

Safeguarding Procedure – Children & Young People

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Audience:	All ADCH Staff, Trustees and Volunteers		
Owner:	Governance Committee	Author:	ADCH Central Team
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1. Purpose and Scope

This procedure provides guidance on the types of abuse and neglect the Association of Dogs and Cats Homes (ADCH) seeks to protect children and young people from and provides information to our staff, trustees and volunteers, on how they should report any safeguarding concerns they may have involving children and young people.

This policy applies to anyone working on behalf of ADCH, including our staff, board of trustees, and volunteers.

2. Safeguarding Duties and Responsibilities

It is the duty and responsibility of everyone working on behalf of ADCH, including staff, trustees and volunteers, to be aware of the harm abuse and neglect can cause and report any safeguarding concerns they may have. All staff, trustees and volunteers must always follow ADCH Codes of Conduct when working on behalf of ADCH.

3. What is Safeguarding?

Safeguarding is the process of protecting people's health, wellbeing, and human rights, and enabling them to live free from harm, abuse, and neglect. It involves identifying and responding to risks, promoting welfare, and ensuring that individuals, especially those who may be vulnerable, are safe in all interactions with an organisation. Emphasis is placed on the need to safeguard children, young people and adults at risk who are at greater risk of harm, abuse and neglect. Despite having limited direct contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults, ADCH is committed to safeguarding these groups, and all people we encounter as part of our charitable work.

4. Types of abuse and neglect

Listed below are the different types of abuse and neglect we seek to protect children and young people from.

For more detailed information on each type of abuse, how to recognise the signs of abuse and what you can do to help prevent and respond to abuse, please visit the [NSPCC website](#).

Neglect is not meeting a child's basic physical and psychological needs. It is a form of child abuse that can have serious and long-lasting impacts on a child's life - it can cause serious harm and even death.

Physical abuse is deliberately hurting a child and causing physical harm.

Child sexual abuse is when a child is forced or persuaded to take part in sexual activities. This may involve physical contact or non-contact activities and can happen online or offline.

Emotional abuse is the ongoing emotional maltreatment of a child, which can have a severe and persistent negative effect on the child's emotional health and development. Exposing a child to aggression, cruelty or abuse between others is also a form of emotional abuse.

Domestic abuse is any type of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between people who are, or who have been in a relationship, regardless of gender or sexuality. It can also happen between adults who are related to one another. Domestic abuse always has an impact on children. Being exposed to domestic abuse in childhood is child abuse. Children may experience domestic abuse both directly and indirectly.

Online abuse is any type of abuse that happens on the internet, using technology like computers, tablets, mobile phones, games consoles and other internet-enabled devices. Children and young people may also be exposed to or engage with many types of harmful content online.

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity. CSE can happen online or offline.

County lines is a type of criminal exploitation and child abuse. Urban gangs persuade, coerce or force children and young people to store drugs and money and/or transport them to suburban areas, market towns and coastal towns.

Child trafficking is defined as recruiting, moving, receiving and harbouring children for the purpose of exploitation. It is a form of child abuse and modern slavery.

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia for non-medical reasons. It's also known as female circumcision or cutting. FGM is child abuse and is illegal in the UK, Ireland, Channel Islands and Isle of Man.

It is important to remember any child can experience abuse or neglect and that some children may be additionally vulnerable because of the impact of discrimination, previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues. Children may experience harm in a family environment, or in an institution or community setting such as a school or sports club. They may know the person who is abusing them or, more rarely, experience abuse from a stranger. Abuse can happen in person or online, or through a combination of the two. Children can also experience more than one type of abuse, and this can have serious and long-lasting impacts on their lives.

5. Reporting a Safeguarding Concern

Safeguarding concerns may arise when working on behalf of ADCH in a variety of ways including:

- Directly witnessing or hearing something
- Indirectly hearing about something from a third party
- Witnessing indicators and signs that a child or young person is (or is at risk of) being abused or neglected
- A disclosure from a child or young person

If have any safeguarding concerns when working on behalf of ADCH, you should follow the following procedure to report your concern/s:

1. If the child or young person is in immediate danger, call the police on 999.
2. If the child or young person is not in immediate danger, complete the [ADCH Safeguarding Concern Report Form](#) as possible. The ADCH Safeguarding Concern Report Form is an online, encrypted form which will gather information about the nature of a safeguarding concern and the details of the person submitting the concern. The form will be sent to ADCH's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), Rebecca Cooper (ADCH Executive Director).

If your safeguarding concern involves the conduct of the DLS, you should instead [email](#) the Designated Safeguarding Lead Deputy, Giles Webber (Chair of Trustees) stating you wish to discuss an urgent

safeguarding concern involving the DSL and include your contact number. The DSL Deputy will phone you as soon as possible and take the details of your concern.

3. The DSL will send an email to the person who has reported a safeguarding concern via the ADCH Safeguarding Concern Report Form to confirm receipt of the form.

If you have not received a confirmation email from the DSL within 12 hours, please [email](#) the DSL Deputy, Giles Webber, to inform him you have completed an ADCH Safeguarding Concern Report Form which has not been acknowledged. The DSL Deputy will then alert the DSL to your report form, and you will receive email confirmation from the DSL to confirm receipt of the form.

4. Once the ADCH Safeguarding Concern Report Form has been received it will be reviewed, and where necessary referred, by the DSL. The DSL may contact you with any further questions they may have. It is important you keep your safeguarding concern confidential and only discuss it with the DSL and DSL Deputy.

6. Responding to a Disclosure from a Child or Young Person

The following points will give you some brief guidance on what to do if a child or young person discloses a safeguarding concern to you. For further advice, please visit the [NSPCC website](#).

- Listen carefully to what they're saying. Be patient and focus on what you're being told. Try not to express your own views and feelings. If you appear shocked or as if you don't believe them, it could make them stop talking and take back what they've said.
- Let them know they've done the right thing by telling you. Reassurance can make a big impact. If they've kept the abuse a secret it can have a big impact knowing they've shared what's happened.
- Tell them it's not their fault. Abuse is never a child's fault. It's important they hear, and know, this.
- Say you'll take them seriously. They may have kept the abuse secret because they were scared they wouldn't be believed. Make sure they know they can trust you and you'll listen and support them.
- Don't confront the alleged abuser. Confronting the alleged abuser could make the situation worse for the child.
- Explain what you'll do next. For younger children, explain you're going to speak to someone who will be able to help. For older children, explain you'll need to report the abuse to someone who can help. Never promise to keep a disclosure a secret.
- Report what the child has told you as soon as possible following the above procedure. Report as soon after you've been told about the abuse so the details are fresh in your mind and action can be taken quickly. It can be helpful to take notes as soon after you've spoken to the child. Try to keep these as accurate as possible.

7. Key Contact Details

[ADCH Safeguarding Concern Report Form](#)

Contact:	Name:	Role:	Email Address:	Phone Number:
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	Rebecca Cooper	ADCH Executive Director	rebecca@adch.org.uk	07759719802
Designated Safeguarding Lead Deputy	Giles Webber	ADCH Chair of Trustees	giles@adch.org.uk	07989013511

8. Data Storage and Retention

Records will be kept securely in accordance with ADCH's Data Retention and Disposal policy which states, *'Incidents and allegations relating to children, or adults at risk will be retained for 6 years from incident report or allegation. After 6 years files should be reviewed to ascertain risk associated with incident and decide whether longer retention period is required'*.

9. Concerns and Complaints

If you are unhappy about ADCH has dealt with a safeguarding concern you have raised, please refer to [ADCH's Complaints Policy](#) and/or [ADCH's Whistleblowing Policy](#).

You can also contact the [NSPCC Helpline](#) or [Childline](#) if you need child protection advice, support or reassurance.

10. Procedure Review

This procedure will be reviewed annually or sooner if there are changes in legislation or safeguarding guidance.

Version History

Version	Changes Made	Date	Made by
V1	Approved	24/03/2026	Board