



Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy and Procedures

To be read and used in conjunction with the *Southend, Essex & Thurrock (SET) Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures (May 2022)*

InterAct Safeguarding Statement

InterAct is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of Children, Young People and Adults who use our services, and expects all staff, volunteers and partners to share this commitment. All post holders are subject to a satisfactory Disclosure and Barring Service disclosure at the appropriate level for their role.

Staff are also required to register with the DBS Update Service, to enable regular follow-up checks, and we request that volunteers do so.

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Scope: The policy and procedures apply throughout InterAct

"Everyone who works with children has a responsibility for keeping them safe. No single practitioner (*or individual*) can have a full picture of a child's needs and circumstances and, if children and families are to receive the right help at the right time, everyone who comes into contact with them has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action."

Working Together to Safeguard Children, HM Government, July 2018, page 10.

[**n.b.** the term child/children refers here to all young people under 18 years of age]

This policy applies to all staff, including senior managers and the board of trustees, paid staff, volunteers and sessional workers, agency staff, students or anyone working on behalf of InterAct.

This policy should be used in conjunction with current versions of:

The *Southend, Essex and Thurrock Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures* (usually known as the *SET Procedures*), downloadable from the Essex Safeguarding Children Board website: www.escb.co.uk

Department for Education statutory guidance *Keeping Children Safe in Education*:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

InterAct Safeguarding Contacts

InterAct Office (all staff)	01245 392053
Designated Lead – Safeguarding: Lesley Bailey	07908 616149
Deputy Leads: Susie Nankivell Vickie Perkins	07763 777211 07976 781054

Activity Leads/Co-ordinators will also provide volunteers, and families of the children & young people they support, with their mobile phone contact numbers.

The purpose of this policy:

- To protect children and young people who receive InterAct's services. This includes volunteers under 18 years old, & children of adults who use our services.
- To provide staff and volunteers with the overarching principles which guide our approach to safeguarding children and young people.
- To ensure that everyone working with InterAct, and anyone receiving support from us, is aware of the responsibilities they and others have - and knows what to do if harm or injury is suspected or is discovered.

InterAct believes that a child or young person should never experience abuse of any kind. We have a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children & young people and to keep them safe. We are committed to practice in a way that protects them.

We recognise that:

- The welfare of the child/young person is paramount.
- All children, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse.
- Working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.

Concept of Significant Harm: [see: *SET Procedures, May 2022, Part A, 1.2*]

Some children are in need because they are suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm. The Children Act 1989 introduced the concept of significant harm as the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of children, and gives local authorities a duty to make enquiries (Section 47) to decide whether they should take action to safeguard or promote the welfare of a child who is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm.

In addition, **harm is defined as the ill treatment or impairment of health and development.** This definition was clarified in section 120 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (implemented on 31 January 2005) so that **it may include "impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another"** for example, where there are concerns of domestic abuse.

Significant harm may be a single event, or a range of ill-treatment with a cumulative effect upon the child's physical and psychological development and wellbeing.

Significant harm may also refer to harm caused by one child to another and which is generally referred to as '**peer on peer abuse**'.

There are no absolute criteria on which to rely when judging what constitutes significant harm. Consideration of the severity of ill-treatment may include the degree and the extent of physical harm, the duration and frequency of abuse and neglect, the extent of premeditation, and the presence or degree of threat, coercion, sadism and bizarre or unusual elements.

Early Help:

[see: *SET Procedures, May 2022, Part A, 1.3*]

InterAct staff should be mindful that they, along with other professionals, have a role in identifying emerging problems affecting the children, young people & families they support, and a responsibility to share information with other professionals to support early identification and assessment.

By doing so, this will enable the provision of targeted early help services to address the assessed needs of a child/children and their family, which focuses on activity to significantly improve the outcomes for the child(ren).

It should also help to prevent issues from escalating and ensure that children and families receive the right help at the right time.

Further information and guidance about *Early Help and Effective Support for Children and Families*, and the thresholds for support, is available via the ESCB website: <https://www.escb.co.uk/2414>

Definitions/Descriptions/Types of Abuse [*SET Procedures, Part A, 1.4*]

Abuse is a form 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. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse.

Children may be abused by an adult or adults, or by another child or children - see also 'Risk from Outside of the Home/Contextual Safeguarding' [*SET Procedures, May 2022, Part A, 1.4.17*]

There are four main kinds of abuse, all of which can cause long term damage to a child.

The four main types of abuse are:

1. Physical abuse

This is when a child is hurt or injured by a child or an adult. Physical abuse includes hitting, kicking, punching and other ways of inflicting pain or injury such as poisoning, drowning or smothering. It also includes giving a child harmful drugs or alcohol.

2. Emotional abuse

This is when adults deny children love or affection, or constantly threaten or humiliate them. Sarcasm, degrading punishments and ignoring a child are also forms of emotional abuse and undermine a child's confidence and sense of self-worth.

3. Neglect

This is when a child's basic need for love, food, warmth, safety, education and medical attention is not met by parents or carers.

4. Sexual abuse

This is when a child is used sexually by one or more adults or young person(s). Sexual abuse can include kissing, touching the child's genitals or breasts, vaginal or anal intercourse and oral sex.

Sexual abuse may not involve physical contact. Sexual abuse also includes encouraging a child to look at pornographic magazines, videos or sexual material on the internet, and other forms of sexual activity online or via mobile phone, including sending or sharing sexual images of children, or encouraging children to share them – photos/videos, 'sexting'.

Bullying, racism and other types of discrimination are also forms of child abuse. Like other kinds of abuse they can harm a child physically and emotionally.

[Descriptions were originally adapted from Safe Network (NSPCC). Full descriptions and definitions are given in *Keeping Children Safe in Education*, DfE, 2023, pp.10-11: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>]

Other types, causes, and increased risk factors for harm/abuse

For **full descriptions** on types/sub-types of abuse/significant harm and how to recognise them, please also refer to Part A.1.4 (Definitions of child abuse and neglect) and Part B3 (Safeguarding Children Practice Guidance) in the current *SET Procedures*. **Potential concerns relating to any of the following issues should be discussed with InterAct's Safeguarding Lead, or with a Deputy Lead.**

Online harm and abuse [*SET Procedures*, Part B3, 25]

Information Communication Technology can be used to facilitate a wide range of abuse and exploitation. Online based forms of child physical, sexual and emotional abuse can include bullying via mobile telephones or online (internet) with verbal and visual messages.

In relation to online sexual abuse in particular, those working with children, adults and families should be alert to the possibility that:

- A child may already have been/is being, abused and the images distributed on the internet or by mobile telephone;
- An adult or older child may be grooming a child for sexual abuse, including for involvement in making abusive images. This process can involve the child being shown abusive images;
- An adult or older child may be viewing and downloading child sexual abuse images.

Those working with children and young people should be aware that, the child/young person may not want to acknowledge their involvement or admit its abusive nature, and may resist efforts to offer protection. This should not be a deterrent and agencies will need to work together closely in order to continue to monitor and assess the nature and degree of any risk to the child/young person.

e-Safety Policy: InterAct also has a separate *e-Safety Policy* to help protect the children and young people who use our services and who make use of information technology, and reduce the risk of online harm.

Exploitation of children and young people (Safeguarding children from exploitation and trafficking), including Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE), 'County Lines' [*SET Procedures*, Part B3, 24]

Children and young people may be abused and neglected by adults and other children for the purposes of exploitation and various forms of modern slavery. This includes 'county lines' (*see below) and through online technologies. Such abuse may also include trafficking children into, within, and out of the UK for the purposes of exploitation.

Exploitation includes sexual, physical, and emotional abuse and, in some cases, neglect, and covers a range of offences which will need differing responses from a range of agencies. Children and young people may be used for:

- sexual abuse
- domestic servitude
- labour exploitation - Nail bars, car washes, factories, etc.
- drug dealing - most often linked to 'county lines' (*see below)
- drug cultivation - most often linked to Vietnamese criminality
- credit card fraud, begging or pickpocketing
- benefit fraud
- drug mules or decoys for adult drug traffickers

- forced marriage
- trade in human organs; and in some cases ritual killings.
- radicalisation
- and other forms of slavery

Exploited children and young people should be treated as victims of abuse, not as offenders. They do not make informed choices to enter or remain in exploitative circumstances, but do so from coercion, enticement, manipulation or desperation.

They have been groomed and threatened and might not recognise that they are being exploited, so those who support them must not give up on them or their families. Both are in danger and need their help, support and protection - with a co-ordinated multi-agency response.

***County Lines** [*SET Procedures*, Part B3, 24.6.4]

'County lines' is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas within the UK, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of 'deal line'. They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store the drugs and money and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons. (Home Office, 2018)

Gang activity/serious youth violence [*SET Procedures*, Part B3, 28]

Young people are put at risk by gang activity, both through participation in and as victims of gang violence which can be in relation to their peers or to a gang-involved adult in their household or community. There may also be links between gangs and 'county lines'. Those affected by gang activity or serious youth violence may have suffered, or may be likely to suffer, significant harm through physical, sexual and emotional abuse or neglect.

There are also situations where a young person may be on the path to significant harm from serious youth violence and gangs but not yet reached that threshold. It is important to recognise this and utilise the services that are available for early intervention.

Knives and other weapons [*SET Procedures*, Part B3, 28.5]

Fear and a need for self-protection is a key motivation for children and young people to carry a weapon - it affords a feeling of power. Neighbourhoods with high levels of deprivation and social exclusion generally have the highest rates of gun and knife crime. Children and young people are more likely to carry knives, noxious substances and other weapons than guns.

Those working with children and young people who may have reason to be fearful in their neighbourhood or education setting should be alert to the possibility that a child or young person may carry a weapon.

Violent extremism, radicalisation and the PREVENT Duty

See *SET Procedures* Part B3: 28.10 & 28.11, & the SET PREVENT Policy & Guidance: <https://www.escb.co.uk/media/2151/set-prevent-policy-guidance-v7.pdf>

Please also refer to:

- Prevent Duty Statement: <http://www.interact.org.uk/about-us/safeguarding>
- The Counter-Terrorism Strategy (CONTEST) 2018. This supersedes the Prevent Strategy (2011): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/counter-terrorism-strategy-contest-2018>

Self-harming and Suicidal Behaviour

[*SET Procedures*, Part B3, 34]

Self-harm can be described as a wide range of behaviours that someone does to themselves in a deliberate and usually hidden way. In the vast majority of cases self-harm remains a secretive behaviour that can go on for a long time without being discovered.

Some people who self-harm are at high risk of ending their lives, either intentionally or unintentionally, although for many self-harm is a means of coping with the emotional distress.

Indicators that a child or young person may be at risk of taking actions to harm themselves or attempt suicide can cover a wide range of life events such as bereavement, bullying at school or a variety of forms of cyber bullying, often via mobile phones, homophobic bullying, mental health problems including eating disorders, family problems such as domestic abuse or any form of child abuse as well as conflict between the child and parents.

Any child or young person, who self-harms or expresses thoughts about this or about suicide, must be taken seriously, and appropriate help and intervention should be offered at the earliest point.

Children affected by domestic abuse & violence [*SET Procedures*, Part B3, 17]

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 defines domestic abuse as:

When both parties are aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and the behaviour is abusive, if it consists of any of the following:

- Physical or sexual abuse
- Violent or threatening behaviour
- Controlling or coercive behaviour
- Economic abuse
- Psychological, emotional or other abuse

and it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.

The issue of children living with domestic abuse and violence is now recognised as a matter for concern in its own right by both government and key children's services agencies. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 explicitly states that children are victims of domestic abuse if they see, hear or experience the effects of the abuse and the child is related to either the victim or the abuser.

All the outcomes for children can be adversely affected for a child living with domestic abuse - the impact is usually on every aspect of a child's life. The impact of domestic abuse on an individual child will vary according to the child's resilience and the strengths and weaknesses of their particular circumstances.

Unborn children may also be affected [*SET B3*, 17.4]

The three central imperatives of any intervention for children living with domestic abuse are:

- To protect the child/ren
- To support the carer (non-abusive partner) to protect themselves and their child/ren, and
- To hold the abusive partner accountable for their violence and provide them with opportunities to change.

Links between domestic abuse & violence, and forced marriage & 'honour-based' abuse/violence

[*SET Procedures* Part B3, 17.2.3, and *SET Procedures* Part B3, 39.1 & 39.2]

Children and young people can be subjected to domestic abuses perpetrated in order to force them into marriage or to 'punish' him/her for 'bringing dishonour on the family'.

Whilst honour-based violence can culminate in the death of the victim; this is not always the case. The child or young person may be subjected over a long period to a variety of different abusive and controlling behaviours ranging in severity. The abuse is often carried out by several members of a family including female relatives/ community members and may, therefore, increase the child's sense of powerlessness and be harder for professionals to identify and respond to.

Female genital mutilation (FGM) [*SET Procedures* Part B3, 39.3]

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines female genital mutilation (FGM) as: "all procedures (not operations) which involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or injury to the female genital organs whether for cultural or other non-therapeutic reasons" (WHO, 1996).

FGM has been a criminal offence in the UK since the Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act 1985 was passed. The Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 extended the prohibition making it also illegal to take a child abroad to undergo FGM, whether or not it is lawful in that country.

It is illegal to aid, abet, counsel or procure the carrying out of FGM. A child for whom FGM is planned is likely to suffer significant harm through physical abuse and emotional abuse, which is categorised by some also as sexual abuse.

Any information or concern that a child is at immediate risk of, or has undergone, female genital mutilation should result in a child protection referral to local authority children's social care.

Safeguarding children where there are specific or multiple issues relating to parents [see *SET Procedures* Part B3, 40]

Other underlying issues and problems in family lives may give rise to safeguarding and/or welfare concerns, which may require onward referral/reporting to ensure that appropriate multi-agency involvement is in place. Potential concerns relating to any of the following issues should be discussed in confidence with InterAct's Safeguarding Lead, or with a Deputy Lead.

Where parent(s) have enduring and/or severe problems, children in the household are more vulnerable to significant harm, through abuse and/or neglect. In some situations, the child/children may also not be well protected from physical and/or sexual abuse by others.

A. Parents who Misuse Substances [*SET Procedures* Part B3, 40.1]

Although there are some parents who are able to care for and safeguard their child/children despite their dependence on drugs or alcohol, parental substance misuse can cause significant harm to children at all stages of development, including harm to unborn children.

B. Parenting Capacity and Mental Illness [*SET Procedures* Part B3, 40.2]

Parental mental illness does not necessarily have an adverse impact on a child's developmental needs, but it is essential to always assess its implications for each

child in the family. Many children whose parents have mental ill health may be seen as children with additional needs requiring professional support, and in these circumstances the need for a common assessment should be considered.

C. Parenting capacity and learning disabilities [*SET Procedures* Part B3, 40.3]

Parental learning disabilities do not necessarily have an adverse impact on a child's developmental needs, but it is essential to always assess the implications for each child in the family. Learning disabled parents may need support to develop the understanding, resources, skills and experience to meet the needs of their children. Such support is particularly necessary where the parent/s experience the additional stressors of:

- Social exclusion;
- Having a disabled child
- Experiencing domestic abuse
- Having poor mental health
- Having substance misuse problems
- Having grown up in care

In most cases it is these additional stressors, when combined with a parent's learning disability, that are most likely to lead to concerns about the care their child/children may receive.

Further details about types of abuse/significant harm

These are part of the training provided to frontline staff, (beginning with ESCB Level 1 online training during induction), and volunteer induction training (safeguarding awareness training, developed from ESCB training materials).

If in doubt, staff or volunteers should contact the Designated Lead for Safeguarding, or Deputy.

InterAct's approach to safeguarding

InterAct seeks to keep children & young people safe from harm by:

- Valuing them, listening to and respecting them.
- Adopting safeguarding children practices through procedures and codes of conduct for staff and volunteers.
- Developing and implementing an effective e-safety policy and related procedures.
- Providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training.
- Recruiting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made.
- Sharing information about safeguarding children and good practice with children, parents, staff and volunteers
- Ensuring that safeguarding information is available for people that use services and family members, setting out what to do if they have a concern
- Sharing concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents and children appropriately.

InterAct's safeguarding priorities

InterAct exists to support and benefit disadvantaged people, including those with disabilities and additional needs. The very first priority of the organisation is to ensure that the young/vulnerable people who use our services are safe and well cared for – and that we fulfil our duty of care to **all** young people, both clients and volunteers.

- We will always seek to work in a positive partnership with parents/carers, staff, volunteers and all other interested parties in a way that ensures that this priority is maintained in accordance with statutory guidance and the Southend, Essex and Thurrock Child Protection Procedures, usually known as the '*SET Procedures*'.
- We will work to ensure that a safe and caring environment is provided and to ensure, so far as possible, that the young people are given the knowledge and skills with which to protect themselves, or obtain support and protection to safeguard their welfare.
- InterAct will appoint a 'Designated Manager for Safeguarding and Child Protection Matters' (referred to in this document as 'Designated Lead – Safeguarding')
- In addition to this Policy, and the procedures, guidelines and code of conduct within it, InterAct has specific 'Professional Boundaries and Relationships at Work' and 'Safer Recruitment' policies.

The Policy also includes a 'Code of Conduct', which aims to protect staff and volunteers from undue suspicion by ensuring good practice at all levels.

- *All staff and volunteers working for InterAct, who may have the possibility of unsupervised access to children, will be appropriately reference checked, and checked with the Disclosure and Barring Service.*

Safeguarding and safe practice with children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities [*SET Procedures* Part B3, 18]

InterAct works with children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and their families in many of its programmes and services. Evidence on the extent of abuse among disabled children suggests that disabled children are at increased risk of harm or abuse, and that the presence of multiple disabilities appears to increase the risk of both abuse and neglect.

Children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities are also known to be vulnerable to various forms of exploitation (see page 5), and as with many other young people, a common feature of child exploitation is that the child or young person does not recognise the coercive nature of the relationship and does not always see themselves as a victim.

Where there are concerns about the welfare of a disabled child or young person, they should be acted upon in the same way as with any other child. Knowledge and skills in safeguarding, and in working with children and young people with disability, have to be brought together to ensure that disabled children receive the same levels of protection from harm as other children.

Particular attention should be paid to promoting a high level of awareness of the risks of harm and high standards of practice, and strengthening the capacity of children and families to help themselves.

Measures should include:

- Making it common practice to help disabled children make their wishes and feelings known in respect of their care and treatment
- Making sure that all disabled children and young people know how to raise concerns, and giving them access to a range of adults with whom they can communicate. Those with communication impairments should have at all times a means of being heard
- An explicit commitment to, and understanding of disabled children's safety
- Close contact with families, and a culture of openness

- Guidelines and training for staff on good practice in working with children of the opposite sex; handling difficult behaviour; anti-bullying strategies; and sexuality and sexual behaviour among young people
- Guidelines and training for staff working with disabled children aged 16 and over to ensure that decisions about disabled children who lack capacity will be governed by the Mental Health Capacity Act once they reach the age of 16

For more detailed guidance, please refer to Part B3; Chapter 18 of the current *SET Procedures*, and to *Safeguarding Disabled Children, Practice Guidance*:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/190544/00374-2009DOM-EN.pdf

What to do: Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures

A: Accidental Injuries

Young people do have accidental injuries, so when you are working with a young person for InterAct, it is important for you to be extra careful and to help guard that young person against injury or harm.

Prevention is better than cure: awareness of potential risks and how to minimise them is vital. Our 'Health and Safety' policy gives more help in this area. Risk assessments should be completed and signed off prior to the activity, as appropriate.

What you should do if an injury or accident occurs:

- (i) If the parent/carer is present, call the injury/accident to their attention immediately.
- (ii) Where the parent/carer is not present, administer basic first-aid if necessary, and where the resources are to hand.
- (iii) Make a written note of the injury, preferably on an Accident and Incident Report form (or you may be asked to complete this later). You should do this even where there is no visible mark. If the young person bangs into something it can be some time before the bruise comes out. This should be submitted to the InterAct Lead Worker as soon as possible, *and stored securely*.
- (iv) Always advise parents/carers of any minor accident or injury immediately they return.
- (v) If the injury is not a simple graze, bump or bruise you must inform the parent/carers or the emergency contact person immediately.
- (vi) If you suspect additionally that urgent medical attention may be necessary, do obtain this by ringing the child's GP or emergency services. Wherever possible, parent/carers or the young person's emergency contact should be involved first, and any action taken should then be in consultation with them.

B: Existing or previous injuries

Any existing injury or hurt to a young person should be advised to you by parent/carers when you meet them. If you are looking after a child or young person and you notice an injury that you have not been told about you should:

- (i) If required, administer first-aid or obtain medical attention as above.
- (ii) Complete an Accident and Incident Report, and a Body Map (if appropriate) to show what and where the injury is. If you need help with this, or you are unsure, please discuss it with the InterAct Lead Worker.
- (iii) Advise the InterAct Lead Worker or Designated Lead - Safeguarding if the injury is serious, or if you are at all concerned.

C: Injuries you suspect may be non-accidental or a result of abuse

If you notice an injury which you think may be non-accidental, or if you are not happy with the explanation that you have been given about an injury, you should:

- (i) **Listen to the young person and make a written record** of what the young person has told you, and what you or others (e.g. parents) have asked or said. If possible, complete an Accident and Incident Report, and a Body Map, showing the site of the injury, with a diagram of its size, shape and colour (or you may be asked to do this later). *InterAct staff should store all written records securely.*
- (ii) **Avoid asking any leading questions** about any injury or abuse. It is not your role to investigate, and this may prejudice any subsequent investigation.
- (iii) **Contact the InterAct Lead Worker or Designated Lead - Safeguarding** as soon as possible. If no-one is available immediately, leave messages on their answerphones, outlining the concern, but avoiding confidential details where possible, and they will get back to you as soon as they can.

If you have concerns about the young person's immediate safety, you should notify the InterAct Lead Worker, Manager or Designated Lead – Safeguarding. They will then take appropriate action, which may necessitate contacting Social Care and/or the Police.

If InterAct staff are concerned that an injury is non-accidental, we are required to inform Social Care and the Police. The decision as to whether to involve Social Care and Police rests with the InterAct Lead Worker, and Designated Lead - Safeguarding. If they believe it necessary, they will ask, *the same day as they are made aware of such concerns*, for an investigation under local Child Protection Procedures.

Concerns about other forms of abuse, including emotional or sexual abuse

There are other forms of abuse which children all too often suffer and which can damage their lives enormously, and which may be hard to identify. These may include verbal bullying of a sustained or aggressive nature, neglect or chronic overprotection, and various forms of sexual abuse and/or exploitation. [Please refer back to 'Descriptions/types of abuse' on pages 4-8 of this Policy]

Abuse may occur face-to-face or online. All abuse can damage the child's development and emotional wellbeing. If you observe or suspect abuse of any kind, you should:

- (i) Make a confidential written note of why you are concerned, and of any other relevant information, as soon as possible, following the same procedures as for a non-accidental injury (see above).
- (ii) Contact the InterAct Lead Worker, or Designated Lead - Safeguarding as soon as possible, using the same procedures as for a non-accidental injury.

It is important to say again that InterAct seeks to support families caring for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. They often do this under enormous personal pressure. It is not our aim to be intrusive, nor is it our role actively to look to uncover situations of harm or abuse.

In the unlikely event that such a situation is suspected, you should ***not*** share your concerns about any possible non-accidental injury or abuse with the child's parent(s)/carer(s), or with anyone other than the InterAct Lead Worker, or Designated Lead - Safeguarding. To do so may complicate any investigation, or cause unnecessary distress.

If InterAct staff have concerns that a child may have suffered significant harm, or is at risk of this, we are required to inform Social Care.

The decision as to whether to involve Social Care will rest with the InterAct Lead Worker and Designated Lead - Safeguarding. If they believe it is necessary they will ask, *the same day as they are made aware of such concerns*, for an investigation under the local Child Protection Procedures.

Where concerns arise which may be linked to domestic abuse, it may also be appropriate for InterAct to make a referral to the MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference). Further information about the support & training available in relation to domestic abuse can be found on the Southend, Essex and Thurrock Domestic Abuse Partnership (SETDAB) website: <https://setdab.org/>

Confidentiality and Information Sharing

If a young person discloses any information to you relating to possible harm or abuse in any form, you should:

- (i) **Listen** carefully to what the young person tells you. **Tell** him/her that you must pass that information on to those responsible for Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures within InterAct, so that they can decide what further action is needed. That may then include a duty to inform Social Care and/or the Police.
- (ii) **Reassure** the young person that you will respond in a way which is intended to safeguard their welfare, and protect him/her and others from further harm.
- (iii) **Do not** share anything disclosed to you, or any other concerns about possible non-accidental injury or abuse, or any written records of this, with the child's parent(s)/carer(s), or with anyone other than the InterAct Lead Worker or the Designated Lead - Safeguarding. To do so may complicate any investigation, or cause unnecessary distress.
- (iv) **Where possible**, and if it is safe and appropriate to do so, offer to go back to the young person, preferably with the InterAct Lead Worker or Designated Lead - Safeguarding, to **let him/her know what action is being taken**.

InterAct staff should also ensure that:

- **They contact an appropriate Manager/Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible** to agree who will need to be made aware of the concern/incident which is being reported, and the timescales for doing so
- That any sensitive information sent electronically is **password protected**
- All written reports records are stored securely

Code of Conduct for staff and volunteers

You must:

- treat all children and young people with respect
- provide an example of good conduct you wish others to follow
- ensure that, whenever possible, there is more than one adult and/or peer volunteer present during activities with children and young people, or at least that you are within sight or hearing of others
- respect a young person's right to personal privacy/encourage young people and adults to feel comfortable and caring enough to point out attitudes or behaviour they do not like
- remember that someone else might misinterpret your actions, no matter how well-intentioned
- be aware that any physical contact with a child or young person may be misinterpreted
- recognise that special caution is required when you are discussing sensitive issues with children or young people
- operate within InterAct's principles, guidance and Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy and Procedures
- operate within InterAct's e-Safety Policy, always using ICT, the internet, mobile phones and other electronic communication devices appropriately
- challenge unacceptable behaviour and report all allegations/suspensions of abuse

You should also:

- give guidance and support to less experienced staff and volunteers.

Incidents that must be reported/recorded:

If any of the following occur you should report this immediately to another colleague and record the incident. You should also ensure the parents/carers of the child are informed:

- If you accidentally hurt a child or young person
- If he/she seems distressed in any manner
- If a child or young person appears to be sexually aroused by your actions
- If a child or young person misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done

You must not:

- have inappropriate physical, verbal, phone, text or online contact with children or young people
- allow yourself to be drawn into inappropriate attention-seeking behaviour
- make suggestive, inappropriate or derogatory remarks or gestures in front of children or young people, or their parents/carers
- jump to conclusions about others without checking facts
- show favouritism to any individual
- either exaggerate or trivialise child abuse issues⁽¹⁾
- rely on your good name or that of InterAct to protect you
- believe "it could never happen to me"
- take a chance when common sense, policy or practice suggests another more prudent approach.

⁽¹⁾*Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex* (ESCB, 2021) provides clear guidance on appropriate responses to concerns over the welfare of Children/Young People

InterAct Young People's Code of Conduct

InterAct has consulted with young people, to draw up a Code of Conduct for those who take part in InterAct activities, so that young people can also take responsibility themselves as participants in a range of positive experiences and opportunities, through which they can get out and about in the community, make friends, build skills, try new things and have fun in a safe and positive environment.

This can be downloaded from the InterAct website, along with this policy: <http://www.interact.org.uk/keeping-you-safe/codes-of-conduct-and-whistleblowing>

Whistleblowing

It is good practice and you have a duty of care to draw attention to bad/poor practice in the workplace. This includes practice which may be abusive and/or neglectful, including online. Staff or volunteers who work with children have individual responsibility to raise concerns with someone who has the responsibility to take action.

Any individual who has reasonable suspicions of bad/poor practice should initially take their concerns to their line manager. If they do not feel that this is the appropriate person, or they do not receive an adequate response to their concerns, they should approach the Designated Lead - Safeguarding, or the Chief Executive.

Sometimes it may be necessary to go outside the immediate work environment, or the immediate organisation. Essex Safeguarding Children Board supports those who raise concerns about practices which may be abusive to children. It is the responsibility of all organisations, including InterAct, to promote a culture which values good practice and encourages whistleblowing.

A whistleblower is a person who reveals information with the intention of calling attention to bad practice, which may include abuse or negligence, in the workplace. Staff who work with children have an individual responsibility to raise concerns about bad practice, and a right to know that they will be supported by their employer as they are acting in good faith.

Whistleblowing includes reporting other aspects of poor practice, and the procedures for doing so are explained in greater detail in the InterAct Whistleblowing Policy.

Review of Policy and Procedures

We are committed to reviewing our policy, procedures and good practice annually, or following any significant changes in local ESCB safeguarding procedures (*SET Procedures*), and/or statutory guidance.

The Policy, Procedures and Appendices will be updated and checked by the Designated Lead for Safeguarding, trained to ESCB Level 3, with reference to local and national guidance. These may also be subject to scrutiny ('Section 11 Audit') if required under ESCB procedures, using their Safeguarding Audit Tools, and/or the *NSPCC Standards for the Voluntary and Community Sector Self-Assessment Tool*.

Acknowledgements:

Some of the wording for this policy originated from: ***Example of a child protection policy - Adapted from Firstcheck, NSPCC 2006***. This was downloaded in April 2013, from the Safe Network website, which has since been closed down.

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Appendix A: Additional Information for Parents

This Appendix is for parents/carers of young people using our services.

What if you suspect an injury is not accidental or that your child has been harmed or abused in some way?

If, following an arrangement made through InterAct, your child has an injury that you think may not be accidental, or you are not happy with the explanation given, or should you suspect your child has been harmed or abused in some way:

- (i) Make a written note of why you are concerned and what your child said about the incident, and about any subsequent conversations with InterAct staff or volunteers on the matter. If you are unhappy or not satisfied with explanations or information given to you, you should also note the reasons why.
- (ii) Contact the InterAct office (01245-392053), or the Designated Safeguarding Lead or one of the Deputy Safeguarding Leads (see mobile numbers on page 2)
You can also contact the Children & Families Hub directly (0345 603 7627).

If you contact Social Care via the Children & Families Hub, they will decide whether to carry out an investigation under their Safeguarding/Child Protection Procedures. The form of this investigation will depend upon the seriousness and nature of the injury or concern. It is likely that it will include the appointment of a key worker by Social Care, who will have overall responsibility for co-ordinating the investigation.

If you contact InterAct, the InterAct Lead Worker, in consultation with the Designated Lead - Safeguarding, will contact Children's Social Care, who will then decide what further action is required.

What to do if you have a complaint or concern of any other kind relating to services or support provided by InterAct to young people, or any suggestions as to how InterAct might improve its services.

InterAct welcomes feedback and comments from our clients and their parents/carers, and we aim to ensure that any concerns or difficulties raised are resolved effectively.

Informal feedback and suggestions are welcome at all times - please speak or write to your usual contact at InterAct, or use one of the project feedback mechanisms.

If you have any concerns or comments about our services, which InterAct needs to address more formally, you should contact the InterAct Lead Worker, or the Designated Safeguarding Lead at the charity office (01245-392053) to discuss your concerns.

If there are concerns or difficulties which cannot be resolved quickly to the satisfaction of all those involved, the Comments, Compliments & Complaints Policy should then be followed. Copies of this policy are available from the charity office.

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Appendix B: InterAct response to allegations or concern against a staff member or volunteer

If InterAct has concerns or receives a complaint or allegation that a worker/volunteer has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child
- possibly committed a criminal offence against, or related to a child, or
- behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates s/he may be unsuitable to work with children

The Designated Lead - Safeguarding or another appropriate member of staff must **immediately** telephone the Essex Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) on 03330 139 797. The Essex LADO will advise InterAct on what action to take next. [In Southend or Thurrock, we will contact their Local Authority Designated Officer: Southend: (01702) 534539, Thurrock: (01375) 652535/652921]

If a concern is raised outside office hours, and a referral to Social Care is required, the Designated Lead - Safeguarding, or another appropriate member of staff, will contact Essex/Southend Social Care 0345 606 1212 (or Thurrock 01375-372468), and inform either the Children's Safeguarding Service or the Local Authority Designated Officer at the first available opportunity during working hours.

Should the child's parent(s)/carer(s) contact Social Care directly, they will make a decision as to whether or not to carry out an investigation under their Child Protection Procedures.

If it then proves necessary to suspend the staff member or volunteer from any further contact with clients or volunteers under the age of 18yrs, whilst any further action is taken, the CEO will implement this decision. The Senior Management Team will be advised, and the Chair of Trustees will be informed immediately such a decision is made. InterAct will offer support during this time, without prejudice to the investigation, to the volunteer or staff member.

After the investigation, the Designated Lead - Safeguarding and the CEO will meet with the staff member or volunteer concerned to clarify the outcome of the investigation and any recommendations made. A support person may attend with the staff member or volunteer concerned.

A report will then be prepared by the Project/Activity Co-ordinator, in consultation with the Designated Lead - Safeguarding. Part of that report will be a decision as to the staff member or volunteer's future with the organisation.

Should the person concerned be a member of permanent staff, that report will constitute a recommendation to the Senior Management Team in accordance with our discipline policy and procedures. They will then make the final decision in such a case. If the staff member or volunteer is unhappy with the decision reached by the organisation they may appeal using InterAct's Complaints and Grievance Procedures.

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Appendix C: Specific guidance relating to overnight activities

InterAct appreciates the value of overnight activities, particularly those at Outdoor Activity Centres, in supporting the personal and social development of young people.

However, staff should always consider the additional risks to young people during these activities, including their individual support needs and potential vulnerability, particularly overnight, and take appropriate actions to minimise such risks.

Before the activity:

- Full consent forms should be circulated to families and returned in sufficient time for individual needs and risks to be considered, and included on Risk Assessment.
- A site visit by staff should be undertaken if the site/centre has not been used by InterAct recently, or if key staff are unfamiliar with the site/centre.
- Information and Risk Assessments should be requested from the Activity Centre, so that any specific risks to participants can be considered in advance.
- Staffing levels should be agreed: paid staff, volunteers and individual PA (personal assistant) support for participants (including overnight arrangements). Consideration should be given to rest periods for staff/volunteers/PAs. Arrangements for a residential activity should, therefore, always take account of any pre-agreed rest periods and the needs of the staff/volunteers/PAs.
- Briefing session/information for participants and parents/carers to be held where appropriate, to enable any individual concerns to be raised and addressed.
- DBS disclosures for any individual PAs should be seen by project staff, where these have not been carried out by InterAct.
- Full Risk Assessment should be completed, covering group arrangements and individual needs/risks, medication requirements and storage, and any contingency plans, including reserve/replacement staff. This is to be read and checked by all staff involved, and signed off by a senior manager.

During the activity:

- Qualified activity instructors will be responsible for ensuring safety during planned activities, following their own procedures, but InterAct staff and volunteers have a key role in supporting them, particularly helping to ensure safe and appropriate behaviour by all participants, and responding to any individual needs which may arise within the group.
- At all times, InterAct staff and volunteers should work with Centre staff to ensure young people are ready, able and supported to participate in the programme as planned. InterAct staff and volunteers will also be responsible for support and supervision of young people during 'free time', including overnight.
- Where at all possible, young people should have privacy for changing, washing etc., although it is acknowledged individual PAs may need to give appropriate support for this or other personal care needs to the young person in their care.

Overnight arrangements:

- Adults should normally sleep in separate but adjacent sleeping quarters, unless other arrangements are required, as set out below.
- Separate sleeping areas should be provided for each gender.
- Attention needs to be given to adequate provision and facilities for young people, staff and volunteers of each gender, and different age groups of young people (where appropriate), and any specific individual needs.
- Attention needs to be given to safe access for the children/young people to adult leaders and to toilet facilities during the night.
- Where young person(s) are identified as being vulnerable overnight, for their own health and wellbeing, and/or because of the potential risk they may pose to others if unsupervised, it may be appropriate and necessary for a member of staff, a volunteer or PA to sleep in the same room. These arrangements should be discussed and agreed in advance with the parent(s)/carer(s) involved, and noted in the risk assessment. If such arrangements are needed due to unforeseen circumstances during the activity, parent(s)/carer(s) should be contacted and verbal consent obtained.

Accidents and Incidents during residential activities

- Any accidents and incidents occurring should be reported immediately to the InterAct Lead Worker for the activity, and to the Activity Centre if appropriate. A written Accident and Incident report should be completed as soon as possible, noting what happened, who was involved, the immediate response to this, and any further actions needed.
- If the accident or incident is more serious, and/or it impacts upon the safe and effective continuation of the activity, the InterAct Lead Worker should contact the Designated Lead - Safeguarding, or another Senior Manager, for further advice.
- In certain circumstances, e.g. following inappropriate or dangerous behaviour, young person(s) may be asked to leave the activity. The decision will rest with the Designated Lead - Safeguarding, or another Senior Manager, in consultation with the InterAct Lead Worker for the activity. Arrangements should be made to ensure that the young person(s) can return home safely.

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Appendix D: Sources of Further Information/Contact Details

Essex Safeguarding Children Board - website: www.escb.co.uk

Telephone: 0333 013 8936; Email: escb@essex.gov.uk

The ESCB website has a wide range of information relating to Safeguarding Children and Child Protection, and types of abuse/significant harm, particularly:

SET Child Protection Procedures should be downloaded from: www.escb.co.uk

**InterAct staff are advised to download and save the pdf of the current version of the SET Procedures onto their computer's 'desktop' screen, for reference at any time.*

Essex County Council Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults -

Making a referral/enquiry by telephone: 0345 603 7627

Where there are concerns about the *immediate* safety of a child/young person (in working hours): 0345 603 7627 and ask for the Priority Line

Out of hours: 5.30pm–8.45am Monday–Thursday; 4.30pm Friday – 8.45am Monday (inc. Bank Holidays), Tel: 0345 606 1212, (and/or Essex Police: 999 or 112)

[All contact details, referral forms etc. are on the ESCB website: www.escb.co.uk]

Full details of how to report concerns about a child, or to request other forms of support for a child (or their family) at an appropriate level, can be found at <https://www.essex.gov.uk/report-a-concern-about-a-child>. There is also a Directory of other agencies and services across Essex who offer targeted support to children and their families. Those services can be accessed directly by families and involved professionals.

SET PREVENT Policy and Guidance:

<https://www.escb.co.uk/media/2151/set-prevent-policy-guidance-v7.pdf>

Working Together to Safeguard Children, HM Government, July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/779401/Working_Together_to_Safeguard-Children.pdf

Keeping Children Safe in Education, Department for Education, 2023:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

Statutory guidance for schools and colleges (including sub-contractors)

InterAct Policies and Guidelines:

Safeguarding Adults; Confidentiality/Information Sharing; Data Protection; e-Safety; Social Media; Handheld Devices Policy; Safer Recruitment; Professional Boundaries and Relationships at Work; Driving at Work; Comments, Compliments & Complaints; Disciplinary; Equality & Diversity; Employment of Ex-offenders; Prevent Duty Statement; Behaviour Policy; Young People's Code of Conduct; Personal Care Policy; Uncollected Child; Whistleblowing; WhatsApp Guidance; Zoom Guidance Notes.

This policy, and those underlined above are downloadable from:

<http://www.interact.org.uk/keeping-you-safe/key-policies>