

Safeguarding Children Policy

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Policy Owner	Board of Trustees
Version	1.0
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Designated Safeguarding Leads	Julie Khan-Muhammad / Nazmul Khan

EMERGENCY CONTACTS

Dudley Children's Safeguarding: 0300 555 0050 | Worcestershire MASH: 01905 822666 /
Emergency: 999 | Police (non-emergency): 101 | NSPCC: 0808 800 5000

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1 Policy Statement

The safeguarding of all children and young people accessing the services of Unique Minds is of utmost importance to the Board of Trustees.

This policy applies to all staff, trustees, volunteers, agency staff, students, and anyone working on behalf of Unique Minds.

The guidance given in this policy is based on the following principles:

- ✓ Creating a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment for all children and young people
- ✓ All children and young people, regardless of age, ability, disability, gender, race, religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, or social background, have the right to be protected from abuse and to participate in an enjoyable and safe environment
- ✓ Unique Minds will seek to ensure that our services are inclusive and make reasonable adjustments for any ability, disability, or impairment, and will commit to continuous development, monitoring, and review

- ✓ Embedding safeguarding into every aspect of our practice
- ✓ Actively promoting the welfare, wellbeing, and development of children and young people through sensitive and responsive service provision
- ✓ Recognising that children have a right to be heard and that their views, wishes, and feelings must be considered in all safeguarding decisions
- ✓ Working in partnership with parents, carers, families, and other agencies to promote the welfare of children and young people
- ✓ Ensuring that safeguarding is supported through training, supervision, and adherence to statutory guidance

A child or young person should never experience abuse of any kind. The welfare of the child is paramount. All allegations will be taken seriously and responded to quickly. Unique Minds recognises that children and young people may be additionally vulnerable due to the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs, mental health needs, or other factors that may affect their ability to protect themselves.

Unique Minds recognises the role and responsibilities of statutory agencies in safeguarding children and young people and is committed to complying with the procedures of local safeguarding partnerships. Working in partnership with children, young people, parents or carers, families, and other agencies is essential in promoting that child's welfare.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

2 Purpose

This policy establishes a comprehensive framework for safeguarding children and young people within Unique Minds, ensuring that all children accessing services are protected from abuse, harm, and neglect. It sets out the organisation's commitment to promoting welfare, protecting children from harm, and supporting their emotional, social, and developmental wellbeing within a safe environment.

This document ensures compliance with statutory safeguarding legislation and guidance relating to children and young people, including the Children Act 1989 and 2004 and national safeguarding frameworks. It provides staff, volunteers, and trustees with clear guidance on recognising, responding to, and reporting safeguarding concerns in a consistent, effective, and child-centred manner.

Safeguarding within this context recognises that children do not have the same capacity as adults to make decisions about risk and that the responsibility to protect them from harm takes precedence over issues of consent where safeguarding concerns arise.

3 Scope

This policy applies to all staff, trustees, volunteers, contractors, and any individual working on behalf of Unique Minds. It covers all activities delivered within the centre, outreach services, and any engagement with children, young people, families, or carers.

It applies to all children and young people who access or are referred to services delivered by Unique Minds, including those experiencing mental health challenges, emotional vulnerability, or additional support needs. It also applies where safeguarding concerns arise in relation to children connected to adults accessing services.

4 Procedure

All staff and volunteers must remain vigilant to the signs of abuse and take immediate and appropriate action where concerns arise. Safeguarding concerns may be identified through observation, direct disclosure from a child or young person, or information received from third parties.

When a concern is identified, the immediate safety and welfare of the child must be prioritised. If there is an imminent risk of harm or a crime has been committed, emergency services must be contacted without delay.

All safeguarding concerns must be reported to a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) as soon as possible. Staff must not delay reporting in order to gather additional information or attempt to investigate the matter themselves. The responsibility of staff is to observe, listen, record, and report.

Where a child or young person makes a disclosure, staff must listen carefully, remain calm, and take what is said seriously. The child should be reassured that they have done the right thing in speaking up. Staff must not promise confidentiality and must explain that the information will need to be shared in order to keep them safe. Leading questions must not be asked, and the information must not be investigated by staff.

A written record of the concern must be completed within 24 hours, including clear and factual details of what has been observed or disclosed. Records must distinguish between fact, opinion, and allegation, and wherever possible, the child's own words should be recorded.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will assess the concern, consider the level of risk, consult with relevant agencies where appropriate, and determine whether a referral to children's social care or other safeguarding services is required. All decisions and actions must be clearly documented.

Confidentiality must be maintained throughout the process, and information should only be shared on a need-to-know basis in line with data protection legislation and safeguarding requirements.

Safeguarding is a continuous process, and appropriate follow-up actions must be undertaken to ensure that the child or young person remains safe and supported.

If a safeguarding concern involves a member of staff, manager, or Designated Safeguarding Lead, the concern must be reported to an alternative senior member of staff or escalated to the appropriate external authority without delay. Staff who report safeguarding concerns will be supported throughout the process.

5 Responsibilities

The Board of Trustees is responsible for ensuring that effective safeguarding systems, policies, and procedures are in place and that the organisation complies with all relevant legislation and statutory guidance relating to children and young people.

Designated Safeguarding Leads are responsible for managing safeguarding concerns, liaising with children's social care and other statutory agencies, maintaining accurate records, and ensuring that appropriate action is taken in response to concerns.

Managers are responsible for ensuring that safeguarding is embedded within practice, that staff are appropriately trained, supervised, and supported, and that safeguarding concerns are managed in line with organisational procedures.

All staff and volunteers are responsible for recognising and reporting safeguarding concerns and must adhere to this policy at all times.

The organisation is responsible for ensuring that robust recruitment, selection, and vetting procedures are in place to prevent unsuitable individuals from working with children and young people. This includes appropriate Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, verification of identity and references, and assessment of suitability for the role.

Safeguarding training is mandatory for all staff and volunteers and will be provided at induction, with regular updates to ensure knowledge remains current. Training will include recognising signs of abuse, responding to disclosures, reporting procedures, record keeping, and maintaining professional boundaries.

Safeguarding will be supported through regular supervision, appraisal, and ongoing professional development. The suitability of staff and volunteers will be monitored on an ongoing basis, and appropriate action will be taken where concerns arise.

Any allegations or concerns regarding the behaviour of a staff member or volunteer must be taken seriously and reported immediately. Appropriate procedures will be followed to ensure that the child is protected, that concerns are investigated appropriately, and that relevant agencies are informed where required.

Safer Recruitment and Staff Safety

The organisation is responsible for ensuring that robust recruitment, selection, and vetting procedures are in place to prevent unsuitable individuals from working with children and young people. This includes appropriate Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, verification of identity, right to work, and adherence to safer recruitment practices in line with statutory safeguarding guidance for children.

Unique Minds recognises that safeguarding begins at the point of recruitment and that all reasonable steps must be taken to ensure that those working with children are suitable, safe, and appropriately qualified for their role.

The organisation will also take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of staff and volunteers, particularly when working in situations where there may be a risk of harm, distress, or challenging behaviour. This includes providing clear guidance, training, and support to enable staff to manage risk safely and effectively.

Training Responsibilities

All staff, volunteers, and trustees must receive appropriate safeguarding training to enable them to carry out their roles effectively when working with children and young people.

Training will include recognising signs and indicators of abuse, understanding the different types of abuse that may affect children, responding appropriately to disclosures, following reporting procedures and escalation pathways, maintaining accurate record keeping, and working within professional boundaries.

Safeguarding training will be mandatory and provided at induction, with regular updates and refresher training to ensure knowledge remains current and aligned with national safeguarding guidance.

Managers and Designated Safeguarding Leads will receive additional, role-specific training, including risk assessment, early help processes, inter-agency working, and safeguarding decision-making within a child protection context.

Safeguarding training is an ongoing responsibility, and staff will be supported through supervision, appraisal, and continuous professional development to ensure that safeguarding practice remains effective and responsive to emerging risks.

Safer Recruitment, Vetting and Monitoring

Unique Minds is committed to ensuring that all staff, volunteers, and individuals working on behalf of the organisation are suitable to work with children and young people.

Robust recruitment and selection procedures will be followed to safeguard those accessing services. This includes clear role descriptions and person specifications, structured interviews, verification of identity and right to work, obtaining and checking references, and assessing suitability for the role, including attitudes and values in relation to safeguarding children.

All staff and volunteers will undergo appropriate Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks in line with their role and level of contact with children. Where appropriate, checks will include barred list checks to ensure that individuals are not prohibited from working with children.

No individual will commence work until all required pre-employment checks have been satisfactorily completed.

Supervision and Support

Managers are responsible for ensuring that safeguarding is embedded within regular supervision and that staff have opportunities to discuss concerns, reflect on practice, and receive guidance in relation to safeguarding children and young people.

Supervision provides a structured opportunity to review safeguarding practice, identify emerging concerns, and ensure that staff feel supported in managing complex or sensitive situations.

Designated Safeguarding Lead – Additional Responsibilities

Designated Safeguarding Leads are responsible for ensuring they remain up to date with local safeguarding procedures and guidance relating to children, including those of the local safeguarding partnerships and multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

They will maintain effective working relationships with children's social care, education, health services, and other relevant agencies, and ensure that safeguarding concerns are managed in line with local multi-agency child protection procedures.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is also responsible for ensuring that referrals are made appropriately, that records are maintained accurately, and that safeguarding practice across the organisation remains consistent and effective.

Ongoing Monitoring and Suitability

Safeguarding is a continuous responsibility, and the organisation will ensure that the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children is monitored on an ongoing basis.

This includes regular supervision and safeguarding discussions, annual appraisals and performance reviews, ongoing safeguarding training and updates, monitoring of conduct and professional boundaries, and prompt action where concerns arise regarding behaviour or practice.

Where concerns are identified about an individual's suitability to work with children, appropriate action will be taken, which may include suspension, investigation, and referral to relevant authorities where necessary.

Allegations Against Staff or Volunteers

Any allegations or concerns regarding the behaviour of a staff member or volunteer in relation to a child must be taken seriously and reported immediately to a Designated Safeguarding Lead or senior manager.

Appropriate procedures will be followed to ensure that the child is protected, that the allegation is managed in line with safeguarding and child protection procedures, and that relevant external agencies are informed where required. This may include referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) where an allegation meets the threshold for formal investigation.

All allegations will be handled in a fair, consistent, and timely manner, ensuring that the safety and welfare of the child remains the primary consideration throughout the process.

6 Definitions

Child

A child is defined as any person under the age of 18 years. This includes all children and young people accessing services, participating in activities, or connected to individuals using the services of Unique Minds.

Abuse

Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child. Someone may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Abuse may take place within a family, in an institutional or community setting, by those known to the child or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can occur online as well as in person and may consist of a single act or repeated acts over time.

Types of abuse include, but are not limited to:

- ✓ Physical abuse – deliberately causing physical harm to a child, including hitting, shaking, burning, or otherwise causing injury
- ✓ Emotional abuse – persistent emotional maltreatment that affects a child's emotional development, including humiliation, intimidation, or rejection
- ✓ Sexual abuse – forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening
- ✓ Neglect – the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, which may result in serious impairment of health or development

Additional forms of abuse may include:

- ✓ Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)
- ✓ Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)
- ✓ Domestic abuse impacting children
- ✓ Online abuse and grooming
- ✓ Peer-on-peer abuse (including bullying, sexual harassment, or violence)
- ✓ Radicalisation and extremism

Safeguarding

Safeguarding refers to the actions taken to protect children from harm, prevent impairment of their health or development, and ensure that they grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care. Safeguarding also includes taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.

Significant Harm

Significant harm is the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of the child. It may arise from a single traumatic event or a combination of

significant events over time, and it is the key threshold for statutory intervention by children's social care.

Early Help

Early Help refers to support provided to children, young people, and families as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life. Early intervention aims to prevent escalation to more serious safeguarding concerns.

Disclosure

A disclosure occurs when a child or young person communicates information about abuse or neglect. This may be done directly, indirectly, verbally, or through behaviour. All disclosures must be taken seriously and acted upon in accordance with safeguarding procedures.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The Designated Safeguarding Lead is the named individual within the organisation responsible for safeguarding children and young people. The DSL is responsible for managing concerns, making referrals, liaising with statutory agencies, and ensuring safeguarding procedures are followed.

Parental Responsibility

Parental responsibility refers to the legal rights, duties, powers, responsibilities, and authority that a parent or guardian has in relation to a child. In safeguarding situations, parental involvement will be considered carefully, particularly where informing a parent may place the child at further risk.

7 Related Legislation and Documents

This policy is underpinned by relevant legislation and statutory guidance relating to the safeguarding of children and young people, including but not limited to:

- ✓ Children Act 1989
- ✓ Children Act 2004
- ✓ Working Together to Safeguard Children (statutory guidance)
- ✓ Human Rights Act 1998
- ✓ Data Protection Act 2018
- ✓ Equality Act 2010

Unique Minds recognises its responsibility to comply with national safeguarding requirements and to work in accordance with local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and procedures.

This policy should be read in conjunction with other organisational policies, including:

- ✓ Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy
- ✓ Whistleblowing Policy

- ✓ Equality and Diversity Policy
- ✓ Health and Safety Policy
- ✓ Complaints Policy

Local safeguarding procedures, including those set out by safeguarding partnerships and multi-agency arrangements, must be followed at all times when responding to safeguarding concerns involving children and young people.

This policy also reflects local safeguarding arrangements within Dudley and Worcestershire safeguarding partnerships.

8 Feedback

Unique Minds is committed to continuous improvement in safeguarding practice. Feedback on this policy and its implementation is welcomed from staff, volunteers, children and young people, parents or carers, and partner organisations.

Feedback can be provided through supervision, team meetings, or directly to Unique Minds management and will be used to inform future reviews, ongoing development, and improvements in safeguarding practice.

9 Approval and Review Details

This policy will be formally reviewed on an annual basis, or sooner if there are changes in legislation, guidance, or organisational practice.

Version control will be maintained to ensure that the most up-to-date policy is in use at all times.

Policy Name	Safeguarding Children Policy
Organisation	Unique Minds
Policy Owner	Designated Safeguarding Lead
Approved By	Board of Trustees
Date Approved	
Review Frequency	Annually or as required
Next Review Date	[Insert Date]
Version Number	[Insert Version]
Last Updated	5th May 2026

10 Appendix

Appendix 1: Types of Abuse

Type of Abuse	Description	Possible Indicators
Physical Abuse	The deliberate use of physical force that results in harm or injury to a child.	Unexplained injuries, bruising, burns, fractures, fear of certain individuals, flinching, inconsistent explanations.
Emotional Abuse	Persistent emotional maltreatment that adversely affects a child's emotional development and sense of self-worth.	Withdrawal, anxiety, low self-esteem, fearfulness, changes in behaviour, reluctance to engage, excessive dependence or attention-seeking.
Sexual Abuse	Forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.	Bruising in intimate areas, changes in behaviour, inappropriate sexualised behaviour, distress, withdrawal.
Neglect	The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs.	Poor hygiene, malnutrition, untreated medical conditions, inappropriate clothing, lack of supervision.
Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)	A form of sexual abuse where a child is manipulated or coerced into sexual activity in exchange for something.	Unexplained gifts, older friendships, secrecy, missing episodes, sudden behavioural changes.
Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)	Where a child is exploited into criminal activity, including county lines.	Absences from school, unexplained money, association with older individuals, travel to unknown locations.
Peer-on-Peer Abuse	Abuse that occurs between children, including bullying, harassment, or violence.	Bullying behaviour, intimidation, sexualised behaviour, social isolation, fear of peers.
Online Abuse / Grooming	Abuse that occurs through digital platforms, including exploitation and coercion.	Excessive secrecy online, sudden changes in device use, distress after online activity, unknown contacts.
Domestic Abuse (Impact on Children)	Exposure to abuse within the home environment.	Fear of going home, anxiety, withdrawn behaviour, aggression, emotional distress.
Discriminatory Abuse	Abuse based on a child's identity or protected characteristics.	Bullying, exclusion, harassment, distress linked to identity.
Radicalisation / Extremism	The process by which a child is drawn into extremist beliefs or activities.	Isolation, sudden changes in beliefs, exposure to extremist material, withdrawal from usual activities.

Type of Abuse	Description	Possible Indicators
Organisational Abuse	Poor care practices or systemic failure within an organisation.	Lack of dignity, rigid routines, unsafe practices, complaints about care.

Appendix 2: Possible Signs and Indicators of Abuse

Abuse may not always be obvious, and children and young people may not disclose concerns directly. Staff and volunteers should remain alert to changes in behaviour, presentation, or circumstances.

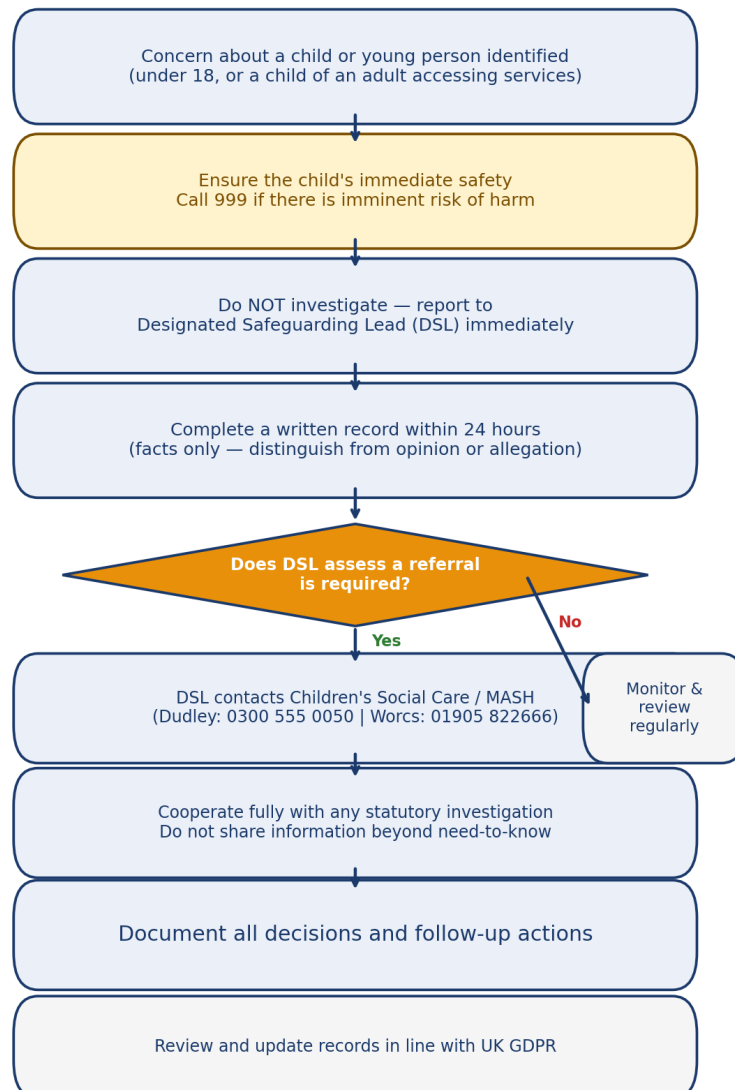
Physical Indicators	Unexplained injuries such as bruises, burns, or fractures / Injuries inconsistent with explanation given / Frequent or repeated injuries / Signs of restraint
Behavioural Indicators	Withdrawal, anxiety, or depression / Sudden changes in behaviour or mood / Fear of certain individuals or environments / Reluctance to engage or communicate / Aggression or agitation / Changes in school attendance or engagement
Emotional Indicators	Low self-esteem or loss of confidence / Tearfulness or distress / Signs of fear, shame, or guilt / Isolation from others / Regression in behaviour (younger behaviours)
Neglect Indicators	Poor personal hygiene / Malnutrition or dehydration / Untreated medical conditions / Inappropriate clothing for weather conditions / Lack of supervision or basic care
Environmental Indicators	Unsafe or unclean living environment / Lack of basic facilities or support / Exposure to harmful or unsafe situations
General Indicators	A child reporting abuse / A third party raising concerns / Changes that 'don't feel right' or raise concern

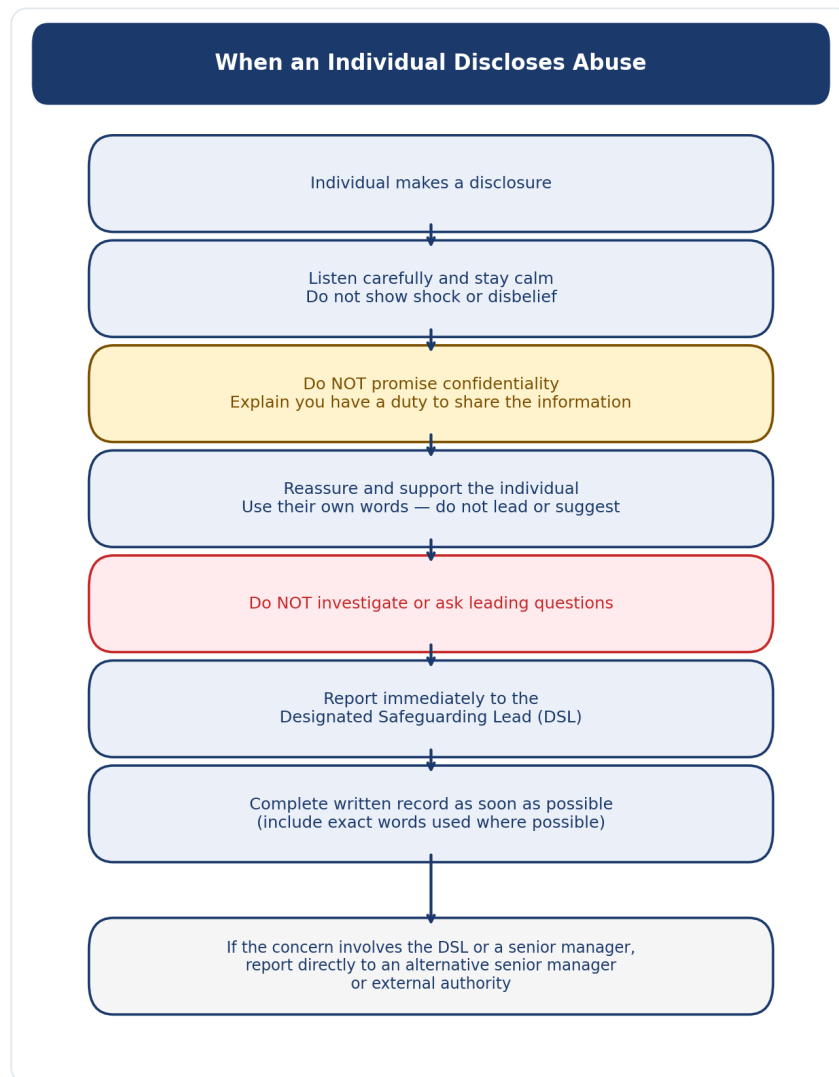
IMPORTANT NOTE

These indicators are not definitive proof of abuse. However, they should always be taken seriously and may require further exploration and reporting in line with safeguarding procedures.

Appendix 3: Safeguarding Reporting Flowcharts

This flowchart outlines the process for responding to safeguarding concerns involving children and young people. For safeguarding concerns relating to adults, staff must refer to the Adult Safeguarding Policy.

Safeguarding Children & Young People — Reporting Procedure



Appendix 4: Safeguarding Contacts

Unique Minds operates primarily within Dudley and Worcestershire local authority areas and works in partnership with relevant safeguarding teams.

Dudley (Stourbridge / Halesowen)	Worcestershire (Hagley / Bromsgrove)
Children's Safeguarding: 0300 555 0050 / Out of Hours (Emergency): 0300 555 8574 / MASH Email: mash@dudley.gov.uk / Website: www.dudley.gov.uk/residents/children/child-protection	Children's Safeguarding (MASH): 01905 822666 / Out of Hours (Emergency): 01905 768020 / MASH Email: mash@worcestershire.gov.uk / Website: www.worcestershire.gov.uk/report-child-abuse

NATIONAL SUPPORT

NSPCC Helpline: 0808 800 5000 / National Domestic Abuse Helpline: 0808 2000 247