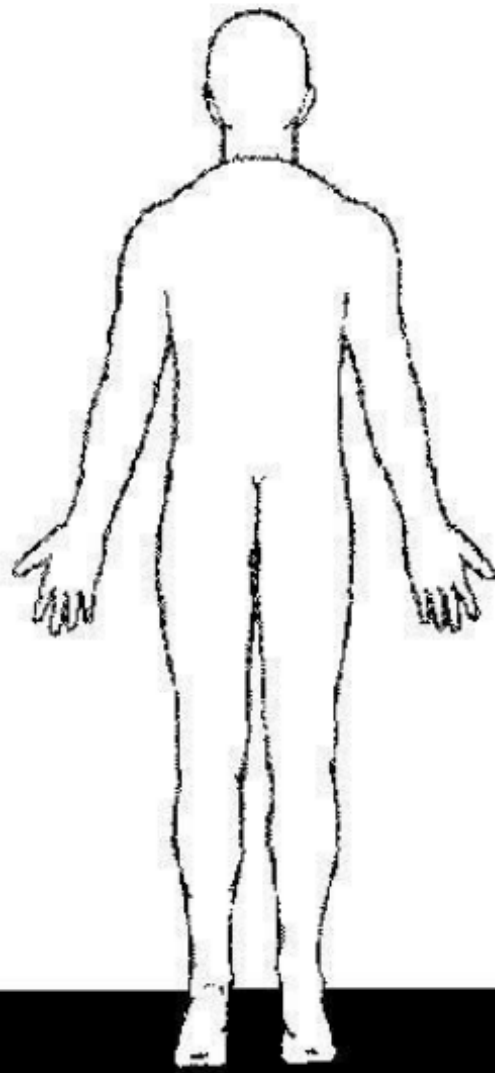
Procedure: This form is to be completed on ALL occasions when there is any cause for concern in relation to the welfare or safety of a child. It must be handed to a Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Behaviour Watch		Injury letter		Home/School Book	
Phone call home		Chronology CP		Email home	

Body Map:



Front



Back