



Grass Roots Forest School C.I.C. Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and procedure

Grassroots Forest School CIC Company number 09900224 provides a nature based educational experience that fosters personal growth and community connection through the provision of nature-based activities and learning new outdoor skills. Our mission is to foster a sense of community and personal growth through hands-on, nature-based activities that cater to diverse groups.

We are dedicated to creating inclusive environments where individuals from all walks of life can come together and thrive. We work with children aged 0-18. We also support students from local Pupil Referral Units (PRU), Early Years Foundation stage (EYFS) plus Special Educational Needs and those with Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs).

All children and young people, wherever they are whoever they are with, whatever they are doing, have the right to protection from neglect, physical, emotional and sexual abuse.

If you have concerns about the safety of a child, or the conduct of a member of Grassroots Forest School CIC staff and or volunteers please contact Vicky Faulkner the designated safeguarding lead via email grassrootsforestschool@gmail.com, phone 07930459580 or in person in one of our sessions.

Statement of Intent

The legal definition of a child is anyone who has not reached their 18th birthday. Abuse is defined as “a violation of an individual’s human and civil right by any other person or persons.”

Grassroots Forest School CIC recognises that the welfare of our children involved in our activities is paramount and that it is our moral and legal responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children attending our services. We endeavour to provide a safe and welcoming environment where children are respected and valued. We recruit safely with all appropriate and necessary checks. We are alert to the signs of abuse and neglect and follow our procedures to ensure that children in our care receive effective support and protection. All our staff receive safeguarding training and supervision, and we have a clear process for recording and referring any concerns.



Safeguarding is:

- protecting children from maltreatment
- preventing impairment of children's health or development both physically and emotionally
- 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

What is child abuse and neglect?

Child abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them, or more rarely, by others (for example, via the internet). They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children. There are four categories of abuse as defined by the Children's Act 1989

Physical abuse

Sexual abuse

Emotional abuse

Neglect

Subsequent legislation has expanded this to online abuse and inappropriate levels of caring responsibilities. Further information in appendix

We are clear as an organisation that "it could happen here" and take all necessary steps, including safe recruitment, to minimise the risk of harm to children in our care.

Who this policy applies to:

This child protection and safeguarding policy applies to all staff, including paid staff, volunteers, sessional workers, agency staff, one-off visitors, students or anyone working on behalf of the setting. For the purposes of this policy where the term staff is used it encompasses all those identified above.

'Everyone who works with children has a responsibility for keeping them safe. No single practitioner can have a full picture of a child's needs and circumstances and, if children and



families are to receive the right help at the right time, everyone who comes into contact with them has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action.' *'Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children' July 2018 (updated July 2022).*

All staff play a crucial role in helping to identify child protection issues and indicators of possible abuse or neglect at an early stage. Grassroots Forest School CIC is committed to referring these concerns via the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

Vicky Faulkner

grassrootsforestschool@gmail.com

07930459580

Who will report to:

[Richmond and Kingston SPA](#)

Telephone: **020 8547 5008**

Hours: Monday to Thursday 8am to 5.15pm

Friday 8am to 5.00pm

Out of hours: **020 8770 5000**

If the concern relates to Vicky Faulkner, then this should **be reported to the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead**

William Blake

treesparrowseducation@gmail.com

Telephone: **07834402358**

If for any reason you do not wish to refer to Grassroots Staff then please call the

[NSPCC Helpline](#)

0808 800 5000 Monday – Friday 10-4pm

help@NSPCC.org.uk 24/7

ALWAYS PHONE 999 IF THE CHILD IS IN IMMEDIATE DANGER



Additionally, if the concern is about the conduct or behaviour of paid staff or volunteers towards children report this to the DSL, Vicky Faulkner and she will contact the Local Area Designated Officer (LADO) who will advise further.

Telephone: **07774 332675**

Email: LADO@achievingforchildren.org.uk

When making a LADO referral if there is a safeguarding concern for a child we would also make a SPA referral.

It is not the role of the DSL to investigate, but to collate the information provided by the referrer and refer ASAP to the SPA. If it is not a Richmond child then we will need to refer via their boroughs safeguarding process

Key contacts:

Ring 999 in an emergency or if the child or vulnerable adult is in immediate danger

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	Vicky Faulkner grassrootsforestschool@gmail.com Telephone: 07930459580
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)	William Blake treesparroweducation@gmail.com Telephone: 07834402358
Single Point of Access (SPA)	Telephone: 020 8547 5008 Hours: Monday to Thursday 8am to 5.15pm Friday 8am to 5.00pm Out of hours: 020 8770 5000 Making a referral if you are a professional
Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)	Telephone: 07774 332675 Email: LADO@achievingforchildren.org.uk



	<i>When making a LADO referral if there is a safeguarding concern for a child we would also make a SPA referral.</i>
Ealing Safeguarding Children Partnership (ESCP)	Telephone Number: 020 8825 8000 Email: ecirs@ealing.gov.uk Ealing Children's Integrated Response Service (ECIRS)

The Designated Safeguarding Lead's roles and responsibilities include:

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) Roles and Responsibilities in a Forest School Setting

Introduction

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) in a Forest School setting plays a crucial role in ensuring the safety and well-being of children and young people. The role aligns with statutory guidance, including **Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2023, Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)**, and the **Children Act 1989 and 2004**. The DSL must uphold safeguarding policies and procedures while recognising the additional vulnerabilities of PRU students. Children who are in early Years and those with SEND needs and EHCPS.

Key Responsibilities

1. Safeguarding and Child Protection

- Act as the primary point of contact for safeguarding concerns within the Forest School.
- Recognise signs of abuse, neglect, and exploitation, particularly in children with complex needs or behavioural challenges.
- Ensure all safeguarding incidents are reported, recorded, and addressed following the local safeguarding procedures and multi-agency partnerships.
- Refer cases to external safeguarding agencies, such as SPA, Children's Social Care and the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), when necessary.
- Ensuring that policies and procedures relating to safeguarding and child protection are fully implemented by the setting and followed by staff, students and volunteers.
- Embedding robust safeguarding and child protection practices across all areas of the provision.



- Liaise with **PRU** staff and external professionals to ensure continuity of safeguarding support.
- When working in **Early Years** following the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework (2023) which sets out the standards for the safeguarding and welfare requirements which all Early Years providers must meet.

2. Risk Assessment and Safe Practice

- Conduct and regularly review **risk assessments** specific to Forest School activities and the needs of PRU students and children in Early Years and Primary.
- Implement strategies to mitigate risks associated with outdoor learning environments.
- Ensure all staff and volunteers adhere to **health and safety policies**, including first aid, emergency procedures, and behaviour management.
- Forest School activities and the needs of **PRU** students, children in **Early Years** and **SEND** students with **EHCPs** Grass Roots Forest School will conduct specific risk assessments.

3. Training and Awareness

- Ensure all Forest School staff and volunteers receive **regular safeguarding training**, in line with statutory requirements. This will include all Directors of Grass Roots Forest School as a minimum every 12 months. Plus, regular termly meetings throughout the year to ensure all staff can review, plan and implement best safeguarding practices.
- Directors to keep up to date with safeguarding legislation, policies, and best practices, disseminating relevant information to staff.
- Staff to have an awareness and training of **Early Years** and how best to support children, document and share information when experiencing any potential abuse
- Support staff in understanding trauma-informed practices, as **PRU** students may have experienced adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). This will be implemented through on-going training and information sharing regularly through the 12 months between safeguarding training.

4. Multi-Agency Collaboration

- Maintain communication with PRU safeguarding teams, social workers, and mental health professionals.
- Attend **child protection conferences, core group meetings, and multi-agency safeguarding meetings** when required.
- Share information in line with **GDPR and confidentiality guidelines**, ensuring timely intervention and support and being mindful that concern of significant risk of harm to a child overrides all GDPR and confidentiality restrictions.

5. Promoting a Safe and Supportive Environment



- Foster a culture of **safeguarding awareness and open communication**, where children feel safe to disclose concerns.
- Encourage **positive behaviour strategies** tailored to the needs of **PRU** students.
- Ensure that Forest School policies align with **Prevent Duty (2015)** requirements, identifying and addressing risks of radicalisation and extremism.
- When working with students from a **PRU** students and staff are aware of who they can talk to, ensuring that they understand the importance of information sharing, this will include sign posting them to impartial advice services in line with their school.

6. Record-Keeping and Reporting

- Maintain **confidential, accurate, and up-to-date safeguarding records** in compliance with statutory guidelines.
- Ensure timely reporting of incidents using **PRU** safeguarding protocols.
- Review safeguarding policies and procedures regularly, making necessary updates in line with legislation changes.
- Regular termly Director's meeting to ensure best practice and record keeping.

Conclusion:

The DSL in a Forest School setting must be proactive, vigilant, and well-informed about safeguarding legislation and best practices. By ensuring a structured and well-implemented safeguarding framework, they create a secure and inclusive learning environment for all children who attend Forest School.

PRU students, and young children in the **Early Years** including children with **SEND** and or **EHCPs** specifically have a framework that can enable them to engage safely in outdoor education and personal development.



What to do if you have concerns about a child and or they have disclosed in a Forest School Session:

We may become concerned or worried about a child's care, behaviour, an injury to a child, something they may have said or the risk they may be being drawn into terrorism and or radicalisation, but the child may not have directly indicated anything to suggest that they have been abused or in danger of abuse. Every case is individual and decisions to investigate or follow up a concern will be made by Single Point of Access (SPA) or a social worker. Ealing Children's Integrated Response Service (ECIRS).

In the case of a child displaying or disclosing concerns regarding radicalisation or terrorism the DSL will report and follow the [prevent guidance when reporting](#)

Step 1: Recognise-disclosure

- Observe signs of abuse, neglect, or concerning behaviour.
- Listen to any disclosure from the child without leading questions.

Step 2: Respond

- Stay calm and reassure the child that they are doing the right thing.
- Do not promise confidentiality and explain that you will need to pass on concerns

Step 3: Report

- Immediately inform the **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) Vicky Faulkner** or William Blake (DDSL) if DSL is not available.
- If the child is in **immediate danger**, call **999**.

Step 4: Record

- Write a factual report including dates, times, and exact words where possible.
- Sign and date the report. See appendix – safeguarding record form and cause for concern

Step 5: Refer

- The **DSL assesses the concern** and follows the setting's safeguarding policy.
- If required, the DSL refers to:
 - **SPA (Single Point of Access) Telephone: 020 8547 5008**

Hours: Monday to Thursday 8am to 5.15pm

Friday 8am to 5.00pm - Out of hours: 020 8770 5000

○ **Ealing Safeguarding Children Partnership (ESCP)**

Telephone Number: 020 8825 8000

Email: ecirs@ealing.gov.uk



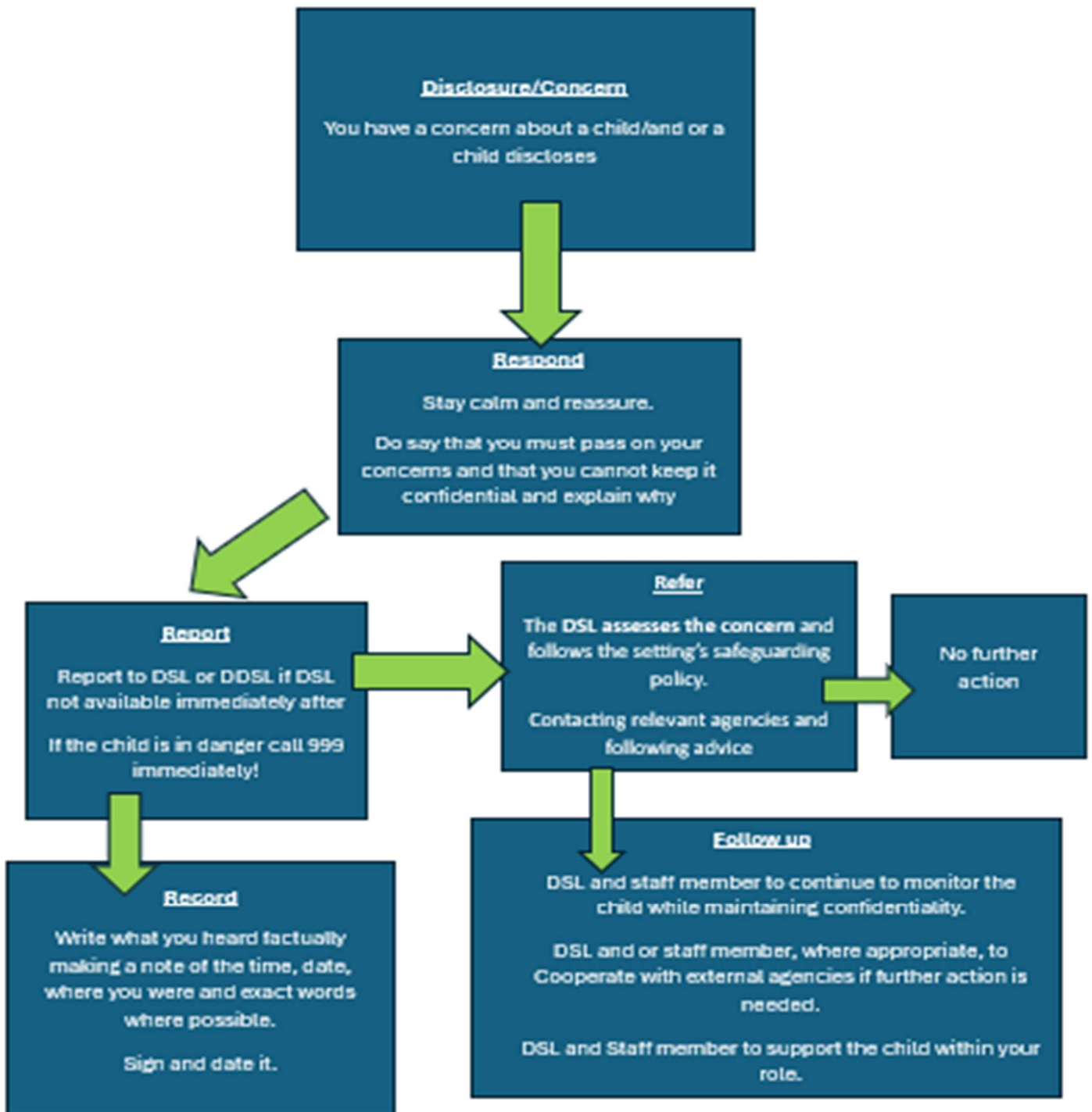
Ealing Children's Integrated Response Service

(ECIRS)

- **NSPCC (0808 800 5000)**
- **Police 999 (if an immediate threat exists) or there is a need to refer to Prevent**
- **In the case of a LADO referral the person in question, the affected child and their caregiver must not be contacted – the referral must be made within 24 hours and it is the LADO that co-ordinates what happens next. No consent is needed or should be sought**

Step 6: Follow-Up

- Continue to monitor the child while maintaining confidentiality.
- Cooperate with external agencies if further action is needed.
- Support the child within your role.
- If the DSL does not decide to refer to the SPA, the reasoning will be recorded, and the decision shared with fellow directors. Should further incidents occur then this information should be included in the referral.



Click link and go to page 29 for Ealing borough flow chart [Ealing Threshold](#)

Where we work in or with another organisation such as a school, we will use their Safeguarding Policy in conjunction with our own and have regard to their reporting procedures.



When a complaint or allegation has been made against an adult:

When a child, member of staff and or parent makes a disclosure or complaint:

It is legal requirement of the DSL to refer to the LADO

The Duty to Refer and the role of the local area designated officer (LADO)

The LADO is employed by the local authority and should be alerted to all cases in which it is alleged that a person who works with children has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed, a child.
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against children or related to a child.
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children.

The LADO role applies to paid, unpaid, volunteer, casual, agency and self-employed workers. The LADO is involved from the initial phase of the allegation through to the conclusion of the case. They will provide advice, guidance and help to determine whether the allegation sits within the scope of the procedures. The LADO helps coordinate information-sharing with the right people and will also monitor and track any investigation, with the aim to resolve it as quickly as possible. The LADO will attend local strategy meetings and chair managing allegation strategy meetings.

If you have concerns about a staff member or volunteer relating to child protection Grassroots Forest School CIC is legally obliged to refer the case to the LADO Contact details: LADO@achievingforchildren.org.uk 07774332675

What will the LADO Service advise you when you refer an allegation?

- Whether the allegation meets the threshold for LADO involvement
- Offer guidance on next steps (involvement of other agencies or internal disciplinary)
- How to manage talking about the concerns with the adult who may have harmed the child
- How to inform the child's parents or carers
- Their view regarding suspension, although the decision rests with the employer
- Regardless of the nature of the allegations and who receives the allegation, it must be reported to the LADO Service immediately. This must also include situations where the worker resigns. Compromise agreements are not acceptable in such circumstances and may put others at risk in the future.



- Complaints procedures are separate to the allegations process and just because someone does not wish to make a complaint, this does not mean the allegation should not be considered and investigated.
- Unless the allegation is found to be false or malicious, records should be kept for 10 years.
- LADO procedures may also apply to an individual who works with children, but the allegations or concerns arise in their private life.
- All settings should have an up-to-date managing allegations or whistle blowing policy.
- Do not investigate the matter, question the victim, alleged perpetrator or potential witnesses without a consultation with the LADO Service.
- Ensure children are safeguarded, make a referral to the SPA/MASH if required.
- The LADO Service is available to offer advice and support on any safeguarding or managing allegation matters, so if in doubt, always make a call to the service.

See flow chart in appendix

If an adult tenders their resignation this must not prevent an allegation being followed up, a formal conclusion reached, and action taken.

Consent to refer:

In the case of a LADO referral the person in question, the affected child and their caregiver must not be contacted – the referral must be made within 24 hours and it is the LADO that co-ordinates what happens next. No consent is needed or should be sought

The Richmond SPA has a consultation line where they will discuss a case or concern and advise you what to do next. They will ask for your organisation and contact, but not the child's details unless it is required if they judge the child is at risk of harm. 0208 547 5008 and ask for a consultation

All procedures should be read in conjunction with:

[**Working together to Safeguard Children 2023**](#)

[**Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023**](#)



[After school clubs, community activities and tuition. Safeguarding guidelines for practitioners. 2023](#)

[AFC - Kingston and Richmond LADO](#)

[Prevent Duty Guidance updated 2024](#)

And Grass Roots Forest School C.I.C. policies:

- Safer recruitment policy
- Code of conduct for staff and volunteers
- Behaviour and communication Policy
- Online safety policy and procedures for responding to concerns about online abuse
Photography and image sharing guidance
- Whistleblowing policy
- Health & Safety Policy and Procedures
- Privacy Policy (including GDPR)



Whistleblowing:

All staff should be aware of their duty to raise concerns, where they exist, about the management of child protection, which may include the attitude or actions of colleagues, poor or unsafe practice and potential failures in the settings safeguarding arrangements. Our priority is to nurture a culture in which all adults, including volunteers, feel safe to raise, without fear of reprisal, any concerns. **This will be on the code of conduct handed to all staff**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practitioner has a concern 	<p>In the first instance this should be raised with the Designated Safeguarding Lead, record your concern as detailed below.</p> <p>If the concern is regarding the Designated Safeguarding Lead call LADO on 07774 332675</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make a record of what you have witnessed in writing 	<p>Include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Names of other adults /children that may have witnessed the behaviour dates/times/locations the nature of your concern
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The DSL will contact LADO - LADO will advise 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The DSL will provide acknowledgment of your concerns 	<p>This will include when and how you will be informed of outcomes and actions</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> if not satisfied with the outcome contact Ofsted 	<p>Contact Ofsted on 0300 123 1232</p>

The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline is available for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally.

Contact details: 0800 028 0285 or email: help@nspcc.org.uk

Refer to Grass Roots Forest School Whistleblowing policy



Confidentiality and information sharing:

We will ensure all staff understand that child protection issues warrant a high level of confidentiality. This is not only out of respect for the child and staff involved, but also to ensure that information being released into the public domain does not compromise evidence. Staff will only discuss concerns with the designated person or manager. That person will then decide who else needs to have the information and they will disseminate it on a 'need-to-know' basis. A GDPR Privacy Notice will be signed by all staff members.

Child protection information will be stored and handled in line with the Data Protection Act 2018 principles.

Record of concern forms and other written information will be stored in a locked facility and any electronic information will be password protected and only made available to relevant individuals. Sensitive or personally identifiable information will not be sent via standard email. A secure service must be used. We are registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) and follow the guidelines required. We will develop effective links with relevant agencies and cooperate as required with any enquiries regarding child protection matters, including attendance at case conferences.

Refer to Grass Roots Forest School Data Protection and GDPR Policy



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Signs of Emotional, Physical, Sexual Abuse and Neglect

Child abuse is any form of physical, emotional or sexual mistreatment or lack of care that leads to injury or harm. An individual may abuse or neglect a child directly, or by failing to protect them from harm. Some forms of child abuse and neglect are listed below and how it could be presented during a Forest School session:

- **Emotional abuse** is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve making the child feel that they are worthless, unloved, or inadequate. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone. During a Forest School session a child or young person could present as being withdrawn, not wanting to participate. Finding it hard to regulate their emotions. Not willing to 'have a go' and feel like they cannot do anything. This would be monitored and closely observed.
- **Physical abuse** can involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may be also caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes, ill health to a child. A child during a session may present with unexplained bruises and marks. Not being able to physically engage in activities like tree climbing, sitting on logs, swinging on a rope swing. They could present as being physical towards others and as in the case of emotional abuse, not being able to regulate their emotions.
- **Sexual abuse** involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. This can involve physical contact, or non-contact activities such as showing children sexual activities or encouraging them to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. This could present by being withdrawn from activities, finding sitting on logs around the fire uncomfortable, not being able to go to the toilet/going to much – urine infections. Sometimes children or young adults could display overtly sexualised language and possibly inappropriate behaviour. Excessive one-to-one attention beyond the requirements of their role, or inappropriate sharing of images.
- **Neglect** is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and emotional needs. It can involve a failure to provide adequate food, clothing and shelter, to protect a child from physical and emotional harm, to ensure adequate supervision or to allow access to medical treatment. Neglect could present as **persistently** showing up at the sessions **without** the appropriate clothing such as – not warm enough clothing or proper shoes. No sunscreen or hat for hot weather. Not having eaten breakfast or not having a snack.

Some children may be more vulnerable to abuse or neglect. Consider whether the following applies:



- The child has additional needs or a disability
- The child holds immigrant status
- Looked after or previously looked after
- having prior experience of neglect, physical and/or sexual abuse
- lack of a safe/stable home environment, now or in the past (domestic violence or parental substance misuse, mental health issues or criminality, for example)
- social isolation or social difficulties
- economic vulnerability
- homelessness or insecure accommodation status
- connections with other people involved in gangs
- having mental health or substance misuse issue
- being excluded from mainstream education, in particular attending a Pupil Referral Unit

Children with disabilities

Adults who work with children and young people with disabilities should be aware of the additional needs children may have that could mean they are more vulnerable to abuse and/or less able to speak out if something isn't right.

Some children may be vulnerable because they:

- have additional communication needs
- they do not understand that what is happening to them is abuse
- need intimate care or are isolated from others
- are dependent on adults for care.

There are several factors that contribute to disabled children and young people being at a greater risk of abuse.

Communication barriers

Children and young people with speech, language and communication needs (including those who are d/Deaf, or have a learning disability or physical disability) face extra barriers when it comes to sharing their worries and concerns.

- Adults may have difficulty understanding a child's speech so they may not realise when a child is trying to tell them about abuse.
- Adults may not have the knowledge and skills to communicate non-verbally with a child, which can make it harder for children to share their thoughts and feelings.



- Communicating solely with parents or carers may pose a risk if the child is being abused by their parent or carer.
- It can be difficult to teach messages about what abuse is or how to keep safe to children with communication needs. Without this knowledge children may not recognise that they are being abused or won't know how to describe what's happening to them.

Misunderstanding the signs of abuse

It's not always easy to spot the signs of abuse. In some cases, adults may mistake the indicators of abuse for signs of a child's disability.

- A child experiencing abuse or attempting to disclose abuse may self-harm or display inappropriate sexual behaviour or other repetitive and challenging behaviours. If this is misinterpreted as part of a child's disability or health condition rather than an indicator of abuse, it can prevent adults from taking action.
- Injuries such as bruising may not raise the same level of concern as they would if seen on a non-disabled child. Adults may assume that bruising was self-inflicted or caused by disability equipment or problems with mobility.



Child Criminal Exploitation

Child Criminal Exploitation occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into any criminal activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or (c) through violence or the threat of violence. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child Criminal Exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology. [Serious Violence Strategy 2018, Home Office.](#)

County Lines

County lines is a form of criminal exploitation where urban gangs persuade, coerce or force children and young people to store drugs and money and/or transport them to suburban areas, market towns and coastal towns (Home Office, 2018). It can happen in any part of the UK and is against the law and a form of child abuse.

Children and young people may be criminally exploited in multiple ways. Other forms of criminal exploitation include child sexual exploitation, trafficking, gang and knife crime.

County lines gangs are highly organised criminal networks that use sophisticated, frequently evolving techniques to groom young people and evade capture by the police.

Perpetrators use children and young people to maximise profits and distance themselves from the criminal act of physically dealing drugs (National Crime agency, 2019). Young people do the majority of the work and take the most risk.

The link below for more information

[Protecting children from county lines | NSPCC Learning](#)

This could present at forest school with a concern from a parent or being observed by a leader of being withdrawn from family; sudden loss of interest in school or change in behaviour, decline in attendance at sessions. Being emotionally 'switched off', but also containing frustration / rage; starting to use new or unknown slang words; holding unexplained money or possessions. Sudden change in appearance – dressing in a particular style or 'uniform' like that of other young people they hang around with, including a particular colour; not wanting to wear appropriate forest school clothing. Dropping out of positive activities; unexplained physical injuries, and/or refusal to seek / receive medical treatment for injuries; during the session. Expressing aggressive or intimidating views towards other forest school young people, some of whom may have been friends in the past.

A referral must be made as soon as possible when any concern of Significant Harm as a consequence of gang activity including child criminal exploitation becomes known. Any agency or practitioner who has concerns that a child may be at risk of harm should contact the Single Point of Access or the police for the area in which the child is currently located.

If there is concern about a child's immediate safety, the Police should be contacted on 999.



Child Sexual Exploitation CSE

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a type of [sexual abuse](#). It happens when a child or young person is coerced, manipulated or deceived into sexual activity in exchange for things that they may need or want like gifts, drugs, money, status and affection. Children and young people are often tricked into believing they're in a loving and consensual relationship so the sexual activity may appear consensual. This is called [grooming](#) and is a type of abuse. They may trust their abuser and not understand that they're being abused. CSE does not always involve physical contact, and can also occur through the use of technology.

Children and young people can be [trafficked](#) into or within the UK for sexual exploitation. They're moved around the country and abused by being forced to take part in sexual activities, often with more than one person. Young people in gangs can also be sexually exploited.

Sometimes abusers use violence and intimidation to frighten or force a child or young person, making them feel as if they've no choice. They may lend them large sums of money they know can't be repaid or use financial abuse or blackmail to control them.

Anybody can be a perpetrator of CSE, no matter their age, gender or race. The relationship could be framed or viewed as friendship, someone to look up to or romantic. Children and young people who are exploited may also be made to 'find' or coerce others to join groups.

It's important to recognise that although the age of consent is 16 years old, children and young people over 16 can be exploited. Child sexual exploitation is a very complex form of abuse. It can be difficult for parents and carers to understand and hard for the young person to acknowledge that they are being exploited.

The NSPCC has guidance on how to recognise and keep children safe below

[Child Sexual Exploitation & How to Keep Your Child Safe | NSPCC](#)

Government guidance on CSE below

[Department for Education](#)

A person under the age of 18 years is regarded as a child under UK law.

Although the age of consent to sexual activity is 16 years, CSE includes young people up to the age of 18 because of the nature of the abuse.

It is important to keep in mind that 16 and 17 year olds may also experience sexual exploitation. No child consents to their own abuse. Adults always have power over young children and young people.



Online Child Exploitation

All young people are at risk from online exploitation and can be unaware that this is happening. Online exploitation includes the exchange of sexual communication or images and can be particularly challenging to identify and respond to. Children, young people and perpetrators are frequently more familiar with, and spend more time in, these environments than their parents and carers.

Online child sexual exploitation allows perpetrators to initiate contact with multiple potential victims and offers a perception of anonymity. Where exploitation does occur online, the transfer of images can be quickly and easily shared with others which makes it difficult to contain the potential for further abuse.

It must be recognised that children may also be perpetrators of abuse, sometimes at the same time as being abused themselves.

Below are government guidelines on **Child online safety: Protecting children from online sexual exploitation and abuse**

This guide is to help you, and your business understand how to protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse on your platform.

[Child online safety: Protecting children from online sexual exploitation and abuse - GOV.UK](#)



Disordered Eating

Below is guidance on how to recognise disordered eating and how to support young adults, children and their parents. However this could be presented as young people or children refusing to eat at Forest School, not being hungry, skipping meals, worried about their weight and how they look.

[Overview – Eating disorders - NHS](#)

Follow the guidance at the front of this document if you have a concern about a child.



Extremism and radicalisation

There is no single route to radicalisation. However, there are some behavioural traits that

could indicate that a child has been exposed to radicalising influences.

Radicalisation in children can happen over a long period of time. In some cases it is triggered by a specific incident or news item and can happen much quicker. Sometimes there are clear warning signs of radicalisation, in other cases the changes are less obvious.

Outwardly a young person or child may become increasingly argumentative refusing to listen to different points of views. Unwilling to engage with children in forest school who are different. Becoming abusive to children who are different also embracing conspiracy theories during discussions. Feeling persecuted and changing friends and appearance. Distancing themselves from old friends during the sessions. No longer doing forest school activities that they used to enjoy. Converting to a new religion and being secretive and reluctant to discuss their whereabouts. Sympathetic to extremist ideologies and groups

It is important that we maintain good relationships with children and families to ensure that we are best placed to notice when changes occur. It is important also to remember that children approaching adolescence may exhibit some of the behaviours outlined above and this may not mean that they have been drawn into extremism or radicalisation.

Follow the procedures in section one at the front of this document if you have concerns about a child.

Prevent is one part of the government's overall counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST.

Prevent sits alongside long-established safeguarding duties on professionals to protect people from a range of other harms such as substance abuse, involvement in gangs and physical and sexual exploitation.

[The Prevent Duty 2023](#)

[Tips for talking about radicalisation](#)

[How to talk to children about extremism](#)



Faith based abuse

Abuse linked to faith or belief is where concerns for a child's welfare have been identified, and could be caused by, a belief in witchcraft, spirit or demonic possession, ritual or satanic abuse features; or when practices linked to faith or belief are harmful to a child.

Any abuse that takes place against those who are branded (or labelled) either as a witch or as having been possessed by an evil spirit is unacceptable. Significant harm (including murder) can occur because of concerted efforts to 'excise' or 'deliver' evil from a child (or vulnerable adult).

Click the link to understand and recognise the signs and how to protect children and young adults [Safeguarding in faith communities | NSPCC Learning](#)

Female genital mutilation and breast ironing

Female genital mutilation (**FGM**) is a form of child abuse. It is the collective name given to a range of procedures involving the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia for non-medical reasons or other injury to the female genital organs. It has no health benefits and harms girls and women in many ways. The practice, which is most commonly carried out without anaesthetic, can cause intense pain and distress and long-term health consequences, including difficulties in childbirth.

FGM is carried out on girls of any age, from young babies to older teenagers and adult women, so staff and volunteers should be aware of risk indicators.

Below is a link to the guidance and policies and procedures that leaders and staff should be aware of

<https://kingstonandrichmondsafeguardingchildrenpartnership.org.uk/guidance-policies-and-procedures/female-genital-mutilation-guidance-for-professionals/>

If staff or volunteers have a concern that a girl may be at risk of FGM, they will record their concern and inform the Designated Safeguarding and Child Protection Officer immediately.

Signs that may indicate a child has undergone FGM:

Prolonged absence from forest school behaviour changes on return from a holiday abroad, such as being withdrawn and appearing subdued, bladder or menstrual problems. Finding it difficult to sit still and looking uncomfortable when sitting around the fires circle. Complaining about pain between the legs then mentioning something somebody did to them that they are not allowed to talk about. Secretive behaviour, including isolating themselves from the group and a reluctance to take part in physical activities such as tree climbing and being on the rope swings. Repeated urinary tract infection The individual who becomes aware of a case of FGM will record their concerns on the safe guarding form and then inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead who will support staff and volunteers in making a direct report to the police. If the DSL, staff members or volunteers have reason to believe that a girl is at imminent risk of FGM due to an upcoming trip out of the country they must make call the police on 999.

Social care and the Police will decide on the course of action which may take the form of an FGM protection order or Emergency Protection Order.



Breast Ironing (flattening)

Breast ironing (also called breast flattening) is when young girls' breasts are damaged over time to flatten them and delay their development. Sometimes, an elastic belt, or binder, is used to stop them from growing.

Breast ironing usually starts with the first signs of puberty and is most often done by female relatives. In most cases, the abuser incorrectly thinks they're behaving in the best interests of the child. They believe flattening the breasts will make the child less 'womanly'. They hope this will protect the girl from harassment, rape, abduction and early forced marriage, and help them stay in education.

Although there's no specific law within the UK around breast ironing, it's a form of child abuse.

Leaders will follow concerns alongside the safeguarding policy in relation to physical abuse. Signs such as being uncomfortable in the chest area, walking hunched over, not taking part in physical activities such as swinging off ropes, climbing trees, not being able to carry equipment.

Find out below what the signs of this abuse are, what you can do if you're concerned about someone and how to get help if they have been affected.

[Breast Flattening – National FGM Centre](#)

Forced Marriage

A Forced Marriage (FM) is a marriage conducted without the valid consent of one or both parties and where duress is a factor. FM is now a specific offence under s121 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 and came into force on 16 June 2014.

[The right to choose: government guidance on forced marriage](#) sets out the roles and responsibilities of all agencies involved in **safeguarding children** and procedures that should be adhered to by all agencies. This guidance includes information about identifying children and young people at risk of harm, discussing concerns, making referrals, undertaking initial assessments and the next steps to take.

This resource pack was developed following a commitment in the [Government's Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy \(VAWG\), published in July 2021](#). The Strategy recognised that more could be done to provide frontline professionals, including local authorities, the police, schools, healthcare services and others, with additional resources on forced marriage.

Reports of forced marriage, including reports from victims who fear they may be forced to marry, must be taken seriously. For young people under the age of 18 years, it will be appropriate to deal with the situation as a child protection issue and refer to the DSL or SPA.



Honour based violence

Honour based violence' (HBV) is a crime or incident which has or may have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or community.

Definition of honour-based abuse

Honour-based abuse (HBA) is an incident or crime involving violence, threats of violence, intimidation, coercion or abuse (including psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional abuse), which has or may have been committed to protect or defend the honour of an individual, family and or community for alleged or perceived breaches of the family and/or community's code of behaviour.

[Crown Prosecution Service](#)

As with all types of abuse, you will know the children you work with. Some potential indicators during a forest school session may include:

sudden absence from forest school; prolonged foreign travel; them having their technology withdrawn; them being constantly chaperoned; changes in behaviour; physical injuries (see signs of physical abuse).

HBV can be described as a collection of practices, which are used to control behaviour within families or other social groups to protect perceived cultural and religious beliefs and/or honour. Such violence can occur when perpetrators perceive that a relative has shamed the family and/or community by breaking their honour code. It is a violation of human rights and may be a form of domestic and/or sexual violence. There is no, and cannot be, honour or justification for abusing the human rights of others.

If there are concerns about a family this should be discussed with the DSL at the earliest opportunity. Further support may be sought from SPA however if there is imminent danger the police should be called on 999.



Peer-on-peer abuse

Children and young adults are vulnerable to abuse by their peers. Peer-on-peer abuse is taken seriously by staff and volunteers and will be subject to the same child protection procedures as other forms of abuse. Staff and volunteers are aware of the potential uses of information technology for bullying and abusive behaviour between young people.

Staff and volunteers will not dismiss abusive behaviour as normal between young people. All staff should understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviour between children and young people. Staff should also recognise that downplaying certain behaviours as “just banter” or “boys being boys” can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviour, an unsafe environment for children and young people and a culture that normalises abuse. The presence of one or more of the following in relationships between children should always trigger concern about the possibility of peer-on-peer abuse:

- Sexual activity (in primary school-aged children) of any kind, including sexting
- One of the children is significantly more dominant than the other (eg much older)
- One of the children is significantly more vulnerable than the other (eg in terms of disability, confidence, physical strength)
- There has been some use of threats, bribes or coercion to ensure compliance or secrecy.

If peer-on-peer abuse is suspected or disclosed

We will follow the same procedures as set out above for responding to child abuse.



Use of Staff personal devices including mobile phones and smart watches:

Forest Schools provide children with invaluable outdoor learning experiences, promoting independence, confidence, and environmental awareness. However, the use of mobile phones in such settings must be carefully managed to ensure safeguarding, data protection, and health and safety compliance. This part outlines the relevant UK legislation and best practices regarding mobile phone use in Forest Schools.

Relevant UK Legislation

Children Act 1989 & 2004

Data Protection Act 2018 & UK GDPR

Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018

- Mobile phones, tablets and smart watches (hereafter referred to as ‘personal electronic devices’) have a place in our setting, and can be helpful in a multitude of ways. Staff are required to not use personal electronic devices during sessions unless in cases of emergencies. Smart watches may be worn.
- Use of electronic devices appropriately and ensure staff have a clear understanding of what constitutes misuse and know how to minimise the risk. Personal mobile phones must not be used to take pictures or videos of the children attending the setting.
- Ensure the use of an electronic device does not detract from the quality of supervision and care of the children.
- Ensure all electronic device use is open to scrutiny
- Ensure staff are vigilant and alert to any potential warning signs of the misuse of devices
- Ensure staff are responsible for their own behaviour regarding the use of mobile phones and should avoid putting themselves into compromising situations, which could be misinterpreted and lead to potential allegations
- Ensure the use of mobile devices in the setting is included as part of the risk assessment
- Ensure that no visitor to the setting uses their personal electronic device on the premises to take photographs or video while children are present



Cameras, photography and images:

Most people who take or view photographs or videos of children do so for entirely innocent, understandable and acceptable reasons. However, due to cases of abuse to children through taking or using images, we must ensure that we have safeguards in place.

To protect the children, we will:

- Obtain parents' and carers' consent for photographs to be taken or published on our website or in newspapers or publications
- Ensure the children are appropriately dressed
- Ensure the setting's designated cameras are only used in the setting
- That where professional photographers are used, parental consent will be obtained prior to photographs being taken
- Ensure that all images are stored securely.
- Ensure photos are only taken with the students consent and only of what they have done or their hands where appropriate

1. Policy Development

- Grass Roots Forest School has a clear mobile phone policy in our GDPR policy that also aligns with safeguarding and data protection laws.
- The policy also specifies who is permitted to use mobile phones and under what circumstances.

3. Use of Phones by Children

- Children should not bring personal mobile phones to Forest School sessions to minimize distractions and safeguarding risks. Phones will be handed in before sessions and kept securely. Grass Roots Forest School also follows the policies and procedures of the schools we work with in regard to this.
- If digital documentation is part of the curriculum, it should be done using school-owned devices with appropriate controls.

4. Emergency Procedures

- At least one mobile phone should be accessible for emergency use by designated staff.
- Contact details and emergency protocols should be stored on this device.
- A risk assessment should outline procedures for mobile phone use in emergency situations.



5. Photography and Social Media

- Staff must follow Grass Roots Forest school policies on taking and sharing images of children.
- Personal phones should not be used to take photographs; only designated devices should be used.
- Images should not be shared on personal social media accounts.

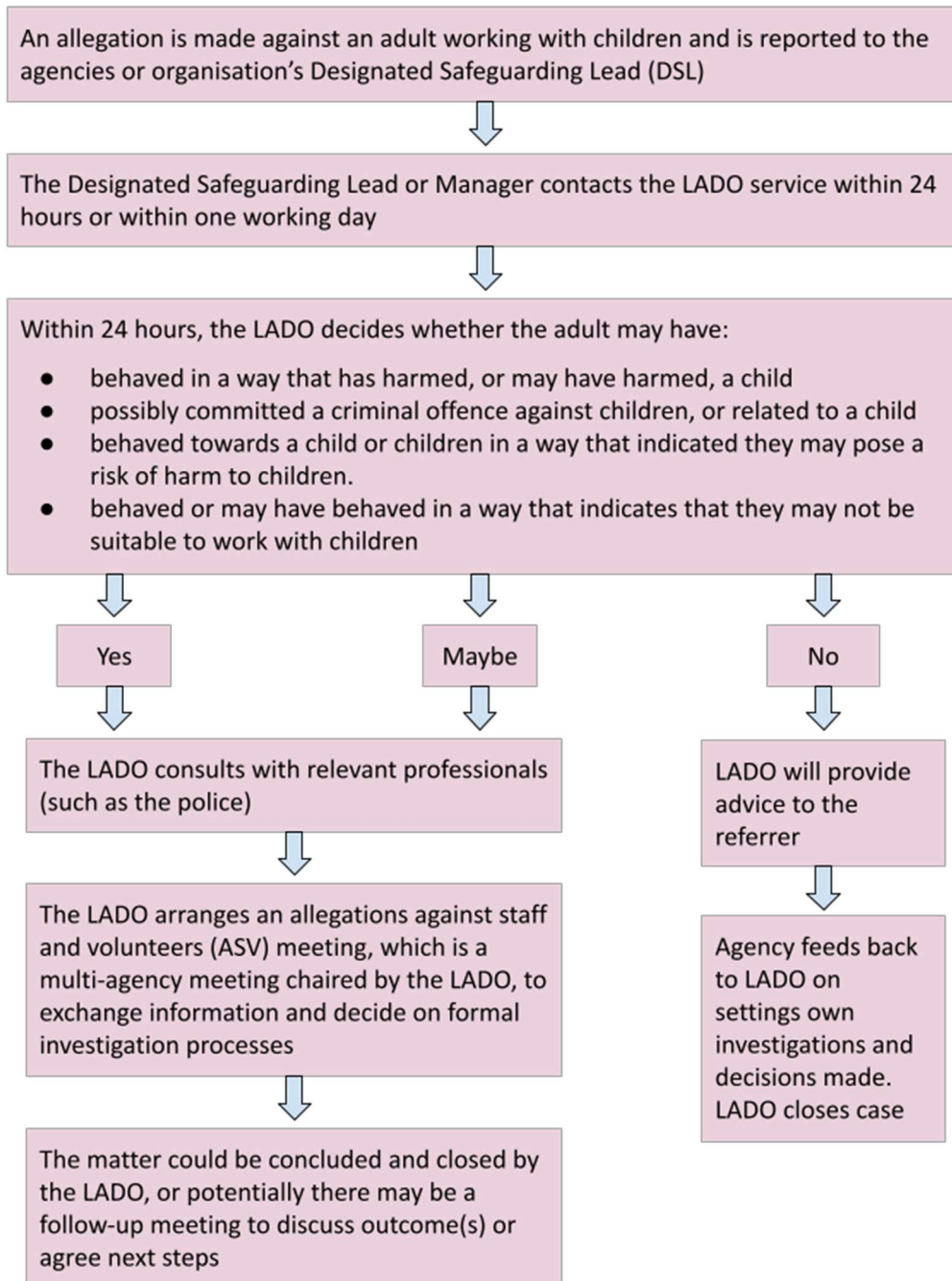
6. Training and Awareness

- Staff and volunteers should receive training on the Forest School's GDPR and mobile phone policy. This will also be included on the Code of Conduct.
- Parents should be informed of the policy and the reasons behind restrictions on mobile phone use.

Conclusion

Ensuring a safe and effective learning environment in Grass Roots Forest Schools requires a well-defined mobile phone policy that complies with UK legislation. By implementing clear guidelines, schools can uphold safeguarding responsibilities while fostering an immersive outdoor learning experience for children.

Allegations against staff - LADO Procedure Flowchart





Cause for Concern / Safeguarding Form

Date of incident	Name of worker completing this form
Name of child DOB Programme attending	How has the concern come to your attention? (please tick) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct observation • Disclosure • Third Party
Child Address Parent phone number	Nature of the issues: (please highlight) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Protection • Safeguarding • Bullying • Equalities
What is your concern? Be specific, include details, location times, fact , evidence seen etc.	
Who else if anyone was involved and how?	
What action have you taken?	
What if any is the follow up or support plan ?	



Have the parents / carers been informed ? YES / NO	
Details	
Has a referral been made to children's Social care?	Yes / NO Details
Has a referral or follow up been communicated to any other agency ?	Yes / NO Details
Signature of person completing this form	
Name & signature of Designated safeguarding Lead	
Date of completion of this form.	



Reviewed and signed and dated	V. Faulkner: Feb 2025
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