

## Child Protection Policy

This document sets out the policy of Mentoring Plus and in section B provides a practical guide for staff and volunteers involved with children. Whilst detailed, this policy is not intended to be comprehensive and as such does not attempt to deal with **all** the issues of working with children and young people. This document should be read in conjunction with other relevant policies such as Safer Recruitment and Safer Working Practice.

This policy should also be read in conjunction with the Bath and North East Somerset Community Safety and Safeguarding Partnership (BCSSP) Procedures set currently at <https://bcssp.org.uk/>.

<b>Section A – Policy</b>
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### **1: Intent and introduction**

#### **1.1 Statement of Intent**

Through its *Child Protection Policy*, Mentoring Plus is committed to promoting the well-being and protecting the health, safety and general welfare of young people, volunteers and staff.

#### **1.2 Introduction**

In promoting this policy Mentoring Plus is keen to take reasonable steps to:

- Provide a welcoming, secure and comfortable environment for the benefit of young people, volunteers and staff
- Keep young people safe from harm while in the care of its staff or volunteers;
- Comply with relevant statutory requirements
- Support and protect the interests of staff and volunteers who have contact with, or access to young people.

#### **1.3 Legal Framework**

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of law and guidance that seeks to protect children, including;

- Children's Act 1989
- United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child 1991
- Data Protection Act 1998
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Children's Act 2004

- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023
- What to do if you're worried a child is being abused – advice for practitioners 2015

This policy should be interpreted in conjunction with relevant content in the following:

- Care Quality Commission Regulation 11 of the Health and Social Care Act, 2008 (regulated activities) 2010
- Care Act 2014
- Children & Social Work Act 2017
- Equality Act 2017
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Mental Capacity Act 2005

## **2: Scope of the policy and those affected**

### **2.1 Mentoring Plus personnel affected**

This policy applies to all employees (including freelance contractors) and volunteers (including trustees), and others representing Mentoring Plus who have contact with young people.

### **2.2 Children and young people**

In law a child is anyone under the age of 18, however older children, for example teenagers may prefer to be called young people.

### **2.3 Activities affected**

Activities and involvement within the scope of this policy include:

- One to one work with young people either as staff or volunteers
- Accompanying young people on visits
- Holding meetings with volunteers and young people
- Working with young people in project interest groups or activity sessions
- Transporting young people to and from their home
- Transporting young people to and from activity sessions and similar
- Working with young people in a residential setting
- Working with young people during issue based training sessions
- Any other activity that might involve substantial, unsupervised access to young people.

## **3: Guiding principles**

### **3.1 In welcoming and working with young people, Mentoring Plus aims to:**

- 1) Provide a friendly welcome for them and promote their general welfare

- 2) Adhere to, and adopt current guidance issued by Bath & North East Somerset Council to all voluntary and community organisations for safer recruitment
- 3) Recognise their rights as individuals and treat them with dignity and respect
- 4) Plan activities involving young people with care to minimise risks to their health and safety
- 5) Raise awareness of the dangers to which young people may be susceptible
- 6) Develop appropriate procedures for responding to accidents, incidents and alleged or suspected harm.

Guidelines for good practice under each of the six points listed above are set out in **Section B**.

## **4: Implementation of the policy**

### **4.1 Distribution of copies**

Full copies of this policy will be distributed as a detailed reference guide to:

- Trustees
- Staff
- Volunteers

### **4.2. Self-Audit**

An annual safeguarding “Self Audit” is carried out by Mentoring Plus using the audit tool provided by Bath & North East Somerset Council.

### **4.3 Training**

A training programme to support the policy and good practice will be delivered to appropriate Trustees, staff, freelancers, and volunteers. This will include training in safer recruitment as required by the Bath & North East Somerset Community Safety and Safeguarding Partnership (BCSSP).

All staff, freelancers and volunteers will receive training as part of their induction into Mentoring Plus. Child Protection forms an essential element of staff and volunteer induction and training.

No trustees, staff, freelancers, or volunteers will be allowed to take part in any recruitment processes unless they have received appropriate induction and training, including Safer Recruitment.

Appropriate trustees (Chairperson and nominated trustee with lead responsibility for safeguarding) and staff safeguarding leads (see 4.4) will receive training on the contents of “Working Together to Safeguard Children” (most recent copy kept on server and can be found at [www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children).)

## 4.4 Safeguarding Leads

Our Head of Practice is the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) for the organisation, supported by a Deputy Safeguarding Lead (DSG) and three Senior Practitioners.

Within their roles, Senior Practitioners are responsible for supporting safeguarding concerns raised by their team members and all volunteer or freelance mentors they directly supervise. All safeguarding incidents and actions must be documented on a secured database for the attention of the relevant safeguarding lead (see Appendix 1).

As appropriate, Senior Practitioners escalate safeguarding concerns from their team to the DSL or DSG, including all safeguarding concerns related to their own delivery (see Appendix 1a), and all referrals to social care.

During weekday evenings (Mon to Fri, excluding some bank holidays) a staff member (whether DSL, DSG or a Senior Practitioner) will be available to support staff members by phone with out of hours safeguarding enquires until 9 pm. If it is not safe for a young person to return home after a mentoring session, staff members should call Social Care Emergency Duty Team 01454 615165 and follow their instructions and/or take the young person to the nearest A&E department.

Public holidays falling on a weekday are treated as weekends. Limited cover is offered over the Christmas/New Year period, during which mentoring sessions do not take place, and this is clearly communicated to staff and volunteers in advance.

For mentors (both volunteer and freelance), see appendix 2 for further instructions on disclosing concerns.

## **5: Other relevant Mentoring Plus policies, instructions and guidance**

- 5.1** This policy should be implemented in conjunction with other policies, instructions and guidance, including:
- (a) Risk assessments on individual young people referred to the charity
  - (b) Risk assessments carried out on young people taking part in activity sessions
  - (c) Recording disclosures or signs of abuse flow chart – attached as Appendix 2
  - (d) Escalation policy recommended by the Bath & North East Somerset Community Safety and Safeguarding Partnership Procedures ([https://bcssp.org.uk/assets/7a7eb990/bcssp\\_escalation\\_policy.pdf](https://bcssp.org.uk/assets/7a7eb990/bcssp_escalation_policy.pdf)) attached as Appendix 3.
  - (e) Use of the internet and social working networking sites (E-Safety and Acceptable Use Policy)
  - (f) Modern Slavery Statement
  - (g) Personal Harassment policy.

## **Section B – Guidelines**

### **1 Welcome and welfare**

#### **1.1 Promoting a friendly environment**

As an organisation that values and encourages the involvement of young people and volunteers, Mentoring Plus aims to provide a welcoming, safe, secure and enjoyable experience for all of its volunteers and service users.

When working with young people, Mentoring Plus intends that staff, freelancers and volunteers see themselves as part of a team sharing this common interest.

The organisation endeavours to provide an environment where anyone feels able to raise any concerns they may have and discuss anything they may be unhappy about.

#### **1.2 Welfare is paramount**

The fundamental principle, both in law and good practice, is that whenever the interests of young people are involved, their welfare must always be paramount. Mentoring Plus recognises this and all staff and volunteers should seek to implement this principle.

## **2: People as individuals**

### **2.1 People as individuals**

Mentoring Plus recognises how we must all be aware of each person's needs and capabilities.

Time should be taken to get to know each person individually in order to make their experience with Mentoring Plus more rewarding. It also enables Mentoring Plus to be more responsive should a young person be suffering harm.

### **2.2 Children and young people's rights**

The Children's Act 1989 gives children and young people certain rights, including the right to be listened to and to talk about any worries they may have, as well as the right to be protected if they are in danger, or at risk of harm.

Young people should feel able to approach a Mentoring Plus representative (staff or volunteer) for help, without fear of recrimination. As a result they should be better able to protect themselves.

## **3: Selection of employees, freelancers and volunteers**

Mentoring Plus will adhere to, and adopt current guidance issued by Bath & North East Somerset Council to all voluntary and community organisations on safer recruitment. These guidelines have been incorporated into our policies and

procedures on selection of trustees, staff and volunteers. This includes keeping a centralised record of DBS checks.

Mentoring Plus will take appropriate steps to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with young people wherever possible. A thorough selection procedure for positions, both paid and unpaid, is the most effective way of assessing a person's suitability, and may act as a deterrent to potential abusers.

It should be noted that **anyone** who applies to work or volunteer with Mentoring Plus may have the potential to cause harm, whether they are a member of staff, freelancer, a volunteer, service user, or other.

In appointing any new member of staff, freelancer or any volunteer, Mentoring Plus will follow the procedures and rigorous checks as laid out in its Safer Recruitment Policy. All members of staff, freelancers and all volunteers will receive supervision as stated in the supervision section of our Safer Working Practice policy.

#### **4: Planning activities to minimise harm**

##### **4.1 Risk assessments and other general considerations**

Health and safety requirements must be carefully considered when planning and carrying out activities involving young people. Mentoring Plus's Health and Safety Policy applies to volunteers as well as employees.

All employees, freelancers and volunteers should carry out thorough risk assessments prior to undertaking events/activities with young people in accordance with the Mentoring Plus Safer Working Practice policy.

All employees, freelancers and volunteers should maintain the standard of behaviour expected from them as outlined in Mentoring Plus' Behaviour Code for Adults Working with Children.

All children and young people should be made aware of Mentoring Plus' Behaviour Code for Children and Young People so that they know what behaviour is expected of them when attending and using the facilities of Mentoring Plus. This code of conduct aims to ensure that children and young people are treated fairly by all adults engaged by Mentoring Plus and working with them.

#### **5: Raising awareness of dangers**

##### **5.1 Types of harm**

- **Physical** – where children or young people receive physical hurt or injury;
- **Neglect** – where adults fail to care for children or young people and to protect them from danger, seriously impairing their health, well-being or development;
- **Emotional** – where children and young people are harmed by a constant lack of love and affection or intimidated by threats or taunts;
- **Sexual** – where children and young people are encouraged or forced to observe or participate in any form of sexual activity by adults or children. This also includes the use of sexualised language.

There are four types of harm as listed above but specific areas that require special attention: Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), Child Exploitation (criminal and sexual), modern slavery and radicalisation. Guidance can be accessed via the following websites:

[www.barnardos.org.uk](http://www.barnardos.org.uk)

[www.childrenssociety.org.uk](http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk)

[www.sarsas.org.uk](http://www.sarsas.org.uk)

<http://nationalfgmcentre.org.uk/fgm/>

<https://www.ltai.info/> - Prevent

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/modern-slavery-bill>

Common sense should be relied upon to recognise the warning signs. However, it is essential to rely on facts rather than opinions and not jump to conclusions.

## **5.2 Who can harm**

An abuser is often known to the person being abused, whether a parent, sibling, other relative, family friend or neighbour. Not only adults can harm. Children and young people can also suffer abuse from their peers. Sometimes the abuser may be an adult who holds a position of authority over a young person. There is no certain way of identifying a would-be abuser, they can be people of any background and do not appear different from the rest of society.

# **6: Responding to accidents, incidents and harm**

## **6.1 Responding to accidents / incidents**

In the event of an accident to an individual, first aid should be administered, preferably by a trained first aider and the situation managed to ensure the welfare of the individual and the safety of others. The emergency services should be called for where appropriate.

An Accident/Incident Report Form should be completed as soon as possible and discussed with the appropriate team leader. Where appropriate the circumstances of the accident should be investigated to establish the cause and to identify what remedial action should be taken to minimise the possibility of a recurrence.

Fatal accidents, major injuries and dangerous occurrences should be notified without delay to the appropriate line manager and CEO, after alerting the appropriate authorities.

Where an accident/incident involving young people has been narrowly avoided, employees, freelancers and volunteers must detail its nature and pass the information on to their line-manager / supervisor.

## **6.2 Responding to alleged or suspected harm**

### **If a person wants to talk about harm**

If a young person wants to talk about harm, it is essential that the employee, freelancer or volunteer:

- Listens carefully to what the person says, keeping calm and looking at them directly;
- Let them know that to help them someone else must be told;
- Reassures them that they are not to blame;
- Is aware that they may have been threatened;
- Does not push them for information;
- Asks open questions including “when, where, what, who”;
- Reassures them that they are right to talk about it and what they say is accepted;
- Lets them know what will happen next and undertakes to let them know the outcome.

## **Dealing with alleged or suspected harm**

When young people sign a contract with Mentoring Plus, the clause relating to confidentiality explains that neither volunteers nor members of staff can maintain a confidence relating to harm or abuse. This is also true of suspected harm or abuse. If a young person has talked about harm, or harm is suspected, the employee, freelancer or volunteer must do two things:

1. Explain to the young person what action they are required to take. This would in the first instance be informing the relevant practitioner, designated safeguarding lead or designated Trustee. The young person also needs to know that if the organisation has grounds to believe that the young person is suffering from harm or abuse, this must be reported as below. It is vital to reassure the young person that this is a caring procedure, designed for their protection. This is not a punishment.
2. **Notify the appropriate project representative, giving them the relevant information.**

It is very important that employees, freelancers and volunteers notify the appropriate project representative, so that if necessary, they can then inform and liaise with the relevant authority or agency. Mentoring Plus representatives are, in the first instance the relevant project safeguarding lead and in their absence the DSL, DSG or Trustee with responsibility for Child Safeguarding.

Mentoring Plus is aware of the necessity in certain cases, in order to secure the safety and welfare of a young person, of sharing information with other agencies over issues of confidentiality.

Where a nominated representative is unavailable, and the vulnerable person is in imminent danger, employees or volunteers should contact the relevant authorities themselves. They should then inform the representative as soon as possible on their return.

In all cases the practitioner is responsible for recording disclosures or signs of witnessed abuse. This must be recorded by the professional on Charitylog and actioned to the DSL for review as described in 6.4 below.



Dealing with incidents of harm is difficult for any individual so employees, freelancers and volunteers **should not:**

- Act alone;
- Start to investigate; or
- Make any assumptions about the persons involved.

Any employee, freelancer or volunteer who is involved in a disclosure of any kind may feel that they need to speak to a child care professional to reassure themselves that they have done the right thing. The NSPCC operates a 24 hour help line for anyone concerned about a child or young person. It is primarily for use by adults and can be used anonymously: **0808 800 5000** or email **help@nscpp.org.uk**.

### **Process for volunteers:**

#### **Support available in an emergency**

##### Between 9am-5pm on weekdays

If mentors need to report an urgent concern or disclosure, they should call their practitioner's mobile either during the mentoring session or immediately afterwards. If there is no answer, call the Mentoring Plus office on 01225 429694 and speak to one of the practitioners who will support.

##### Between 5pm-9pm on weekdays

Call the office number on 01225 429694 and follow the instructions on the answerphone. It will re-direct the call to the mobile of the practitioner on duty.

Mentors with an urgent safeguarding concern for the young person's immediate safety should call the Emergency Children's Social Care team on 01454 615165.

If all numbers are unobtainable, please take the mentee to the nearest A&E department if they cannot return home safely. Express the concern / situation to staff there.

##### After 9pm weekdays or at weekends / Bank Holidays

If your concern means there is an immediate threat to life or risk of significant harm, call 999.

If the mentor has an urgent safeguarding concern, call the Emergency Children's Social Care team on 01454 615165.

In either instance, follow this with a call to your practitioner and leave a voicemail and an email outlining a timeline of events, so they can follow up as soon as they are able to pick up the message.

### **Process for practitioners sharing disclosure with schools:**

- Request Read Receipt and cc the Designated Safeguarding Lead into email for all child protection concerns – e.g. immediate and significant harm.

### **6.3 Dealing with alleged or suspected harm involving an employee, freelancer or Mentoring Plus volunteer**

Where it is suspected that an employee, freelancer or volunteer may be involved in the abuse, employees, freelancers and volunteers should let the appropriate Mentoring Plus representative know as soon as possible. The employee, freelancer or volunteer should be immediately removed from access to young people, but be assured that no presumptions have been made and that the allegation will be fully investigated by the relevant authorities with the support of the LADO.

Where it is suspected that the CEO or Practitioners may be involved in the abuse, employees, freelancers and volunteers should let the alternative staff representative or Board Member (Chairperson or nominated trustee for safeguarding) know as soon as possible.

Allegations made against staff, volunteers or freelancers should be referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for Safeguarding – contact details can be found on page 12. If the chairperson or nominated trustee for safeguarding is invited by the Link Officer or Local Authority Designated Officer for Safeguarding to attend a meeting to discuss any allegations against the CEO or Practitioners, they should do so only after consulting other trustees for advice and guidance. In line with procedures for undertaking investigations they should not inform or discuss the matter with the CEO or Practitioners.

In the situation above, it is also required that the procedures set out by the DBS office are followed in terms of checking whether conditions have been met to disclose the matter to the DBS Office, and that all required steps referred to are implemented.

This guidance is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/making-barring-referrals-to-the-dbs#who-has-a-legal-duty-to-refer>.

A flowchart summarising this process is provided in Appendix 4. Where a referral is required please use the relevant DBS Referral Form currently available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/673546/DBS Referral Form v5 0 August 2017 PDF .pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/673546/DBS_Referral_Form_v5_0_August_2017_PDF.pdf)

Guidance for completing the form can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-referrals-form-and-guidance/dbs-paper-referral-form-guidance>

Appropriate trustees (Chairperson and trustee responsible for Child Safeguarding) and senior staff (CEO, Head of Practice, DSG and Senior Practitioners) should receive training on the contents of “Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023”.

If gross misconduct is reasonably suspected, it may be appropriate to ask them not to attend the office or premises at all while the matter is under investigation (suspended on full pay if an employee). Once the relevant authority’s enquiry has concluded, the Mentoring Plus Board should decide what further action is appropriate in conjunction with Mentoring Plus’s other relevant policies.

## **6.4 Accurate notes**

Full and accurate notes (verbatim where possible) must be written within one working day and recorded using Charitylog. Notes should include:

- The date and time of the alleged incident or disclosure;
- The parties involved;
- What was alleged; and
- The action taken.

Records should be as accurate as possible as they may be invaluable to the investigation and used as evidence in court.

## **6.5 Confidentiality and sensitivity**

When dealing with personal and emotive details of this nature, confidentiality must be always maintained since the allegations or suspicions may prove to be unfounded. Notes and records should be kept in a secure place and shared only with those who need to know about the incident or allegation.

A sensitive approach should be taken with the accused to explain why an investigation must take place and to reassure them that the matter will be handled discreetly and even-handedly by Mentoring Plus.

No assumptions of guilt should be made unless and until an actual conviction has been obtained in the proceedings. Impartial contact will be maintained by a nominated Mentoring Plus staff member during this process.

## **6.6 Multi-agency approach to safeguarding**

See <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-protection-system/multi-agency-working-child-protection/>

### **Internal Contacts for Child Safeguarding**

#### **Staff contacts:**

##### **Organisational Safeguarding Lead**

Helen Goodchild – Head of Practice

[helen.goodchild@mentoringplus.net](mailto:helen.goodchild@mentoringplus.net)

01225 429694 / 07749 431802

##### **Deputy Safeguarding Lead**

Humphrey Pain – Primary Mentoring Manager

[humphrey.pain@mentoringplus.net](mailto:humphrey.pain@mentoringplus.net)

01225 429694 / 07714 254017

#### **Trustee contact:**

Susan Milner - Trustee with responsibility for Child Safeguarding

[chair@mentoringplus.net](mailto:chair@mentoringplus.net)

01225 429694

**External contacts:**

B&NES Social Care – Children & Families Duty and Assessment Team

[ChildCare\\_Duty@bathnes.gov.uk](mailto:ChildCare_Duty@bathnes.gov.uk)

01225 396111 or 01225 477929

Emergency out of hours: 01454 615165

***B&NES Local Authority Designated Officer***

The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) will be involved in the management and oversight of individual cases of allegations of abuse made against those who work with children.

01225 396810 (Monday – Friday office hours). Email: [LADO@bathnes.gov.uk](mailto:LADO@bathnes.gov.uk)

***Police - 101***

Last reviewed: September 2024

Next review: September 2025

## Appendix 1: Internal process for recording disclosures or signs of abuse witnessed by Mentoring Plus Representative

Disclosures are to be logged on Young Person's record on Mentoring Plus' secure database and note the following as a 'contact' in the appropriate Safeguarding referral:

- 1 Name of person disclosing or displaying signs of abuse
- 2 To whom have they disclosed information to/or who has reported any display of signs of abuse?
- 3 Date and time disclosure received/signs of abuse witnessed
- 4 Detail what the person said (verbatim where possible) or signs of abuse witnessed – from phone conversation and emailed detail
- 5 Any other observations
- 6 Any actions taken by Practitioner
- 7 Set an 'Action' on the database for the relevant project Senior Practitioner / Deputy Safeguarding Lead or Designated Safeguarding Lead accordingly
  - a. **Action date to be 7 days from date of entry**

**New Referral for: 'Safeguarding'**

◀ Go back to Client record  
◀ Go back to Project Selection page

**FILL THE DETAILS OF THE CONTACT BELOW:**

Date of Contact 04-02-2016 28 13:59 ?

Referred By

Contact Method Not Defined

Details of Contact  
[Click here to expand](#)

Done By Rachel Sheahan Harris

**IF SOMETHING NEEDS TO BE DONE, FILL IN THE SECTION BELOW:**

Further Action Needed  
[Click here to expand](#)

Response Method Not Defined

When By? 28 09:00 ?

Who By? Not Known

**SAVE AND GO TO...**

## Appendix 1a) - Internal safeguarding escalation process

### Practitioner receives concern / disclosure

- Practitioner to log relevant info on CLOG (verbatim where possible). **Seek immediate guidance if necessary**
- Practitioner to action CLOG entry to SP with max 1 week response deadline
- In lieu of SP, practitioner to log to DSG / DSL
- If SP receives concern directly - assign CLOG action to DSG / DSL
- If DSG / DSL receives concern directly - log to their alternative or other SP in lieu of alternative

### Practitioner to check concern with relevant SP as soon as possible

- SP to make recommendation
- Practitioner to follow SP recommendations
- If practitioner / SP unsure about recommendation - seek support from DSG / DSL
- If relevant SP not available - practitioner to seek support from DSG / DSL

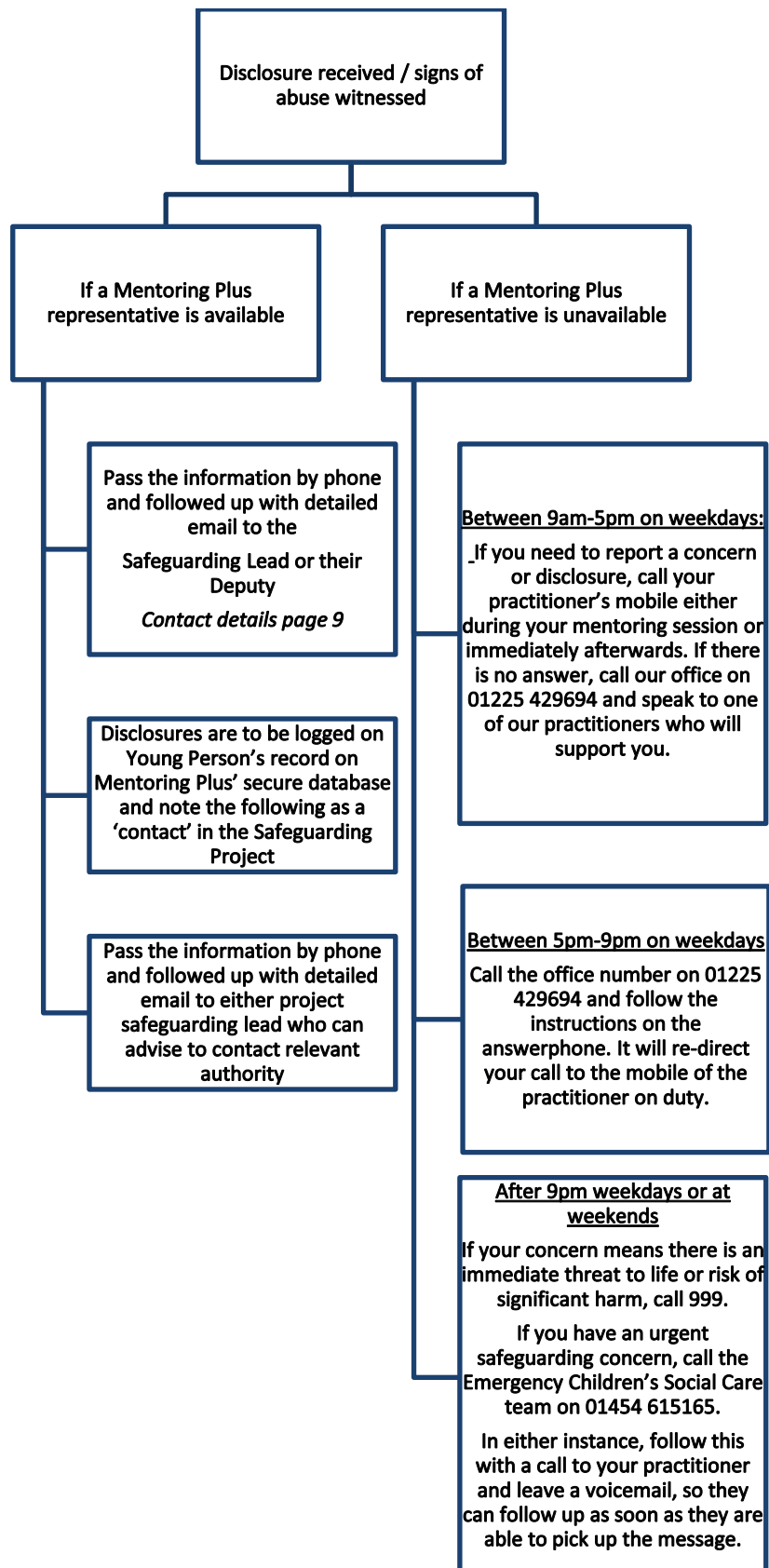
### SP / DSG / DSL to log response and actions on CLOG

- SP / DSG / DSL to send additional email to practitioner to inform them there has been info or an action added to CLOG with CLOG referral reference number and YP initials
- Action emails to be sent as "high importance"
- Practitioner to follow up with relevant log entries accordingly and assign actions / updates to SP where appropriate

#### Key

DSL – Designated safeguarding lead  
DSG - Deputy Safeguarding lead  
EDT – Emergency Duty Team (social care)  
S.P – Senior Practitioner  
YP – Young person

Appendix 2: Flow chart for **Mentors** dealing with disclosures or signs of abuse witnessed



## **Appendix 3: Escalation Policy – Resolution of professional disagreements in work relating to the safety of children**

This policy is directly in line with the Escalation Policy as described in the Bath & North East Somerset Community Safety and Safeguarding Partnership Procedures ([https://bcssp.org.uk/assets/7a7eb990/bcssp\\_escalation\\_policy.pdf](https://bcssp.org.uk/assets/7a7eb990/bcssp_escalation_policy.pdf))

### **1.3 Introduction**

At no time must professional disagreement detract from ensuring that the child is safeguarded. The child's welfare and safety must remain paramount throughout.

This procedure identifies a non-exhaustive list of potential areas of disagreement, guidance on preventing disputes and procedures to be followed when disputes cannot be resolved through discussion and negotiation between professionals at front line level. It does not include procedures when there is a disagreement regarding the need to convene an Initial Child Protection Conference or the implementation of the Child Protection Plan. Some organisations use the term Conflict Resolution Policy.

### **Potential areas of disagreement**

- A referral not considered to meet the threshold for assessment by Children's social care;
- Children's social care conclude that further information should be sought by the referrer before a referral is progressed;
- There is disagreement as to whether the child protection procedures should be invoked;
- Children's social care and the Police place different interpretations on the need for significant agency response in relation to a child protection enquiry;
- There is a disagreement over the sharing of information and/or provision of services;
- There is disagreement over the outcome of any assessment and whether the appropriate action plan is in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child.

### **1.4 Stages of the policy**

#### **1.4.1 Stage One**

Most disagreements can be resolved through discussion and negotiation. The professionals involved should attempt to resolve differences through discussion within one working day, but if they are unable to do so, their disagreement must be reported by them to their line managers or equivalent.

With respect to most day-to-day issues, the relevant line managers will be able to resolve the disagreement. This contact should take place within twenty-four hours. The purpose of this contact is to review the available information and to resolve the concern. It may be helpful to consider the involvement of the designated or named professional at this stage in preference to use of line management.



Any action agreed should be fed back immediately to the relevant managers involved and the detail of the conflict and agreements reached should be recorded on the child's file.

#### 1.4.2 Stage Two

Where it is not possible to resolve the matter at front line management level, the matter should be referred without delay to second tier management level.

The issue will then be considered at second tier management level and/or include Team Around the Family, with direct communication taking place with the designated professional or named professional for safeguarding within the individual agency or at a second-tier management level.

If the area of conflict relates to whether a case meets the threshold for a referral or service from Children's social care, then the Early Help Assessment/TAC Implementation Officer will also be involved in this discussion.

#### 1.4.3 Stage Three

If despite following the Stage Two process the disagreement remains, the matter will be referred to an appropriate Head of Service within Specialist Children's Services, who will consider the matter with their equivalent level of management within the concerned agency who is in dispute.

The purpose of escalating the dispute to this level is to reach a position where differing professional opinions have been taken into account and efforts made to explore whether the dispute has arisen through lack of clarity or understanding in the professional dialogue. Ultimately a decision will need to be reached where agencies agree a way forward where the interests of the child take precedence over a professional stalemate.

#### 1.4.4 Stage Four

In the unlikely event that the professional disagreement remains unresolved, the matter must be referred to the Head of Safeguarding, who will determine the most appropriate course of action.

In all cases where it has not been possible to resolve differences and/or where there may be lessons to be learned for future practice, consideration should be given to holding a multi-agency case review.

At any stage of the process, any action agreed should be fed back immediately to the second-tier management staff involved and the detail of the conflict and agreements reached should be recorded on the child's file.

All disputes should be resolved in a timely way so that the welfare of the child remains paramount. In some situations, it may be required to instigate all of the stages within a short period of time or to escalate the process so that the safety of the child is not compromised.

### **1.5 Timescales**

Some matters may be resolved very quickly, and this will be determined locally by the complexity of the issues. In all cases, the matter will be resolved as speedily as

possible, and the primary focus will be on ensuring that the safety and welfare of the child concerned is assured whilst discussions take place.

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## **1.6 Additional Notes**

At all stages of the process actions and decisions must be recorded in writing and shared with relevant personnel, to include the worker who raised the initial concern. This must include written confirmation between the parties about an agreed outcome of the disagreement and how any outstanding issues will be pursued.

It may be useful for individuals to debrief following some disputes to promote continuing good working relationships.



### Barring referral flow chart

We have put together the following flow chart to help you decide if it is appropriate to refer someone to us.

