

Yare Sailing Club Safeguarding and Child Protection Guidelines

This policy statement is based on the RYA Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy Statement, which was revised by the RYA in January 2020. It has been adapted for the Yare Sailing Club in July 2022.

This policy refers to anyone under the age of 18, defined as a child by the Children Act 1989. The policy applies to all club members and volunteers.

The RYA is committed to safeguarding children taking part in its activities from physical, sexual or emotional harm, neglect or bullying. We recognise that the safety, welfare and needs of the child are paramount and that any child, irrespective of age, disability, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual or gender identity or social status, has a right to protection from discrimination and abuse.

The child's experience of the sport is our priority. We will create a safe and welcoming environment, both on and off the water, where children can have fun and develop their skills and confidence. We will treat children with respect, celebrate their achievements and listen to their views and experiences.

RYA affiliated clubs are encouraged to adopt and implement similar policies and procedures. The RYA will provide them with information and support.

The RYA:

- Recognises that safeguarding children is the responsibility of everyone, not just those working directly with them.
- Carefully recruits and selects all RYA employees, contractors and volunteers in roles involving close contact with children and provides them with appropriate information or training.
- Responds swiftly and appropriately to all complaints and concerns about poor practice or suspected abuse, referring to external agencies as necessary.
- Regularly reviews safeguarding procedures and practices in the light of experience or to take account of legislative, social or technological changes.
- Communicates changes and shares good practice with training centres, clubs and class associations.

The RYA Safeguarding and Equality Manager should be notified of all relevant concerns, allegations or complaints.

Yare Sailing Club Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures

1. Designated Person

Although everyone has a role to play in ensuring that children are safe, the YSC has a designated individual, the Club Welfare Officer, who has specific responsibility for implementing our policy. The YSC should inform the RYA Safeguarding Manager when they are appointed, to ensure that they receive relevant information and advice. In a club it could be a volunteer, ideally someone with relevant knowledge and experience, who is perceived as being approachable and having a child-centred approach. They don't need to be an expert – that is the role of Children's Services and the Police. Training is available from the RYA.

The designated person's role description includes:

- Maintaining up-to-date policy and procedures, compatible with the RYA's.
- Ensuring that relevant volunteers are aware of and follow the procedures, including implementing safe recruitment procedures.
- Advising the management committee on safeguarding and child protection issues.
- Maintaining contact details for local Children's Services and Police.
If you are unable to obtain contact details from your local authority's website or the phone book, the RYA Safeguarding and Equality Manager can provide this information on request.

If there is a concern, the designated person will:

- Be the first point of contact for any concerns or allegations, from children or adults, ensuring that confidentiality is maintained in all cases.
- Decide on the appropriate action to be taken, in line with the organisation's procedures and in conjunction with the person in charge (Commodore, etc).
- Keep a brief confidential record of concerning events that are signed and dated
- Keep the RYA informed as necessary.

Everyone in the organisation should know who the Welfare Officer is and how to contact them.

2. Good practice guidelines

Culture

It is important to develop a culture within your organisation where both children and adults feel able to raise concerns, knowing that they will be taken seriously, treated confidentially and will not make the situation worse for themselves or others.

Minimising risk

Plan the work of the club and promote good practice to minimise situations where adults are working unobserved or could take advantage of their position of trust. Good practice protects everyone – children, volunteers and organisers.

These common sense guidelines should be available to everyone within your organisation:

- Avoid spending any significant time working with children in isolation
- Do not take children alone in a car, however short the journey

- Do not take children to your home as part of your organisation's activity
- Where any of these are unavoidable, ensure that they only occur with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge of the organisation or the child's parents
- If a child is having difficulty with a wetsuit or buoyancy aid, ask them to ask a friend to help if at all possible
- If you do have to help a child, make sure you are in full view of others, preferably another adult
- Restrict communications with young people via mobile phone, e-mail or social media to group communications about organisational matters. If it's essential to send an individual message, copy it to the child's parent or carer.

You should never:

- engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games
- allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form
- allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged, or use such language yourself when with children
- make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun
- fail to respond to an allegation made by a child; always act
- do things of a personal nature that children can do for themselves.

It may sometimes be necessary to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are very young or disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of both the child (where possible) and their parents/carers. In an emergency situation which requires this help, parents/carers should be informed as soon as possible. In such situations it is important to ensure that any adult present is sensitive to the child and undertakes personal care tasks with the utmost discretion.

Additional vulnerability

Some children may be more vulnerable to abuse or find it more difficult to express their concerns. For example:

- a disabled child who relies on a carer to help them get changed may worry that they won't be able to sail any more if they report the carer
- a deaf child may not be able to express themselves or speak confidentially if they need an interpreter
- a child who has experienced racism may find it difficult to trust an adult from a different ethnic background
- children with low self-esteem or mental health problems can be more vulnerable to bullying or abuse, as can gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender young people, or any child who has a characteristic that marks them out in others' eyes as 'different'.

Grooming

Grooming is when someone develops a relationship with a child over a period of time to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual abuse or exploitation. Children and young people can be groomed online or face-to-face, by a stranger or by someone they know - for example a family member, friend or professional. For more information on possible signs of grooming, see <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/grooming/> Sometimes the perpetrator grooms the entire family, building a relationship with the child's parents/carers so that they are allowed more access to the child than would normally be the case.

Similar behaviour could be used to radicalise young people and recruit them to a religious or political cause. This is unlikely to happen in a sailing club setting, but under the government's 'Prevent' strategy teachers and others working with young people receive training on recognising the warning signs.

Bullying

If a child alleges bullying or shows signs of being bullied, this must be investigated. For a definition of bullying, see Appendix 2.

Responsibilities of organisers and volunteers

Make sure your organisers or volunteers are given clear roles and responsibilities and are aware of your organisation's safeguarding policy.

First Aid and Medical Treatment

First Aid, provided by an appropriately trained and qualified person (eg RYA, St John's ambulance etc.) is part of an organisation's duty of care. Wherever possible, obtain consent from the person or their parent/guardian if under eighteen or a vulnerable adult.

Communication and Images

The world of the internet, social media and apps is constantly and rapidly evolving and it is hard to keep up to date, but it is important for parents and for anyone working with young people to develop some understanding of how they use technology, the risks involved and how to keep them safe. Suggested sources of information, mainly intended for parents but useful for anyone, are:

www.nspcc.org.uk/shareawarewww.internetmatters.org

www.saferinternet.org.uk

Parents

Organisations are responsible for the content published on their sites or pages, but parents must accept responsibility for their children's access to and use of computers, tablets and smartphones. See the links above for guidance.

Club websites and social media

When promoting your club and encouraging your members to interact online, there are a few issues to bear in mind in relation to children and young people:

- follow the RYA guidance on the use of images of children (see Photography section below)
- ensure that the content and language on your site or page, including contributions to blogs, forums etc, is not inappropriate for younger visitors and does not link directly to unsuitable material on other sites
- provide a clear process for members to report inappropriate content or online bullying to the webmaster to request that content is removed
- have a robust procedure for handling and assessing such a report or request and acting promptly to remove the offending content

Children and young people

Children and young people use modern technology as a matter of course, but they don't always understand the risks involved and their parents are not always fully aware of their children's risky behaviour. Online communication and texting can often be used as a

means of bullying. 'Cyberbullying' should be treated in the same way as any other form of bullying. www.thinkuknow.co.uk and www.childline.org.uk provide guidance and support for children and young people in different age groups, as well as for parents and carers, on matters such as online bullying, sharing images and 'sexting'

Photography, images and video

Publishing articles, photos and videos in club newsletters, on websites, in local newspapers etc is an excellent way of recognising young people's achievements and of promoting your organisation and the sport as a whole. However it is important to minimise the risk of anyone using images of children in an inappropriate way. Digital technology makes it easy to take, store, send, manipulate and publish images.

There are two key principles to bear in mind:

Before taking photos or video, obtain written consent from the child's parents/carers for their images to be taken and used

- A consent form could be included with the event entry form
- Any photographer or member of the press or media attending an event should wear identification at all times and should be fully briefed in advance on your expectations regarding his/her behaviour and the issues covered by these guidelines.
- Do not allow a photographer to have unsupervised access to young people at the event or to arrange photo sessions outside the event.
- Consent should also be obtained for the use of video as a coaching aid. Any other use by a coach will be regarded as a breach of the RYA's Code of Conduct.
- Care must be taken in storing and access to images. Images are personal data and should be treated in accordance with your organisation's Data Privacy Policy.

When publishing images, make sure they are appropriate and that you do not include any information that might enable someone to contact the child

- It is preferable to use a general shot showing participants on the water, or a group shot of the prizewinners, without identifying them by name.
- If you are recognising the achievement of an individual sailor and wish to publish their name with their photo, DO NOT publish any other information (eg. where they live, name of school, other hobbies and interests) that could enable someone to contact, befriend or start to 'groom' the child.
- Ensure that the young people pictured are suitably dressed, to reduce the risk of inappropriate use.

Most sailing activity takes place in areas that are open to the public and it is therefore not possible to control all photography, but any concerns about inappropriate or intrusive photography, or about the inappropriate use of images, should be reported to the organisation's child protection/welfare officer and treated in the same way as any other child protection concern. Parents and spectators should be prepared to identify themselves if requested and state their purpose for photography/filming.

3. Handling concerns, reports or allegations

This section is primarily for the organisation's designated Welfare Officer, but everyone should be aware of the procedures to follow if there are concerns.

A complaint, concern or allegation may come from a number of sources: the child, their parents or carers, someone else within your organisation, a member of the public, or the statutory authorities (Police or Children's Social Care). It may involve the behaviour of one of your volunteers or employees, or something that has happened to the child outside the sport, perhaps at home or at school. Children may confide in adults they trust, in a place where they feel at ease.

An allegation may range from mild verbal bullying to physical or sexual abuse. If you are concerned that a child may be being abused, it is NOT your responsibility to investigate further BUT it is your responsibility to act on your concerns and report them to the appropriate statutory authorities. For guidance on recognising abuse, see Appendix A.

Handling an allegation from a child

Always:

- stay calm – ensure that the child is safe and feels safe
- show and tell the child that you are taking what he/she says seriously
- reassure the child and stress that he/she is not to blame
- be careful about physical contact, it may not be what the child wants
- be honest, explain that you will have to tell someone else to help stop the alleged abuse
- make a record of what the child has said as soon as possible after the event, using the child's own words
- follow your organisation's child protection procedures.

Never:

- rush into actions that may be inappropriate
- make promises you cannot keep (eg. you won't tell anyone)
- ask leading questions (see 'Recording and handling information' below)
- take sole responsibility – consult someone else (ideally the designated Child Protection/Welfare Officer or the person in charge or someone you can trust) so that you can begin to protect the child and gain support for yourself.

You may be upset about what the child has said or you may worry about the consequences of your actions. Sometimes people worry about children being removed from their families as a result of abuse, but in reality this rarely happens. However, one thing is certain – you cannot ignore it.

Recording and handling information

If you suspect that a child may have been the subject of any form of physical, emotional or sexual abuse or neglect, the allegation must be referred as soon as possible to Children's Social Care or the Police who have trained experts to handle such cases. Do not start asking leading questions which may jeopardise any formal investigation. A leading question is where you suggest an answer or provide options that only need a 'yes' or 'no' answer, instead of allowing the child to explain things in their own words.

An example would be asking 'did X hit you?' instead of 'how did you get that bruise?'. Use open questions such as 'what happened next?'. Only ask questions to confirm that you need to refer the matter to someone else. Listen to and keep a record of anything the child tells you or that you have observed and pass the information on to the statutory authorities.

All information must be treated as confidential and only shared with those who need to know. If the allegation or suspicion concerns someone within your club or centre, only the child's parents/carers, the organisation's Welfare Officer, the person in charge of the organisation (unless any of them are the subject of the allegation), the relevant authorities and the RYA Safeguarding and Equality Manager should be informed. If the alleged abuse took place outside the sport, the Police or Children's Social Care will decide who else needs to be informed, including the child's parents/carers. It should not be discussed by anyone within the organisation other than the person who received or initiated the allegation and, if different, the person in charge.

Procedures

It is essential to have clear and agreed procedures to follow. These include procedures to be followed by anyone concerned about a child's welfare, either outside the sport or within your organisation.

Statutory Authorities

If your club or centre is contacted by the Police or Children's Services concerning information received or a complaint made by or about a member, volunteer or employee, you are advised to contact the RYA Safeguarding and Equality Manager as soon as possible for guidance and support. Co-operate fully with official requests for factual information, but do not express any personal opinions on the person's conduct.

Handling the media

If there is an incident at your premises which attracts media interest, or if you are contacted by the media with an allegation concerning one of your members or employees, do not give any response until you have had an opportunity to check the facts and seek advice. You may wish to contact the RYA's Communications department on 023 8060 4215 for professional advice on handling the media.

Insurance

If there is a serious allegation involving harm caused to a child either at your premises or as a result of taking part in your activities, the person in charge should consider notifying your insurers in case there is a subsequent claim against the organisation.

Data retention

Confidential information must be processed, stored and destroyed in accordance with your organisation's Data Privacy Policy and Data Protection legislation. Records containing personal information should be: adequate, relevant and not excessive for the purpose(s) for which they are held; accurate and up to date; and only kept for as long as is necessary. They should be reviewed on a regular basis. If a person is removed from your organisation for a safeguarding reason, you need to decide whether you should keep essential details of the reasons of action taken, and who will have access to that file in the future, in case the former member tries to re-join at a later date or a further allegation is made about them.

Historical allegations

If someone raises a child protection concern relating to incidents that took place some time ago, follow the same procedure as you would for a new concern, even if the person about whom the allegation is being made is no longer active within your organisation. If the concern appears to relate to a criminal offence, encourage the individual to contact the Police on 101.

Reference to the Disclosure and Barring Service or Disclosure Scotland

The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) maintains the lists of people barred from working with children or with vulnerable adults in England.

Reporting Procedures

Revised Jan 2015

If you are uncertain what to do at any stage, contact the RYA's Safeguarding and Equality Manager on 023 8060 4104 or the NSPCC free 24-hour helpline 0808 800 5000.

Details of Children's Social Care departments and emergency duty teams are listed on local authority websites and in local phone books. If you are unable to find the appropriate contact number, call the RYA's Safeguarding and Equality Manager or, if a child is at immediate risk, the Police.

4. Useful Contacts

NSPCC 24 hour free helpline

For advice on any aspect of children's welfare
0808 800 5000. E-mail: help@nspcc.org.uk Website: www.nspcc.org.uk

Childline 24 hour free helpline 0800 1111. Website: www.childline.org.uk

MIND – mental health charity

Tel: 0300 123 3393 Text: 86463. E-mail: info@mind.org.uk. Website: www.mind.org.uk

Social Care Services

Your local phone book or the website for your County Council or unitary local authority will list numbers for the Children and Families Services, generally with separate numbers for Children's Social Care and for the Emergency Duty Team (out of hours service).

Royal Yachting Association

Safeguarding and Equality Manager
RYA House, Ensign Way
Hamble
Southampton
SO31 4YA

Tel: 023 8060 4104 E-mail: safeguarding@rya.org.uk. Website: www.rya.org.uk/go/safeguarding

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) – RYA is Registered Body

Website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service>

Safeguarding Adults Policy and Guidelines

Who could be regarded as an 'adult at risk' or 'vulnerable adult'?

In recent years there has been a shift away from using the term 'vulnerable', which can be perceived as a disempowering term, to describe adults who are potentially at risk of harm or abuse (for more information on types of abuse, see Appendix 2).

The term 'Adult at Risk' as defined by the Care Act 2014 applies to people aged 18 or over who are in need of care or support, regardless of whether they are receiving them, and because of those needs are unable to protect themselves against abuse or neglect.

There are also adults who are at risk due to a specific circumstance they may find themselves in, for example: domestic abuse, forced marriage, sexual or commercial or financial exploitation. Adults at risk may include individuals who are vulnerable as a consequence of their role as a carer.

All of us could be regarded as being at risk or vulnerable at certain times in our lives, for example when undergoing medical treatment or experiencing a period of mental ill-health. Equally, not all people with a disability would identify themselves as being vulnerable or at risk at all times.

In a sailing and boating context, clubs and centres may work with:

- people who have a physical disability, whether from birth or acquired through injury, illness or advancing age, ranging from those who can sail independently but need some assistance getting afloat, to those who depend on others for physical care and support
- people who are blind or visually impaired, who may need to be guided around the site and when getting on board, and sail with sighted crew
- people who are deaf or hearing impaired, whose needs are largely connected to communication and inclusion
- people who have learning disabilities or who for some other reason (eg. brain injury, dementia) may not have the capacity (see Mental Capacity below) to make independent decisions or to assess risk
- people who are on the autism/Asperger spectrum
- people who are experiencing mental illness.

Mental capacity and consent

Although many of the good practice guidelines and principles to be followed when safeguarding children also apply to adults, there is a key difference.

In the case of a child, there is a clear duty to act if we suspect that the child has been harmed or is at risk of harm. In the case of an adult, the starting assumption must always be that they have the capacity to make a decision and have the right to do so. If there is an allegation or concern about an adult who has capacity, **their consent must be obtained** before any referral is made, unless others are at risk of harm. No information should be given to the adult's family or carers without their consent.

If the adult does not have capacity and is unable to give consent, a referral may be made and their family or carers informed, provided that they are involved in the individual's life and are not implicated in the allegation.

Mental capacity refers to the ability to make a decision at a particular time. The term 'lacks capacity' means that a person is unable to make a particular decision or take a particular action for themselves at a particular point in time – although they may still be able to express an opinion or preference or take a less complex decision.

Under the Mental Capacity Act 2005 a person lacks capacity to make a decision if they have an 'impairment of or disturbance in the function of their mind or brain' (either temporary or permanent), and as a result they cannot do **one or more** of the following:

- Understand the information relating to this particular decision (including its benefits and risks)
- Retain the information for long enough to make this decision
- Weigh up the information involved in making this decision
- Communicate their decision in any way.

The Act also says that:

- A person is not to be treated as unable to make a decision unless all practical steps to help him/her to do so have been taken without success.
- A person is not to be treated as unable to make a decision merely because he/she makes an unwise decision.
- An act carried out or decision made, for or on behalf of a person who lacks capacity must be undertaken, or made, in their best interests.
- Before the act is carried out, or the decision is made, regard must be paid to whether the purpose for which it is needed can be as effectively achieved in a way that is less restrictive of the person's rights and freedom of action.

Adults at Risk Policy Statement

The YSC is not a Sailability Centre but is committed to safeguarding adults at risk taking part in its activities from physical, sexual, psychological, financial or discriminatory abuse or neglect. We recognise that everyone, irrespective of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, marriage or civil partnership or social status, has a right to protection from discrimination and abuse.

Appendix 1 RYA Good Practice Guide for Instructors, Coaches and Volunteers

This guide only covers the essential points of good practice when working with children and young people. You should also read the organisation's Child Protection Policy and Procedures which are available for reference at all times.

- Avoid spending any significant time working with children in isolation
- Do not take children alone in a car, however short the journey
- Do not take children to your home as part of your organisation's activity
- Where any of these are unavoidable, ensure that they only occur with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge of the organisation or the child's parents
- Design training programmes that are within the ability of the individual child
- If a child is having difficulty with a wetsuit or buoyancy aid, ask them to ask a friend to help if at all possible

- If you do have to help a child, make sure you are in full view of others, preferably another adult
- Restrict communications with young people via mobile phone, e-mail or social media to group communications about organisational matters. If it's essential to send an individual message, copy it to the child's parent or carer.

You should never:

- engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games
- allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form
- allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged, or use such language yourself when with children
- make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun
- fail to respond to an allegation made by a child; always act
- do things of a personal nature that children can do for themselves. It may sometimes be necessary to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are very young or disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of the child (where possible) and their parents/carers. In an emergency situation which requires this type of help, parents should be fully informed. In such situations it is important to ensure that any adult present is sensitive to the child and undertakes personal care tasks with the utmost discretion.

Appendix 2 – What is child abuse?

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others (including via the internet). They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

Physical abuse may involve adults or other children inflicting physical harm:

- hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating
- giving children alcohol or inappropriate drugs
- a parent or carer fabricating the symptoms of, or deliberately inducing, illness in a child
- in sport situations, physical abuse might also occur when the nature and intensity of training exceeds the capacity of the child's immature and growing body.

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve:

- conveying to a child that they are worthless, unloved or inadequate
- not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate
- imposing expectations which are beyond the child's age or developmental capability
- overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child from participating in normal social interaction
- allowing a child to see or hear the ill-treatment of another person

- serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger
- the exploitation or corruption of children
- emotional abuse in sport might also include situations where parents or coaches subject children to constant criticism, bullying or pressure to perform at a level that the child cannot realistically be expected to achieve.

Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child.

Sexual abuse. Sexual abuse involves an individual (male or female, or another child) forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening, to gratify their own sexual needs. The activities may involve:

- physical contact (eg. kissing, touching, masturbation, rape or oral sex)
- involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images
- encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or watch sexual activities
- grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet)
- sport situations which involve physical contact (eg. supporting or guiding children) could potentially create situations where sexual abuse may go unnoticed. Abusive situations may also occur if adults misuse their power and position of trust over young people.

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- ensure adequate supervision
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment
- respond to a child's basic emotional needs
- neglect in a sport situation might occur if an instructor or coach fails to ensure that children are safe, or exposes them to undue cold or risk of injury.

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It 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 in exchange for something the victim needs and wants (eg. attention, money or material possessions, alcohol or drugs), and/or for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation can also occur online without involving physical contact.

Extremism goes beyond terrorism and includes people who target the vulnerable - including the young - by seeking to: sow division between communities on the basis of race, faith or denomination; justify discrimination eg. towards women and girls; persuade others that minorities are inferior; or argue against the primacy of democracy and the rule of law in our society.

Bullying(not included in 'Working Together' but probably more common in a sport situation than some of the other forms of abuse described above)

Bullying (including online bullying, for example via text or social media) may be seen as deliberately hurtful behaviour, usually repeated or sustained over a period of time, where it is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves. The bully is often another young person. Although anyone can be the target of bullying, victims are typically shy, sensitive and perhaps anxious or insecure. Sometimes they are singled out for physical reasons – being overweight or physically small, being gay or lesbian, having a disability or belonging to a different race, faith or culture.

Bullying can include:

- physical pushing, kicking, hitting, pinching etc

- name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, persistent teasing and emotional torment through ridicule, humiliation or the continual ignoring of individuals
- posting of derogatory or abusive comments, videos or images on social network sites
- racial taunts, graffiti, gestures, sectarianism
- sexual comments, suggestions or behaviour
- unwanted physical contact.

The acronym STOP – Several Times On Purpose - can help you to identify bullying behaviour.

Recognising Abuse

It is not always easy, even for the most experienced carers, to spot when a child has been abused. However, some of the more typical symptoms which should trigger your suspicions would include:

- unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries
- sexually explicit language or actions
- a sudden change in behaviour (eg. becoming very quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper)
- the child describes what appears to be an abusive act involving him/her
- a change observed over a long period of time (eg. the child losing weight or becoming increasingly dirty or unkempt)
- a general distrust and avoidance of adults, especially those with whom a close relationship would be expected
- an unexpected reaction to normal physical contact
- difficulty in making friends or abnormal restrictions on socialising with others.

It is important to note that a child could be displaying some or all of these signs, or behaving in a way which is worrying, without this necessarily meaning that the child is being abused. Similarly, there may not be any signs, but you may just feel that something is wrong. If you have noticed a change in the child's behaviour, first talk to the parents or carers. It may be that something has happened, such as a bereavement, which has caused the child to be unhappy.

If you are concerned

If there are concerns about sexual abuse or violence in the home, talking to the parents or carers might put the child at greater risk. If you cannot talk to the parents/carers, consult your organisation's designated Welfare/Safeguarding Officer or the person in charge. It is this person's responsibility to make the decision to contact Children's Social Care Services or the Police. It is NOT their responsibility to decide if abuse is taking place, BUT it is their responsibility to act on your concerns.

RW 13/07/22