


# Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

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#### Owner and version control

This document must be approved annually by Senior Leadership Team and presented to the Advisory Boards.

## 1. Purpose & intent

This policy ensures that our recruitment and operational practices align with child protection and safeguarding principles. We are committed to promoting safeguarding and providing clear guidance on recognising and responding to potential risks that may place a child in harm's way. Additionally, this policy highlights the risks of modern slavery and human trafficking, including how to identify signs of exploitation and report concerns appropriately.

At Best Practice Network, we firmly believe that no child, young person, or vulnerable adult should experience any form of abuse. We acknowledge our responsibility to safeguard the welfare of individuals within our training environments and those who engage with our organisation.

Best Practice Network is committed to the following principles:

- The welfare of each individual is paramount.
- Every person, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation, or identity, has the right to equal protection from all forms of harm or abuse.
- Collaboration with young people, vulnerable adults, their parents, carers, and relevant agencies is essential to ensuring their safety and well-being.

## 2. Scope & definition

This policy applies to all members of the Best Practice Network (BPN) Senior Leadership Team, employees, associates, facilitators, mentors, learners, service providers, and volunteers. It covers all programmes delivered by BPN to apprentices, trainees, and candidates, including those working directly with children.

All employees and associates must read and acknowledge this policy before undertaking work with BPN. The policy is accessible to all stakeholders on our website: [Best Practice Network Policies](#).

### Definitions

- **Child or Young Person** – Any individual under the age of 18, as defined by legislation.
- **Vulnerable Adult** – As per the *Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006*, an individual aged 18 or over who requires community care services due to mental or physical disability, age, or illness and is unable to protect themselves from significant harm or exploitation.

A vulnerable adult may include individuals who:

- Have a physical or sensory disability
- Are physically frail or have a chronic illness
- Have a mental illness, dementia, or a learning disability
- Are elderly and frail
- Misuse drugs and/or alcohol
- Live in sheltered housing or a care home
- Exhibit challenging behaviour
- Are detained in custody
- Receive payments from a local authority
- Require healthcare services

Vulnerability is context-dependent, and each case must be assessed individually.

- **Significant Harm** – The threshold for intervention by external agencies.
- **British Values** – Defined as democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance for different faiths and beliefs.

BPN promotes respect for others, in accordance with the *Equality Act 2010*, ensuring inclusivity across all protected characteristics.

### 3. Overview of our policy

#### Safeguarding Commitment

**Best Practice Network** is fully committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people, apprentices, and vulnerable adults. We take all reasonable steps to protect them from physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, neglect, and harm—ensuring their safety, wellbeing, and development.

#### Our Safeguarding Pledge

We will:

- **Provide a safe and supportive environment** for learning and development.
- **Proactively identify** individuals at risk of harm or suffering significant harm.
- **Take swift and appropriate action** to protect and safeguard those in our care.

#### Safe Recruitment & Partnerships

- We **rigorously DBS vet all employees**, conducting necessary background checks regardless of role.
- We **require suppliers, partners, and associates** to adhere to our safeguarding policies and procedures.
- We ensure **effective supervision, training, and quality assurance** across all operations.

Given our work across multiple schools and settings, it is essential that our staff and associates possess the **necessary checks, knowledge, and skills** to perform their roles safely and effectively.

## Our Definition of Safeguarding

For Best Practice Network, safeguarding and promoting welfare means:

- **Protecting** children and vulnerable adults from maltreatment and peer-on-peer abuse.
- **Promoting and monitoring digital safety** when using the internet, social media, or mobile devices provided by BPN.
- **Preventing harm** to health, development, or wellbeing.
- **Providing safe and effective care** to help children and vulnerable adults thrive.
- **Supporting positive outcomes**, enabling young people to achieve their full potential and transition successfully into adulthood.

## 4. Safeguarding commitment at Best Practice Network

Best Practice Network (BPN) is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people, and vulnerable adults, in accordance with:

- **The Children Act 1989 and 2004** (statutory duties to protect children's welfare).
- **Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)** (multi-agency safeguarding guidance).
- **The Care Act 2014** (protection of vulnerable adults).
- **Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE 2024)** (statutory guidance for education providers).
- **Apprenticeships Safeguarding Duty (ESFA 2023)** (safeguarding requirements for training providers).

## Implementation

### 1. Staff and Associates

- All employees, freelancers, and contractors must adhere to this policy, with commitment clauses embedded in their contracts.
- Regular updates are provided via mandatory training, briefings, and newsletters.

### 2. Learners and Apprentices

- This policy is included in all programme handbooks and forms part of the induction process.
- For apprentices, safeguarding is reinforced during monthly progress reviews, aligning with DfE compliance requirements.

### 3. Reporting and Accountability

- Concerns must be reported following our internal procedures, which reflect **Section 11 of the Children Act 2004** (organisational responsibility for safeguarding).
- Failure to comply may result in disciplinary action, in line with **Employment Law** and **Ofsted/ESFA safeguarding obligations**

## 5. Safer Recruitment - recruitment of employees

**Best Practice Network (BPN) is committed to responsible employment practices, ensuring full compliance with relevant legislation.** This includes exempting individuals with specific convictions from roles involving access to young people or vulnerable adults where a recognised risk exists.

As part of this commitment:

- All vacancies are routinely reviewed to assess associated risks.
- **Employment offers are conditional** on satisfactory completion of:
  - A **Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)** check.
  - The **HMG Baseline Personnel Security Standard (BPSS)**.
- Failure to meet these standards will result in withdrawal of the offer.
- Providing false or incomplete disclosure may lead to disciplinary action, including dismissal.

**DBS checks are risk-assessed per role**, and all related data is handled confidentially under the **Data Protection Act**.

- **New employees (from March 2024):** Must register with the **DBS Update Service** within one month of receiving their certificate.
- **Employees with pre-March 2024 DBS checks:** Will undergo a new check after 3 years and then join the Update Service.

### Recruitment Policy Compliance

BPN's **Safer Recruitment Policy** requires:

✓ **Trained interviewers** who understand safer recruitment processes.

✓ **All new starters** to complete DBS/BPSS checks and:

- Receive a **safeguarding briefing**.
- Complete **child protection/safeguarding training** (online and in-house Prevent training) within their first month.
- ✓ **Line managers and HR** to maintain logs proving compliance.
- ✓ A **central register** aligned with **KCSIE** requirements.

## 6. Safer recruitment -Recruitment of associates

- **Contractual Agreement:** Every new associate must sign a contract confirming their compliance with the **BPN Safeguarding Policy and Procedures**. This includes verifying that they have completed **safeguarding/child protection training** and **Prevent Duty training** and agree to undertake **annual refresher training**.
- **Onboarding Process:** HR will issue these documents as part of the onboarding process. **Annual updates** will be communicated to all associates.
- **Pre-Contract Requirements:** Any individual contracted to work for BPN must provide the following in advance:
  - **Date of Birth**
  - **DBS registration number and date**
  - **Proof of registration to the DBS Update Service** (where available)
- **Accountability:** The **line manager** and **HR** share responsibility for ensuring compliance and maintaining an **audit log** as evidence.
- **Safer Recruitment Policy:** BPN's **Safer Recruitment Policy** must **always** be followed.

## 7. Safer recruitment - Ongoing responsibility for employees and associates

### 1. Pre-Deployment Checks & Induction

- BPN managers **must not** assign employees or associates to work on behalf of BPN until all required safeguarding checks and inductions are completed.
- 2. **Annual & Ad-Hoc Briefings**
  - The BPN Safeguarding Team will conduct **annual briefing sessions** for all employees.
  - Additional briefings will be held when **new legislation or requirements** arise.
  - Non-attendees will receive the briefing materials via circulation.
- 3. **Line Manager Responsibilities**
  - Line managers, commissioners, and contractors **must**:
    - Include safeguarding as a **standard agenda item** in employee updates and training.
    - Collaborate with HR to **ensure compliance** with safeguarding measures.
- 4. **Ongoing Suitability Declarations**
  - **All employees and associates** must complete an **annual suitability declaration**.
    - **Employees:** Declarations will be stored in the **online HR system**.
    - **Associates:** Declarations will be stored on the **associate dashboard**.

## 8. Safeguarding good practice

### Commitment to Safeguarding

Best Practice Network acknowledges its duty to act promptly and responsibly on any reports or suspicions of abuse or neglect.

### Responsibilities of Staff and Partners

All individuals working with children, young people, apprentices, or adults at risk must:

1. **Prioritise Welfare**
  - Take all reasonable steps to safeguard the health, safety, and well-being of young people and vulnerable adults.
  - Ensure all activities are age-appropriate, considering participants' maturity, ability, and individual needs.
2. **Maintain Professional Conduct**
  - Uphold the highest standards of personal behaviour, appearance, and professionalism at all times.
  - Use appropriate language, gestures, and conduct to foster a safe and respectful environment.
3. **Minimise Risk in One-to-One Situations**
  - Avoid being alone with young people or vulnerable adults, including in cars or private meetings.
  - Where individual interactions are necessary, ensure they are:
    - Conducted openly (e.g., in visible or public spaces).
    - Approved and monitored by another responsible person.

### Reporting Concerns

Any concerns about abuse, neglect, or breaches of this policy must be reported immediately in line with our safeguarding procedures.

## 9. Working in schools and settings

BPN representatives must always adhere to the established procedures of the school, setting, or site they are visiting. These locations are responsible for implementing their own visitor and on-site worker protocols.

## 10. Ongoing training

All staff receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection training, including online safety. This covers expectations, roles, and responsibilities related to filtering and monitoring, with training provided at induction.

BPN ensures that:

- All employees complete **annual online safeguarding training** as part of BPN's **Essential training**.
- This policy is regularly reinforced through **employee briefings, line management communications, and training sessions** for associate facilitators and consultants.

BPN's Essential training include:

- Sexual Harassment (LC0014)
- Cyber Security (LC002)
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (LC007)
- GDPR (LC001)
- Health & Safety (LC003)
- Modern Slavery & Trafficking (LC005)
- Prevent Duty (LC008)
- Safeguarding: Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)

The **Designated Safeguarding Team (DSOs)** delivers tailored update training to BPN associates, coordinated with each programme team. Additionally, the policy is promoted via:

- Newsletters & internal communications.
- Whole-company briefings.
- Emails from the **Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs)**.

## 11. Responding to people who have experienced abuse or a Safeguarding concern

Best Practice Network acknowledges its responsibility to act on all reports or suspicions of abuse or neglect. Such concerns will be promptly investigated and securely recorded using our safeguarding platform, My Concern, to ensure consistent monitoring, follow-up, and compliance with safeguarding procedures.

To further strengthen safeguarding practices, we analyse trends through monthly reports generated by My Concern. These insights inform targeted training and continuous improvement in safeguarding across our organisation.

### How employees should respond to a disclosure or allegation<sup>1</sup> of abuse:

#### Immediate Actions:

1. **Stay Calm** – Maintain a composed and professional demeanour.
2. **Listen Actively** – Allow the individual to speak without interruption.

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<sup>1</sup> To raise and record concerns please refer to the guidance in [section 15](#) below.



3. **Do Not Promise Confidentiality** – Explain gently that you may need to involve safeguarding professionals to support them.
4. **Let Them Lead the Conversation** – Avoid pressing for details; let them share at their own pace.
5. **Ask Neutral Questions** – Use open-ended questions ("*Can you tell me more?*") and avoid leading language.
6. **Reassure Them** – Affirm that they've done the right thing by speaking up.

#### Next Steps:

7. **Explain the Process** – Inform them you'll escalate the concern to the **Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO)** and that **My Concern** will be used to record and track the case securely.
8. **Mention External Support** – If needed, the **Safeguarding Children's Board** (or equivalent) may be consulted.
9. **Record in My Concern Immediately** –
  - Log **verbatim details** (using the individual's words).
  - Include **date, time, location, and names mentioned**.
  - Upload any supporting evidence (e.g., photos, messages).
10. **Report to the DSO** – Submit the concern via **My Concern** and follow up verbally if urgent.

#### Confidentiality & Caution:

- **Only share on a *need-to-know* basis** – Discuss only with the DSO or safeguarding team.
- **Do NOT investigate** – Leave this to trained professionals.

#### If Abuse Is Witnessed or Just Occurred:

- The **DSO** will:
  - Review the **My Concern** record and initiate an investigation.
  - Update the case log with actions taken (all entries are **auditable and password-protected**).
- **Possible Pathways:**
  1. **Police Involvement** – If a crime is suspected.
  2. **Social Services Referral** – For welfare concerns.
  3. **Internal Disciplinary Action** – Led by BPN/employer

## 12. Managing allegations against an employee

Best Practice Network is committed to handling allegations against employees **promptly, fairly, and with strict confidentiality**. The following procedures apply:

1. **Initial Response**
  - All allegations will be investigated **swiftly and treated confidentially**.
  - If an employee is **suspected of a criminal offence**, the **police** will be informed without delay—particularly if an offence has been witnessed.
2. **Support for Vulnerable Individuals**



- Where a **child, learner or vulnerable adult** makes an allegation, arrangements will be made to ensure they can share their concerns **safely and without pressure**.
- 3. **Employee Status During Investigation**
  - Depending on the nature of the allegation, the employee **may be suspended** or temporarily reassigned to other duties **while the investigation is ongoing**.
- 4. **Whistleblowing Protection**
  - Employees are encouraged to raise concerns via our **Whistleblowing Policy**, which is clearly communicated to all staff.
  - Those reporting concerns in good faith will receive **full support** and protection under this policy.

## 13. Managing an allegation against a third-party supplier e.g. Facilitator or Instructor

Best Practice Network is committed to handling all allegations against third-party suppliers promptly, fairly, and with strict confidentiality. The following steps outline our process:

1. **Initial Response & Notification**
  - Allegations will be addressed **swiftly and confidentially**.
  - The third-party supplier will be **informed of the allegation**, and an investigation will commence.
2. **Legal & Police Involvement**
  - If the allegation suggests a **criminal offence**, the Police will be notified immediately.
  - If a crime is **witnessed**, emergency services should be contacted **without delay**.
3. **Support for the Reporter (Young Person or Vulnerable Adult)**
  - The **wishes and feelings** of the individual making the allegation will be respected.
  - A **safe and supportive environment** will be provided to ensure they can express their views without fear.
4. **Third-Party Investigation Oversight**
  - Best Practice Network will **request evidence** that a **full and impartial investigation** is being conducted by the third-party supplier.
  - We will **monitor progress** to ensure accountability.
5. **Corrective Action & Assurance**
  - Best Practice Network will **verify** that appropriate **corrective actions** have been implemented to prevent recurrence.
  - If necessary, we will **terminate the partnership** if the third party fails to meet safeguarding standards.

## 14. Keeping learners safe

We are committed to ensuring a safe, respectful, and supportive environment for all learners. To achieve this, we will:

- **Promote Respect and Inclusion:** Maintain a learning environment free from harassment, discrimination, or abuse, where everyone is treated with dignity and courtesy.
- **Collaborate for Safety:** Work in partnership with learners, employers, and external agencies to foster a culture of safety, health, and wellbeing.
- **Protect Vulnerable Learners:** Proactively identify and support learners at risk of abuse, neglect, or radicalisation, ensuring timely interventions.

- **Train and Empower Staff:** Ensure all employees and associates receive training on safeguarding best practices, including:
  - Recognising signs of abuse, neglect, or behavioural changes that may indicate harm.
  - Understanding factors that increase learner vulnerability.
  - Following clear reporting procedures (see *Section 15* and appendices).
- **Promote Learner Wellbeing:** Educate learners on personal health, safety (including online safety), and resilience to help them make informed decisions.
- **Combat Radicalisation:** Raise awareness of extremism and terrorism risks, equipping learners and staff to recognise and prevent radicalisation.
- **Provide Confidential Support:** Offer learners and employers access to designated safeguarding leads for confidential advice, guidance, and referrals to specialist agencies when needed.
- **Conduct Regular Safeguarding Check-Ins:**
  - Hold **monthly confidential reviews** with tutors, incorporating safeguarding and Prevent-related questions.
  - Explicitly ask learners, "*Do you feel safe?*" and provide support in line with policy.
  - Integrate safeguarding education into the **induction process** and ongoing training.
- **Build Resilience:** Through tutoring and training, empower learners to make safe, informed choices to protect themselves from exploitation and abuse.

## Digital Safeguarding and Online Safety

### Definition and Commitment

**Digital safeguarding** means protecting individuals from harm in the online environment through:

- ✓ **Technical measures** (e.g., filtering, monitoring).
- ✓ **Guidance and support** (e.g., training, reporting mechanisms).
- ✓ **Clear procedures** for incident response.

**Best Practice Network (BPN)** is committed to safeguarding all learners, employees, and users of our digital services in line with:

- The **Children Act 2004** (duty to promote welfare).
- **Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2024** (statutory guidance for schools/colleges).
- The **UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) & Data Protection Act 2018** (secure data handling).
- The **Online Safety Act 2023** (new duties on tech firms to protect users).

We apply the same safeguarding principles to **online and offline** activities.

### Key Online Risks

We protect our community from harms including:

- **Cyberbullying & harassment** (*Malicious Communications Act 1988*).
- **Sexual exploitation & grooming** (*Sexual Offences Act 2003*).
- **Discrimination & hate speech** (*Equality Act 2010*).
- **Sharing illegal content** (e.g., CSAM – *Protection of Children Act 1978*).
- **Impersonation, hacking & fraud** (*Computer Misuse Act 1990*).
- **Misinformation & radicalisation** (*Prevent Duty, Counter-Terrorism Act 2015*).

## Four Categories of Online Risk

Risk Area	Examples	Legal/Best Practice Reference
<b>Content</b>	Pornography, self-harm, extremism	<i>Online Safety Act 2023</i> (duty to remove illegal content)
<b>Contact</b>	Grooming, scams, peer pressure	<i>KCSIE 2023</i> (education on healthy relationships)
<b>Conduct</b>	Cyberbullying, nude sharing	<i>Revenge Porn Helpline</i> (support for image abuse)
<b>Commerce</b>	Phishing, gambling, fraud	<i>Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) scams guidance</i>

Report phishing/scams to the [Anti-Phishing Working Group \(APWG\)](#).

## Best Practices in Digital Safeguarding

BPN adopts the following **proactive measures**:

- **Regular staff training** on evolving online threats (aligned with *KCSIE*).
- **Age-appropriate education** for learners on privacy, critical thinking & reporting.
- **Secure systems** (GDPR-compliant data storage, encrypted communications).
- **Clear reporting pathways** (DSL contact always available).
- **Partnerships with experts** (e.g., *UK Safer Internet Centre*, *NSPCC*).

## Roles & Responsibilities

- **All users** must comply with our **IT Acceptable Use Policy**.
- **Employees/Associates** must report concerns to the **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)**.
- **IT Manager** monitors usage & implements security controls.
- **Apprentices** receive **mandatory online safety training** (Day 1 + refreshers).

**Note:** Even though BPN does not provide internet access, users must follow this policy when engaging with **BPN systems** (e.g., email, VLEs).

## Further Support

- **Report illegal content** to the [Internet Watch Foundation \(IWF\)](#).
- **Mental health support:** [Young Minds](#).
- **Full policy:** BPN Digital Safeguarding Policy: <https://www.bestpracticenet.co.uk/our-policies>

## Filtering and Monitoring

Best Practice Network (BPN) complies with statutory safeguarding requirements, including:

- **Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2024** (Part 1, Annex C) – Mandates robust filtering and monitoring.
- **Prevent Duty (2015)** – Requires blocking extremist content, informed by risk assessments.
- **UK GDPR & Data Protection Act 2018** – Balances privacy with safeguarding needs.
- **Ofsted's Online Safety Expectations** – Ensures a "whole-school approach."

## Our Safeguarding Measures

### 1. Technology & Tools

- **Lightspeed Filter & Alert** is deployed on all **BPN loan devices**, providing:
  - **AI-driven content blocking** (aligned with **UKCIS filtering standards**).
  - **Real-time alerts** for high-risk searches (e.g., self-harm, radicalisation).
  - **Customisable filtering policies** by user/group (e.g., staff vs. students).

## 2. Monitoring Protocols

- **Monthly Reports:** The DSL reviews Lightspeed analytics to identify trends or breaches.
- **Immediate Action:** Search alarms (e.g., violent or sexualised terms) trigger:
  - **DSL notification** within 24 hours.
  - **Follow-up** with the individual (staff/student) and safeguarding team.
  - **Escalation** to LADO/children's services if required (**Working Together 2023**).

## 3. Staff & Student Roles

- **IT Team:** Maintains Lightspeed systems, ensuring 99.9% uptime (SLA-backed).
- **DSL:** Leads monthly reviews, updating policies per emerging risks (e.g., AI misuse).
- **Students:** Contribute to annual policy reviews via surveys (**UNCRC Article 12**).

## 4. Annual Compliance

- **Lightspeed systems audited** against **SWGfL's filtering checklist**.
- **Prevent Duty risk assessments** refreshed biannually.

**Governance:** The Advisory Board reviews termly report, ensuring strategic alignment with **KCSIE Annex B**

## Sexual Harassment

**Best Practice Network** maintains a **zero-tolerance** stance towards sexual harassment, which includes but is not limited to:

- Indecent exposure
- Unwanted sexual remarks, teasing, or innuendo
- Inappropriate staring, touching, or physical advances
- Taking or distributing sexual photographs without consent
- Forced exposure to pornography
- Being made to witness sexual acts against one's will
- Any form of sexual coercion, assault, or rape

We recognise that victims—**particularly children, young people, and vulnerable adults**—may find it difficult to disclose abuse verbally. Therefore, **all staff, associates, and representatives** of Best Practice Network must:

- Remain vigilant for **potential signs of abuse or harassment**
- Act promptly by reporting concerns to the **Designated Safeguarding Leads** (see *Section 15*)

**Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action.**

## Peer on Peer abuse

At Best Practice Network (BPN), we maintain a **zero-tolerance stance** toward peer-on-peer abuse. We understand that the absence of reported incidents does not mean such abuse is not occurring within our programmes.

All employees and associates are trained to **recognise and respond** to peer-on-peer abuse appropriately. It must never be dismissed as "banter" or "just having a laugh," as tolerating such behaviour risks normalising harmful actions.

Any allegations of peer-on-peer abuse will be:

- **Recorded** systematically,
- **Investigated** thoroughly by the Designated Safeguarding Leads, and
- **Addressed** with appropriate action.

Where necessary, we will collaborate with external agencies, including the police, to ensure a robust response.

## SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability)

Best Practice Network recognises that learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) may face disproportionate challenges, including bullying (which can sometimes go unnoticed) and communication barriers. We are committed to ensuring their safety and well-being. If you have any concerns about a learner, please report them to the Designated Safeguarding Leads without delay.

## Care Leavers

At **Best Practice Network (BPN)**, we are committed to providing a **safe, inclusive, and supportive** environment for **Care Leavers** (aged 16-25) in adult learning and apprenticeships. Recognising their potential vulnerabilities—such as housing instability, financial hardship, and mental health challenges—we implement **trauma-informed practices** and tailored safeguarding measures to ensure their wellbeing and success.

### Key Points of the Policy:

1. **Identification & Support**
2. **Safeguarding & Wellbeing**
3. **Housing & Practical Assistance**
4. **Progression & Employability**
5. **Staff Training & Awareness**
6. **Partnerships & Monitoring**
7. **Reporting & Confidentiality**

Our Care Leavers policy is available on our website <https://www.bestpracticenet.co.uk/our-policies>

## 15. What to do if you are worried a child, young person or vulnerable adult is at risk

### Detailed Guidance

#### 1. Emergencies

If a child is at **immediate risk of harm**:

- Call 999 (Police) or 111 (NHS).

#### 2. Non-Urgent Safeguarding Concerns

- Report to Best Practice Network's Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO):
  - Email: [safeguarding@bestpracticenet.co.uk](mailto:safeguarding@bestpracticenet.co.uk)
  - Online: [BPN Safeguarding Page](#)
- If in a school/setting:
  - Inform the **manager on-site** and notify BPN's DSO **the same day**.

#### 3. Escalation Pathways

If concerns persist or are not addressed:

- Local Authority Child Protection Team:
  - [Find your local council's reporting portal](#).
- NSPCC Helpline:
  - ☎ 0808 800 5000 | ✉ [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk) | 📱 Text 88858.

#### 4. Mandatory Reporting: FGM

Under **Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023, para 40)**, teachers **must report** suspected FGM of girls under 18 to the **police immediately**.

#### Legal Duty

Under **Section 5B of the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003** (as amended by the **Serious Crime Act 2015**), all **teachers in England and Wales** must report to the police **known cases** of FGM where:

- A girl **under 18** has disclosed FGM.
- You observe **physical signs** (e.g., prolonged absence, difficulty walking, or changes in behaviour).

#### Key Statutory Guidance:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023), Paragraph 40 ([GOV.UK Link](#)).
- Mandatory Reporting Duty for FGM ([Home Office Guidance](#)).

#### Signs a Child May Be at Risk of or Have Undergone FGM

Physical Signs	Behavioural Signs	Contextual Risk Factors
Difficulty sitting/standing	Reluctance to undergo medical exams	Family history of FGM
Prolonged absence from school	Anxiety about holidays abroad	Mentions "special procedure" or "becoming a woman"
Sudden changes in behaviour	Withdrawal or depression	Family from a high-prevalence country (e.g., Somalia, Sudan, Egypt)

## Step-by-Step Reporting Process for FGM

### 1. Immediate Action:

- If the child is in **immediate danger**, call **999**.
- If no emergency but FGM is suspected, **call the police non-emergency line (101)** and submit a report to the **BPN DSO** within **24 hours**.

### 2. What to Report:

- The child's name, age, and address (if known).
- Details of the disclosure/evidence (e.g., "Child said she was 'cut' during holiday in Somalia").
- Any protective factors (e.g., sibling also at risk).

### 3. Follow-Up:

- **Document** all actions (time, date, police reference number).
- Inform the **school's DSL** (if in an educational setting).
- **Do NOT** confront the family directly—this could escalate risk.

### 4. Support for the Child:

- Refer to **NSPCC FGM Helpline (0800 028 3550)** or [NHS FGM Support](#).

## Additional Resources

- Home Office FGM Resource Pack: [Download Here](#)
- NSPCC FGM Guidance: [Visit Page](#)

## 5. Staff Support

BPN recognises staff may also face risks. Contact the **DSL** or senior leader for support.

## Key References

1. **Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023)** – [GOV.UK Link](#)
  - **Paragraph 40:** Mandatory FGM reporting.
2. **Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)** – [GOV.UK Link](#)



### 3. NSPCC Guidelines – [NSPCC Reporting Abuse](#)

Designated Safeguarding Leads	Phone number	Email address
Chris Garcia	07584310068	<a href="mailto:chrisgarcia@bestpracticenet.co.uk">chrisgarcia@bestpracticenet.co.uk</a>
Sian Marsh	07795683297 (Out of office hours 07799072872)	<a href="mailto:sianmarsh@bestpracticenet.co.uk">sianmarsh@bestpracticenet.co.uk</a>
DSO Team	0117 920 9200	<a href="mailto:safeguarding@bestpracticenet.co.uk">safeguarding@bestpracticenet.co.uk</a>

## 16. Confidentiality and Safeguarding in Work with Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults.

When working with children, young people, or vulnerable adults, maintaining clear and transparent communication about confidentiality is essential. While professionals and agencies are legally obligated to protect personal information and generally cannot disclose it without consent, **the welfare of the individual takes precedence if there are concerns about significant harm.** In such cases, safeguarding must be the priority, and appropriate information sharing becomes imperative.

### *Key Principles for Practitioners:*

1. **Open Communication from the Start**
  - Discuss confidentiality and safeguarding policies at the outset of any engagement.
  - Provide regular reminders to ensure understanding of processes and professional responsibilities.
  - Clearly explain the **limits of confidentiality** before any issues arise.
2. **Avoid Promising Secrecy**
  - Never guarantee absolute confidentiality. If a child discloses abuse, explain sensitively that you must report it to ensure their safety.
3. **Responsible Information Sharing**
  - If sharing confidential information becomes necessary, explain the reasons to the individual in an age-appropriate manner.
  - Seek their cooperation where possible and keep them informed about next steps.
4. **Support and Guidance**
  - Provide clear explanations of:
    - **Why** information must be shared.
    - **What** processes will follow.
    - **Who** will be involved and how they can seek support.

By fostering trust through transparency, professionals can balance confidentiality with the critical duty of safeguarding vulnerable individuals.

## 17. Recording and managing confidential information

Best Practice Network is committed to maintaining confidentiality wherever possible. Information relating to safeguarding concerns will only be shared with relevant parties on a strict need-to-know basis.

All records will be stored securely in accordance with UK data protection legislation, including the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.

All staff and partners must adhere to this protocol, ensuring alignment with organisational safeguarding procedures and statutory duties.

## 18. The Prevent Duty Guidance 2023

### BPN's Prevent Commitment in Education

As an education provider, **Best Practice Network (BPN)** fulfils its **Prevent Duty** under the **Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015** by:

Key Responsibility	Education-Specific Actions
<b>Policy &amp; Compliance</b>	Regularly updated <b>Prevent Policy</b> aligned with <b>Department for Education (DfE) guidelines</b> and <b>Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)</b> .
<b>Staff Training</b>	Mandatory <b>Prevent Awareness Training</b> for all staff, plus <b>WRAP training</b> for DSLs. Annual refreshers include <b>education-sector case studies</b> .
<b>Curriculum Integration</b>	Promoting <b>British Values</b> (democracy, rule of law, etc.) through teaching materials and pastoral support.
<b>Threat Monitoring</b>	<b>Monthly reviews</b> of local Prevent threats/trends at safeguarding meetings, using <b>Home Office data</b> and <b>local authority briefings</b> .
<b>Reporting &amp; Referrals</b>	Clear protocols for escalating concerns to the <b>DSL</b> or <b>Channel Panel</b> (for tailored support).

### Education-Specific Prevent Practices (2024)

#### 1. Monthly Threat Reviews

- **At safeguarding meetings**, DSLs analyse:
  - Local **Prevent referral trends** (e.g., rising far-right or Islamist extremism in schools).
  - **Online risks** (e.g., extremist content targeting young people via social media).
  - **Student vulnerabilities** (e.g., bullying, mental health, or exposure to extremist influences).

#### 2. Embedding Safeguarding in Reviews and Curriculum

- address critical thinking, online safety, and extremist narratives.
- promote democratic values and counter extremist views.

#### 3. Staff Vigilance

- Training covers **spotting signs** (e.g., sudden changes in behaviour, extremist language in assignments).
- **Digital safeguarding** policies monitor school devices/networks for extremist material.

## Key Definitions

Term	Definition	Relevance to Schools/Training Providers
<b>Channel Panel</b>	Multi-agency group assessing Prevent referrals and providing support.	Schools may refer vulnerable students for <b>mentoring or counselling</b> .
<b>Online Grooming</b>	Extremists targeting young people via gaming/social media.	Staff must follow <b>online safety policies</b> and report concerns.
<b>Far-Right Extremism</b>	Hate-based ideologies promoting racial/religious violence.	Rising concern in schools; addressed via <b>inclusive curricula</b> .

## Reporting

1. **Staff observe concern** (e.g., extremist views expressed in class).
2. **Immediate referral to DSL** using internal safeguarding forms.
3. **DSL assesses risk** and escalates to **Channel/Police** if needed.
4. **Monthly meeting** reviews outcomes and adjusts strategies.

## Emergency Contacts:

- **Anti-Terrorist Hotline:** 0800 789 321

# 19. Modern Slavery in the UK (2025): Know the Signs & Take Action

## What is Modern Slavery?

Modern slavery is the illegal exploitation of people for profit through coercion, violence, or deception. Despite the UK's **Modern Slavery Act 2025** amendments and AI-driven compliance tools, exploitation persists in hidden supply chains, unregulated gig work, and even digital spaces (e.g., social media recruitment scams).

## Who is at Risk in the UK?

Victims can be any age, gender, or nationality. **2025-specific risks include:**

- **Migrant workers** in construction, car washes, nail bars, or **green energy supply chains** (e.g., lithium battery factories).
- **Care workers** on exploitative visas tied to single employers.
- **Children** forced into **county lines drug trafficking** or **online sexual exploitation**.
- **Homeless individuals** coerced into **cannabis farms** or **scam call centres**.

## Key Signs (Updated for 2025)

Modern slavery is often hidden in plain sight. Look for:

- ✓ **Physical Signs** – Injuries, malnourishment, or wearing **dirty/unseasonal clothing** (e.g., no coat in winter).
- ✓ **Behavioural Signs** – Avoids eye contact, seems fearful, or has **scripted responses** (potential trafficking coaching).
- ✓ **Work Conditions** – Excessive hours, **paid below minimum wage** (£12.50/hr in 2025), or no proper contract.
- ✓ **Living Conditions** – Overcrowded houses, **landlords withholding passports**, or windows permanently covered.
- ✓ **Digital Control** – No personal phone, **social media managed by someone else**, or payments in cash/crypto.

## Types of Modern Slavery in the UK (2025)

Type	UK-Specific Risks
Human Trafficking	Victims moved via <b>fake UK work visas</b> or "debt bondage" in food processing.
Forced Labour	Exploitation in <b>delivery gig work</b> , garment factories, or <b>off-grid car washes</b> .
Sexual Exploitation	Brothels disguised as massage parlours or <b>AI-coerced OnlyFans accounts</b> .
Criminal Exploitation	Forced <b>county lines drug trafficking</b> or <b>benefit fraud</b> (e.g., Universal Credit scams).
Domestic Servitude	Hidden in wealthy households, with victims isolated and unpaid.

## How to Report

The UK's **Modern Slavery Helpline (0800 0121 700)** now includes:

- ◆ **AI Chatbot Assistance** – Anonymous reporting via **WhatsApp or Signal**.
- ◆ **Blockchain Verification** – Employers must log worker IDs on **Home Office-approved ledgers**.
- ◆ **Local Council Scanners** – AI audits **HMO licences** to flag overcrowded housing.
- ◆ **QR Code Posters** – In public toilets, takeaways, and job centres for discreet alerts.

### Act Now:

- **Text "HELP" to 61016** (UK Modern Slavery Helpline).
- **Scan a QR code** in suspicious workplaces.
- **Check your employer's compliance** via the **GOV.UK Modern Slavery Register**.

## Why This Matters in 2025:

The UK estimates **over 130,000 victims** (Home Office, 2025), with **only 1 in 6 identified**. Tech and vigilance are critical to stopping exploitation.

# Reference Terms

## A. The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

[Guidance on DBS checks for employers](#)

## B. Legal Framework

This policy aligns with UK legislation and guidance designed to safeguard children, including:

- **Children Act 1989**
- **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) 1991**
- **Data Protection Act 2018 & UK GDPR**
- **Human Rights Act 1998**
- **Sexual Offences Act 2003**
- **Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003**
- **Children Act 2004**

- **Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006**
- **Children and Families Act 2014**
- **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Code of Practice (0-25) 2014**
- **Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015**
- **Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023)**
- **Prevent Duty Guidance: England and Wales (2023)**

## C. Context

Child protection is an integral aspect of **safeguarding and promoting welfare**, referring to actions taken to protect children at risk of **significant harm**. This policy applies to all individuals under **18 years of age**, hereafter referred to as *children*.

As outlined in the **DfE's *Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)***, safeguarding encompasses:

- Protecting children from **maltreatment**
- Preventing **impairment to health or development**
- Ensuring safe and effective care
- Enabling **positive outcomes** for all children
- Adhering to **Prevent Duty Guidance (2023)** under the **Counter-Terrorism and Security Act (2015)**

**Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024)** mandates safeguarding duties for schools including training providers (including maintained nurseries). [Read the full guidance here.](#)

We uphold the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**, affirming that:

- All children have the **right to protection**
- Children's **views must be heard and respected**
- Interventions must be **child-centred**
- Safeguarding requires **multi-agency collaboration**
- Professionals must consider **race, gender, disability, culture, sexuality, and age** in safeguarding responses

## D. Definitions of Abuse

**Abuse** involves maltreatment through **harmful acts or failure to protect**. It can occur in **families, institutions, or communities**, including online, and may be perpetrated by **adults or other children**.

### 1. Physical Abuse

Includes **hitting, shaking, poisoning, burning, or fabricated illness**. **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)** is a form of gender-based violence addressed under safeguarding procedures.

### 2. Emotional Abuse

Persistent **emotional harm**, such as **belittling, silencing, or bullying (including cyberbullying)**. It may involve **exposure to domestic abuse** or **developmentally inappropriate demands**.

### 3. Sexual Abuse

Involves **coercing a child into sexual activities**, whether **contact (e.g., rape, assault)** or **non-contact (e.g., grooming, indecent imagery)**. Abuse can occur **online or offline** and is **not limited by gender or age**.

### 4. Neglect

Persistent **failure to meet basic needs**, including:

- Lack of **food, shelter, or medical care**
- Exposure to **harm or inadequate supervision**
- Ignoring **emotional needs**

### 5. Abuse and Children with Disabilities

Disabled children face **higher risks** due to:

- **Communication barriers**
- **Dependency on multiple carers**
- **Social isolation or intimidation**

Safeguarding responses **must not tolerate lower standards** for disabled children.

## E. Safeguarding Issues

Staff must recognise risks such as:

- **Child-on-child abuse** (bullying, sexual harassment, upskirting, hazing)
- **Drug/alcohol misuse**
- **Serious violence (e.g., county lines)**
- **Radicalisation**
- **Sharing of nude imagery (sexting)**

**Key Principles:**

- **Never dismiss harmful behaviour** as "banter" or "normal".
- **Report concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).**

## F. Exploitation and Harm

### 1. Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

Includes **forced involvement in drug trafficking, theft, or violence**. Victims may **appear complicit** but are **legally recognised as exploited**.

### 2. Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Involves **coercion into sexual acts**, including **16–17-year-olds** who can legally consent. Perpetrators may use **grooming or blackmail**.

### 3. Domestic Abuse

Encompasses **psychological, physical, or financial abuse**. Children may be **direct victims** or **witnesses**, impacting their **wellbeing and education**.

### 4. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

**Teachers must report suspected FGM** in under-18s to the **police**.

### 5. Mental Health Concerns

May indicate **underlying abuse**. Staff should **follow safeguarding procedures** and consult the **DSL**.

### 6. Serious Violence

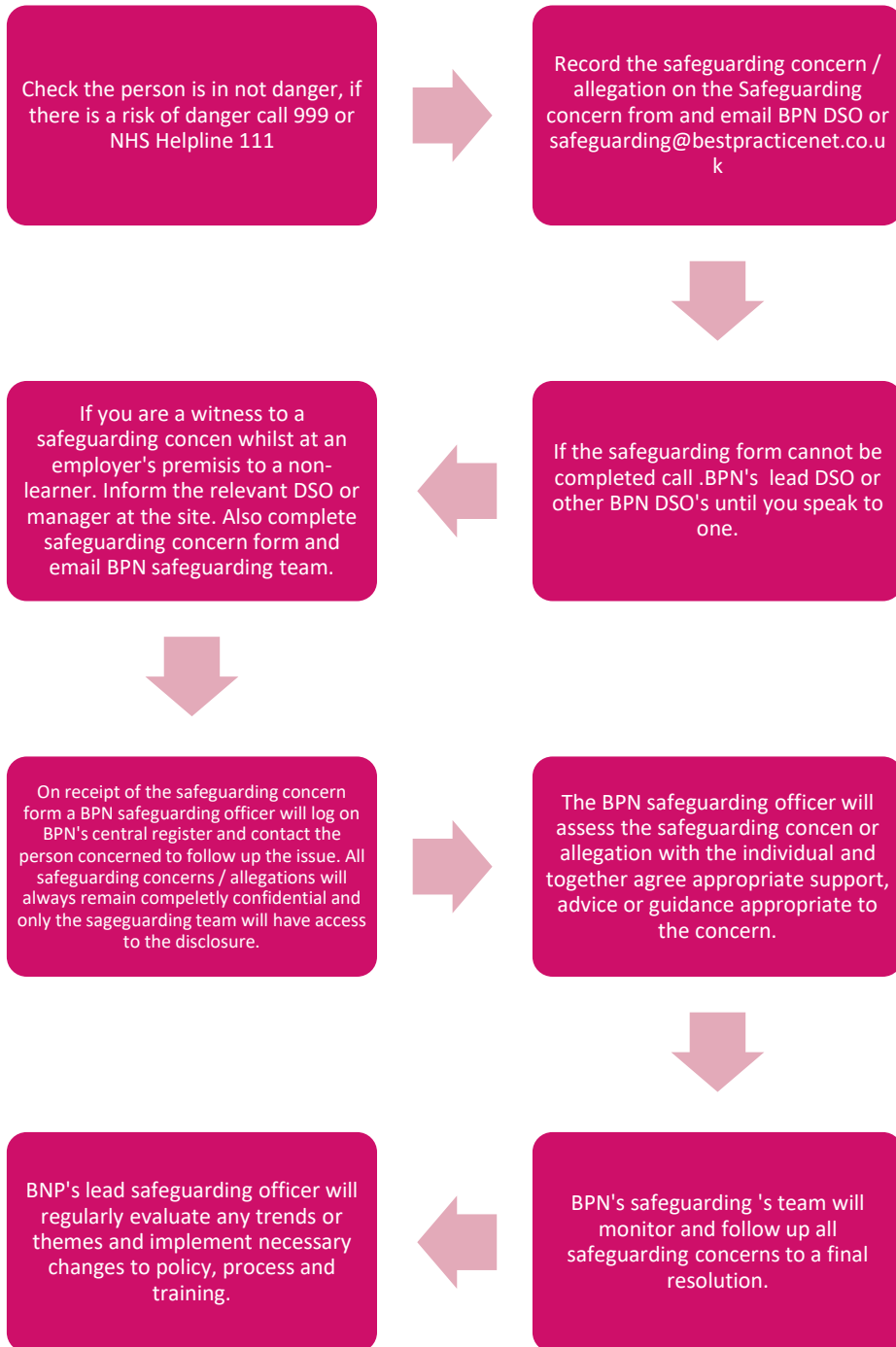
Warning signs include:

- **Unexplained absences/injuries**
- **Association with older individuals**
- **Possession of expensive gifts**



## Appendices

### Reporting Procedure



### Safeguarding Concern Form

<https://www.bestpracticenet.co.uk/safeguarding>