



Policy for Safeguarding and Child Protection

Footsteps Child Protection Officers:

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Haringey Single Point of Access

02084894592 / 5652 / 5762 / 4582

Designated Officer

02084892968 / 1186 Email: lado@haringey.gov.uk

Local Safeguarding Children's Board

02084891472 Email: lscb@haringey.gov.uk

Enfield Children's Safeguarding

Office Hours: Duty Officer on 02083792507

Out of hours: 0208 379 1000 – (Enfield Council)

Islington Child Safeguarding Team

02075277400

Hackney Children and Young Persons Access and Assessment Team

02083565500 (Duty Line Mon to Fri 9am - 5pm)

02083562710 (Emergency Out of Hours Team)

Camden Child Protection Duty and Assessment Team

North Camden 02079746600

Out of hours 02079744444

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Out of hours 02079744444

Introduction

As a provider of education, sport, and community-based activities, Footsteps seeks to provide all our students with services of the highest quality. Footsteps maintains Safeguarding of our students and vulnerable adults as set out in *Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2024*, as issued and amended by the DfE. All staff must read all of the KCSIE 2024 and sign to say they have read and understood it.

We regard the following principles that have been adopted by Footsteps as essential to this quality of service. Safeguarding is considered an essential component of our organisational culture. This expectation does not just apply to Footsteps Staff and Teachers. It is the responsibility of Footsteps to ensure that all supply staff and teachers, and all contractors, are vetted appropriately, and to fully explore any concerns about supply staff or contractors. Footsteps recognises that it is not appropriate to simply release supply, agency, and contracted staff following safeguarding allegations and concerns. All such issues must be dealt with properly, formally, and appropriately, with the necessary contacts informed of all matters in this area. Footsteps will work with appropriate agencies and the LADO when anyone who has worked at Footsteps, under any circumstances, has behaved in a way that might indicate they may not be suitable to work with children.

The Principal (also DSL) of Footsteps is responsible to the Board of Trustees regarding the safeguarding of Footsteps students and will also discuss with, and communicate appropriately to, any serious safeguarding concerns and issues the local authority LADO. The DSL and the entire Footsteps team are aware that it is important to think not just about safeguarding allegations, but also about safeguarding concerns. Footsteps should have an approach that recognises that concerns tend to grow and that they may exist and be apparent before someone actually makes an allegation. We should act quickly on concerns – not wait for an allegation to arise.

At Footsteps, the particular vulnerability of children who have a social worker is recognised. Footsteps monitors such students, and their performance and well-being, and works with social workers and outside agencies, to ensure we are able to deliver the best possible outcomes for them. Footsteps pays special attention to children in need. These include students on a Children in Need Plan, on a Child Protection Plan or those who are Looked After Children. Under the Children Act 1989, ALL disabled children are Children in Need. Footsteps monitors the well-being and progress of all Footsteps' children in need and works with the outside agencies that support them. The educational outcomes of children in need of help, and protection, is of prime concern within Footsteps and their progress is monitored to ensure they achieve their best outcomes. "Improving the educational outcomes of Children in Need of help and protection" (June 2019) offers further information. The conclusion of the review "Help, protection, education" sets out government action to support this.

With regards to reporting suspected or reported safeguarding concerns to the police, reference should be made to the National Police Chief's Council guidance document to establish whether police involvement is appropriate.

Children who are absent from Footsteps due to unauthorised absence will be carefully monitored as there is increased potential for exploitation. This includes CSE, and abuse at home, County Lines involvement, radicalisation, and also honour based abuse and violence. Footsteps staff are aware of peer on peer/child on child abuse. The Voyeurism Act (April 2019) has reference to "Upskirting" which is an offence. Footsteps staff are alert to this form of voyeurism.

The Footsteps DSL, SENCO, and SLT team work together for the benefit of our students to improve the learning environment for students with mental health issues. Formal training provides the Footsteps DSL, SENCO, and SLT with a good understanding of their roles, the processes, and the procedures and responsibilities of other agencies, particularly children's social care. DSL should help promote educational outcomes by working closely with their teachers and sharing information about their welfare, safeguarding and child protection concerns. DSL supervision is a requirement in the inspection framework and in Working Together (2018) so Footsteps does implement this.

Footsteps acknowledges that schools have a part to play in children's mental health and well-being. It is important to have clear systems and processes to identify needs and consider when these needs become a safeguarding concern. "Mental health and behaviour in schools" (June 2014/18) offers useful guidance in this area – particularly Chapter 4. The Link programme offers additional training to train schools senior mental health leads.

Footsteps adopts the definitions used in the Children Act 2004, and in *Working together to safeguard children* (2023). This can be summarised as:

- Providing help and support to meet the needs of children as soon as problems emerge
- Protecting children from maltreatment, whether within or outside the home, including online
- Preventing the impairment of children's mental and physical health or development
- Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes

This policy is based on the legislation and guidance provided within:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024: statutory guidance for schools and colleges DFE
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023) statutory guidance
- London Child Protection Procedures, 5th Edn.(March 2020)
- Information Sharing (2016)
- What to do if you're worried a child is being abused (2015)
- Children Act (1989)
- Children Act (2004)
- Education Act (2011)
- Children and Families Act (2014)
- Help, Protection, Education: concluding the Children in Need review (June 2019)

All safeguarding policies, protocols and procedures are regularly reviewed and are compliant with all legislative requirements and the guidance and advice of the local authorities and their relevant Local Safeguarding Children's Boards.

Footsteps sets out to achieve its goals by:

- Ensuring appropriate levels of concern and care are delivered throughout Footsteps, and by recognising and respecting all participants in Footsteps projects and services as individuals. We do not discriminate in relation to age, gender, physical disability mental or sensory impairment, race, culture, class, economic factors, sexual orientation, marital status, politics, religion or any other specific factor.
- This means that we encourage respect for others background, appearance, personality, abilities, opinions or preferences. We do not countenance any form of abuse, whether physical, sexual or emotional, nor destructive criticism or verbal insults.
- For all participants in any of our projects and services, be they students, volunteers or staff, we seek to ensure that any activities that are undertaken are underpinned by high levels of Safeguarding, and delivered in an atmosphere of mutual respect, dignity and support. This is the ethos that sets the tone of our work.

Safeguarding relates to the issues listed below. Our policies on these aspects provide more detail.

- students' health and safety
- child protection
- physical contact
- preventing radicalisation

- safer recruitment
- anti-bullying
- behaviour
- the use of reasonable force
- meeting the needs of students with medical conditions
- providing first aid
- educational visits
- intimate care
- internet and e-safety
- appropriate arrangements to ensure school security, taking into account the local context

Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education

Including RSE on the new curriculum will be compulsory from September 2020. If this is not achievable it must be delivered at least at the start of the summer term 2021.

In order to safeguard welfare in the first instance of our students who have a learning or physical disability, and also generally for all persons involved in Footsteps projects and/or activities, we have adopted a protection policy with the following aims and objectives.

Aims

- To protect children and vulnerable adults
- To work to the highest standards of good practice in safeguarding
- To safeguard the welfare of all participants on Footsteps projects and activities

Objectives

- To raise awareness of abuse, what is meant by abuse, its causes and symptoms
- To provide Footsteps students, staff and volunteers with guidance to safeguard and prevent abuse and allegations of abuse.
- To give Footsteps students staff and volunteers clear guidance on how to respond to situations of suspected abuse

Within our overarching child protection procedures, particular areas of concern include:

COVID 19

1. **Rationale**
 - a. Footsteps COVID 19 strategy is an additional measure put in place to ensure maximum safety so that behaviour can be controlled and monitored with regards to the COVID 19 virus. The aim is to mitigate risk to all in the school community by ensuring risk is securely managed.
2. **b.** This behaviour policy considers relevant guidance from the government: •

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-school-closures/guidance-for-schools-about-temporarily-closing#behaviour-and-exclusions>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preparing-for-the-wider-opening-of-schools-from->

1- june/planning-guide-for-primary-schools#annex-a-behaviour-principles

3. c. Students will need to behave/act differently at Footsteps; Footsteps will create systems and a culture to support this. These systems and culture will be reviewed and updated in the future, as required.
4. d. The systems and culture that has been created needs to be communicated to staff members, students and parents and relevant training needs to be put in place.

2. The school expects: All stakeholders to adhere to/support the existing Behaviour Policy and new COVID 19 routines that are established.

3. During arrangements for the COVID period:

- a. Staff should:
 - act immediately if there is any risk to another person's well-being or safety (as per Behaviour Policy and COVID protocols)
 - identify any reasonable adjustments that need to be made for students with more challenging behaviour
- b. Students will be required to follow instructions on/expectations about:
 - any altered routines for arrival or departure
 - social distancing,
 - bringing a bottle of water to school, bringing a mask, wearing a mask in lessons, follow one way systems
 - school instructions on hygiene, such as handwashing and sanitising
 - moving around Footsteps as per specific instructions (for example, one-way systems, out of bounds areas, queuing)
 - sneezing, coughing, tissues and disposal ('catch it, bin it, kill it') and avoiding touching their mouths, noses and eyes with hands
 - use of toilets
 - amendments (if any) to Footsteps uniform / sportswear requirements
 - sharing any equipment or other items including drinking bottles
 - amended expectations about break and lunch times, including where students may be
 - who they can socialise with at school and where this takes place
 - any behaviour that would cause more of concern during this period
 - telling an adult if they are experiencing symptoms of coronavirus
 - adhere to Footsteps COVID-19 home learning arrangements

4. Incidents

- a. Parent/carers should be informed of serious concerns the school has about their son/daughter's behaviour
- b. A zero tolerance approach will be enforced, therefore, students can expect to be suspended during the day or be given a fixed-term exclusion for not adhering to the behaviour policy including breaches of COVID protocols
- c. Students can expect to be sent home or parent/carers will be expected to collect their son/daughter if the health and safety of other students and staff members are put at risk by the students not adhering to the behaviour policy or do not take the COVID protocols seriously.
- d. Footsteps recognises that a few children with SEND may struggle to adapt to the expected protocols and so will work to implement strategies aimed at gaining the appropriate compliance.
- e. Should it be deemed necessary, as a duty of care, staff will physically intervene in an incident. Contact should be a short as possible aiming to achieve separation and de-escalation.

5. Monitoring:

- a. Established standard practice will continue.
- b. Risk assessments for individual students will be monitored by relevant medical/pastoral staff.
- c. Amendments to operational procedures will be made as required and will be communicated to staff and students. Review of protocols will be undertaken to address emerging matters or changes to the guidance, as necessary.

At Footsteps, we recognize that some children may be more vulnerable to abuse, neglect, or harm and may benefit from early intervention to prevent escalation of their needs. *Early Help* is a key component of our safeguarding approach, enabling us to identify and address potential concerns at an early stage before they develop into more serious issues. This is in line with the statutory guidance outlined in *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2024*.

Principles of Early Help

Early help involves providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life, from the foundation years through to teenage years. At Footsteps, we aim to:

- Recognize and identify children and families who may benefit from early help.
- Offer targeted support to meet identified needs, including support for mental health, family circumstances, disability, or social difficulties.
- Actively engage with parents, carers, and children, ensuring that their views are considered when offering support and planning interventions.
- Work collaboratively with external agencies and professionals, such as health and social care, to provide a coordinated response to the needs of children and families.

Identifying Children Who May Need Early Help

All staff at Footsteps are trained to recognize signs that a child may need early help. These signs may include, but are not limited to:

- Children showing signs of mental health difficulties, emotional or behavioral problems.
- Children with family members in prison or who are known to the criminal justice system.
- Children with disabilities, special educational needs (SEN), or children facing language or communication barriers.
- Children who are frequently absent or missing from school.
- Children at risk of exploitation (sexual, criminal, or radicalisation).
- Children living in households where there is domestic abuse, substance misuse, or parental mental health concerns.
- Children living in poverty, facing housing instability, or who are young carers.

Staff should report any concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), who will assess the need for early help and initiate appropriate action in consultation with other agencies and the child's family.

Procedure for Early Help

1. **Identification:** Concerns about a child's welfare are identified by staff, either through observations or disclosures made by the child, parent, or other professional. All staff are responsible for identifying early help needs, but they should discuss these concerns with the DSL.
2. **Assessment:** The DSL will assess whether early help is appropriate, taking into account the child's individual circumstances. If early help is needed, the DSL will develop a clear plan to provide support.
3. **Action and Monitoring:** The DSL, in collaboration with the child's family and other agencies (such as health and social services), will implement the early help plan. The progress of the child will be closely monitored, and the effectiveness of the support will be regularly reviewed.
4. **Escalation:** If the child's needs increase, or early help interventions are not proving effective, the DSL will refer the child to local authority children's social care for statutory services or further intervention.

Working with Other Agencies

Footsteps understands the importance of working with other agencies in providing early help. We will:

- Refer to and work with Haringey's Single Point of Access, and other relevant agencies, including health services, educational psychologists, and social care, to provide a coordinated response.
- Ensure that the appropriate consent is sought from parents or carers before engaging other agencies, unless there is a risk to the child's safety.
- Share information appropriately with professionals involved in a child's care, following the principles of data protection and confidentiality.

The Role of All Staff

All staff members play a crucial role in identifying children who may benefit from early help.

Staff are required to:

- Be vigilant in observing and identifying early signs of harm, abuse, or neglect.
- Report any concerns, no matter how small, to the DSL in a timely manner.
- Support the implementation of early help plans, working closely with the DSL and external professionals.

At Footsteps, early help is integral to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. By addressing concerns at an early stage, we can offer timely interventions that improve outcomes for our students and their families.

Child Exploitation

All staff, especially the DSL and Deputy DSL must consider whether students are at risk of abuse and exploitation not just at home, but also outside their home and family situation. Extra-familial risks to children are prevalent and present serious risks, including CSE, Criminal Exploitation, and serious Youth Violence.

6. Child sexual exploitation (CSE)

Child sexual exploitation(CSE) involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people receive something (for example food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, gifts, money or in some cases simply affection) as a result of engaging in sexual activities. Sexual exploitation can take many forms ranging from the seemingly 'consensual' relationship where sex is exchanged for affection or gifts, to serious organised crime by gangs and groups. What marks out exploitation is an imbalance of power in the relationship. The perpetrator always holds some kind of power over the victim which increases as the exploitative relationship develops. Sexual exploitation involves varying degrees of coercion, intimidation or enticement, including unwanted pressure from peers to have sex, sexual bullying including cyberbullying and grooming. However, it also important to recognise that some young people who are being sexually exploited do not exhibit any external signs of this abuse.

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7. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM): professionals in all agencies, and individuals and groups in relevant communities, need to be alert to the possibility of a girl being at risk of FGM, or already having suffered FGM. There is a range of potential indicators that a child or young person may be at risk of FGM, which individually may not indicate risk but if there are two or more indicators present this could signal a risk to the child or young person. Victims of FGM are likely to come from a community that is known to practise FGM. Professionals should note that girls at risk of FGM may not yet be aware of the practice or that it may be conducted on them, so sensitivity should always be shown when approaching the subject. Warning signs that FGM may be about to take place, or may have already taken place, can be found on pages 11-12 of the Multi-Agency Practice Guidelines referred to previously. Staff should activate local safeguarding procedures, using existing national and local protocols for multi-agency liaison with police and children's social care.

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8. Physical and/or emotional neglect or abuse

Physical: a form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Emotional: 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.

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9. Missing Children

Missing children is defined as "children whose whereabouts are unknown to their parent, guardian, or legal custodian.

10. Bullying, including cyberbullying (by text message, on social networking sites, email etc) and prejudice-based bullying

11. Domestic violence involving ANY family member

This includes any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality.

12. Fabricated or induced illness

Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

13. Faith abuse

May include rites or practices linked to a belief in spirit possession of children or adults.

14. Forced Marriage

Often the result of cultural and historical practices, many young people, mainly females but not always, are forced into an unwanted marriage, often being taken abroad to facilitate the practice.

15. Gang activity / abuse and youth violence

Much of gang culture revolves around the intimidation and control of young people who are forced into acts of sexual activity, violence or crime as a result.

16. Violence against women and girls (VAWG)

Cultural and religious practices sometimes accept the physical and emotional abuse of females as 'normal' or 'just the way things work'. Consequently, many women and girls are regularly abused by family and the public at large.

17. Racism

Racism means treating people differently simply because of their racial background.

18. Homophobic or transphobic abuse

It is not acceptable to intimidate or bully people simply on the basis of their gender or sexuality.

19. Trafficking

Trafficking is the practice of moving people between countries in order to exploit them, either as cheap labour, slaves or in the sex industry.

20. Mental Health

People with mental health problems or special needs should not be abused or exploited because of their condition. Footsteps staff should be alert and make considered judgements as to when and if this might become a safeguarding concern.

21. Radicalization

Preventing Radicalization

Footsteps is committed to safeguarding students from the risks of radicalization and extremism in line with the statutory *Prevent Duty* as outlined in *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2024*. We recognize that protecting students from extremist ideologies and radicalization is part of our wider safeguarding duties and is essential to promoting their well-being.

What is Radicalization?

Radicalization refers to the process by which a person comes to support or engage in extremist ideologies that may lead to violence or terrorism. Extremism is defined as vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect, and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. Radicalization can occur through many channels, including online platforms, social media, and through personal or group influence.

The Prevent Duty

As part of the *Prevent Duty*, all schools and colleges have a responsibility to prevent students from being drawn into extremism and terrorism. This includes:

- Identifying individuals at risk of radicalization.
- Working with external agencies to provide support.
- Promoting values that safeguard students from radical ideologies.

Recognizing the Signs of Radicalization

Staff at Footsteps are trained to recognize the signs that a student may be vulnerable to radicalization or already being radicalized. These signs may include:

- **Behavioural changes:** Sudden withdrawal from peers, increased levels of anger, or becoming more reserved and secretive.
- **Ideological changes:** Expressing extreme views about government policies, religion, or culture, or becoming increasingly intolerant of others.
- **Associations:** Associating with known extremists or visiting extremist websites, social media platforms, or chat rooms.
- **Isolation:** Increased isolation from family and friends or rejection of previously held beliefs or values.

The Role of Staff

All staff members at Footsteps play a vital role in preventing radicalization. They must remain vigilant, report any concerns, and take proactive steps to prevent students from being drawn into extremist ideologies. Staff will:

- **Report Concerns:** Any concerns about a student potentially being at risk of radicalization must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), who will assess the situation and take appropriate action.
- **Early Intervention:** Staff will work with students and their families early on if there are concerns about radicalization, engaging with external agencies such as the local *Prevent* team and other safeguarding professionals.

The Role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The DSL has lead responsibility for implementing the Prevent Duty and safeguarding children at risk of radicalization. The DSL will:

- **Assess Risks:** Regularly assess the risks of students being drawn into extremism or terrorism, ensuring that these risks are addressed within Footsteps' safeguarding policies and procedures.
- **Make Referrals:** Refer students at risk of radicalization to the *Channel* programme, which provides early intervention support for individuals at risk of being drawn into terrorism. Referral will only be made with the consent of the individual or their parent/guardian unless there is an immediate risk to the student's safety.
- **Liaise with External Agencies:** Work closely with external agencies, including the *Prevent* team, local authority safeguarding services, and the police, to ensure appropriate support for at-risk students.
- **Provide Support:** Ensure that any student identified as at risk of radicalization is provided with appropriate support, including mental health services or engagement with specialist educators.

Preventing Radicalization Through Education

Date of Issue: September 2024

Date of Review: September 2025

Footsteps promotes an inclusive environment that encourages open discussions about diverse views and beliefs. This is done through:

- **Embedding British Values:** Promoting democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect, and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs within our curriculum and school ethos.
- **Developing Critical Thinking:** Teaching students critical thinking skills so they can challenge extremist ideologies and make informed decisions about the information they encounter, particularly online.
- **Online Safety:** Educating students on how to stay safe online and how to recognize and resist extremist content they may encounter on the internet or social media.

Online Radicalization

Recognizing that the internet is a major factor in radicalization, Footsteps ensures that:

- **Filtering and Monitoring:** Effective filtering and monitoring systems are in place to detect and block access to harmful or extremist content on school devices and networks. The IT service provider works with the DSL to review and manage online risks.
- **Online Safety Education:** Students are educated on online safety and the risks of extremist content as part of our broader safeguarding and digital literacy curriculum.

Channel Programme

The *Channel* programme is a multi-agency approach that supports individuals identified as vulnerable to radicalization. If the DSL assesses that a student may benefit from this intervention, they will:

- Make a referral to the *Channel* programme with the student's or their parent's consent, unless there is an immediate safeguarding concern.
- Work closely with the *Channel* panel to provide ongoing support and monitor the student's progress.

Partnership Working

Footsteps recognizes the importance of working with external partners to prevent radicalization. This includes:

- **Local Authorities and Prevent Teams:** Collaborating with the local authority's *Prevent* teams to assess risks and provide targeted interventions.
- **Law Enforcement:** Reporting concerns and working with law enforcement when necessary, particularly if there is an immediate risk of harm.
- **Parents and Families:** Engaging with parents and families as part of a coordinated response to radicalization concerns, where appropriate.

Monitoring and Review

Footsteps will regularly review its procedures and policies to ensure they comply with the latest guidance on preventing radicalization. This includes:

- Annual reviews of filtering and monitoring systems.
- Ongoing training for staff to ensure they remain alert to the risks of radicalization.
- Working with local safeguarding agencies to stay up-to-date with the latest threats and trends in radicalization.

Misogyny and Prevent: As part of the Prevent Duty, Footsteps is committed to addressing misogynistic attitudes and ideologies that may lead to radicalization or extremist behaviour. This includes recognizing and challenging extremist narratives that promote hatred, violence, or discrimination against women and girls. Staff will be vigilant in identifying signs of misogynistic

radicalization and will refer concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) for appropriate intervention.

Young people have the right to develop their own ideas and beliefs and should not be forced, by whatever means, to follow a path that is chosen for them on the basis of religious prejudice or cultural practices.

22. Private fostering

The term Private fostering is when a child under the age of 16 (or under 18 if the child is disabled) is cared for by someone who is not their parent or a 'close relative'. This is a private arrangement made between a parent and a carer, for 28 days or more. 'Close relatives' are defined as step-parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, uncles or aunts (whether of full blood, half blood or by marriage).

People become private foster carers for all sorts of reasons. Private foster carers can be a friend of the child's family, or be someone who is willing to care for a child of a family they do not know. It is not private fostering if the placement was made by a social worker who has intervened on behalf of the local authority. Missing children is defined as "children whose whereabouts are unknown to their parent, guardian, or legal custodian.

23. Extremist behaviour

Young people of any sex or background should not be encouraged or coerced into taking part in extremist or terrorist activities wherever in the world they may live or that the activities might take place.

24. Sexting / teenage relationship abuse

Young people should not be forced into taking part in unwanted sexual activity through pressure, bullying, gang initiation, or through cyber techniques.

25. Substance misuse – drugs, alcohol, tobacco

Young people should never be allowed to use or abuse substances that may do them short or long term damage.

Footsteps is very alert to these issues and monitors students to ascertain if there is any potential for such activities to be taking place in their lives.

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024 requires the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) to take lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection (including online safety and understanding the filtering and monitoring systems and processes in place).

This includes overseeing and acting on:

- filtering and monitoring reports
- safeguarding concerns
- checks to filtering and monitoring systems.

The IT service provider should have technical responsibility for:

- maintaining filtering and monitoring systems
- providing filtering and monitoring reports
- completing actions following concerns or checks to systems.

The IT service provider should work with the senior leadership team and DSL to:

- procure systems
- identify risk
- carry out reviews
- carry out checks.

To support schools and colleges to meet this duty, the Department for Education has published a set of filtering and monitoring standards.

Additionally, KCSIE 2024 provides clarification that being absent, as well as missing, from education can be warning sign of a range of safeguarding concerns, including sexual abuse, sexual exploitation or child criminal exploitation. It provides additional information on online pre-recruitment checks for shortlisted candidates and on responding to allegations related to organisations or individuals using school premises.

All IT safety systems will be reviewed annually.

Policy Element: Safeguarding and Child Protection Training

1. Training Requirement:

- All staff members within the educational setting must undergo safeguarding and child protection training.

2. Inclusion of Filtering and Monitoring:

- The training program must include an understanding of expectations, applicable roles, and responsibilities in relation to filtering and monitoring of internet content for the safety of children.

3. Compliance with Guidance:

- All educational settings are required to adhere to the latest published guidance on filtering and monitoring of internet content.

4. Governing Bodies and Proprietors:

- Paragraph 141 of the guidance emphasizes that governing bodies and proprietors should consider the number and age range of children, those at higher risk of harm, and their frequency of IT system usage, along with the cost-effectiveness of safeguarding measures.

5. Standards for Filtering and Monitoring: The new standards for filtering and monitoring should be implemented in educational settings. Schools and colleges must:

- Assign roles and responsibilities to manage filtering and monitoring systems. – The system is monitored via FST cisco firewall + access point and anti-virus software
- Reviewing filtering and monitoring provision at least annually. – This is reviewed every 6 months, depending on alerts and triggers.
- Blocking harmful and inappropriate content while minimizing the impact on teaching and learning. – All content is blocked via the Cisco Firewall and filtering software.
 - Establish effective monitoring strategies that meet safeguarding needs.
- Governing bodies and proprietors should review these standards and collaborate with IT staff and service providers to ensure compliance.

6. Cyber Security Standards:

- Schools and colleges should also consider meeting the Cyber Security standards.

7. Policy Reflection:

- The safeguarding and child protection policy for the educational setting must reflect the approach to filtering and monitoring on school devices and networks.

8. Elective Home Education (EHE):

- In cases where parents or carers are considering home education, particularly for children with Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCP), the local authority will need to review the plan while working closely with parents.

9. Children Absent from Education:

At Footsteps, we recognize that children missing from or absent from education, whether for prolonged periods or on repeated occasions, can be a safeguarding concern. Absence from education can be an indicator of a range of issues, including abuse, neglect, exploitation, or mental health challenges. In line with the statutory guidance outlined in *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2024*, Footsteps is committed to ensuring that robust measures are in place to monitor and address attendance concerns to safeguard our students.

Responsibilities

- Monitoring Attendance: Footsteps maintains rigorous monitoring of student attendance. All instances of unauthorised or unexplained absences are promptly investigated to ensure that no child is at risk of harm. This includes children who are regularly absent or missing for extended periods.
- Early Intervention: If a pattern of irregular attendance is identified or a student is absent for a prolonged period, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and relevant staff will work with the student, parents, and external agencies to address underlying concerns. Early intervention is key to ensuring any issues are identified and addressed before they escalate into serious safeguarding concerns.

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Procedures for Addressing Absences

- Daily Monitoring:** Attendance is monitored daily by administrative and safeguarding staff. Any unexplained absence is followed up immediately with a call to the parent or carer.
- Escalation of Concerns:**
 - Stage 1:** After two consecutive days of unexplained absence, or sooner if there are specific safeguarding concerns, the DSL will be alerted. Attempts to make contact with the family will continue while assessing any risks to the child's safety.
 - Stage 2:** After 5 consecutive days of unexplained absence, a letter is home to parents/guardians/carers. If no contact is made and concerns escalate, a home visit may be arranged, or external agencies (such as children's services or the police) may be contacted to conduct a welfare check.
 - Stage 3:** If the child is considered missing from education for an extended period or is showing a pattern of repeated absence, a formal referral will be made to the Local Authority under their *Children Missing Education (CME)* procedures.
- Liaising with External Agencies:** Footsteps will work closely with external partners, including local authority children's services and safeguarding teams, to ensure the well-being of children who are absent. When absences indicate potential safeguarding risks, such as exploitation or radicalization, referrals will be made to appropriate agencies like the *Prevent* team or child protection services.

Local Authority Involvement

Footsteps will follow statutory guidelines for working with the local authority when children are:

- Absent for extended periods without explanation.
- At risk of being removed from the school roll without clear educational arrangements in place (e.g., families intending to home-educate).
- Missing from education as part of wider safeguarding concerns.

The school will ensure that all actions are documented and shared with the appropriate authorities.

Promoting Attendance and Well-being

Footsteps strives to create an inclusive and supportive learning environment that encourages regular attendance. We recognize the link between attendance and achievement, well-being, and safeguarding. By working closely with students, families, and external agencies, we aim to address barriers to attendance and ensure the safety of all children.

This policy element outlines the key requirements and considerations for safeguarding and child protection in the educational setting, including training, compliance with guidance, and standards for filtering and monitoring, among other important aspects.

- Safer Recruitment**

Schools should inform shortlisted candidates that online searches may be done as part of due diligence checks

Copies of documents used to verify the successful candidate's identity, right to work and required qualifications should be kept on their personnel file

- **Use of school premises for non-school activities**

Where schools are used for non-school activities, there is clarity around safeguarding arrangements that schools should expect providers (hirers) to have in place in accordance with the guidance on keeping children safe in [out-of-school settings](#). Further information can be found in paragraph 167 of the updated guidance

As with any safeguarding allegation, schools should follow their own safeguarding policies and procedures, including informing the LADO should they receive an allegation relating to an incident that happened when an individual or organisation was using their school premises for the purposes of running activities for children. Examples of these include community groups, sports associations or service providers that run extra-curricular activities)

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- **Equality Act**

Paragraph 89 has been updated and states that:

'provisions within the Equality Act allow schools to take positive action, where it can be shown that it is proportionate, to deal with particular disadvantages affecting pupils or students with certain protected characteristics in order to meet their specific need. A school could, for example, consider taking positive action to support girls if there was evidence they were being disproportionately subjected to sexual violence or sexual harassment. There is also a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled children and young people.'

- **Channel**

An individual will be required to provide their consent before any support delivered through the Channel programme is provided

- **Forced marriage**

In this section there is a new paragraph which states the following:

'In addition, since February 2023 it has also been a crime to carry out any conduct whose purpose is to cause a child to marry before their eighteenth birthday, even if violence, threats or another form of coercion are not used. As with the existing forced marriage law, this applies to non-binding, unofficial 'marriages' as well as legal marriages.'

The forced marriage resource pack has also been updated, so it would be useful to obtain a copy of this.

Policy Statement

Footsteps regards Safeguarding as a paramount aspect of its work and believes that the welfare of its users, and students, including those who have a learning, physical and/or sensory disability is essential. Footsteps child protection policy requires its staff, volunteers and non-disabled students to accept the duty of safeguarding the welfare of students who have a disability and to prevent physical, sexual and emotional abuse of all students with a disability with whom they come into contact. At the same time, guidelines and procedures set out in this document aim to ensure the welfare of all people, disabled and non-disabled, participating in Footsteps projects and/or activities.

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The policy document will be available to all stakeholders, volunteers and paid staff in Footsteps.

Partnerships with Parents

Working with parents is an important aspect of Footsteps. Parents' and children's need for privacy should be respected. However, the priority is the needs of the child and effective liaison is crucial for this.

It should be recognised that families from different backgrounds and cultures will have different approaches to child-rearing. These differences should be acknowledged and respected provided they do not place the child at risk as defined later in this policy.

Where possible staff should work with and share information with parents. Permission for liaison and information sharing with outside agencies should be sought unless it places the child at risk. In these cases, it is preferable to seek advice from social care or make a child protection referral.

Children and the Court system.

At Footsteps, we understand that children may become involved with the court system for a variety of reasons, and this can have a significant emotional and psychological impact on their well-being. We are committed to supporting students who are involved in both family and criminal court proceedings, in line with the statutory guidance outlined in *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2024*.

Children Involved in Family Court Proceedings

Children who are subject to family court proceedings, such as those relating to custody disputes, parental separation, or care arrangements, may experience heightened stress, anxiety, or emotional distress. We recognize that these factors can affect their school performance and behavior.

Our Approach:

- **Awareness and Sensitivity:** All staff members will be sensitive to the needs of children involved in family court proceedings. We will aim to provide a supportive and understanding environment where children feel safe to express their feelings.
- **Collaboration with Cafcass:** We will work with external agencies, including the *Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass)*, when necessary. Cafcass offers advice to the court on the best interests of the child and works directly with children and families during these proceedings.
- **Emotional Support:** Staff will provide appropriate emotional support to students who may struggle due to the court proceedings, ensuring they have someone to talk to if they are feeling distressed. If necessary, we will make referrals to external mental health services for further support.

Children as Witnesses in Criminal Courts

When children are required to give evidence in criminal court cases, this can be a particularly distressing experience. Children may be called upon to testify either as victims or witnesses. Footsteps is committed to supporting children during this difficult time and ensuring they receive the help they need.

Special Measures:

- Children giving evidence in court are entitled to special measures, such as giving evidence via video link, pre-recorded testimony, or using screens in court to shield them from the defendant. These measures are designed to protect the child from further trauma.

- We will ensure that staff are aware of any child involved in such cases and provide them with emotional support both before and after court appearances. Teachers and pastoral staff will be briefed to understand the potential emotional impact on the child's school life.
- child's school life.

Support for Children Involved in the Youth Justice System

Children who come into contact with the youth justice system, whether as offenders or victims of crime, face particular vulnerabilities. At Footsteps, we recognize the importance of continued educational engagement for these children to help them overcome the challenges they may face.

Our Approach:

- **Collaboration with Youth Justice Services:** We will work closely with the *Youth Offending Team (YOT)* and other relevant agencies to ensure that children involved in the youth justice system receive the educational support they need.
- **Non-Stigmatizing Environment:** We aim to create an inclusive environment where children involved in the youth justice system are not marginalized or stigmatized. All staff will be vigilant for any signs of distress and will offer appropriate intervention when needed.

Guidance for Staff

All staff at Footsteps are trained to recognize the potential impact that court proceedings may have on a child's emotional and mental health. We will:

- Monitor the behavior and well-being of children who are involved in court proceedings and provide additional pastoral support where necessary.
- Refer students to external agencies, such as child mental health services, for specialist support if required.
- Ensure that children feel safe and supported within the school environment, helping them to remain engaged with their education during difficult times.

Information Sharing and Confidentiality

As part of our safeguarding responsibilities, we will share relevant information with appropriate external agencies (e.g., Cafcass, YOT) when necessary to safeguard the child's welfare. We will always seek parental consent before sharing information unless doing so would place the child at risk of harm. All information will be shared on a need-to-know basis and treated with the strictest confidentiality.

Definitions

Abuse

Abuse is the violation of a person's human and civil rights. Abuse may be said to have occurred when a person suffers harm to their physical, emotional and social well-being.

Vulnerability

Vulnerability can result from the need for care, prompting, support, supervisor, help or advice. It may also result from exposure to the risk of abuse. A vulnerable person may be the carer, volunteer or staff member in certain situations.

Types of Abuse

- **Physical**
Hitting, slapping, kicking, hair-pulling, throwing objects, burning, scalding etc.
- **Neglect**
Physical neglect: Failure to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing, protection, supervision and medical and dental care, or to place persons at undue risk through unsafe environments or practices.
- **Passive neglect:** A caregiver's failure to provide or wilful withholding of the necessities of life including food, clothing, shelter or medical care.
- **Wilful deprivation:** Wilfully denying a person who, because of age, health or disability, requires medication or medical care, shelter, food, therapeutic devices or other physical assistance - thereby exposing that person to risk of physical, mental or emotional harm.
- **Emotional neglect:** The failure to provide the nurturance or stimulation needed for the social, intellectual and emotional growth or well being of an adult or child.
- **Sexual**
Any sexual contact between an adult and child 16 years of age and younger; or any sexual activity with an adult who is unable to understand, has not given consent, is threatened, coerced or forced to engage in sexual behaviour.
- **Emotional or psychological**
Verbal assaults, threats of maltreatment, harassment, humiliation or intimidation, or failure to interact with a person or to acknowledge that person's existence. This may also include denying cultural or religious needs and preferences.
- **Financial or material**
The improper use of another person's assets or the use or withholding of another person's resources.

Confidentiality

Children and adults have rights to protection from abuse. Such rights may require Footsteps to pass on confidential information to appropriate authorities. Relevant information about the protection of children must be shared with the investigative agencies, but only on a "need to know" basis.

Staff should be careful in subsequent discussions and ensure that information is only given to the appropriate person. All staff should be kept aware of issues relating to confidentiality and the status of information they may hold.

Confidentiality is respected at all times, but disclosure may be necessary to protect another person. Footsteps students, volunteers and staff must only inform the Footsteps Safeguarding Officer, Chris Hall, of disclosures. Chris Hall's contact details are available at every Footsteps Academy.

If you are unable to contact Chris Hall, report to your Academy Leader but do not disclose the details of the disclosure.

Reporting Abuse / Safeguarding Referrals

If you suspect abuse of any kind, or have a disclosure made to you that has Safeguarding implications, IMMEDIATELY inform the Footsteps Designated Lead Safeguarding Officer (DSL), Chris Hall, of your concerns, either by telephone or in person. This action takes precedence over any other task or activity.

Do not discuss the disclosure with colleagues, students, or anybody else. All information is to be regarded as **strictly confidential**.

Remember - It is not part of your role and responsibility to investigate abuse, but it is absolutely imperative that you report it as soon as possible. Also, ensure that you inform the young person making a disclosure to you that you cannot withhold information that has safeguarding implications.

If concerted attempts to contact the Designated Lead Safeguarding Officer are unsuccessful, telephone Lydia Hall and advise her that your attempts to contact the Designated Lead Safeguarding Officer have failed. You must not discuss the disclosure with anyone at this point – all information remains strictly confidential.

After informing the Designated Lead Safeguarding Officer, complete the Footsteps Safeguarding Disclosure Form, based on the information you have received regarding your concerns, and ensure that you have signed, timed, and dated the form. Email the completed form to the Lead Safeguarding Officer. Ensure that any information entered is treated as **strictly confidential**.

Within 2 hours of your initial email, contact the Designated Lead Safeguarding Officer again to ensure that they have acted on your information.

Failure to observe the procedures or failure to respect confidentiality will be regarded as gross misconduct and may lead to disciplinary action.

Footsteps Child Protection Officers

Designated Child Protection Lead: Chris Hall (Principal)

Deputy Designated Person: Chaz Syed (Operations Manager)

Nominated Child Protection Governor: Giles Hall (Chairman of Trustees)

Guidance on Dealing with Suspected Abuse

All staff should refer concerns to the designated person (DSL) as soon as possible – **this action takes precedence over any other task or activity**.

In the meantime, they should:

- listen to the child and take them seriously
- remain calm and caring
- reassure the child that they have done the right thing in talking to you
- make notes of the conversation as soon as possible, using the child's own words
- explain what will happen next and who will be told
- make a written record of the information given, including the time, date and place of the incident(s), persons present and what was said; sign and date the written record.

Do not:

- promise confidentiality
- postpone the discussion until a different time
- interpret what you have been told
- probe or ask leading questions.

Where you suspect that a child is being abused you should:

- immediately tell your line manager or the designated person for safeguarding about your concerns
- make factual notes of what has occurred, using the child's own words where relevant, and any action taken.

The designated person will follow the procedure below.

- Where possible, discuss concerns with the child and their parents and obtain agreement to making a referral to children's social care unless this discussion would put the child at increased risk of significant harm.

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- Seek professional advice if unsure about whether or not to talk to parents first.
- When a referral is made, agree what the child and parents will be told, by whom and when. Inform the recipient of the referral what information has already been discussed with the child and their parents.
- If a telephone referral is made it must be confirmed in writing within 48 hours. Children's social care should acknowledge your written referral within one working day of receiving it, indicating the course of action chosen. If nothing has been heard back within 3 working days, contact children's social care again.
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Under no circumstances confront the abuser. There is a risk of forewarning the abuser and compromising any investigation or prosecution.

Allegations against members of staff or volunteers

In the case of allegations against staff or volunteers, it is important that you do not discuss the allegations with anybody. Write down the allegations, including times, places and any details you have been given. Report immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (Chris Hall) – UNLESS the allegations concern Chris Hall (the lead safeguarding officer). In that case, contact Giles Hall (Chairman of the Board of Trustees and Trustees Safeguarding Officer), or, if the case is urgent, consider reporting directly to the local authority safeguarding team for guidance.

In some circumstances the Designated Lead Safeguarding Officer may wish to take action to prevent further danger to children or to the member of staff. Should the member of staff be suspended or asked to work under supervision or at a different location, this action should be regarded as a protective measure and no indication of guilt or otherwise will be suggested.

Further, again depending on the detail of the incident, the member of staff may face disciplinary action if the management decide an offence has occurred, even if the offence is not one of direct abuse.

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In the event of any disciplinary action, the action will be followed to conclusion whether that staff member remains at Footsteps or leaves employment. Where appropriate, any concerns will be reported to the relevant authorities / agencies.

Leadership and management of safeguarding

The Principal, DSL, and Management Team will ensure that the policies, procedures and training undertaken are effective and comply with the law at all times.

Safeguarding training can be done in house for new staff. However, all staff must enrol on a Safeguarding course as soon as is practically possible.

Footsteps will maximise Safeguarding performance by:

- Meeting responsibilities for inter agency, which includes providing a co-ordinated offer of early help when additional needs of children are identified
- ensuring that an effective child protection policy is in place together with a staff behaviour policy
- appointing a designated safeguarding lead who should undergo child protection training every two years
- making sure that children are taught about safeguarding.

Footsteps will prevent people who pose a risk of harm from working with children by:

- adhering to statutory responsibilities to check staff who work with children
- practise and review regularly a comprehensive Safer Recruitment policy

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- taking proportionate decisions on whether to ask for checks beyond that which is required
- ensuring that volunteers are appropriately supervised
- making sure that at least one person on any appointment panel has undertaken safer recruitment training¹
- ensuring there are procedures in place to handle allegations against members of staff and volunteers
- making sure that there are procedures in place to handle allegations against other children



Signed:

Chris Hall
Principal + DSL