



Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy - Scunthorpe

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Introduction

Opening Doors recognises and is committed to fulfilling its statutory duties, roles and responsibilities under Section 42-46 of the Care Act (2014) in ensuring each and every vulnerable adult is protected and safeguarded against potential harm and abuse.

For the purpose of clarity within this document the term ‘vulnerable adult’ refers to an adult who may be at risk of abuse or neglect. This includes, but is not limited to, adults who have needs for care and support, are experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect, and as a result of those needs, are unable to protect themselves. Opening Doors considers the welfare and safety of all individuals it comes into contact with, irrespective of whether they meet the full statutory criteria for a safeguarding enquiry at a given moment.

Aim

The aim of this policy is to provide all staff, service users, parents, governors and volunteers with clear guidance and effective procedures to ensure everyone associated with the service is safe. This policy outlines our statutory duties and responsibilities under the Care Act (2014) and the Children and Families Act (2014), ensuring a cohesive and integrated approach across our service, social care and health.

We wish to promote:

- The safety and welfare of all vulnerable adults in the service.
- A high level of commitment to accepting individual responsibility for all safeguarding issues.
- High levels of training and professional development to ensure all staff have the skills necessary to implement this policy.

Opening Doors recognises that to ensure the best safeguarding outcomes for its service users, a joined up, multi-agency approach is vital. Opening Doors adheres to the Safeguarding Adults Procedures for North Lincolnshire. Opening Doors Safeguarding Policy and practice gives due regard to and is informed by the following statutory and local guidance, policies and procedures:

- North Lincolnshire Safeguarding Adults Board Multi Agency Policy & Procedures
- Criminal Exploitation of Children and Vulnerable Adults: County Lines Guidance

Safeguarding at Opening Doors is not purely limited to the implementation of this policy. Safeguarding of vulnerable adults is a holistic approach that runs throughout everything we do at Opening Doors and we aim to provide our service users with the necessary skills and abilities to keep themselves safe and to know what to do when they feel unsafe.

Principles of Adult Safeguarding

Opening Doors follows the 6 principles of Adult Safeguarding which underpin all reporting, investigations and referrals related to adult safeguarding:

- Empowerment: Personalisation and the presumption of person-led decisions and informed consent.
- Prevention: It is better to take action before harm occurs
- Proportionality: Proportionate and least intrusive response appropriate to the risk presented.
- Protection: Support and representation for those in greatest need.
- Partnership: Providing local solutions through services working with their communities. Communities have a part to play in preventing, detecting and reporting neglect and abuse.
- Accountability: Accountability and transparency in delivering safeguarding.

The Mental Capacity Act and 'Undue Influence'

The MCA 2005, is frequently raised in relation to adult safeguarding and requires the utmost care, particularly where it appears an adult with capacity for making decisions that nevertheless places them at risk of being abused or neglected.

The Mental Capacity act 2005 is designed to protect and restore power to adults who may lack or have reduced capacity to make certain decisions. The following principles apply for the purposes of this act:

- A person must be assumed to have capacity unless it is established that he/she lacks capacity.
- A person is not to be treated as unable to make a decision unless all practicable steps help him/her to do so have been taken without success.
- A person is not treated as unable to make a decision merely because he/she makes an unwise decision
- An act done or the decision made, under the Act for on behalf of a person who lacks capacity must be done, or made, in his/her best interests.
- Before the act is done, or the decision is made, regard must be had to whether the purpose for which it is needed can be as effectively achieved in a way that is less restrictive of the person's rights and freedom of action.

Where an adult at risk has capacity but is suspected to be acting under duress or being coerced this may be due to 'Undue Influence'. 'Undue influence' applies to situations where there is evidence of coercion or undue pressure in reference to financial or property transactions. Three initial points in relation to this are:

- The unduly influenced person has mental capacity to take decision in question
- The person is influenced to enter into a transaction in such a way that is not of his/her own free will
- There are 2 legal types of undue influence. 'Express' in relation to gifts and wills or 'presumed' that applies to gifts only. Consent should therefore not always be taken at face value, since some adults may need protection from emotional manipulation or exploitation.

Policy Monitoring and Review Arrangements

The policy will be monitored by Directors and staff with Safeguarding responsibility at least once per year. The policy will be reviewed annually or in the event of any significant local or national policy changes.

Implementation

It is the duty of the Designated Safeguarding Lead / Service Manager to ensure all service users are safeguarded at all times. The Designated Safeguarding Lead at Opening Doors is Lynsey Bloomer. A list of key contacts can be found at appendix 2.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will ensure that all staff members at Opening Doors undertake safeguarding training relevant to their roles at least every 12 months. This will be delivered through a combination of online safeguarding training and safeguarding workshops. Every member of staff will undertake a comprehensive induction on commencement of employment at Opening Doors and this includes an introduction to safeguarding and the PREVENT duty. This training format will enable staff to be aware of any changes within the safeguarding arena and to recognise and respond to potential indicators of abuse.

Types of Abuse

Physical Abuse

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

Sexual Abuse

Involves forcing or enticing someone to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the person is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving vulnerable adults in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging vulnerable adults to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a Young person in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other vulnerable adults.

Emotional Abuse

The persistent emotional maltreatment of a vulnerable adult such as to cause severe and adverse effects to one's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a vulnerable adult 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 vulnerable adult 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 a vulnerable adult.

These may include interactions that are beyond a vulnerable adult's developmental capability as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the vulnerable adult participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing vulnerable adults frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of vulnerable adults. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of vulnerable adults, although it may occur alone.

Neglect

The persistent failure to meet a vulnerable adult's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of health or development. Neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to: provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment); protect a vulnerable adult from physical and emotional harm or danger; ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a vulnerable adult's basic emotional needs. Opening Doors also specifically recognises the importance of addressing Self-Neglect, where an adult neglects their own care needs.

Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is defined as any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence, or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, personally connected to each other. It does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a pattern of behaviour. The behaviour is considered abusive if it consists of any of the following:

- Physical or Sexual Abuse
- Violent or Threatening Behaviour
- Controlling or Coercive Behaviour
- Economic Abuse
- Psychological, Emotional, or other Abuse

Financial or material Abuse

Financial abuse is the main form of abuse investigated by the Office of the Public Guardian. Financial abuse can occur in isolation but research has shown, where there are other types of abuse there is often financial abuse. This can include theft; fraud; exploitation; misappropriation; misuse and withholding of money or property. Staff borrowing money or objects from a service user is also considered financial abuse.

Organisational Abuse

Organisational abuse includes neglect and poor care practice within an institution or specific care setting. This may range from one off incidents to ongoing ill-treatment. Organisational abuse is most likely to occur when staff receive little support; are inadequately trained or poorly supervised/supported. Potential indicators can include: inappropriate rules and regulations; lack of service user stimulation; inappropriate staff behaviour and restriction of external contacts.

Discriminatory abuse

Discriminatory abuse is a pattern of behavior or specific acts that violate an adult's rights, cause distress, or fail to meet their individual needs based on prejudice, biases, or a lack of understanding regarding their differences (such as race, religion, sexuality, or disability). It ranges from subtle unprofessional conduct (like teasing or inappropriate staff conversations) and systemic failings (such as inadequate staff training or care plans that overlook individuality) to severe, intentional harm. The most extreme forms include denial of civil rights, medical neglect based on disbelief, humiliation, and outright hate crimes like assault, all rooted in discriminatory beliefs.

Peer on Peer Abuse

If one vulnerable adult causes harm to another, this should not necessarily be dealt with as abuse. However, it may be appropriate to regard a vulnerable adult's behaviour as abusive if:

- There is a large difference in power (for example age, size, ability, development) between the vulnerable adult's concerned; or
- The perpetrator has repeatedly tried to harm one or more other vulnerable adult; or
- There are concerns about the intention of the alleged perpetrator

If the evidence suggests that there was an intention to cause severe harm to the victim, this should be regarded as abusive whether or not severe harm was actually caused. Where it is judged by the Designated Safeguarding Lead that peer abuse has taken place, as with any other form of abuse there will be a referral made to social care. Where the act is judged to be bullying behaviour the Service will follow procedure and a referral to social care may be made at the discretion of the DSL.

Criminal Exploitation & Cuckooing

Criminal exploitation of vulnerable adults is widespread geographically. It is relatively little known about or recognised by those best placed to spot victims. It can still be exploitation even if the activity appears consensual and can involve force or enticement to encourage vulnerable adults into crime. It is usually typified by a power imbalance in favour of those perpetrating the exploitation. Some indicators of county lines involvement and exploitation are listed below, with those at the top of particular concern:

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

Cuckooing is a practice where criminals take over a person's home and use the property to facilitate exploitation. It takes the name from cuckoos who take over the nests of other birds. There are different types of cuckooing: using the property to deal drugs, store or take drugs and using the property to sex work and often involve vulnerable people being exploited. There are several signs to look out for that may indicate someone is a victim of cuckooing:

- frequent visitors at unsociable hours
- changes in the neighbour's daily routine
- unusual smells coming from a property
- suspicious or unfamiliar vehicles outside an address on a regular basis.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

FGM is a procedure where the female genital organs are injured or changed and there is no medical reason for this. It is frequently a very traumatic and violent act for the victim and can cause harm in many ways. The practice can cause severe pain and there may be immediate and/or long-term health consequences, including mental health problems, difficulties in childbirth, causing danger to the child and mother; and/or death.

Modern Slavery

Modern slavery is the illegal exploitation of people for personal or commercial gain. It's a serious crime and a violation of fundamental human rights. Modern slavery is an umbrella term encompassing a range of severe exploitative practices, including human trafficking, slavery, servitude, and forced or compulsory labour. All concerns must be reported immediately to the police and adult social care.

Radicalisation and The Prevent Duty

Radicalisation refers to the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and extremist ideologies associated with terrorist groups. The DSL and Deputy DSL have undertaken Prevent training in line with the Prevent Duty to protect vulnerable adults from radicalisation. All staff complete annual training to raise awareness of Prevent. This forms part of a rolling programme of staff training.

Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between vulnerable adults of any sex. They can also occur through a group sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single or group of vulnerable adults. Sexual violence refers to sexual offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 including; Rape, Assault by Penetration and sexual assault. Sexual harassment refers to unwanted conduct of a sexual nature that can occur online or offline. This could include; sexual comments such as telling sexual stories, making lewd comments, making sexual remarks about clothes and appearance and calling someone sexualised names. It may also include sexual 'jokes' or taunting, physical behaviour such as deliberately brushing against someone, interfering with someone's clothes and displaying pictures, photos or drawings of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment can also occur online and may include non-consensual sharing of sexual images and videos (often referred to as sexting), inappropriate sexual comments on social media, exploitation, coercion and threats. Online harassment may be standalone, or part of a wider pattern of sexual harassment and/or sexual violence.

Cause for Concern processes

Cause for Concern - Reporting & Recording

A cause for concern is an action, observation, discussion or disclosure that makes you feel anxious or worried about the well-being or safety of a vulnerable adult. Signs of abuse may come through disclosure, complaint, expression of concern, or witnessing something. Any concerns about a service users' safety or well-being at home, on transport or when accessing the service should be reported immediately to the DSL.

Where there is concern regarding the welfare of a vulnerable adult this should be recorded immediately on the Cause for Concern form (see appendix 1). These forms can be accessed via the Google Docs Cause for Concern form and can also be found printed at service premises. The completed form must then be passed directly to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). In the absence of the DSL the form should be passed to the deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead within the service (Heather Holt) or in the absence of all of the above the concern should be discussed with a Duty Officer at Adult Social Care. When in the community, reporting a concern may be done via telephone and the form sent to the DSL at the first available opportunity.

Where a concern is linked to a visible mark on a vulnerable adult, then the body map on the Cause for Concern form needs to be completed in full. As well as the location of marks a brief description of the size, shape and colour is needed.

All meetings, telephone calls, discussions and decisions made (including rationale) that relate to any potential concerns about the safety or well-being of the service users must be recorded on the reverse of the cause for concern or adjoining documentation.

As a result of a Cause for Concern the DSL, or deputy DSL will, decide on the most appropriate course of action, record this and then act accordingly. This may include referrals to external agencies such as the Police and Adult Social Care. The Local Authority Adult Social Care team decides if the concern reaches the threshold for a Section 42 enquiry. If concerns don't meet the Section 42 criteria, the Local Authority may still offer support under other parts of the Care Act.

Where possible, actions will be shared with the person raising the initial concern. If this does not happen it does not mean that action has not been taken but in some circumstances it may not be appropriate to share information.

Cause for Concern - possible actions

Examples of the action that the DSL or a deputy DSL may take include, but are not limited to:

- No further action at this point - The DSL has decided that the concern does not warrant an action at this point. There is no safeguarding concern.
- Team to call home for further information - the DSL has decided that further information from a parent/carer would help to inform the circumstances around the concern.
- Situation monitored - the DSL has decided that as a stand-alone concern there is not a safeguarding issue but should further concerns of this nature arise there may be sufficient reason to act further.
- Advisory call to Social Care - the DSL has decided that there is potential evidence of a safeguarding issue and the advice of social care will assist in best informing next actions.
- Safeguarding Alert raised with social care - the DSL has decided that there is sufficient concern to indicate that a vulnerable adult is unsafe and has shared the information with Social Care in order to take action under North Lincolnshire Safeguarding Adults Procedures.
- Action within the service - the DSL has decided that the concern is one which can be addressed and resolved through service action. This may be a concern around bullying or peer relationships for example.
- Referral to the Police or intel report to Police.

Where there is belief, or reason to believe that a crime has been committed this will be immediately referred to the police as a starting point. This would include any crime relating to sexual violence, amongst others.

Where it has been confirmed that vulnerable adults have suffered some form of abuse, appropriate support will be given to them in partnership with other services, with the DSL playing a pivotal role in targeting a 'tiered working' response.

Allegations against Adults working with Vulnerable Adults

Any concerns, allegations or disclosures, about the conduct of a member of staff, must be reported immediately to Lynsey Bloomer (Service Manager). In the absence of the Service Manager concerns must be reported to Sarah Parker (Principal, Trent View College) who will notify a Director. Concerns about the conduct of staff should be recorded via the 'Staff concern / Whistleblowing' Google Form. This action will hopefully prevent minor concerns, which can be resolved with support and guidance, from escalating into serious concerns and incidents. In the case of serious concerns this will enable the Service Manager to act immediately to resolve it. Where anyone has a concern which may implicate the Service Manager, this must be reported to Sarah Parker (Principal, Trent View College) who will notify a Director.

Concerns may relate to any number of issues, including the actions or inactions of an employee, director, volunteer, contractor or agency member of staff, which potentially demonstrate behaviours not in line with the services's code of conduct or within the reasonable expectations of professional behaviour placed upon those working in an environment with vulnerable adults. Concerns do not have to directly involve vulnerable adults.

Examples of concerning behaviour could include, but are not limited to:

- being over friendly with vulnerable adults;
- having favourites;
- taking photographs of vulnerable adults on a personal mobile phone (other than within the LogMyCare App);
- engaging with a vulnerable adults on a one-to-one basis in a secluded area or behind a closed door;
- using inappropriate, sexualised, intimidating or offensive language;
- working outside of the training and guidance given when using physical intervention.

Such behaviour can exist on a wide spectrum, from the inadvertent or thoughtless, or behaviour that may look to be inappropriate, but might not be in specific circumstances, through to that which is ultimately intended to enable abuse.

Allegations may also relate to transferable risk for example:

- Children's Social Care are involved with the adult's own child or children;
- concerns arise about a person's behaviour about their own children (or children for which they have a caring role);
- concerns arise about the behaviour of a partner, member of the family or other household member;
- where other information suggests they may pose a risk to any person that may demonstrate a transferable risk within their role with vulnerable adults.

Allegations relating to transferable risk will be responded to as per the processes above and where appropriate the transferable risk will be explored and risk-assessed by the service, this may involve seeking advice from the Adult Social Care team to evaluate transferable risk.

There are three key areas for consideration in response to allegations:

- A Police investigation of a possible criminal offence;
- Adult Social Care enquiries and/or assessment about whether a vulnerable adult is in need of protection or services;
- Consideration by the employer of disciplinary action.

If there are concerns that abuse or a crime has been committed then the Service Manager will liaise appropriately with external agencies such as the Police and Adult Social Care. Detailed records will be made to include decisions, actions taken, and reasons for these.

Parents/carers are typically informed of an allegation. However, if doing so could obstruct disciplinary or investigative proceedings advice will be sought from the Police or HR Business Partner. The individual against whom the allegation is made will be supported to understand the concerns and the processes involved by the Service Manager.

Suspension is not an automatic response when an allegation is reported. All options to avoid suspension are considered prior to taking that step. The Service manager will consider carefully whether the circumstances warrant suspension from contact with vulnerable adults at the service, or until the allegation is resolved. In many cases, an investigation can be resolved quickly and without the need for suspension. However, suspension will be considered when there's a suspected risk of harm to a vulnerable adult at the service, or if the case is serious enough to warrant dismissal should it be proven.

If an allegation is determined to be unsubstantiated, unfounded, false or malicious, the designated safeguarding lead will consider whether the person who has made the allegation is in need of help or may have been abused by someone else and this is a cry for help. In such circumstances, a referral to adult social care may be appropriate.

Where an employee is dismissed from employment or resigns prior to the conclusion of disciplinary action the service may make a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service if appropriate. Where disciplinary action is not warranted there could be a number of other outcomes which are implemented in order to support the staff member and prevent or reduce the likelihood of recurrence. These could include:

- Opportunity to undertake retraining in a specific area
- Advisory conversation relating to staff conduct
- Employee support plan

Relevant records will be retained to enable any cumulative concern over time to be assessed and addressed.

How to respond to disclosures

If a vulnerable adult chooses to disclose information to you, you SHOULD:

- be accessible and receptive
- where necessary ask any clarifying questions using 'Tell me, Explain or Describe...' (TED questions)
- listen carefully and uncritically at their pace
- take what is said seriously
- reassure them that they are right to tell
- be clear that you may need to pass the information on to others
- make a careful record of what was said, using speech marks appropriately
- report to the DSL

You should NEVER:

- take photographs of injuries
- examine marks/ injuries solely to assess whether they may have been caused by abuse (there may be a need to give appropriate first aid)
- investigate or probe, aiming to prove or disprove possible abuse – never ask leading questions.
- make promises to service users about confidentiality or keeping 'secrets'
- assume that someone else will take the necessary action
- jump to conclusions or react with shock, anger or horror
- speculate or accuse anybody
- confront another person allegedly involved
- offer opinions about what is being said or about people allegedly involved
- ask a child to sign a written copy of the disclosure or a 'statement'.

Procedures with regards to sexual violence and sexual harassment

Reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment are likely to be complex and require difficult professional decisions to be made often quickly and under pressure. The DSL will take a lead role and use their professional judgement, supported by other agencies such as social care and the police in the decision-making process. As with any other form of safeguarding concern all staff have a duty to report any concern relating to sexual violence or sexual harassment to the DSL or deputy DSL via the 'Cause for Concern' procedure.

If information received indicates a vulnerable adult has suffered, is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm a safeguarding referral will be made to social care immediately. In the event of disclosure, observation or knowledge arising of an incident of sexual violence or sexual harassment the DSL or deputy DSL will immediately refer to the police where a criminal offence is felt to have been committed. Where a criminal offence has not been committed the DSL will work in liaison with social care to ascertain the pathway of support to victim and alleged perpetrator. The victim will never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting sexual violence or harassment. Confidentiality will not be promised as it will be very likely the concern will have to be shared further.

Safer Recruitment

When recruiting new members of staff, the service follows the government safer recruitment principles, and has due regard to the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and The Protection of Freedoms Act 2012. Opening Doors has separate written recruitment and selection procedures in place and ensures that enhanced DBS checks are undertaken in line with government guidance, that appropriate references are obtained, qualifications are verified. The service retains a 'single central record' of when the appropriate checks are undertaken in regard to relevant staff and directors. All relevant DBS and other checks are made for staff and directors and recorded on the Single Central Record which is reviewed on a regular basis. For further information please refer to the Wellspring Academy Trust HR Handbook.

Safer recruitment training has been undertaken by senior members of staff who sit on recruitment panels in accordance with guidance and best practice principles. The induction of all new staff and directors includes a

requirement to sign a declaration that they have read and understood the Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy and other Opening Doors policies. This declaration is repeated annually. All staff and Directors employed by Wellspring are required to attend safeguarding training and renew this at least every three years, this may take the form of on-line training. Staff are encouraged to undertake further safeguarding training as appropriate, following consultation with the DSL.

Further Reading

Key Underpinning Documents to this policy can be found at the following locations:

- [North Lincolnshire Safeguarding Adults Board Multi Agency Policy & Procedures](#)
- [Making Safeguarding Personal 2014/15](#)
- [LSAB Cuckooing Practitioners Guide](#)
- [The PREVENT Duty](#)
- [Mandatory Reporting of Female Genital Mutilation](#)

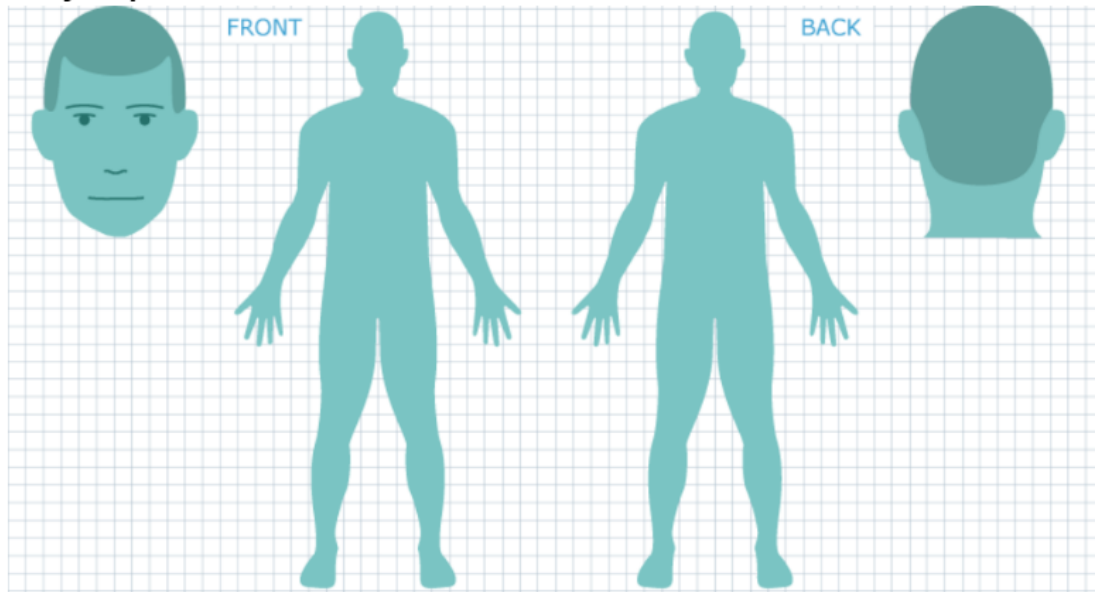
Cause for Concern

Name:	Staff Name:
Date:	Time:

Reason for Concern (please highlight)		
Neglect	Bullying	Disclosure
Head lice	Observation	Dirty clothing
Body odour	Bruise seen	E-safety
Prevent	Attendance/absence	Mental health concern
Sexualised behaviour	Sexual violence	Other
Exploitation	Abuse (please specify)	FGM

Description:

Body Map



Description

DSL Comments

Appendix 2 - Key Persons and Contact information

Name	Role	Contact details
Lynsey Bloomer	Service Manager & DSL	07547 351362
Heather Holt	DDSL	07801 557736
Sarah Parker	Principal - Trent View College Director - Opening Doors	office@trentviewcollege.co.uk
North Lincolnshire Adult Safeguarding	To report adult abuse, harm or neglect	01724 297000
Care Quality Commission	Independent regulator of health and social care in England (for concerns relating to adult social care or care homes).	03000 616161