**Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy September 2024-25**

**Prepared by Dan Shoebridge**

**Review date: September 2024**

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**Signed:**

**Next review date: September 2025**

This Policy has been updated and reviewed in accordance with the requirements of:

* Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024
* Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership-policies and procedures manual

MASH Contact details for concerns about a child:

* phone 0300 555 1384 during office hours 8.30am to 5pm Monday to Thursday, 8.30am to 4.30pm on Friday
* phone 0300 555 1373 at all other times to contact the Out of Hours service

**Purpose**

The intention of this policy is to outline how safeguarding and child protection concerns, referrals and monitoring will be handled sensitively, professionally and in ways which support the needs of the child.

Q.U.E.S.T Work Skills recognises that whilst safeguarding measures relate to all pupils, child protection duties refers to those pupils identified as suffering or being at risk of suffering harm. ‘Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined for the purposes of this guidance as: protecting children from maltreatment; preventing impairment of children’s health or development; ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes.’ (‘Keeping Children Safe in Education’ September 2024).

**Introduction**

Q.U.E.S.T Work Skills takes seriously its responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of children and young people in its care. “The welfare of the child is paramount” (Children Act 1989).

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a statutory responsibility on the governing body to have policies and procedures in place that safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are pupils of the school (Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education DfES2006 issued

November 2006 came into force 1st January 2007 and there is updated guidance in Part 2 of

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018).

There are four main elements to our safeguarding and child protection policy;

* Safer Recruitment processes are followed to ensure that those who are unsuitable to work with children are not employed.
* Prevention through the creation of a positive, safe atmosphere and the teaching, and support offered to young people so that they can manage risks
* Protection by following agreed procedures, ensuring staff are trained and supported to respond appropriately, in a timely manner and sensitively to child protection concerns, including those concerning pupils vulnerable to extremist views and peer on peer abuse (including bullying and coercion – emotional and physical – which could have a sexuality and gender focus and is dealt with through behaviour procedures). Early intervention is key here.
* Support to pupils who may have been abused, including peer on peer abuse.

**Q.U.E.S.T Work Skills Assurance**

We recognise that for the young people we are commissioned to work with, high self-esteem, confidence, supportive friends and clear lines of communication with a trusted adult helps to prevent abuse and extremism. Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility; therefore, everyone who comes into contact with children and their families and carers has a role to play in safeguarding children. The children involved in these sessions may not be working with any other professionals, therefore it is particularly important that staff who work with these children are in a position to identify concerns early and provide help for children.

In order to fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities, sessions will make sure that our approach is child-centred and is in the best interests of the young person. Everyone who comes into contact with children has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action.

Q.U.E.S.T Work Skills will therefore:

* Establish and maintain an environment where pupils feel safe and secure and are encouraged to talk, and are listened to.
* Where appropriate, ensure all staff are aware of signs of abuse, categories of abuse and have an understanding that safeguarding issues are often complex and overlapping. All staff recognise that abuse can be in the form of peer on peer abuse.
* Ensure that pupils know that there are adults within the sessions with us who they can approach if they are worried or are in difficulty, as well as organisations outside school from whom they can seek help.
* Ensure that wherever possible every effort will be made to establish effective working relationships with parents and colleagues from partner agencies.

**Framework**

Safeguarding and child protection are the responsibilities of all adults and supporting good practice is the responsibility of Pan-Dorset Safeguarding Children Partnership. This policy is in line with guidance from the following:

* The Children Act 1989 & Section 11 of the Children’s Act 2004
* The Education Act 2002 (Section 175)
* Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024)
* PDSCP Policies and Procedures Manual (2024)

**Roles and Responsibilities**

All adults working with or on behalf of children have a responsibility to protect them. Mr D Shoebridge is the designated safeguarding lead and will therefore assume responsibility for all liaising with MASH, the school where the pupil is on role and parents/carers.

All safeguarding matters will be stored electronically on the session reports which will support the gathering of information to support the childs needs. If considered appropriate D Shoebridge will seek guidance from ChAD whose contact details are shown at the beginning of this policy.

When additional adults are employed, Q.U.E.S.T Work Skills will be responsible for ensuring that the safer recruitment processes and vetting process, enhanced Disclosure and Barring Scheme (DBS), and other statutory lists and local intelligence checks will be sought on all staff that have substantial and unsupervised access to children.

Staff also have the responsibility to ensure that any technology required either before, during or after the session to communicate with the child or parent is done so in confidential manner. This includes:

* Use of IT and mobile phones: Staff should not use their personal numbers of email address to communicate with parents/carers and the young person. All IT devices used during the session should be available for anyone to use at any time.
* Taking, storing and destructing photographs and videos of children: staff should not use personal devices to store images of the children they are working with, even if it is for the purposes of the vocational courses they are undertaking. The young people under taking vocational qualifications will require photographic evidence of the work they have completed and so will be in photos. For the external provider, these photos must be kept for 12 months, after which time they will be securely destructed.
* Social Media: Under no circumstances should a member of staff post a picture of the child they are working with on their personal social media account.

**Definitions**

It is essential that any staff working with young people through Q.U.E.S.T Work Skills are alert to potential indicators of abuse or neglect. These are defined as:

**Abuse**: 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 (e.g. via the internet). They may be abused by an adult or adults or by another child or children.

**Physical abuse**: a form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

**Emotional abuse**: the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child’s emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or ‘making fun’ of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child’s developmental capability as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone.

**Sexual abuse**: involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities 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 of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children. The sexual abuse of children by other children is a specific safeguarding issue in education.

**Neglect**: 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 occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to: provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment); protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child’s basic emotional needs.

**Extra Familial Harm (EFH):** Extra-familial abuse is linked to ‘contextual safeguarding’ or ‘complex safeguarding’. These concepts refer to harm that occurs to children outside of their family system, often during the adolescent years because at this age their social networks widen. These networks can have a significant influence over an adolescent’s understanding of social norms. A large proportion of child exploitation takes place in public spaces (parks, stairwells, high streets etc.) so it is these locations that often require a professional response to safeguard young people from exploitation rather than solely focusing on the child and their family.

Parents should be partners in safeguarding children and young people from child exploitation. Parents can often feel like secondary victims to exploitation as they try to safeguard their children and young people from extra-familial harm. Child exploitation can adversely affect parent-child relationships and parents may feel under scrutiny by professionals.

Children experiencing exploitation and trauma may direct physical aggression towards their parents and siblings, creating further strain in family relationships. Parents/carers can also feel a sense of guilt and shame that their child has been exploited, they may also feel physically threatened by perpetrators and concerned about their family’s safety.

Q.U.E.S.T Work Skills will establish a regular dialogue with parents, social workers, case officers and other professionals to ensure that there is transparent approach that will ensure the young person has access to the most appropriate support in relation to their needs.

**Categories of Abuse:**

In conjunction with the PDSCP procedures, Q.U.E.S.T Work Skills will ensure that children are safeguarded appropriately within the following categories:

**Missing Children**

As designated safeguarding lead, My D Shoebridge will make enquiries into the circumstances surrounding a child who is missing from a session. This will be made initially with the child’s home and if appropriate, the child’s school.

If this is not possible, or the child is missing, Mr D Shoebridge will assess the child's vulnerability.

From the first day that a child does not attend a session and there is no explanation or authorisation of the absence, the following steps should be taken:

Mr D Shoebridge will make contact with the parents/carers (person with parental responsibility for the child) to seek reassurance that the child is safe at home;

The outcome of the contact will be assessed and if there are any concerns a report will be made to ChAD. This will be viewed alongside the following factors:

The child may be the victim of a crime;

* The child is subject of a Child Protection plan;
* The child is looked after;
* There is a known person posing a risk to children in the household or in contact with the household;
* There is a history of the family moving frequently;
* There are serious issues of attendance.

**Child Sexual Exploitation**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities 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 of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

The following list provide indicators that a child may be sexually exploited. This information will be provided to any adult working with young people through Q.U.E.S.T Work Skills:

* Unexplained money or gifts;
* Going missing (for short or long periods), or during the course of the school day;
* Being distressed or withdrawn on return;
* Disengaging from existing social networks;
* Secrecy around new associations;
* Additional mobile phones or concerning use of technology;
* Sexual health problems/ unplanned pregnancies;
* Disclosure of rape/sexual assault (and reluctance to report);
* Changes in temperament/emotional wellbeing;
* Drug or alcohol misuse;
* Involvement in criminal activity;
* Secretive behaviour;
* Unexplained physical injuries.

A referral to ChAD will be made if the adults working with young people decide that a minimum threshold of factors has been met.

**Peer on Peer Abuse**

"Peer-on-peer abuse is any form of physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse, and coercive control exercised between children, and within children's relationships (both intimate and non-intimate), friendships, and wider peer associations.

Peer-on-peer abuse can take various forms, including (but not limited to): serious bullying (including cyber- bullying), relationship abuse, domestic abuse, child sexual exploitation, youth and serious youth violence, harmful sexual behaviour and/or prejudice-based violence including, but not limited to, gender-based violence.

Online peer-on-peer abuse is any form of peer-on-peer abuse with a digital element, for example, sexting, online abuse, coercion and exploitation, peer-on-peer grooming, threatening language delivered via online means, the distribution of sexualised content, and harassment."

(Peer on Peer Abuse Toolkit - Farrer & Co).

It is important to consider the context in which any peer-on-peer abuse is taking place, as this will inform the best to approach working with and supporting the child. You may need to refer to guidance on other forms of abuse such as domestic abuse, harmful sexual behaviour, involvement in gangs and criminal exploitation.

Young people undertaking sessions through Q.U.E.S.T Work Skills will be working in small groups with a maximum size of 1:2. Peer on peer abuse during a session will therefore be very easy to identify and will be dealt with through mentoring the individuals involved. A zero tolerance approach will be taken in relation to any form of sexual violence or sexual harassment. (KCSiE point 446)

Where the act is repetitive, or taking place away from the session, the childs parents/carers will be informed.

If the severity of the abuse is high, police and/or ChAD will also be notified.

**Bullying**

Bullying can be categorised into three main areas:

* Physical - for example, hitting, kicking, shoving, theft;
* Verbal - for example, threats, name calling, racist, sexual or homophobic remarks;
* Emotional - for example, isolating an individual from activities/games and the social acceptance of their peer group.

The following indicators could suggest that a child is being bullied:

* Being frightened of walking to and from school and changing their usual route;
* Feeling ill in the mornings;
* Beginning truanting;
* Beginning to perform poorly in their school work;
* Coming home regularly with clothes or books destroyed;
* Becoming withdrawn, starting to stammer, lacking confidence, being distressed and anxious and stopping eating;
* Attempting or threatening suicide;
* Crying themselves to sleep, having nightmares;
* Having their possessions go missing;
* Asking for money or starting to steal (to pay the bully) or continually 'losing' their pocket money;
* Refusing to talk about what's wrong;
* Having unexplained bruises, cuts, scratches;
* Beginning to bully other children/siblings;
* Becoming aggressive and unreasonable

Any incidents of bullying will be swiftly addressed and children will be made aware that bullying is not acceptable and that some acts of bulling could be a criminal offence.

**Self-harm and suicidal behaviour**

Definitions from the Mental Health Foundation (2003) are:

* Deliberate self-harm is self-harm without suicidal intent, resulting in non-fatal injury;
* Attempted suicide is self-harm with intent to take life, resulting in non-fatal injury;
* Suicide is self-harm, resulting in death.

Indicators that would suggest that a child may be self-harming are:

* Cutting behaviours;
* Other forms of self-harm, such as burning, scalding, banging, hair pulling;
* Self-poisoning;
* Not looking after their needs properly emotionally or physically;
* Direct injury such as scratching, cutting, burning, hitting yourself, swallowing or putting things inside;
* Staying in an abusive relationship;
* Taking risks too easily;
* Eating distress (anorexia and bulimia);
* Addiction for example, to alcohol or drugs;
* Low self-esteem and expressions of hopelessness.

Where it is deemed appropriate to explore the concerns further with a child, then the member of staff will use the following questions with the child for scaffolding:

* If they have taken any substances or injured themselves;
* Find out what is troubling them;
* Explore how imminent or likely self-harm might be;
* Find out what help or support the child or young person would wish to have;
* Find out who else may be aware of their feelings.

ChAD and parents/carers will be informed at all stages of this concern.

**Abuse through Digital Media**

Where there is suspected or actual evidence of anyone accessing or creating indecent images of children, this will be shared with the Police and Children's social care in line with the Referrals Procedure.

Due to the nature of this type of abuse and the possibility of the destruction of evidence, Q.U.E.S.T Work Skills will discuss their concerns with the Police and Children's Social Care before raising the matter with the family. This will enable a joint decision to be made about informing the family and ensuring that any child's welfare is safeguarded.

**Violent Extremism**

In the first instance, this will be referred to ChAd for advice on how to proceed and if parents should be informed. However suspected online terrorist material can be reported through [www.gov.uk/report-terrorism](http://www.gov.uk/report-terrorism).

Reports can be made anonymously, although practitioners should not do so as they must follow the procedures for professionals. Content of concern can also be reported directly to social media platforms.

**Gang Activity, Youth Violence and Criminal Exploitation affecting Children**

It can be common for groups of children and young people to gather together in public places to socialise, and although some peer group gatherings can lead to increased antisocial behaviour and low level youth offending, these activities should not be confused with the serious violence of a street gang.

The following guidelines are therefore aimed at identifying a young person who may be involved in a street gang.

The following indicators may suggest that a child is involved in some form of gang activity:

* Child withdrawn from family;
* Sudden loss of interest in school or change in behaviour. Decline in attendance or academic achievement (although it should be noted that some gang members will maintain a good attendance record to avoid coming to notice);
* Being emotionally 'switched off', but also containing frustration / rage;
* Starting to use new or unknown slang words;
* Holding unexplained money or possessions;
* Staying out unusually late without reason, or breaking parental rules consistently;
* Sudden change in appearance – dressing in a particular style or 'uniform' similar to that of other young people they hang around with, including a particular colour;
* Dropping out of positive activities;
* New nickname;
* Unexplained physical injuries, and/or refusal to seek / receive medical treatment for injuries;
* Graffiti style 'tags' on possessions, school books, walls;
* Constantly talking about another young person who seems to have a lot of influence over them;
* Breaking off with old friends and hanging around with one group of people;
* Associating with known or suspected gang members, closeness to siblings or adults in the family who are gang members;
* Starting to adopt certain codes of group behaviour e.g. ways of talking and hand signs;
* Going missing;
* Being found by Police in towns and cities many miles from their home;
* Expressing aggressive or intimidating views towards other groups of young people, some of whom may have been friends in the past;
* Being scared when entering certain areas; and
* Concerned by the presence of unknown youths in their neighbourhoods.

All staff working through Q.U.E.S.T Work Skills will be made aware if these indicators, to be able to offer appropriate support.

Children's Social Care or the police for the area in which the child is currently located woill be contacted. An Early Help Assessment may be crucial in the early identification of children and young people who need additional support due to risk of involvement in gang activity.

**Harmful Sexual Behaviour**

In conjunction with child sexual exploitation, peer on peer abuse, bullying and abuse through digital media. If a child makes a disclosure is to a member of staff at Q.U.E.S.T Work Skills, Mr D Shoebridge should undertake and record an initial risk assessment and consider three factors:

* The victim, especially their protection and support;
* The alleged perpetrator; and
* The risk to any other children (and, if appropriate, adults).

Concerns about the behaviour and the welfare and safety of the child/ren should be discussed with Children's Social Care which may require a referral and further assessment

Children's Social Care will undertake an assessment and there will be an interagency strategy meeting if the concerns are that a child has suffered, or a child or children is likely to suffer, significant harm.

**Child Criminal Exploitation**

This category should be viewed alongside ‘Child Sexual Exploitation’ above but also includes children who are at risk of becoming involved in County Lines.

The following indicators may suggest that a child is being exploited:

* Persistently going missing from school or home and / or being found out-of-area;
* Unexplained acquisition of money, clothes, or mobile phones;
* Excessive receipt of texts / phone calls and/or having multiple handsets;
* Relationships with controlling / older individuals or groups;
* Leaving home / care without explanation;
* Suspicion of physical assault / unexplained injuries;
* Parental concerns;
* Carrying weapons;
* Significant decline in school results / performance;
* Gang association or isolation from peers or social networks;
* Self-harm or significant changes in emotional well-being.

If there are concerns about a child being exploited Mr D Shoebridge will be responsible for communicating with ChAD, Police and parents/carers as appropriate.

**Zero-tolerance approach to incidents of women and violence**

Q.U.E.S.T Work Skills will ensure that all incidents of sexual harassment and/or violence are met with a suitable response, and never ignored.

Young people are encouraged to report anything that makes them uncomfortable, no matter how ‘small’ they feel it might be.

The provisions response will be:

* + - Proportionate
		- Considered
		- Supportive
		- Decided on a case-by-case basis

Sanctions for sexual harassment and violence will depend on the level of seriousness of the incident.

The provision has procedures in place to respond to any allegations or concerns regarding a child’s safety or well-being. These include clear processes for:

* Responding to a report
* Carrying out risk assessments, where appropriate, to help determine whether to:
	+ Manage the incident internally
	+ Refer to early help
	+ Refer to children’s social care
	+ Report to the police

 **Managing a Disclosure-Hearing and Observing a child:**

If a child discloses directly to a member of staff, the following procedures will be followed:

• Listen carefully to what is said;

• Ask only open questions such as:

• 'Tell me what happened.'

• 'Please explain what you mean when you say …..'

• 'Can you describe the person?' or 'Can you describe the place?'

• Do not ask questions which may be considered to suggest what might have happened, or who has perpetrated the abuse, e.g. ‘Did your Dad hit you?’

• Do not force the child to repeat what he/she said in front of another person;

• Do not begin an investigation – for example by asking the child to record what happened in writing or taking a photograph of any injuries;

• Report immediately to the DSL and complete a hand-written record as soon after the disclosure as possible and in any case **within 24 hours**, using the child's words as far as possible. Use body maps to record any observed injuries.

• A referral to social care to discuss or refer, will be made by usually the DSL or a deputy unless in exceptional circumstances this can be any member of staff

• A template for recording a disclosure is emailed to all staff at the start of the academic year and new staff joining upon arrival during the year. Hard copies are available in the staff room.

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**Records and Monitoring**

Well-kept records are essential to good child protection practice. Q.U.E.S.T Work Skills is clear about the need to record any concern held about a child or children within our sessions, the status of such records and when these records should be passed over to other agencies. In the event of a safeguarding concern, Mr D Shoebridge will highlight this on the daily session reports. All safeguarding concerns will be emailed to the referring school to allow them to maintain their own chronologies. Refer to roles and responsibilities for further guidance.

**Parental Consultation**

Good communication with parents/ carers is crucial in order to safeguard and promote the welfare of children effectively. Q.U.E.S.T Work Skills will always undertake appropriate discussion with parents/ carers prior to involvement of another agency **unless to do so would place the child or an adult at further risk of harm or would impede a criminal investigation** **such as where sexual abuse, domestic abuse or induced illness has taken place.**

Where appropriate, Q.U.E.S.T Work Skills will support parents/ carers to have an understanding of the responsibilities placed on staff to safeguard children and their duty to co-operate with other agencies in this respect.

When a referral is deemed to be necessary in the interests of the child, and the parents have been consulted and are not in agreement, the following action should be taken:

• The reason for proceeding without parental agreement must be recorded;

• The parent's withholding of permission must form part of the verbal and written referral to LA children's social care;

• The parent should be contacted to inform them that, after considering their wishes, a referral has been made.

**Supporting Pupils at Risk**

Q.U.E.S.T Work Skills recognises that children who are abused or who witness violence may find it difficult to develop a sense of self-worth or view the world as a positive place.

These sessions may be the only stable, secure and predictable element in the lives of children at risk.

Nevertheless, whilst undertaking these sessions, their behaviour may still be challenging and defiant or they may be withdrawn. Q.U.E.S.T Work Skills will endeavour to support pupils through:

* Practical sessions to encourage self-esteem and self-motivation.
* Promoting a positive, supportive and secure environment in which there are approachable adults and which gives all pupils and adults a sense of being respected and valued.
* Recognition that in a home environment where there is domestic violence, drug or alcohol abuse.

**Appendix One:**

