

## Seagull Safeguarding Children Policy

### Purpose

- To protect children and young people from harm.
- To provide all members of the Seagull community, as well as children and young people with the overarching principles that guide our approach to child protection

The Seagull acknowledges the duty of care to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and is committed to ensuring safeguarding practice reflects statutory responsibilities, under the Children and Young Persons Act 1963, the Child (Performances) Regulations 1968, the Protection of Children Act 1999 and the Criminal Justice and Court Services Act 2000 and The Children Acts 1989 and 2004, government guidance and complies with best practice and industry requirements.

### Safeguarding Officer

The Designated Safeguarding Officer for the Seagull Lowestoft CIC is

<b>Name</b>	[REDACTED]
<b>Address</b>	[REDACTED]
<b>Tel</b>	[REDACTED]
<b>Email</b>	[REDACTED]

The Designated Safeguarding Director for the Seagull Lowestoft CIC is

<b>Name</b>	[REDACTED]
<b>Address</b>	c/o The Seagull Morton Road Lowestoft NR33 0JH
<b>Tel</b>	01502 589726
<b>Email</b>	[REDACTED]

## **Seagull Safeguarding Children Policy**

### **We recognise that:**

The welfare and interests of children are paramount in all circumstances. We acknowledge that some children, including disabled children and young people or those from ethnic minority communities, can be particularly vulnerable to abuse and we accept the responsibility to take reasonable and appropriate steps to ensure their welfare.

We aim to ensure that regardless of age, culture, ability or disability, gender, racial origin, religious belief, sex or sexual identity or socio-economic background, all children

- Have a positive and enjoyable experience at The Seagull in a safe and child centred environment
- Are protected from abuse whilst participating in performances and rehearsals or other activities.
- Will be treated equally and with respect and dignity

### **The Seagull believes that:**

- Children and young people should never experience abuse of any kind
- We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children and young people to keep them safe and to practice in a way that protects them.

### **The Seagull will ensure that:**

- Enthusiastic and constructive feedback is given rather than negative criticism
- Action will be taken to stop any inappropriate verbal or physical behaviour
- Bullying will not be accepted or condoned;
- All adult members provide a positive role model for dealing with other people;
- We avoid any inappropriate contact with children
- We do not show favouritism to any individual child
- The welfare and safety of each child will always be put first
- It will hold a register of every child involved and will retain a contact name and number close at hand in case of emergencies;

### *The Seagull will ensure that cont.:*

- Children, young people and their families know about the safeguarding policy and what to do if they have a concern
- Staff and volunteers understand their responsibilities in respect of safeguarding and are provided with appropriate learning opportunities to undertake training so they recognise, identify and respond to signs of abuse, neglect and other safeguarding concerns relating to children and young people
- Support children's right to privacy, including the misuse of photographic images, video and social media
- Appropriate action is taken in the event of incidents/concerns of abuse and support provided to the individual/s who raise or disclose the concern
- Confidential, detailed and accurate records of all safeguarding concerns are maintained and securely stored
- They prevent the employment/deployment of unsuitable individuals
- Robust safeguarding arrangements and procedures are in operation.
- Staff and volunteers are informed of changes in legislation and policies for the protection of children

This policy will be widely promoted and is mandatory for everyone involved in The Seagull. Failure to comply with the policy will be addressed without delay and may ultimately result in dismissal/exclusion from the organisation.

### **Child Protection and Visiting Companies and groups**

Visiting companies and groups who are rehearsing/performing at the Seagull are required to have their own Child Protection Policy and procedures in place where members of the company are children, young people or vulnerable adults or where the visiting company plan to work with children, young people or vulnerable adults as part of an ancillary education package. We reserve the right to ask for copies of all child protection documentation on request and ensure that all permissions and arrangements for supervision are in place.

### Health and Safety in the Theatre

An assessment to identify risks will be carried out prior to every new class, workshop or production involving children at The Seagull. This will ensure that risks are minimised in the studios, theatre spaces, dressing rooms and back stage areas for workshops and/or rehearsals.

The following things will be checked prior to a group of children or young people using a space:

- Is the room temperature suitable?
- Is the room light enough?
- Are the exits clearly identified and free from obstruction
- Is the floor area free from obstruction?
- Are there any potential trip, slip or other hazards?
- Are the fire extinguishers clearly visible and unobstructed?

The member of staff/volunteer leading the session/rehearsal, must be made aware of fire evacuation procedure from the space they are using.

### Dealing with Concerns of Abuse

The following action should be taken if you suspect a child or vulnerable adult may be suffering abuse in some way:

- Do not attempt to investigate
- Privately voice your concerns to the supervising teacher/youth worker/carer
- If you continue to feel concerned speak immediately to the Safeguarding Officer who will contact the relevant authorities
- As soon as possible after becoming aware of possible abuse, make notes about your concerns.
- Pass on your written record to the Safeguarding Officer. Do not discuss the incident with anyone else
- Ask for support for yourself if you feel you need it

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### **Dealing with Disclosures**

The following action should be taken if a child who has suffered abuse confides in you:

- Listen attentively to what the child or young person is saying
- Do not promise confidentiality. The child, or young person, must be supported to understand that you will have to pass on information and why it is important
- Ask open non-leading questions which help to clarify what the child is say but not lead into an investigative situation. Intrusive questioning could contaminate a subsequent child protection investigation.
- Reassure the child, that s/he has been courageous in speaking to you about this.
- Do not make judgements about what is disclosed or about the alleged abuser.
- Explain the next step, the child should know that they will be kept informed and supported as appropriate
- Treat the allegation seriously and report it immediately to the Safeguarding Officer.
- Write down exactly what was said using the pro-forma attached to this policy (Pro-forma for recording concerns/allegations of abuse)
- On no account should you speak to the parent or carer about what has been alleged until the Safeguarding Officer has investigated the matter and discussed concerns with the Police or Social Worker if appropriate.
- Ask for support for yourself if you feel you need it

### **Dealing with disclosures against a staff member**

- Good practice in both the recruitment and supervision of staff and volunteers should be designed in such a way that the risk of abuse is reduced and staff can protect themselves from false allegations. However, the possibility of abuse cannot be eliminated and constant vigilance is necessary.
- If a user tells you that someone in the organisation has caused them harm, this should be treated in the same way as any other disclosure a child may make.
- The information should be passed on to the Safeguarding Officer and handled in the same manner.

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*Please note that in managing concerns/disclosures it is not your responsibility to decide whether or not abuse has taken place. You must abide by these guidelines if you are concerned about the welfare of a user.*

### **Storing of and access to confidential child protection data**

The Seagull Theatre abides by all relevant data protection legislation. We follow best practice for the processing of information relating to individuals, including obtaining, holding, use or disclosure of such information. Children are entitled to the same duty of confidence as adults, provided they have the ability to understand the choices and their consequences relating to the proposed lines of action. Where consent had not been obtained the law permits disclosure of confidential information necessary to safe guard a child where s/he is considered to be at risk. All child protection information will be stored securely and will only be shared with authorised personnel and appropriate authorities.

### **Safer Recruitment**

The Seagull is committed to:

- safeguarding and protecting all children and young people by implementing robust safer recruitment practices
- identifying and rejecting applicants who are unsuitable to work with children and young people
- responding to concerns about the suitability of applicants during the recruitment process
- responding to concerns about the suitability of employees and volunteers once they have begun their role
- ensuring all new staff and volunteers participate in an induction which includes child protection

All roles which involve working unsupervised with children will be subject to successful completion of an enhanced DBS check. Such checks will be organised and funded by the

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Seagull. Any staff or volunteers working with children in a supervised role will be subject to a standard DBS check.

All volunteers and staff will be required to undertake Safeguarding awareness training at least every 12 months and will be subject to a detailed induction upon first appointment or first volunteering. The induction process will be completed before any access to children is allowed and will include going through the entire induction package.

All employed staff working with children in an unsupervised role will be subject to providing two references, one of which will be a previous employer.

### **Managing Information from the Criminal Records Bureau**

The Seagull is committed to the development of best practice in relation to the safeguarding of children and young people and will ensure the following practice:

- Disclosures will only be requested when necessary and relevant to a particular post/role and the information provided on a Disclosure certificate will only be used for these purposes.
- Disclosure information will only be shared with the Safeguarding Officer and Directors who are authorised to see it in the course of their duties
- Where additional disclosure information is provided to The Seagull Theatre this be discussed with the individual should the Disclosure information have an impact on the outcome on the employment/ continued volunteering of the individual.

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## Appendix

### Definitions and signs of child abuse

Child abuse happens when a person – adult or child – harms a child. It can be physical, sexual or emotional, but can also involve a lack of love, care and attention. Neglect can be just as damaging to a child as physical or sexual abuse. Children may be abused by:

- Family members
- Friends
- People working or volunteering in organisational or community settings
- People they know
- Or, much less commonly, by strangers

Children suffering abuse often experience more than 1 type of abuse. The abuse usually happens over a period time, rather than being a single, isolated incident. Increasingly, abuse can happen online.

### General signs of abuse

Children who suffer abuse may be afraid to tell anybody about the abuse. They may struggle with feelings of guilt, shame or confusion – particularly if the abuser is a parent, caregiver or other close family member or friend. Many of the signs that a child is being abused are the same regardless of the type of abuse. Anyone working with children or young people needs to be vigilant to the signs listed below.

- Regular flinching in response to sudden but harmless actions, for example someone Raising a hand quickly
- Showing an inexplicable fear of particular places or making excuses to avoid particular people
- Knowledge of ‘adult issues’ for example alcohol, drugs and/or sexual behaviour which is inappropriate for their age or stage of development
- Angry outbursts or behaving aggressively towards other children, adults, animals or toys
- Becoming withdrawn or appearing anxious, clingy or depressed
- Self-harming or thoughts about suicide
- Changes in eating habits or developing eating disorders
- Regularly experiencing nightmares or sleep problems
- Regularly wetting the bed or soiling their clothes
- In older children, risky behaviour such as substance misuse or criminal activity
- Running away or regularly going missing from home or care
- Not receiving adequate medical attention after injuries.

These signs do not necessarily mean that a child is being abused. There may well be other reasons for changes in a child’s behaviour such as a bereavement or relationship problems between parents/carers. In assessing whether signs are related to abuse or not, they need to be considered in the context of the child’s development and situation.

### Physical abuse

Physical abuse happens when a child is deliberately hurt, causing injuries such as cuts, bruises, burns and broken bones. It can involve hitting, kicking, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning

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or suffocating. It's also physical abuse if a parent or carer makes up or causes the symptoms of illness in children. For example, they may give them medicine they don't need, making them unwell. This is known as fabricated or induced illness (FII).

### Spotting the signs of physical abuse

All children have trips, falls and accidents which may cause cuts, bumps and bruises. These injuries tend to affect bony areas of their body such as elbows, knees and shins and are not usually a cause for concern. Injuries that are more likely to indicate physical abuse include:

#### Bruising

- Bruises on babies who are not yet crawling or walking
- Bruises on the cheeks, ears, palms, arms and feet • bruises on the back, buttocks, tummy, hips and backs of legs
- Multiple bruises in clusters, usually on the upper arms or outer thighs
- Bruising which looks like it has been caused by fingers, a hand or an object, like a belt or shoe
- Large oval-shaped bite marks.

#### Burns or scalds

- Any burns which have a clear shape of an object, for example cigarette burns
- Burns to the backs of hands, feet, legs, genitals or buttocks. Other signs of physical abuse include multiple injuries (such as bruising, fractures) inflicted at different times.

If a child is frequently injured, and if the bruises or injuries are unexplained or the explanation doesn't match the injury, this should be investigated. It's also concerning if there is a delay in seeking medical help for a child who has been injured.

#### Neglect

Neglect is persistently failing to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs usually resulting in serious damage to their health and development. Neglect may involve a parent's or carer's failure to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing or shelter
- Supervise a child (including leaving them with unsuitable carers) or keep them safe from harm or danger
- Make sure the child receives appropriate health and/or dental care
- Make sure the child receives a suitable education
- Meet the child's basic emotional needs – parents may ignore their children when they are distressed or even when they are happy or excited. This is known as emotional neglect.

Neglect is the most common type of child abuse. It often happens at the same time as other types of abuse.

### Spotting the signs of neglect

Neglect can be difficult to identify. Isolated signs may not mean that a child is suffering neglect, but multiple and persistent signs over time could indicate a serious problem. Some of these signs include:

- Children who appear hungry - they may come to school without lunch money or even try to steal food
- Children who appear dirty or smelly and whose clothes are unwashed or inadequate for the weather conditions
- Children who are left alone or unsupervised
- Children who fail to thrive or who have untreated injuries, health or dental problems
- Children with poor language, communication or social skills for their stage of development
- Children who live in an unsuitable home environment, for example the house is very dirty and unsafe, perhaps with evidence of substance misuse or violence
- Children who have taken on the role of carer for other family members

### Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse is forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities. It doesn't necessarily involve violence and the child may not be aware that what is happening is abuse. Child sexual abuse can involve contact abuse and/or non-contact abuse. Contact abuse happens when the abuser makes physical contact with the child. It includes:

- Sexual touching of any part of the body whether the child is wearing clothes or not
- rape or penetration by putting an object or body part inside a child's mouth, vagina or anus
- Forcing or encouraging a child to take part in sexual activity • making a child take their clothes off, touch someone else's genitals or masturbate.

Non-contact abuse involves non-touching activities. It can happen online or in person and includes:

- Encouraging a child to watch or hear sexual acts
- Not taking proper measures to prevent a child being exposed to sexual activities by others
- Showing pornography to a child
- Making, viewing or distributing child abuse images
- Allowing someone else to make, view or distribute child abuse images.

Online sexual abuse includes:

- Persuading or forcing a child to send or post sexually explicit images of themselves, this is sometimes referred to as sexting

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- Persuading or forcing a child to take part in sexual activities via a webcam or smartphone
- Having sexual conversations with a child by text or online
- Meeting a child following online sexual grooming with the intent of abusing them.

Abusers may threaten to send sexually explicit images, video or copies of sexual conversations to the young person's friends and family unless they take part in other sexual activity. Images or videos may continue to be shared long after the abuse has stopped. Abusers will often try to build an emotional connection with a child in order to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual abuse. This is known as grooming.

### Spotting the signs of sexual abuse

There may be physical signs that a child has suffered sexual abuse. These include:

- Anal or vaginal soreness or itching
- Bruising or bleeding near the genital area
- Discomfort when walking or sitting down
- An unusual discharge
- Sexually transmitted infections (STI)
- Pregnancy

Changes in the child's mood or behaviour may also cause concern. They may want to avoid spending time with specific people. In particular, the child may show sexual behaviour that is inappropriate for their age. For example:

- They could use sexual language or know things about sex that you wouldn't expect them to
- A child might become sexually active at a young age
- They might be promiscuous

### Child sexual exploitation

Sexual exploitation (CSE) is a type of sexual abuse. Young people in exploitative situations and relationships receive things such as gifts, money, drugs, alcohol, status or affection in exchange for taking part in sexual activities.

Young people may be tricked into believing they're in a loving, consensual relationship. They often trust their abuser and don't understand that they're being abused. They may depend on their abuser or be too scared to tell anyone what's happening. They might be invited to parties and given drugs and alcohol before being sexually exploited. They can also be groomed and exploited online.

Some children and young people are trafficked into or within the UK for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Sexual exploitation can also happen to young people in gangs (Berelowitz et al, 2013).

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Child sexual exploitation can involve violent, humiliating and degrading sexual assaults and involve multiple perpetrators.

### Spotting the signs of child sexual exploitation

Sexual exploitation can be very difficult to identify. Warning signs can easily be mistaken for 'normal' teenage behaviour. Young people who are being sexually exploited may:

- Go missing from home, care or education
- Be involved in abusive relationships, appearing intimidated and fearful of certain people or situations
- Hang out with groups of older people, or anti-social groups, or with other vulnerable peers
- Get involved in gangs, gang fights, gang membership
- Have older boyfriends or girlfriends
- spend time at places of concern, such as hotels or known brothels
- Not know where they are, because they have been moved around the country
- Be involved in petty crime such as shoplifting
- Have access to drugs and alcohol
- Have new things such as clothes and mobile phones which they can't or won't explain
- Have unexplained physical injuries

### Harmful sexual behaviour

Children and young people who develop harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) harm themselves and others. HSB can include:

- Using sexually explicit words and phrases
- Inappropriate touching
- Using sexual violence or threats
- Full penetrative sex with other children or adults.

Sexual behaviour between children is also considered harmful if 1 of the children is much older – particularly if there is more than 2 years' difference in age or if 1 of the children is pre-pubescent and the other isn't (Davies, 2012). However, a younger child can abuse an older child, particularly if they have power over them – for example, if the older child is disabled (Rich, 2011).

### Spotting the signs of harmful sexual behaviour

It's normal for children to show signs of sexual behaviour at each stage in their development. Children also develop at different rates and some may be slightly more or less advanced than other children in their age group. Behaviours which might be concerning depend on the child's age and the situation. If you're unsure whether a child's sexual behaviour is healthy, Brook provide a helpful, easy-to-use [Traffic Light Tool](#). The traffic light system is used to describe

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healthy (green) sexual behaviours, potentially unhealthy (amber) sexual behaviours and unhealthy (red) sexual behaviours.

### Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is persistent, and, over time, it severely damages a child's emotional health and development. It involves:

- Humiliating, putting down or constantly criticising a child
- Shouting at or threatening a child or calling them names
- Mocking a child or making them perform degrading acts
- Constantly blaming or scapegoating a child for things which are not their fault
- Trying to control a child's life and not recognising their individuality
- Not allowing them to have friends or develop socially
- Pushing a child too hard or not recognising their limitations
- Manipulating a child
- Exposing a child to distressing events or interactions such as drug taking, heavy drinking or domestic abuse
- Persistently ignoring them
- Being cold and emotionally unavailable during interactions with a child
- Never saying anything kind, positive or encouraging to a child and failing to praise their achievements and successes

### Spotting the signs of emotional abuse

There aren't usually any obvious physical signs of emotional abuse, but you may spot signs in a child's actions or emotions. It's important to remember that some children are naturally quiet and self-contained whilst others are more open and affectionate. Mood swings and challenging behaviour are also a normal part of growing up for teenagers and children going through puberty. Be alert to behaviours which appear to be out of character for the individual child or are particularly unusual for their stage of development. Babies and pre-school children who are being emotionally abused may:

- Be overly affectionate towards strangers or people they haven't known for very long
- Not appear to have a close relationship with their parent, for example when being taken to or collected from nursery
- Lack confidence or become wary or anxious
- Be unable to play or be aggressive or nasty towards other children and animals.

Older children may:

- Use language, act in a way or know about things that you wouldn't expect for their age
- Struggle to control strong emotions or have extreme outbursts
- Seem isolated from their parents
- Lack social skills or have few, if any, friends
- Fear making mistakes
- Fear their parent being approached regarding their behaviour

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- Self-harm

### Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is any type of controlling, bullying, threatening or violent behaviour between people who are or were in an intimate relationship. There are many different types of abusive behaviours that can occur within intimate relationships, including emotional, sexual, financial, psychological and physical abuse. Domestic abuse can be underpinned by an on-going pattern of psychologically abusive behaviour (coercive control) that is used by 1 partner to control or intimidate the other partner.

In situations of domestic abuse, both males and females can be abused or be abusers. Domestic abuse can happen in any relationship regardless of age, sexuality, gender identity, race or religious identity. Research by the NSPCC has indicated that many young people experience domestic abuse in their own intimate relationships (Barter, 2009). The UK's cross-government definition of domestic abuse also covers relationships between young people aged 16 and 17 (Home Office, 2013).

Children's exposure to domestic abuse between parents and carers is child abuse. Children can be directly involved in incidents of domestic abuse or they may be harmed by seeing or hearing abuse happening. The developmental and behavioural impact of witnessing domestic abuse is similar to experiencing direct abuse. Children in homes where there is domestic abuse are also at risk of other types of abuse or neglect.

### Spotting the signs of domestic abuse

It can be difficult to tell if domestic abuse is happening, because it usually takes place in the family home and abusers can act very differently when other people are around. Children who witness domestic abuse may:

- Become aggressive
- Display anti-social behaviour
- Suffer from depression or anxiety
- Not do as well at school - due to difficulties at home or disruption of moving to and from refuges

### Bullying and cyberbullying

Bullying is behaviour that hurts someone else. It usually happens over a lengthy period of time and can harm a child both physically and emotionally. Bullying includes:

- Verbal abuse, such as name calling
- Non-verbal abuse, such as hand signs or glaring
- Emotional abuse, such as threatening, intimidating or humiliating someone
- Exclusion, such as ignoring or isolating someone
- Undermining, by constant criticism or spreading rumours

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- Controlling or manipulating someone
- Racial, sexual or homophobic bullying
- Physical assaults, such as hitting and pushing
- Making silent, hoax or abusive calls.

Bullying can happen anywhere – at school, at home or online. When bullying happens online it can involve social networks, games and mobile devices. Online bullying can also be known as cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying includes:

- Sending threatening or abusive text messages
- Creating and sharing embarrassing images or videos
- 'Trolling' - sending menacing or upsetting messages on social networks, chat rooms or online games
- Excluding children from online games, activities or friendship groups
- Setting up hate sites or groups about a particular child
- Encouraging young people to self-harm
- Voting for or against someone in an abusive poll
- Creating fake accounts, hijacking or stealing online identities to embarrass a young person or cause trouble using their name

### **Spotting the signs of bullying and cyberbullying**

It can be hard to know whether or not a child is being bullied. They might not tell anyone because they're scared the bullying will get worse. They might also think that the bullying is their fault. No one sign indicates for certain that a child's being bullied, but you should look out for:

- Belongings getting 'lost' or damaged
- Physical injuries such as unexplained bruises
- Being afraid to go to school, being mysteriously 'ill' each morning, or skipping school
- Not doing as well at school
- Asking for, or stealing, money (to give to a bully)
- Being nervous, losing confidence or becoming distressed and withdrawn
- Problems with eating or sleeping
- Bullying others

### **Child trafficking**

Child trafficking is child abuse. It involves recruiting and moving children who are then exploited. Many children are trafficked into the UK from overseas, but children can also be trafficked from one part of the UK to another. Children are trafficked for:

- Child sexual exploitation
- Benefit fraud



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- Forced marriage
- Domestic servitude such as cleaning, childcare, cooking
- Forced labour in factories or agriculture
- Criminal exploitation such as cannabis cultivation, pickpocketing, begging, transporting, drugs, selling pirated DVDs and bag theft

Children who are trafficked experience many forms of abuse and neglect. Physical, sexual and emotional abuse is often used to control them and they're also likely to suffer physical and emotional neglect.

Child trafficking can require a network of organised criminals who recruit, transport and exploit children and young people. Some people in the network might not be directly involved in trafficking a child but play a part in other ways, such as falsifying documents, bribery, owning or renting premises or money laundering (Europol, 2011).

Child trafficking can also be organised by individuals and the children's own families. Traffickers trick, force or persuade children to leave their homes. They use grooming techniques to gain the trust of a child, family or community. Although these are methods used by traffickers, coercion, violence or threats don't need to be proven in cases of child trafficking - a child cannot legally consent to their exploitation, so child trafficking only requires evidence of movement and exploitation. Modern slavery is another term which may be used in relation to child trafficking.

Modern slavery encompasses slavery, servitude, forced and compulsory labour and human trafficking (HM Government, 2014). The Modern Slavery Act passed in 2015 in England and Wales categorises offences of slavery, servitude, forced or compulsory labour and human trafficking (NCA, 2017).

### Spotting the signs of child trafficking

Signs that a child has been trafficked may not be obvious, but you might notice unusual behaviour or events. These include a child who:

- Spends a lot of time doing household chores
- Rarely leaves their house, has no freedom of movement and no time for playing
- Is orphaned or living apart from their family, often in unregulated private foster care
- Lives in substandard accommodation • isn't sure which country, city or town they're in
- Is unable or reluctant to give details of accommodation or personal details
- Might not be registered with a school or a GP practice
- Has no documents or has falsified documents
- Has no access to their parents or guardians
- Is seen in inappropriate places such as brothels or factories
- Possesses unaccounted for money or goods

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- Is permanently deprived of a large part of their earnings, required to earn a minimum amount of money every day or pay off an exorbitant debt
- Has injuries from workplace accidents
- Gives a prepared story which is very similar to stories given by other children

There are also signs that an adult is involved in child trafficking, such as:

- Making multiple visa applications for different children
- Acting as a guarantor for multiple visa applications for children
- Travelling with different children who they're not related to or responsible for
- Insisting on remaining with and speaking for the child
- Living with unrelated or newly arrived children
- Abandoning a child or claiming not to know a child they were previously with

### Female genital mutilation

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is the partial or total removal of external female genitalia for non-medical reasons. It's also known as female circumcision or cutting.

The age at which FGM is carried out varies. It may be carried out when a girl is new-born, during childhood or adolescence, just before marriage or during pregnancy (Home Office et al, 2016).

Religious, social or cultural reasons are sometimes given for FGM. However, FGM is child abuse. It's dangerous and a criminal offence.

There are no medical reasons to carry out FGM. It doesn't enhance fertility and it doesn't make childbirth safer. It's used to control female sexuality and can cause severe and long-lasting damage to physical and emotional health.

### Spotting the signs of female genital mutilation

A girl at immediate risk of FGM may not know what's going to happen. But she might talk about or you may become aware of:

- A long holiday abroad or going 'home' to visit family
- Relative or cutter visiting from abroad
- A special occasion or ceremony to 'become a woman' or get ready for marriage
- A female relative being cut – a sister, cousin or an older female relative such as a mother or aunt
- Missing school repeatedly or running away from home

A girl who has had FGM may:

- Have difficulty walking, standing or sitting
- Spend longer in the bathroom or toilet
- Appear withdrawn, anxious or depressed

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- Have unusual behaviour after an absence from school or college
- Be particularly reluctant to undergo normal medical examinations
- Ask for help, but may not be explicit about the problem due to embarrassment

### **Reporting requirements**

Regulated health and social care professionals and teachers in England and Wales must report 'known' cases of FGM in under-18s to the police (Home Office, 2016)



**Pro-forma for recording concerns/allegations of abuse**

Name of Child:
Age:
Address and telephone number:
Name of parents/carers:
Name of other siblings (if known):
Any special circumstances relating to the child (e.g. special needs, health and welfare issues):
What is the nature of your concern (e.g. allegation by a child, young person or vulnerable adult or a suspicion of abuse by a concerned adult)

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If a child has alleged abuse, give the name of the person they spoke to and the time and place when this allegation was made

If a user has alleged abuse, record as quickly as possible what was said. This should be as accurate as possible and in the child's own words

If another adult has expressed concern about the safety of a user record their concerns and ask them to confirm that the details are correct

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Have any possible signs or indicators of abuse been identified? By whom?
If known record the name(s) of the person(s) implicated in the abuse
Record when the referral to social work, police or reporter was made and the name of the person who received your call and advice given
What advice was given about liaising with the user's parent(s)/carer(s)?

Signed (Safeguarding Officer) \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signed (Director) \_\_\_\_\_

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Date \_\_\_\_\_