

# Education Authority

## Safeguarding Children Guidance

### For Schools & EOTAS Centres

### During COVID-19 Arrangements



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## BACKGROUND

On 27 March 2020, Mr Peter Weir, Minister for Education, issued correspondence indicating that Safeguarding and Child Protection Regulations as outlined in DE Circular 2017/04 remain applicable to education services during Covid-19 arrangements. The purpose of this document, written by the Education Authority (EA) Child Protection Support Service (CPSS), is to summarise safeguarding arrangements for education staff during Covid-19 arrangements as requested by the Minister. Guidance in this document adheres to the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland policy and procedures. The CPSS remains available to support education staff during Covid-19 and can be contacted by **CPSS Helpline Number: 028 95985590** or by email on:

CPSSAntrim@eani.org.uk

CPSSBelfast@eani.org.uk

CPSSArmagh@eani.org.uk

CPSSDundonald@eani.org.uk

CPSSOmagh@eani.org.uk

The current national health concerns relating to Covid-19 creates uncertainty in the lives of children and young people<sup>1</sup>. Daily routines, family life, friendship groups and the safe space that schools and EOTAS settings provide have been disrupted. For many children, the need to spend most of their day at home will bring an additional challenge, and for some this will be an additional safeguarding risk factor. It is important that the adults responsible for safeguarding children are sensitive to their physical, social and emotional needs in these most unusual circumstances. It is critically important that children who are or may be in distress are identified so that a proportionate, compassionate and sensitive response can be taken.

Effective safeguarding practice will:

- **PROMOTE** the welfare of the child and young person<sup>2</sup>;
- **PREVENT** harm occurring through early identification of risk and appropriate, timely intervention; and
- **PROTECT** children from harm when this is required.

The DE Circular 2017/04 should be made readily available to all staff and volunteers who are providing support to the children of Covid-19 key workers and vulnerable children. A copy of the circular is available at:

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/education/safeguarding-and-child-protection-in-schools-guide-pdf-for-website-%28september-2019%29.pdf>

## DEFINITIONS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Those working in the education sector are professionally and legally required to respond to child abuse and neglect. All staff and volunteers should have an understanding of the categories of abuse and neglect, including signs and indicators, so that they can recognise and respond to the safeguarding needs of children and young people (see Appendix 1).

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<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this document the term child includes child and young person.

<sup>2</sup> For the purpose of this document the term child includes child and young person.

## SAFEGUARDING RESPONSIBILITIES

School Principals, Leaders in Charge, Senior Teachers and others in positions of responsibility must ensure that appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place to safeguard children at all times.

They must also ensure that staff including volunteers are supported to respond quickly to requests for help from parents and all safeguarding concerns.

All staff, including those who do not normally work in the Covid-19 school, Cluster or EOTAS Centre should become familiar with child protection arrangements.

A Designated Teacher/Deputy Designated Teacher should be appointed to support staff and volunteers working in each Covid-19 school or Cluster.

Those involved in safeguarding practice and decision making must adhere to the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland policy, procedures and guidance found at:

<https://www.proceduresonline.com/sbni/>.

## KEY SAFEGUARDING PRINCIPLES

Safeguarding and child protection principles remain relevant and should underpin decision making, policy and interventions:

- **Paramountcy:** the child's welfare is of paramount importance;
- **Participation:** the voice of the child is heard and their views given serious consideration;
- **Parental Responsibility:** parents are supported and empowered to exercise their parental responsibilities in a manner that respects their right to family life;
- **Partnership:** the most effective way to safeguard and protect children is through working in partnership with families, other disciplines, services and agencies;
- **Prevention:** children and families should be supported early through help and support interventions that prevent problems occurring or worsening;
- **Protection:** all children should be protected from harm and this should include multi-agency safeguarding measures as necessary;
- **Proportionate:** responses to concerns should be proportionate to the circumstances;
- **Privacy:** children and families have a right to privacy and confidentiality, therefore, their personal information must only be shared with those who need to know in order to safeguard and protect the child;
- **Informed decision making:** decisions and actions taken must be considered, well informed and based on outcomes that are sensitive to, and take account of, the child or young person's specific circumstances, risks to which they are exposed, and their assessed needs and evidence of what works;
- **Accountability:** safeguarding processes and decisions must be open and transparent and adhere to legislation and guidance including those on professional records keeping.

## RESPONDING TO PARENTAL CONCERNS

As a trusted member of staff or volunteer within a Covid-19 school or Cluster, parents may ask you for advice and help when they have concerns about their child's wellbeing or safety. Asking for help is a protective factor and so parental concerns and requests for help should always be taken seriously.

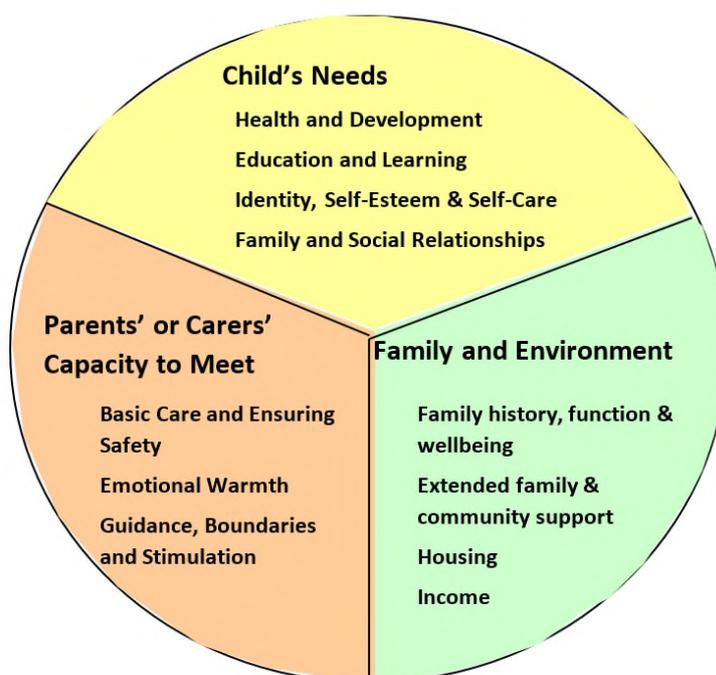
Staff should listen carefully to parental concerns and ensure that the request for help is brought to the attention of a teacher or school leader so that a decision can be made as to how best to provide help. Supports available from family members and local statutory, voluntary and community services should be considered and information provided to the parent where possible.

## RESPONDING TO SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS

As a member of staff and volunteers in a Covid-19 school or Cluster, you may become concerned that a child is at risk of harm and needs to be safeguarded. You might notice something about the child's appearance, behaviour or something that the child has said. A child may disclose his/her experience of child abuse or mental health worries. You may notice that a parent is finding it very difficult to cope, perhaps given the additional pressures and uncertainty as a result of Covid-19.

Think carefully about:

- 1 The child's needs;
- 2 The Parent's ability to meet the child's needs;
- 3 The child's family circumstances<sup>3</sup>.



<sup>3</sup> <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/thresholds-need-model>

## TALKING TO CHILDREN ABOUT CONCERNS

When engaging with a child about concerns, staff and volunteers should adhere to the '5 R's':

- RECEIVE:** Listen actively, open body language, accept, non-judgemental - (Tell me; Explain to me; Describe to me);
- REASSURE:** "You've done the right thing by coming to me". Reassure the child that you have listened and hear what has been said but don't promise what cannot be delivered;
- RESPOND:** Tell the child what you are going to do and do it, making sure the child is safe before leaving;
- REPORT:** As soon as possible, report any concerns to the Leader in Charge;
- RECORD:** As soon as possible, record facts (When? Where? Who? What?).

All safeguarding concerns must be brought to the attention of a teacher or school leader so that a decision can be made as to how best to address the concern.

If a child is thought to be 'in need', a teacher, principal or school/cluster leader should share their concerns with the child's parents as soon as possible. The family should be offered help and support from statutory, voluntary or community based services. If it is thought necessary to involve social services, a 'child in need' UNOCINI referral should be made to HSCT Social Services Gateway Team, with parental consent.

## MAKING A REFERRAL TO SOCIAL SERVICES

HSCT Social Services and PSNI are responsible for the investigation of child protection concerns. Responsibility for referrals to Social Services Gateway Teams, when abuse or neglect is suspected, lies with the Principal or Leader in Charge, who should be supported by a Designated or Deputy Designated Teacher. If a child is thought to be 'at risk of significant harm' and in need of protection, a referral must be made to the relevant Health & Social Care Trusts (HSCTs) Social Services Gateway Teams, preferably with parental consent (see Appendix 3). Contact should also be made with the local Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust:

### Gateway Teams Monday: Friday 9 am – 5 pm

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust	02890 507000
South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust	03001000300
Northern Health and Social Care Trust	03001234333
Southern Health and Social Care Trust	08007837745
Western Health and Social Care Trust	02871314090

**Out of Hours Regional Emergency Social Work Service** – 02895 049999

Telephone referrals must be followed up with a completed UNOCINI referral within 24 hours.

If staff or volunteers are worried about the safety or welfare of a child, it is important that this is reported. Even if there is uncertainty, it is always best to make the referral so that social services and the police can investigate concerns about a child's safety.

If a child is known to social services and has a social worker, contact should be made with the social worker to discuss the concern and agree further action if required to safeguard and protect the child.

If it is believed that a child or young person is at immediate risk, this should be reported without delay to the police service as a 999 emergency.

## UNOCINI

UNOCINI (Understanding the Needs of Children in NI) is the safeguarding framework for use by all professionals and agencies involved in safeguarding and protecting children. Application of the UNOCINI framework enables multi-disciplinary teams and agencies to communicate using a shared format, language and understanding.

The UNOCINI framework includes 'thresholds of need' so that professionals can develop a shared understanding of safeguarding risks and take appropriate actions to avoid escalation of children's needs through early and effective interventions.

A UNOCINI referral form must be completed whenever staff wish to refer a child or young person to HSCT Social Services Gateway Teams for support, safeguarding or a fuller assessment of a child's needs.

Further detailed guidance on UNOCINI is available at the DoH website at: [www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/understanding-needs-children-northern-irelandunocini-guidance](http://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/understanding-needs-children-northern-irelandunocini-guidance) .

**Consent:** Prior to making a UNOCINI referral to Social Services the consent of the parent/carers and/or the young person (if they are competent to give this) will normally be sought. The exception to this is where to seek such consent would put that child, young person, or others at increased risk of significant harm or an adult at risk of serious harm, or it would undermine the prevention, detection or prosecution of a serious crime including where seeking consent might lead to interference with any potential investigation. In instances where consent is sought but refused, a referral should be made and a record maintained of the reasons for that decision and the actions taken.

## CONCERNS ABOUT STAFF OR VOLUNTEERS

All safeguarding allegations or concerns that staff or volunteers pose a risk to children must be reported immediately to the Leader in Charge and to the Designated Teacher or Deputy Designated Teacher. A Principal, Leader in Charge or designated senior member of staff should be identified to manage the allegation from the outset. The Designated Teacher should provide advice and ensure that advice is sought from CPSS.

If the Principal or Leader in Charge is the subject of a safeguarding concern, this should be reported immediately to the EA/CCMS/ETI/CSSC Link Person connected to the Covid-19 School or Cluster. This Link Person will be the Lead Individual if the concern relates to the Leader in Charge. The host school principal should also be informed. The issue should be dealt with as an immediate priority and unnecessary delays should be avoided.

Every effort should be made to maintain confidentiality and guard against unwanted publicity. Allegations should not be shared with other staff, families or children unless this has been agreed as part of a multi-agency child protection response.

All allegations in relation to staff should be discussed with CPSS and a senior member of the relevant Human Resources team.

## RECORD KEEPING

All members of staff and volunteers must complete a Note of Concern regarding all safeguarding concerns (see Appendix 5). This should be completed as soon as possible on the day that the concern has been raised, signed and dated by the person completing it, and countersigned by the Leader in Charge.

If the concern relates to the Leader in Charge then the EA/CCMS/ETI and CSSC Link to the C-19 Cluster should countersign the note of concern.

All notes of concern and any written correspondence relating to child protection and safeguarding must be held securely in line with 2016/20 guidance. All notes of concern and copies of UNOCINI referrals will be held by the Covid -19 school or Cluster.

**As part of Covid-19 arrangements, copies of the Note of Concern and UNOCINI (if relevant) should be sent by the Leader in Charge to the Designated Teacher of the school that the child is registered to attend and to EA CPSS.**

**CPSS Telephone Helpline Number: 028 95985590**

## APPENDIX 1: DEFINITIONS OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

**PHYSICAL ABUSE** is deliberately physically hurting a child. It might take a variety of different forms, including hitting, biting, pinching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating a child.

**EMOTIONAL ABUSE** is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child. It is also sometimes called psychological abuse and it can have severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's emotional development.

Emotional abuse may involve deliberately telling a child that they are worthless, or unloved and inadequate. It may include not giving a child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them, or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. Emotional abuse may involve bullying – including online bullying through social networks, online games or mobile phones – by a child's peers.

The following issues may indicate safeguarding concerns:

- Substance Misuse
- Self-Harm
- Suicidal Thoughts
- Eating Disorders
- Body Image
- Attachment Disorder

**SEXUAL ABUSE** occurs when others use and exploit children sexually for their own gratification or gain or the gratification of others. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape, or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside clothing. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via e-technology). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

**NEGLECT** is the failure to provide for a child's basic needs, whether it be adequate food, clothing, hygiene, supervision or shelter that is likely to result in the serious impairment of a child's health or development. Children who are neglected often also suffer from other types of abuse.

**EXPLOITATION** is the intentional ill-treatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over a child or young person; to take selfish or unfair advantage of a child or young person or situation, for personal gain. It may manifest itself in many forms such as child labour, slavery, servitude, engaging in criminal activity, begging, benefit or other financial fraud or child trafficking. It extends to the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation can be sexual in nature.

**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 (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or

wants, and/ or (b) 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 does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology

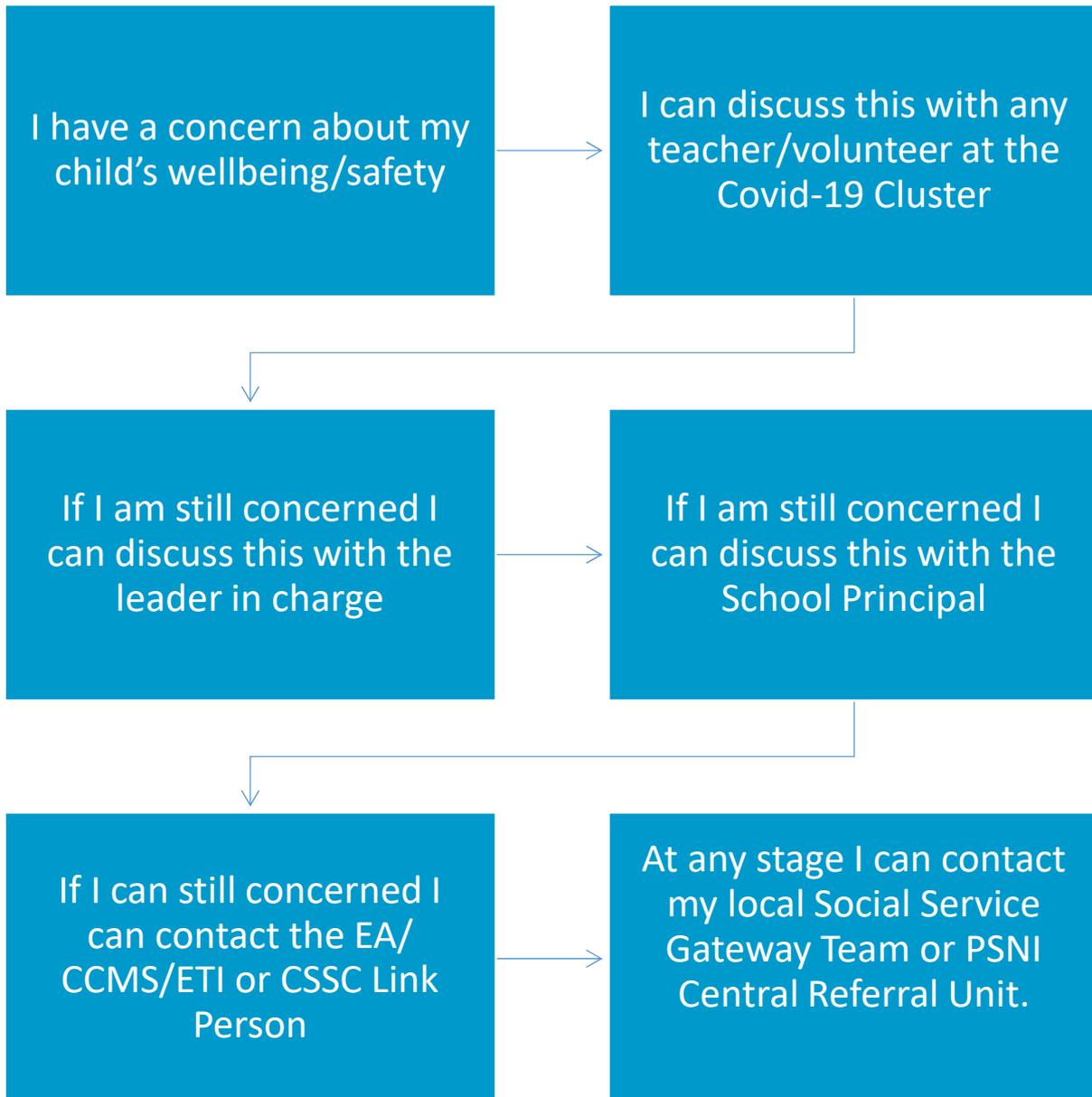
*(Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in NI. Department of Health version 2.0 2017)*

#### **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE IS:**

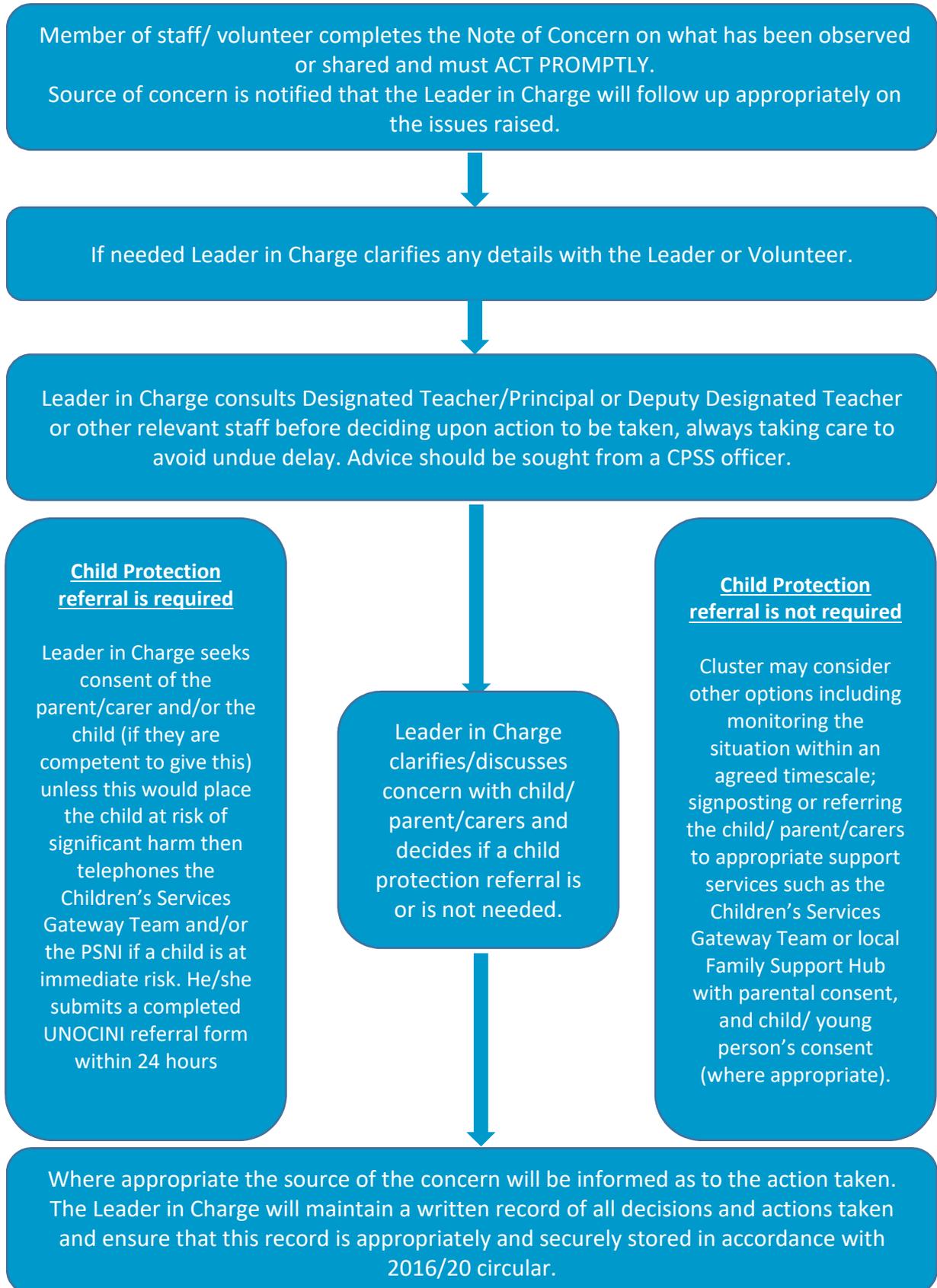
‘Threatening, controlling, coercive behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, virtual, physical, verbal, sexual, financial or emotional) inflicted on anyone (irrespective of age, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation or any form of disability) by a current or former intimate partner or family member.’

**(DOH/DOJ “Stopping domestic and sexual violence and abuse in NI” A 7 year strategy, March 2016)**

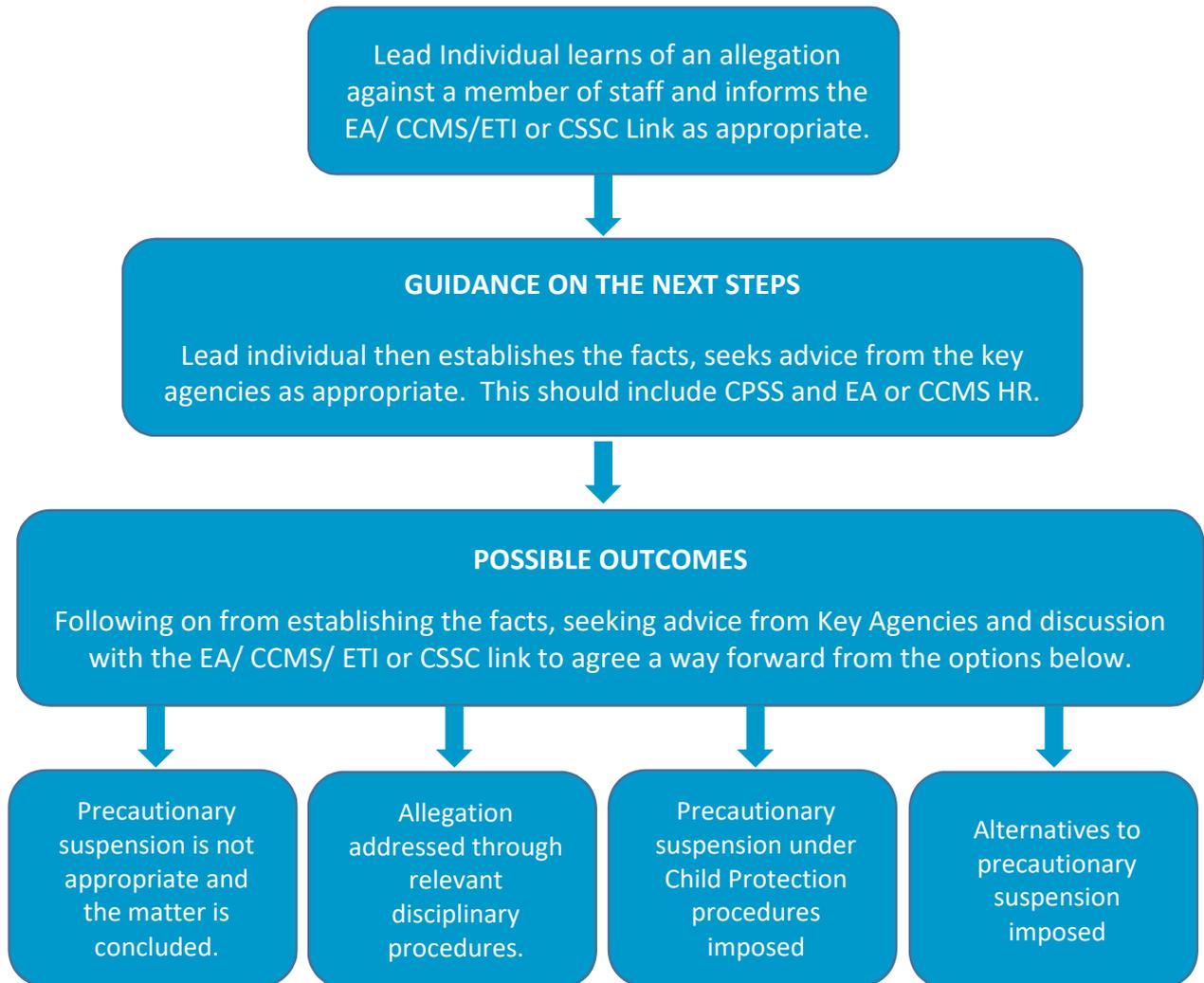
FLOW CHART FOR PARENT – I HAVE CONCERN ABOUT MY CHILD



### APPENDIX 3: FLOWCHART FOR STAFF WHEN SAFEGUARING CONCERNS ABOUT A CHILD HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED



**APPENDIX 4: FLOWCHART WHEN DEALING WITH ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE AGAINST A MEMBER OF STAFF/VOLUNTEER IN COVID-19 CLUSTER**



**CONFIDENTIAL**

**NOTE OF CONCERN**

**CHILD PROTECTION RECORD - REPORTS TO LEADER IN CHARGE**

Name of Child or Young Person:	
DOB and Year Group:	
Date, Time of Incident/Disclosure:	
Circumstances of Incident/Disclosure:	
Nature and Description of Concern:	

Parties involved, including any witnesses to an event and what was said or done and by whom:

Action taken at the time:

Details of any advice sought, from whom and when:

Any further action taken:

Date and time of report to the Leader in Charge:

NAME	SIGNATURE	DATE
Name of Staff Member making the report:		
Name of Leader in Charge:		

Follow up by Leader in Charge: Include contact with other professionals including EA Services, Social Services, PSNI and if appropriate parents.

Written note from staff member placed on pupil's child protection file:  
If 'No' state reason: Yes  No

Written note received by school child or young person is registered to attend and copied to CPSS:  
If 'No' state reason: Yes  No

**TELEPHONE AND WEB SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN**

<b>WHO CAN HELP?</b>	<b>WHAT DO THEY DO?</b>	<b>WHAT TOPICS CAN THEY HELP WITH?</b>	<b>HOW CAN THEY BE CONTACTED?</b>
<b>Anna Freud</b>	Supporting children's mental health during periods of disruption	Anxiety Mental Health	<a href="http://www.annafreud.org">www.annafreud.org</a>
<b>Lifeline</b>	Crisis response line for people in distress	Depression Mental health Textphone users (for deaf and hard of hearing):	0808 800 8000  18001 0808 808 8000
<b>Childline</b>	Childline provides support and guidance on multiple topics including:	Bullying You and your body Home and Family Relationships School	0800 1111  <a href="http://www.childline.org.uk">www.childline.org.uk</a> 1-2-1 counsellor chat
<b>NSPCC</b>	Advice on safeguarding and child protection issues and somewhere to report concerns Web support	Safeguarding Child abuse Child protection	0808 800 5000  <a href="http://www.there4me.com">www.there4me.com</a>
<b>The HideOut</b>	Web space to help children and young people understand domestic abuse and how to take positive action of it's happening to you	Domestic Violence	<a href="http://www.thehideout.org.uk">www.thehideout.org.uk</a>
<b>Family Support NI</b>	Website to access support in your area – for a wide range of issues – giving local contact details		<a href="http://www.familysupportni.gov.uk">www.familysupportni.gov.uk</a>

**TELEPHONE AND WEB SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

<b>WHO CAN HELP?</b>	<b>WHAT DO THEY DO?</b>	<b>WHAT TOPICS CAN THEY HELP WITH?</b>	<b>HOW CAN THEY BE CONTACTED?</b>
<b>Anna Freud National Centre</b>	Supporting young people's mental health during periods of disruption	Anxiety Mental health	<a href="http://www.annafreud.org">www.annafreud.org</a>
<b>Lifeline</b>	Crisis response line for people in distress or despair	Depression Mental health Suicidal thoughts Textphone users (for deaf and hard of hearing):	0808 808 8000  18001 0808 808 8000
<b>Childline</b>	Childline provides support and guidance on multiple topics including:	Bullying You and your body Home and Family Relationships Sex School	0800 1111  <a href="http://www.childline.org.uk">www.childline.org.uk</a> 1-2-1 counsellor chat
<b>The MIX</b>	Crisis messenger text service	Alcohol Homelessness Suicidal thoughts General advice Mental health Sex/ relationships	0808 808 4994
<b>NSPCC</b>	Advice on safeguarding and child protection issues and somewhere to report concerns Web support for teenagers	Safeguarding Child abuse Child protection	0808 800 5000  <a href="http://www.there4me.com">www.there4me.com</a>
<b>Aware</b>	Aware is a mental health charity working exclusively for those with depression and mental health concerns	Depression Bipolar disorder	02890 357 820
<b>Frank</b>	Confidential advice on drugs	Alcohol Drugs	0300 123 6600

<b>SIMON Community</b>	Support for individuals and families who are at risk of becoming homeless	Homelessness Housing	0800 171 2222
<b>Informing Choices NI</b>	Advice on sexual health	Sexual health Pregnancy Contraception STDs Access to family planning	0345 122 8687  Monday - Friday 9-5
<b>Common Youth Clinics</b>	Clinics, advice & guidance on sexual health	Emergency contraception Pregnancy testing Counselling	02890 328 866
<b>Domestic and Sexual Violence Helpline</b>	Advice for anyone affected by domestic and sexual violence	Domestic violence Sexual violence	0808 802 1414
<b>The Migrant Centre NI</b>	Financial Health and Well being		euss@migrantcentreni.org
<b>Cara-Friend/ LGBT Switchboard NI</b>	Support and counselling for the Gay, Lesbian and Transgender communities	LGBTQ+ advice Sex and relationship advice	0808 8000 390
<b>Women's Aid</b>	Specialist services for women, children and young people who have experienced domestic and sexual violence.	Domestic Violence Sexual violence Relationships	0808 802 1414
<b>Family Support NI</b>	Website to access support in your area – for a wide range of issues – giving local contact details		<a href="http://www.familysupportni.gov.uk">www.familysupportni.gov.uk</a>
<b>Young Minds</b>			<a href="https://youngminds.org.uk">https://youngminds.org.uk</a>



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