## Child Protection Flowchart: what to do if you suspect a child is being abused:

If you believe the child is in immediate danger, **CALL THE POLICE ON 999,** otherwise:

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Listen to the child. Make notes recording what they tell you or what you notice that is concerning. (refer to the section: Responding to Abuse or Disclosures by Children)

↓

Explain that you will pass this information on to someone who will help and try to obtain their consent for this. Even if you can't get their consent - still follow the steps below:

↓

Ring or speak directly to Lyndsey Middleton, Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) for Northern Heartlands CIO immediately on 07948 349369 or (01833) 200220 to report your concerns.

↓

If you can't get hold of Lyndsey, speak directly to Katy Milne, Creative Director and Safeguarding Deputy, on 07951 939830 or (01833) 200220 to report your concerns.

↓

If you can't get hold of either Katy or Lyndsey, contact Durham County Council's First Contact team on **03000 267979. Y**ou will speak to an officer who can provide appropriate advice and guidance, and who will work with you to decide the level of response needed.

↓

Email your written notes and concerns as soon as possible (always within 24 hours) to Info@northernheartlands.org, with the email title 'Safeguarding Concerns'.

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Once you have received confirmation that your written record has been received, delete the record from your files and emails. The DSO will make sure the record is stored securely.

↓

If your concern is about the Designated Safeguarding Officer or Deputy you should report immediately to the Trustee Safeguarding Lead Ben Tinkler or Chair of Trustees Graham Young.

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Details of the allegation, disclosure or suspicion will be passed on to the team in the local authority where the project took place within 24 hours.

# Northern Heartlands

# Safeguarding Children's Policy & Procedures

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# Safeguarding Children - Policy

## 1. Policy Statement

This policy sets out Northern Heartlands CIO's commitment to safeguarding and child protection. The Charity is committed to the protection of children from all forms of harm and abuse. This policy applies to all staff, freelancers, trustees, volunteers, students, or anyone else working on behalf of the Charity that comes into contact with children and young people through the work of Northern Heartlands.

The Charity will meet the commitment to keeping children safe by:

- Recognising that all staff and volunteers who come into contact with children through the work of Northern Heartlands, have a commitment to keeping children safe.
- Recognising that all children regardless of race, gender, religious belief, disability, age, sexual orientation, or identity have a right to equal protection from harm; and that some children are more vulnerable to harm because of their circumstances, prior experiences, communication needs or level of dependency.
- listening to children and respecting them.
- appointing a nominated child protection lead and a member of the trustee board who takes lead responsibility for safeguarding at the highest level in the organisation.
- writing detailed safeguarding and child protection procedures.
- making sure all staff and volunteers understand and follow the safeguarding and child protection procedures and understand their role with regard to safeguarding children.

This safeguarding policy aligns with the following policies and resources of the Charity:

- Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Safe Recruitment Policy
- Social Media Policy
- Trustee Code of Conduct

## 2. Policy Guidance and Review

**This policy was last updated in: October 2026.**
This policy will be reviewed and updated annually by the Charity's staff and trustees, and has been drawn up in accordance with all relevant and applicable legislation and guidance available to the Charity including the following:

- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- General Data Protection Regulation
- Data Protection Act 2018

- Working together to safeguard children - GOV.UK
- Safeguarding children and child protection | NSPCC Learning

## 3. Definitions

For the purpose of this policy and accompanying procedures we have set out the following definitions:

**Safeguarding** is the action you take to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm. Safeguarding means:

- protecting children from abuse and maltreatment
- preventing harm to children's health and development
- providing support to meet children's needs when problems emerge
- ensuring children grow up with safe and effective care, within their family where possible
- taking action to make sure that all babies, children and young people have the best outcomes.

**Child protection** is part of the safeguarding process. It focuses on protecting individual children identified as suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm. This includes child protection procedures detailing how to respond to concerns about a child.

**Children** or **Child** refers to anyone under the age of 18 years old.

**Staff and Volunteers** refers to all staff, freelancers, trustees, volunteers, students, or anyone else working on behalf of the Charity.

## 4. Organisational Safeguarding Roles and Contact Information

The staff and trustees within the organisation that take a lead on Safeguarding are as follows:

1) Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) – Lyndsey Middleton, Creative Communities Coordinator
    a) E: Lyndsey.middleton@northernheartlands.org
    b) M: 07948 349369
    c) T: 01833 200220
2) Safeguarding Deputy – Katy Milne, Senior Manager
    a) E: katy.milne@northernheartlands.org
    b) M: 07951 939830
    c) T: 01833 200220
3) Trustee Safeguarding Lead – Ben Tinkler
    a) E: ben@bridgecreative.org

The NSPCC Helpline can also offer general advice and guidance on safeguarding concerns in the workplace, from child protection specialists, available between 10am and 4pm Monday to Friday:
Phone number: 0808 800 5000
Email: help@nspcc.org.uk

# Safeguarding Procedures for Responding to Abuse or Neglect

**This document provides clear guidance and procedures that all staff and volunteers working on behalf of Northern Heartlands CIO will follow, to keep children safe and respond to concerns about a child. These procedures align with the Charity's commitment to safeguarding and child protection, as set out in its Safeguarding Policy.**

**If you suspect a child is being abused or receive a disclosure from a child, follow our Child Protection Flowchart on page one of this document.**

## 1) Types of Abuse or Neglect

Any child can experience abuse or neglect. They may experience harm in a family environment, or in an institution or community setting such as a school or sports club. They may know the person who is abusing them or, more rarely, experience abuse from a stranger. Abuse can happen in person or online, or through a combination of the two. Children can also experience more than one type of abuse, and this can have serious and long-lasting impacts on their lives.

It's important to understand the **types of abuse or neglect** in order to recognise and respond to it. Please see **Appendix A** for a list of types of abuse or neglect, and additional information regarding **Private Fostering** arrangements**.**

## 2) Recognising Abuse or Neglect – What to look out for

It can be very hard for children and young people to speak out about abuse. Often they fear that there may be negative consequences if they tell anyone what's happening to them. It's vital that children and young people are able to speak out, and that whoever they tell takes them seriously and acts on what they've been told.

If a child does not tell someone verbally about what's happened to them, there may be other indicators that something is wrong. People who work with children need to be able to recognise the signs and know how to respond appropriately. The signs of child abuse aren't always obvious.

Some **common signs** that there may be something concerning happening in a child's life include:

- unexplained changes in behaviour or personality
- becoming withdrawn
- seeming anxious
- becoming uncharacteristically aggressive
- lacks social skills and has few friends, if any
- poor bond or relationship with a parent
- knowledge of adult issues inappropriate for their age
- running away or going missing
- always choosing to wear clothes which cover their body

These signs don't necessarily mean that a child is being abused, there could be other things happening in their life which are affecting their behaviour. You may also notice some concerning behaviour from adults who have children in their care, which makes you concerned for the child/children's safety and wellbeing.

## 3) Responding to Abuse or Disclosures by Children

**Disclosure is the process by which children and young people start to share their experiences of abuse with others.** Children may disclose directly or indirectly and sometimes they may start sharing details of abuse before they are ready to put their thoughts and feelings in order. Not all disclosures will lead to a formal report of abuse, but all disclosures should be taken seriously. It takes extraordinary courage for a child to go through the journey of disclosing abuse.

It's vital that anyone who works with children and young people is able to provide them with the support they need.

**Children and young people may disclose abuse in a variety of ways, including:**

- **Directly** – making specific verbal statements about what's happened to them
- **Indirectly** – making ambiguous verbal statements which suggest something is wrong
- **Behaviourally** – displaying behaviour that signals something is wrong (this may or may not be deliberate)
- **Non-verbally** – writing letters, drawing pictures or trying to communicate in other ways.

Children and young people may not always be aware that they are disclosing abuse through their actions and behaviour.

### Tips for handling and responding to a Disclosure:

**Show you care, help them open up:**

- Give your full attention to the child.
- Try and ensure the child has a safe space to speak, out of earshot but ideally still in visual contact with the rest of the group or responsible adults in the room.
- Keep your body language open and encouraging.
- Be compassionate, be understanding and reassure them their feelings are important.

**Take your time, slow down:**

- Respect pauses and don't interrupt the child – let them go at their own pace.
- Recognise and respond to their body language.
- Remember that it may take several conversations for them to share what's happened to them.

**Show you understand, reflect back:**

- Make it clear you're interested in what the child is telling you.
- Reflect back what they've said to check your understanding – and **use their language** to show it's their experience.
- Reassure them that they've done the right thing in speaking to you.
- Never promise a child that you will keep the things they're telling you a secret.
- Explain to them that you will need to share this information with someone who can help them. Ask for their consent to do this (if you feel they are old enough to understand this)
- Never talk about what a child has shared with the person the child shared concerns about. This could make things a lot worse for the child.

**Make detailed notes:**

- Keep accurate and detailed notes. Write down the child's exact words.
- Write down the child's name, if available, so the child can be identified.
- These notes will form the basis of what you share with the nominated safeguarding lead for the Charity.

## 4) The Importance of Sharing Information

As a staff member or volunteer who works with children and young people, sometimes it can be difficult to understand when to share information. Staff may be worried that by sharing information they may get an innocent parent or carer into trouble. They might also think that their concerns might be not serious enough to report. It's important to remember the following principles when considering sharing any concerns you may have:

- **Follow your gut instincts**. If you have a concern, or something doesn't seem right, share your concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- **When sharing information you should be as factual as possible**. If you need to give your own or somebody else's opinion make sure it is clearly differentiated from fact.
- Information about a child's welfare helps professionals build a clearer picture of the child's life and gain a better understanding of any risks the child is facing.
- **Information sharing helps to ensure that an individual receives the right services at the right time** and prevents a need from becoming more acute and difficult to meet.

### Safeguarding concerns shared via Digital Channels

Social media and digital platforms may be used by individuals to disclose safeguarding concerns, intentionally or inadvertently. Where a safeguarding concern is identified:

- The content should not be ignored or deleted;
- A factual record should be retained;
- The matter must be escalated immediately in line with Northern Heartlands safeguarding procedures.

Staff and freelance suppliers are not expected to investigate safeguarding concerns themselves but must ensure they are passed promptly to the appropriate lead.

Staff and freelance suppliers must not delete, overwrite, or otherwise interfere with official social media content, comments, messages, or moderation records where they may be relevant to an ongoing safeguarding concern.

# Safeguarding Procedures to Keep Children, Staff and Volunteers Safe at Events and Activities

Staff and volunteers at Northern Heartlands CIO will come into contact with children and young people at its planned events and activities, as participants, as audience members, through work experience, volunteering opportunities and through other services. This may include regular contact with children over a number of sessions or events, or short term contact at a drop-in style activity.

When planning events and activities that involve children and young people, Northern Heartlands staff and volunteers will always:

- **Work together to fully risk assess the activities** involved to ensure the highest standards of safety for all children and young people
- **Share risk assessments and plans with event partners** to keep children safe, and ensure that risk assessments are updated throughout the lifetime of a project, as and when new risks arise
- **Ensure vigilance in looking out for, responding to and reporting concerns** about a child

## 5) Staff to Child Ratios

All staff and volunteers must ensure they follow the best practice guidance offered by the NSPCC on minimum ratios of adults to children, as follows:

  - 0 - 2 years - one adult to three children
  - 2 - 3 years - one adult to four children
  - 4 - 8 years - one adult to six children
  - 9 - 12 years - one adult to eight children
  - 13 - 16 years - one adult to ten children

In additional to this, when working with children and young people, Northern Heartlands recommends that there are always two designated staff members in the room at any time. (This may include staff or volunteers from a partner organisation, such as a school or youth group). This ensures that if an emergency situation arises, one member of staff can deal with the emergency, while the other can ensure safe supervision of the children. It's also helpful to have a second person to support young people to take part, and take note of any issues arising, particularly if the other person is focussed on delivery.

If working with children and young people who have special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) or additional needs, this may require more supervision than the minimum ratios above. Northern Heartlands will carry out a risk assessment to help decide on supervision ratios. This should take account of children and young people's behaviour, ability and mobility. As far as possible, include input from children and young people and their parents and carers in risk assessments to ensure children's needs are met.

## 6) Lone working with young people

If situations do arise where staff or volunteers are left alone with children it's helpful to ensure that:

- Another member of staff is aware you are working alone with children, and is ideally nearby and within earshot of the activity

- Staff and volunteers are ideally not left in a 1:1 situation with children, unless by doing so it prioritises the safety of a young person (for example, staying with a child at the end of a session who hasn't been collected by a parent/carer).

## 7) Disclosure and Barring Service Checks

When working with children and young people, it is important to ensure the staff and volunteers have the correct level of DBS check in place. The required level of check will reflect the degree and frequency of unsupervised access with children as part of planned activities and events, and this will be considered as part of the risk assessment. When adults are working unsupervised with children, it is standard practice to require those adults to have undertaken an Enhanced Level DBS.
Northern Heartlands will accept DBS' Certificates as proof of DBS that are dated within 3 years, or that can be accessed as part of the DBS Update Service here: DBS Update Service - GOV.UK

Staff and volunteers that do not have a DBS check, may still work with children and young people within activities, however this should be considered as part of the risk assessment and there should be another staff member present who does have the required level of DBS check, ensure the staff member without a DBS is not left alone with children and young people.

Staff and volunteers that have a DBS check in place that does show a previous conviction, may still work with children and young people within activities, however this should also be considered as part of the risk assessment process.

Northern Heartlands accepts DBS checks that are dated within 3 years, or that are provided via the Update Service.

## 8) Consent for activities

Northern Heartlands will ensure that consent is sought for activities that young people take part in, and that clear, detailed information about activities is communicated to parents/carers or those acting on their behalf, such as youth workers or teachers, in order for children to take part. Written consent will usually be requested, however, verbal and behavioural consent will also be accepted, for example, if a parent and child attend a drop in activity.

## 9) Participant Data/Information

When Northern Heartlands is arranging activity for children without a parent/carer or partner organisation present acting 'in loco parentis', we will require detailed information about each child taking part, ideally provided in advance, in order to keep the child safe. This will include full contact details, contact details of a parent/carer, and at least one emergency contact number. We will also require health and medical information about the child or young person, to ensure we have the details we need if a medical emergency arises.

If a young person arrives unaccompanied by a parent/carer to an event or activity, without prior consent or this contact information, then it's important for the staff member in charge to seek this information at the earliest opportunity, and consider whether it's appropriate and safe for the young person to stay at the activity and take part. It's equally important to consider if turning the child away puts them more at risk than if the young person stays. This should all be considered as part of the risk assessment process.

All information held on file will be held in line with Northern Heartlands' Data Protection Policy, and all staff handling this information should work together to ensure it's safekeeping.

## 10) Photo/Filming Consent

It's important to understand that some children and young people cannot appear in published photos or films due to safety reasons. It's therefore extremely important that permissions for children to be filmed or photographed, should be sought from parents/carers prior to young people taking part in Northern Heartlands activities. Northern Heartlands should also provide information to parents/carers about where photos and films may be used and published, so that parents can make an information decision about whether consent is right for them and their child.

Northern Heartlands will always seek consent for children to be included in photos and filming direct from parents/carers unless in the following situations:

- Where Northern Heartlands is working directly with a partner organisation, who is able to provide photo and filming consent on behalf of a parent/carer.
- Where Northern Heartlands is filming or photographing at an event or activity where prior consent can't be attained – such as at large unticketed public event. In these cases, appropriate signage will be displayed to state that filming and photography will be taking place.

Where possible, written permission will always be sought first, however verbal permission can also be sought.

## 11) Child Performance Licences and Chaperones

A child may need a licence if they're under school leaving age and taking part in:

- films, plays, concerts or other public performances that the audience pays to see, or that take place on licensed premises
- any sporting events or modelling assignments where the child is paid

The legislation around Child Performance Licences exists in order to protect the welfare of children and young people who take part in performances and to ensure they are protected from exploitation. The laws and regulations place a duty on Local Authorities to ensure the health, welfare and kind treatment of children involved in the entertainment industry and also to issue licences permitting their participation in such activities and performances.

Northern Heartlands or the organisation in charge must apply to the child's local council for a child performance licence. A Body Of Person's Approval (BOPA) can also be issued, as an alternative to individual child licences. More information on Child Performance Licences for the County Durham Local Authority area can be found here: Child performance licence - Durham County Council

**Chaperone arrangements for the child:** If the child will not be supervised by their parent, school teacher or home tutor during a planned performance, they must be supervised by a chaperone approved by the council. Chaperones can apply for approval from their local council.

## 12) Positive and Appropriate Behaviour by Staff and Children

It's really important that staff and volunteers promote and model positive behaviours when working with children and young people, that protect children and young people from abuse, minimise any allegations or incidents of inappropriate behaviour, and ultimately ensures that everyone - staff, volunteers and children and young people - feel safe, respected and valued.

**Behaviour of Children and Young People**

When delivering all activities for children, staff will model and encourage positive behaviour by children and young people, to ensure the safety of all those taking part. This includes:

- Encouraging a positive, inclusive, friendly atmosphere, where everyone is welcomed
- Encouraging children and young people to take responsibility for setting out the positive behaviours that they want to see within their sessions, and forming a group contract, charter or manifesto to agree these together
- Encourage children and young people to be sensitive to the needs of others, treat everyone as they would wish to be treated, and respect differences
- Encouraging mutual respect and valuing everyone's ideas and contributions
- Encouraging young people to speak out about attitudes or behaviour that makes them uncomfortable

Staff may need to challenge any behaviour by young people that is deemed unsuitable or inappropriate, or that is deemed unsafe. When delivering activity alongside a partner organisation, such a school or youth group, Northern Heartlands staff and volunteers must seek guidance from partner staff as to the appropriate steps to take to address any inappropriate behaviour. Staff should also seek advance and guidance from parents/carers in order to support any issues around inappropriate behaviour.

If necessary, young people may be asked to leave a session, activity or project if their behaviour is deemed unacceptable.

**Behaviour of Staff and Volunteers**

When working with children and young people, it's important to ensure that staff and volunteers are working in a way that keeps both them and the children safe. Staff and volunteers are likely to be seen as a role models by young people and therefore must act appropriately, including behaviour that takes place outside the organisation, and behaviour that takes place online.

Staff and volunteers must:

- Treat children and young people fairly and without prejudice or discrimination
- Respect differences in gender, sexual orientation, culture, race, ethnicity, disability and religious belief systems, and challenge discrimination and prejudice
- promote relationships that are based on openness, honesty, trust and respect
- avoid showing favouritism
- exercise caution when you are discussing sensitive issues with children or young people
- ensure your contact with children and young people is appropriate and relevant to the nature of the activity you are involved in
- ensure that whenever possible, there is more than one adult present during activities with children and young people (as detailed above)

- if a child specifically asks for or needs some individual time with you, ensure other staff or volunteers know where you and the child are
- only provide personal care in an emergency and make sure there is more than one adult present if possible, unless it has been agreed that the provision of personal care is part of your role and you have been trained to do this safely

Staff and Volunteers MUST NOT:

- allow concerns or allegations to go unreported
- take unnecessary risks
- smoke, consume alcohol or use illegal substances
- develop inappropriate relationships with children and young people
- make inappropriate promises to children and young people
- engage in behaviour that is in any way abusive, including having any form of sexual contact with a child or young person
- Let children and young people have your personal contact details (mobile number, email or postal address) or have contact with them via a personal social media account
- act in a way that can be perceived as threatening or intrusive
- patronise or belittle children and young people
- make sarcastic, insensitive, derogatory or sexually suggestive comments or gestures to or in front of children and young people

Northern Heartlands will take very seriously any allegation of inappropriate behaviour by a member of staff or volunteer. Any concerns of this nature should be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, as detailed in the flowchart on page 8 of this document.

## 13) Safe Physical Contact by Staff and Volunteers

There are situations when it's appropriate and necessary for adults to make physical contact with a child, to keep them safe or to help them develop their skills. This guidance outlines how to make safe, appropriate contact with children and young people. Children and young people have the right to say what level of contact they are comfortable with and should always be listened to and respected.

**When is physical contact appropriate?**

Adults in positions of responsibility and trust shouldn't make unnecessary physical contact with children and young people. Physical contact should always take place in the interests of, or for the benefit of the child, rather than the adult involved. It should take place only when necessary to:

- treat an injury
- develop skills or techniques, for example adjusting a child's limbs, posture or equipment to aid their technique, or in a drama/dance/movement game or activity where it's required to hold hands/make physical contact
- prevent an injury or accident, for example intervening if a child is about to fall
- comfort a distressed child or to celebrate their success – adults to use their discretion to make sure contact does not become unnecessary or unjustified (particularly if repeated with the same individual)

**Physical contact best practices**

Unless the situation is an emergency, adults working with children should:

- ask the child before making contact or explain to the child the reason for this physical contact (as part of explaining the rules of a warm up game or activity for instance)
- encourage the child to raise any concerns or worries that they have – for example, if any physical contact makes them feel uncomfortable or threatened, but also seeking their feedback such as, “am I holding too tight?”, “is this still, okay?”
- try to minimise the use of well-intentioned gestures, such as putting a hand on the shoulder or arm - these gestures if repeated could lead to questions being raised by others, or make the young person feel uncomfortable

**Physical contact with young people should not:**

- involve touching genital areas, buttocks, breasts or any other part of the body that might cause a child distress or embarrassment
- take place out of sight of others or in secret

**Children who need specific assistance**

A young person with an injury, impairment or disability, may require specific support or assistance which requires physical contact. You should follow these guidelines:

- discuss assistance with the child and their parents or carers before they take part in the activity and where possible ask children their preferred way of being assisted
- ask parents or delegated care providers to carry out all intimate or personal care tasks for their child – this isn't an appropriate role for Northern Heartlands staff or volunteers
- treat children with dignity and respect when they are assisted, lifted, or manually supported
- adults who will be assisting should receive appropriate training to minimise the risk of injuries

## Appendix A – Types of Abuse or Neglect and Private Fostering

- **Neglect** is not meeting a child's basic physical and psychological needs. The four main types of neglect are physical neglect, emotional neglect, educational neglect, or medical neglect.
- **Physical abuse** is defined as deliberately hurting a child and causing physical harm; which may result in injuries such as bruises, broken bones, burns or cuts.
- **Child sexual abuse** (CSA) is when a child is forced or persuaded to take part in sexual activities. This may involve physical contact or non-contact activities and can happen online or offline.
- **Emotional/Psychological Abuse** is the ongoing emotional maltreatment of a child, which can have a severe and persistent negative effect on the child's emotional health and development.
- **Domestic abuse** is any type of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between people who are, or who have been in a relationship, regardless of gender or sexuality. It can also happen between adults who are related to one another.
- **Online abuse** is where children are exposed to abuse or harmful content online which impacts their wellbeing.
- **Child sexual exploitation** is a type 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 into sexual activity.
- **County lines** is a type of criminal exploitation. Urban gangs persuade, coerce or force children and young people to store drugs and money and/or transport them to suburban areas, market towns and coastal towns.
- **Child criminal exploitation** is a form of child abuse where a child or young person is forced or coerced to engage in criminal activity or commit any type of crime.
- **Bullying or cyberbullying** is when individuals or groups seek to harm, intimidate or coerce someone who is perceived to be vulnerable
- **Problematic and harmful sexual behaviour:** Problematic sexual behaviour (PSB) is developmentally inappropriate or socially unexpected sexualised behaviour which doesn't have an overt element of victimisation or abuse. Harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) is developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour displayed by children and young people which is harmful or abusive.
- **Child trafficking and modern slavery:** child trafficking is defined as recruiting, moving, receiving and harbouring children for the purpose of exploitation. Child trafficking is a form of modern slavery.
- **Spiritual, Cultural, Faith or Belief based Child Abuse including witchcraft and spirit-based possession -** In such cases a parent or carer has come to view a child as 'different' and they may have attributed this to the child being possessed. The term 'belief in spirit possession' is the belief that an evil force has entered a child and is controlling him or her. Sometimes the term 'witch' is used and is the belief that a child is able to use an evil force to harm others. Abuse occurs when a child is beaten, burnt, scalded, cut, strangled, starved or isolated, as the abuser believes that this will weaken or remove the evil force or spirit from the child.
- **Female genital mutilation (FGM)** is the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia for non-medical reasons. It's also known as female circumcision or cutting.
- **Oral Infant Mutilation (OIM)** involves gouging out the teeth of a child without anaesthetic to prevent common childhood illnesses. IOM is a traditional practice performed by some cultures as an accepted remedy for illness.
- **Breast Ironing:** The process during which young pubescent girls' breasts are ironed, massaged, flattened and/or pounded down over a period of time (sometimes years) in order for the breasts to disappear or delay the development of the breasts entirely. Some adolescent girls and boys may choose to bind their breast using constrictive material due to gender transformation or identity, and this may also cause health problems.

More detailed information about these types of abuse and how to recognise the signs of abuse can be found on the NSPCC's website here: www.learning.nspcc.org.uk/child-abuse-and-neglect. (Other sources include Durham Safeguarding Children's Partnership DSL Training June 2026 Slides available here).

## Private Fostering

A private fostering arrangement is one that is made privately (without the involvement of a local authority) for the care of a child under the age of 16 years (under 18 if disabled) with someone other than a parent or close relative, in their own home, with the intention that it should last for 28 days or more. It is not private fostering if the arrangement was made through social services. It is not classed as a private fostering arrangement if the child is staying with a close relative (i.e., grandparents, older sister or brother, aunt or uncle).

Private foster carers/parents are legally required to notify the local authority. Many people are not aware of this requirement; if you know a child or young person is being privately fostered and you think the local authority is unaware, please notify us or support the parent/carer to do so.

If you know someone in a personal or professional capacity who is privately fostering or is about to, you should encourage them to notify Children's Services and if they are not able to do so then you should take responsibility for notifying them.

Please contact First Contact Service on: 03000 26 79 79 Email: firstcontact@durham.gov.uk.