



Policy Name	Safeguarding Children
Approved by	FEAST Board inc. Trustees
Approval date	V.2 12th Oct '24
Next Review date	2026
Cross Reference	Volunteer Safer Recruitment Policy, Safeguarding Adults Policy & Whistleblowing Policy

1. Introduction

FEAST is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children at risk who come into contact with our services. This policy outlines our approach to safeguarding children and ensures that all volunteers, and trustees understand their responsibilities in protecting those in our care.

2. Definitions

Children at Risk: Individuals aged under 18 who may be at risk of harm due to personal circumstances such as physical or mental health conditions, or those who may be vulnerable due to social circumstances.

Safeguarding: The measures taken to protect children at risk from abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility:

Child protection is a part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. This refers to the activity which is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering or are at risk of suffering significant harm. As adults and/or professionals or volunteers, everyone has a responsibility to safeguard children and promote their welfare.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children – and in particular protecting them from significant harm - depends upon effective joint working between agencies and professionals that have different roles and expertise.

Individual children, especially some of the most vulnerable children and those at greatest risk of social exclusion, will need co-ordinated help from health, education, children's social care, the voluntary sector and other agencies.

For those children who are suffering, or at risk of suffering significant harm, joint working is essential, to safeguard and promote welfare of the child(ren) and – where necessary – to help bring to justice the perpetrators of crimes against children. All agencies / professionals / volunteers should:

- ✓ be alert to potential indicators of abuse or neglect;
- ✓ be alert to the risks which individual abusers, or potential abusers, may pose to children;

- ✓ know how to share information so that an assessment can be made of the child's needs and circumstances;
- ✓ contribute to whatever actions are needed to safeguard and promote the child's welfare;

Definitions of abuse and neglect:

Abuse and neglect are forms 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 a stranger. They may be abused by an adult or adults or another child or children.

The Care and Support Statutory Guidance (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-act-statutory-guidance/care-and-support-statutory-guidance>) identifies 10 different types of abuse and can be consulted for further information signs and indicators for each category. They are listed as:

Physical abuse including:

- assault
- hitting
- slapping
- pushing
- misuse of medication
- restraint
- inappropriate physical sanctions

Domestic violence including:

- psychological
- physical
- sexual
- financial
- emotional abuse
- so called 'honour' based violence

Sexual abuse including:

- rape
- indecent exposure
- sexual harassment
- inappropriate looking or touching
- sexual teasing or innuendo
- sexual photography
- subjection to pornography or witnessing sexual acts
- indecent exposure
- sexual assault
- sexual acts to which the individual has not consented or was pressured into consenting [children cannot give consent]

Psychological abuse including:

- emotional abuse
- threats of harm or abandonment
- deprivation of contact
- humiliation
- blaming
- controlling
- intimidation
- coercion
- harassment
- verbal abuse
- cyber bullying
- isolation
- unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal of services or supportive networks

Financial or material abuse including:

- theft
- fraud
- internet scamming
- coercion in relation to an adult's financial affairs or arrangements, including in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions
- the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits

Modern slavery encompasses:

- slavery
- human trafficking
- forced labour and domestic servitude.
- traffickers and slave masters using whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment

Discriminatory abuse including forms of:

- harassment
- slurs or similar treatment:
 - because of race
 - gender and gender identity
 - age
 - disability
 - sexual orientation
 - religion

Organisational abuse

Including neglect and poor care practice within an institution or specific care setting such as a hospital or care home, for example, or in relation to care provided in one's own home. This may range from one off incidents to on-going ill-treatment. It can be through neglect or poor professional practice as a result of the structure, policies, processes and practices within an organisation.

Neglect and acts of omission including:

- ignoring medical
- emotional or physical care needs
- failure to provide access to appropriate health, care and support or educational services
- the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating

Self-neglect

This covers a wide range of behaviour neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding. A decision on whether a response is required under safeguarding will depend on the individual's ability to protect themselves by controlling their own behaviour. There may come a point when they are no longer able to do this, without external support.

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
- sexual
- financial
- emotional

Financial abuse

Financial abuse is the main form of abuse investigated by the Office of the Public Guardian both amongst adults and children at risk. Financial recorded abuse can occur in isolation, but as research has shown, where there are other forms of abuse, there is likely to be financial abuse occurring. Although this is not always the case, everyone should also be aware of this possibility.

Potential indicators of financial abuse include:

- change in living conditions
- lack of heating, clothing or food
- inability to pay bills/unexplained shortage of money
- unexplained withdrawals from an account
- unexplained loss/misplacement of financial documents
- the recent addition of authorised signers on a client or donor's signature card
- sudden or unexpected changes in a will or other financial documents

These categories of abuse are also relevant to FEAST's Safeguarding Adults Policy.

Staff awareness

All volunteers will be made aware of this policy as part of their initial induction process and they will also be provided with regular briefings and updates.

Where necessary or possible, volunteers will be encouraged to undertake appropriate training, either in person or online.

Reviewing the Policy and Procedure

This policy and procedure will be reviewed every year, this will include checking telephone numbers, accuracy of personnel details, and any updates required by a change in local or national policy.

Procedures

What to do if you have concerns about a child.

You may have concerns about a child because of something you have seen or heard, or a child may choose to disclose something to you. If a child discloses information to you, you should:

- ✓ Do not promise confidentiality, you have a duty to share this information and refer to Children's Social Care Services.
- ✓ Listen to what is being said, without displaying shock or disbelief.
- ✓ Accept what is said.
- ✓ Reassure the child, but only as far as is honest, don't make promises you may not be able to keep *eg: 'Everything will be alright now', 'You'll never have to see that person again'.*
- ✓ Do reassure and alleviate guilt, if the child refers to it. For example, you could say, *'You're not to blame'.*
- ✓ Do not interrogate the child; it is not your responsibility to investigate.
- ✓ Do not ask leading questions (*eg: Did he touch your private parts?*), ask open questions such as *'Anything else to tell me?'*
- ✓ Do not ask the child to repeat the information for another member of the team.
- ✓ Explain what you have to do next and who you have to talk to.
- ✓ Take notes if possible or write up your conversation as soon as possible afterwards.
- ✓ Record the date, time, place any non-verbal behaviour and the words used by the child (do not paraphrase).
- ✓ Record statements and observable things rather than interpretations or assumptions.

Whatever the nature of your concerns, please always raise them for discussion with the Designated Safeguarding Lead: Sarah Hardcastle via email: Sarah@FEAST.org.uk or mobile phone: 07807 112864

See the diagram on the next page for the process to follow.

If you still have concerns, you should refer to:

KCC Integrated Children's Services

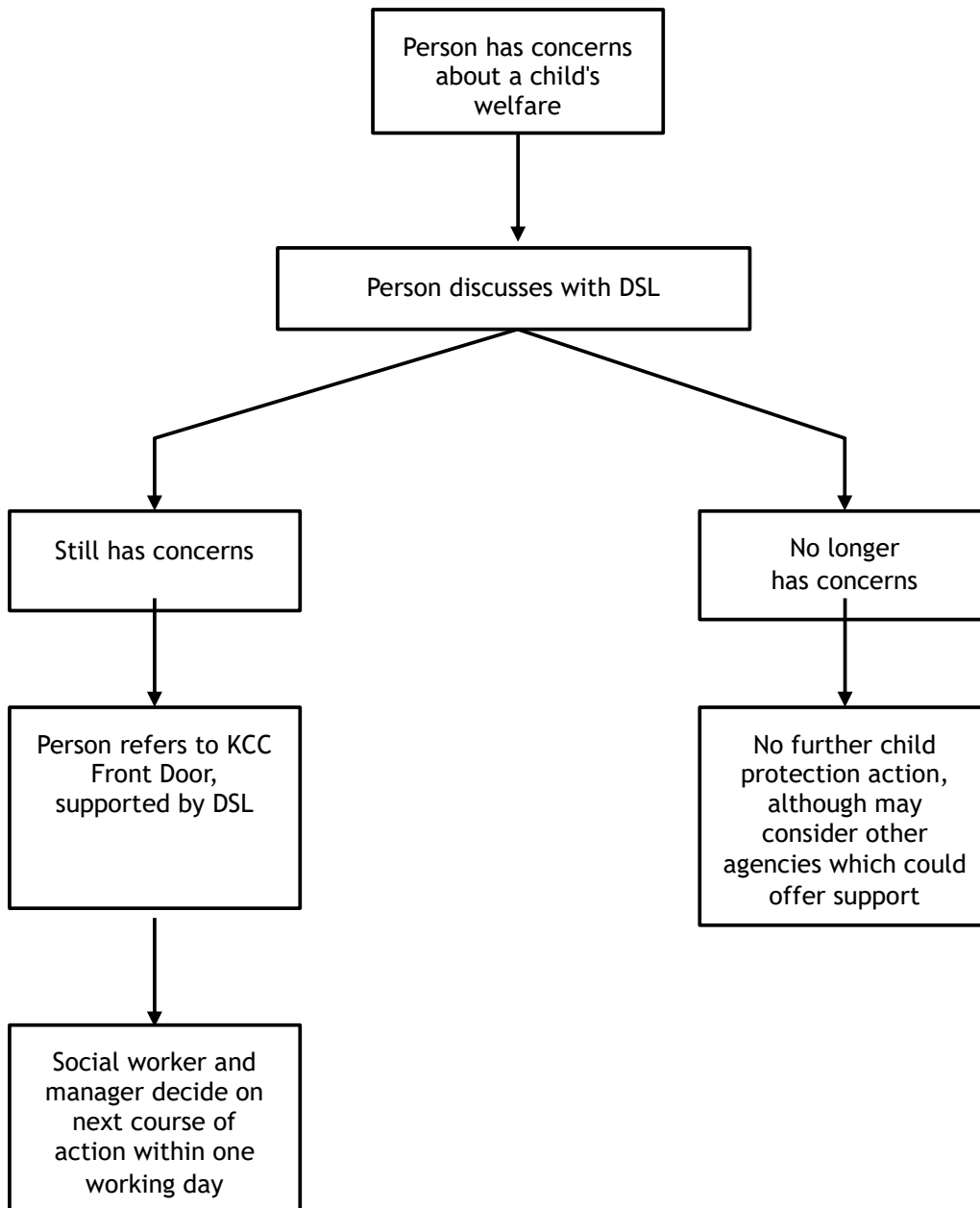
Front Door: 03000 41 11 11

Out of hours (after 5pm / Urgent calls only): 03000 41 91 91

What information will you need when making a referral?

You will be asked to provide as much information as possible, for example; the child's full name, date of birth, address, school, GP, languages spoken, any disabilities the child may have, details of the parents. Do not be concerned if you do not have all these details, you should still make the call.

Process Chart Where There Are Concerns About A Child's Welfare



Allegations Involving a Volunteer

FEAST is committed to having effective recruitment procedures, including checking all volunteers to make sure they are safe to work with children and young people. Where appropriate, key staff involved in recruitment processes will undertake Safer Recruitment Training.

However, there may still be occasions when there is an allegation against a member of the team or volunteer. Allegations against those who work with children, cover a wide range of circumstances. All allegations of abuse of children by those who work with children or care for them must be taken seriously. All reports of allegations must be submitted within one working day to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

The following procedure should be applied in all situations where it is alleged that a person who works with children has:

- ✓ Behaved in a way which 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 which indicates that he/she is unsuitable to work with children.

The allegations may relate to the persons behaviour at FEAST, at home or in another setting.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will discuss the matter to determine what steps should be taken and where necessary obtain further details of the allegation and the circumstances in which it was made. The discussion should also consider whether there is evidence/information that establishes that the allegation is false or unfounded, whether a referral to KCC Front Door is required and/or whether disciplinary action is appropriate.

Some allegations will be so serious as to require immediate referral to KCC Front Door and the Police, but common sense and judgement must be applied in reaching a decision about what action to take.

If the allegation is not patently false and there is cause to suspect that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer Significant Harm, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will immediately refer the matter to the KCC Front Door and ask for a Strategy Discussion/Meeting to be convened straight away.

Some allegations may be less serious and at first sight might not seem to warrant consideration of a police investigation or enquiries by KCC Front Door. However, it is important to ensure that even apparently less serious allegations are followed up and examined objectively by someone independent of FEAST. Consequently the Designated Safeguarding Lead should be informed of all allegations that come to the attention of volunteers and appear to come within the scope of this procedure so that he or she can consult Police and social care colleagues as appropriate.

Where such allegations are made, consideration must be given to the following three strands:

- 1: The police investigation of a possible criminal offence;
- 2: Enquiries and assessment by Children's Social Care Services as to whether the child is need of protection or in need of services;
- 3: Consideration by the organisation of action in respect of the individual.