



DREAMSCHEME
Where Young People Thrive

DREAMSCHEME NORTHERN IRELAND

Safeguarding Policy

MARCH 2025

DREAMSCHEME NORTHERN IRELAND
77a Saintfield Road, Belfast BT8 7HN.

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Section 1: Introduction and statement

Dreamscheme Northern Ireland is committed to promoting and protecting the general welfare, health and safety of every child and young person we come in contact with. The Board, staff and volunteers of this organisation recognise their responsibilities to develop awareness of the issues which can cause harm and act appropriately in respect of these.

A. Responsibilities

Dreamscheme Northern Ireland will :

1. Fully recognise its responsibilities for safeguarding children and young people.
2. Respect and promote the rights, wishes and feelings of children and young people.
3. Promote and implement appropriate procedures to safeguard the well-being of children and protect them from abuse.
4. Recruit, train, support and supervise its staff and volunteers to adopt best practice to safeguard and protect children from abuse and to minimise risk to themselves.
5. Require staff and volunteers to adopt and abide by this Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.
6. Respond to all allegations of misconduct or abuse of children in line with this Policy and these Procedures.
7. Liaise with statutory and all other appropriate agencies in safeguarding everyone that Dreamscheme comes into contact with in carrying out its work.

B. Principles

This Policy and these Procedures are based on the following principles:

1. The welfare of children and young people is of paramount concern.
2. All children and young people whatever their culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, socio-economic status, religious belief and/or sexual identity have the right to safeguarding from abuse.
3. The Children Order defines a 'child' as a person under the age of 18.
4. The policy and procedures are based on the following legislation and codes of practice : The Children NI (1995) Order, Our Duty to Care July 2017 – Volunteer Now, Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People August 2017, Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007 as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
5. Safeguarding responsibility in Northern Ireland ultimately lies with the Health and Social Care Board and Trusts in partnership with the PSNI. Other responsible bodies include the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI).
6. Clearly defined processes of timely reporting risk and disclosures of harm toward children and young people which are well-understood and put in place. The relevant statutory authorities (eg. Social Services and PSNI) will be informed.

C. Review

This Policy and these Procedures will be regularly monitored and reviewed in accordance with changes in legislation and our activities. As a minimum a review to take place every three years.

Policy Owner	Approved by	Date Issued / reviewed	Next Review
CEO	Dreamscheme Board	21 March 2025	21 March 2026
Designated Officer	Lizzie Brown	Designated Officer	Jonny Luke

Section 2: The prevention of abuse

Every child has a right to protection from harm. In contrast, adults may choose not to act at all to protect themselves, and it is only in extreme circumstances that the law intervenes.

Children may experience abuse and neglect at any age and it may have a profound impact not only on their immediate safety and health but on their long-term development and wellbeing.

The signs of abuse and neglect can be difficult to detect. Children may be seen as easy targets for abuse. Their developing communication and understanding of what constitutes mistreatment means that they may have difficulty alerting others to it. A child’s reliance on their parents and family may also mean that it is easier to conceal harm or coerce a child into not disclosing it to others.

There are many reasons why a child or young person may be abused. Whatever the reason, abuse is always wrong and it is never the child’s or young person’s fault. It is very important that abuse is stopped as soon as it is discovered for the sake of both the victim and the abuser.

It is a fact that the majority of abusers are known to their victims. It is not only adults who abuse children. Peer to peer abuse is a growing concern. This is when older children abuse younger children or their peers.

Youth leaders have a duty to protect children and young people and must be prepared to listen, and be ready for the occasion when more serious matters may be disclosed.

Youth leaders may be the only adults outside the child’s family that have significant contact with them and so it is especially important that all those working with children have a good understanding of abuse and neglect and how to recognise the possible indicators.

2.1 Definitions

Definitions

A child is anyone under the age of 18.

Child in Need: a child is considered to be 'in need' if:

- He is unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision for him of services.
- His health or development is likely to be significantly impaired without the provisions of such services.
- He is disabled.

Child in Need of Protection: a child who is at risk of, or likely to suffer, significant harm.

Safeguarding

The process of protecting children from harm, promoting their welfare, and taking action to keep them safe.

Disclosure

When a child or young person shares information about abuse or neglect they have experienced or witnessed.

Definitions of Harm

The Children's Order defines 'harm' as ill-treatment or the impairment of health or development. This can be both physical and non-physical and affect physical and mental health and physical, intellectual, emotional, social, or behavioural development. Harm can be the result of action or inaction (omission) and can deliberate or as the result of lack of knowledge or awareness. There is no absolute definition of 'significant harm'; this is assessed on a case-by-case basis by the relevant HSCT.

Definitions of Abuse (Children)

The definitions of abuse below are taken from the Department of Health guidelines in Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (August 2017)

Abuse is a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to another individual or violates their human or civil rights. It may be perpetrated by a wide range of people, including those usually close to an individual.

Harm from abuse is not always straightforward to identify and a child or young person may experience more than one type of harm or significant harm.

Abuse can be include::

- Physical abuse;
- Sexual abuse;
- Emotional abuse;
- Neglect; and
- Exploitation.
- Bullying

Physical Abuse is deliberately physically hurting a child. It might take a variety of different forms, including hitting, biting, pinching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating a child.

Sexual Abuse occurs when others use and exploit children sexually for their own gratification or gain or the gratification of others. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact and it may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via e-technology). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Emotional Abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child. It is also sometimes called psychological abuse and it can have severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's emotional development.

Neglect is the failure to provide for a child's basic needs, whether it be adequate food, clothing, hygiene, supervision or shelter that is likely to result in the serious impairment of a child's health or development. Children who are neglected often also suffer from other types of abuse.

Exploitation is the intentional ill-treatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over a child or young person; to take selfish or unfair advantage of a child or young person or situation, for personal gain. It may manifest itself in many forms such as child labour, slavery, servitude, engagement in criminal activity, begging, benefit or other financial fraud or child trafficking. It extends to the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation can be sexual in nature.

Emotional bullying may be a verbal assault, including name-calling, insults, repeat teasing, sectarian/racist assaults, or it may take more indirect forms, such as spreading malicious gossip, rumours or excluding someone from a social group. Bullying is not an accepted behaviour towards anyone at Dreamscheme Northern Ireland whether they are a child, staff, volunteer or parent. Anyone found to be bullying others will be dealt with seriously both in regards to the behaviour

exhibited and the reasons for the behaviour in accordance with our anti-bullying policy.

2.2 Signs and symptoms of abuse

Recognising child abuse is not easy and it is not a staff member’s or volunteer’s responsibility to decide whether or not a child or young person has been abused. It is their responsibility to pass on any concerns to the statutory agencies for them to investigate.

How might child abuse come to your notice ?

1. You may notice signs of physical abuse.
2. A child or young person may behave in a sexually explicit way, inappropriate for their age.
3. You may notice signs of neglect.
4. You may be told of abuse or neglect.
5. Occasionally abuse may involve a team member or other child or young person as the perpetrator.

The signs listed as indicators are not definitive or exhaustive

PHYSICAL INDICATORS	BEHAVIOURAL INDICATORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Unexplained bruising in soft tissue areas ■ Repeated injuries ■ Black eyes ■ Injuries to the mouth ■ Torn or bloodstained clothing ■ Burns or scalds ■ Bites ■ Fractures ■ Marks from implements ■ Inconsistent stories/excuses relating to injuries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Unexplained changes in behaviour - becoming withdrawn or aggressive ■ Difficulty in making friends ■ Distrustful of adults or excessive attachment to adults ■ Sudden drop in performance ■ Changes in attendance pattern ■ Inappropriate sexual awareness, behaviour or language ■ Reluctance to remove clothing

2.3 The Role of the Designated Officer / Person.

A Designated Officer is appointed to assist in the implementation of the Dreamscheme Safeguarding Policy and to ensure that the organisation complies wholly with UK legal requirements and good practice relating to the safeguarding

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of children and young people during all youth work activities arranged for them. The Dreamscheme Northern Ireland Board of Directors assume the overall responsibility for the Safeguarding Policy and practice.

The Designated Officer shall be made known to young members, staff, volunteers and parents alike; as the designated person to whom concerns will be addressed. If the concern is about the Designated Officer, please report to the Chief Executive / Chairman.

Guidelines for recording / dealing with incidents/accidents will be outlined later in this policy document.

The Designated Officer within ***Dreamscheme Northern Ireland*** is:

Name: Lizzie Brown

Contact details:

77A Saintfield Road, Belfast, BT8 7HN.

Mobile : 07547457959

2.4 Safe Recruitment of staff and volunteers

All reasonable steps must be taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children and young people. Dreamscheme Northern Ireland consistently applies a thorough and clearly defined method of recruiting staff and volunteers in line with legislative requirements and best practice.

- Volunteers are carefully selected, trained and supervised. The chief executive of Dreamscheme Northern Ireland must approve the involvement of new volunteers and their participation must be ratified by the unanimous approval of the Board. This includes Dreamschemer 'Leaders in training' to be appointed as volunteers.
- All new staff/volunteers working with children or young people must complete Dreamscheme Northern Ireland's application form which includes a self declaration section. Clear Job Descriptions of staff roles and volunteers are defined and maintained.
- Individuals must complete and sign the Access NI Disclosure Certificate Application Form which gives permission to enable ***Dreamscheme Northern Ireland*** to administer an Access NI check (proof of identity MUST be provided)
- Declaration of past convictions or cases pending and agreement to have an AccessNI check completed, is a pre-requisite to approval for all staff/volunteers to work with young people. Written references are sought as appropriate.
- All staff/volunteers must agree to abide by Dreamscheme Northern Ireland's Safeguarding Policy and all are required to sign the Code of Conduct
- Any concerns or objections with regard to suitability of a member of staff/volunteer should be submitted to the Board's designated person

2.5 Effective management, support supervision and training of staff and volunteers

- There is an induction process for staff and volunteers.
- There is a probationary period for staff and a trial period for volunteers.
- Relevant training is provided, appropriate to the post/role, with refresher training provided at a minimum of every 2 years.
- There is a robust structure and process for support and supervision for all staff and volunteers, appropriate to the post/role.
- There is an annual appraisal for staff and review for volunteers.
- Comprehensive written records are kept of: training completed, support and supervision, and annual appraisals/reviews.

Section 3 : The Practice of Safeguarding and Codes of Conduct

3.1 The principles of good practice

Dreamscheme Northern Ireland will follow principles of good practice for the protection of children and young people including the following;

- Promote the general welfare, health and development of children and young people and strive to protect them from abuse of all kinds.
- Recognise that children have rights as individuals and treat them with dignity and respect.
- Raise awareness of the abuses from which children should be protected.
- Adopt and consistently apply a clearly defined method of recruiting, assessing and selecting staff and volunteers.
- Recognise that all workers, voluntary or paid, have rights and treat them with dignity and respect.
- Plan the work of the organisation so as to minimise opportunities for children to suffer harm.
- Develop effective procedures for dealing with accidents and complaints and alleged or suspected incidents of abuse.
- Establish links with parents and other relevant organisation.

3.2 Codes of Practice - General

- Value each child and young person and recognise the unique contribution that they each can make.
- Provide an example we wish others to follow.
- Respect a young person's right to personal privacy.
- Use appropriate language with children and young people.
- Be aware that someone else might misinterpret our actions, no matter how well intentioned.
- Recognise that special caution is required in sensitive moments of counselling, such as dealing with bullying, bereavement or abuse.
- Endeavour to plan activities which involve more than one person.
- Never jump to conclusions about others without checking the facts.
- Never allow ourselves to be drawn into inappropriate attention-seeking situations.
- Never exaggerate or trivialise child abuse issues.
- Ensure that at least two adults are present at all times in any situation where children and young people are in our care. A ratio of one qualified leader to 10 children (age 8 upwards) should be maintained. In a mixed group situation there should be one of either gender.

3.3 Self Protection Guidelines for Staff and Volunteers

Do

- Have an appropriate mix of male and female leaders.
- As far as possible ensure that leaders are not left alone in a closed room, particularly a sleeping area or bathroom, with a child or young person. Either have another leader present, or keep the door open and inform the leaders where you are, why you are there and who is with you.
- If any banter takes place, it is important that the leaders ensure that:
 - The child or young person enjoys it, feels it is fun, but still feels respected.
 - The child or young person does not feel threatened or intimidated by it.
 - It is appropriate banter – not nasty or highlighting areas that the child or young person may feel are their weaknesses.
 - It does not have the potential for other children to use it in an inappropriate or hurtful way e.g. where it turns into taunting or name calling.
- Respect a young person's right to personal privacy.
- Remember that someone else might misinterpret your actions, no matter how well intentioned.
- Recognise that special caution is required even in sensitive moments of counselling, such as when dealing with bullying, bereavement or abuse.
- Plan activities which involve more than one other person being present, or at least which are within sight or hearing of others.
- Use your common sense.
- Where a child or young person makes an allegation or a disclosure of child abuse, this must be reported to the leader in charge, who will then take appropriate action.

Do Not

- Do not engage in rough physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay, wrestling, tickling etc.
- Do not permit abusive youth peer activities e.g. initiation ceremonies, bullying etc.
- Leader involvement in some physical contact games is inappropriate and caution should always be exercised with all similar activities.
- Do not believe "it could never happen to me".
- Do not make suggestive remarks or gestures even in fun.
- Do not allow yourself to be drawn into inappropriate attention seeking behaviour such as tantrums or crushes.
- Do not rely on your good name to protect you.
- Do not allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any sort.
- Do not allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- Do not do things of a personal nature for children that they can do for themselves.

- Whenever possible avoid taking young children or young people alone in a car on journeys, however short. Try to ensure that another leader or other children/young people are with you. If a situation arises that you have to transport a child home, ensure that other leaders know what is happening and that the child is in the rear seats.
- Do not allow the inappropriate use of computers, tabs, phones or other digital communications devices.

3.4 Guidelines on General Safety

Safety is of prime importance during any activity. It is not only the responsibility of the leader in charge but of every volunteer. All workers should be familiar with and follow the Dreamscheme Northern Ireland Health and Safety Policy. Staff and volunteers will adhere to the following guidelines:

Always do a quick risk assessment e.g. have a quick initial look around the premises you are about to use to identify any possible dangers e.g. a stack of chairs which could topple, an electric cable which could trip etc.

Be aware of the location of fire exits and ensure that they are not obstructed. Occasional fire drills should be conducted to ensure that all young people know what evacuation procedure to follow in the event of a real fire. Know where the nearest fire extinguishers are located. In the event of a fire, evacuating the building and saving life is much more important than fighting a fire.

Maintain attendance records and ensure that at least one of the leaders is carrying a mobile phone during sessions.

Where possible workers should be aware of what medication young people are currently taking and this should not be given without written consent from parents or doctors. Workers should also seek to obtain information concerning allergies and reaction to foods e.g. peanuts. Medication should be clearly marked, out of the reach of children and young people and securely locked away.

Young people should be supervised at all times by a worker while in a kitchen area.

There should be adequate supervision by a worker of certain equipment e.g. table tennis tables, snooker tables etc.

When using special equipment for your programme e.g. for “one off” activities such as trampolining, bouncy castle etc., ensure there is adequate supervision by trained workers. You may also require special insurance to cover these higher risk activities. Be aware of the physical environment and remove/avoid items which may cause injury during the said activity.

Areas where maintenance work is taking place should never be used.

Know where the accident incident report book is kept in which you should record details of accidents/injuries/witnesses/date.

3.5 Social Media / Technology

All staff and volunteers must adhere to the Dreamscheme Northern Ireland Social Media Policy and Guidelines on use of internet, emailing and texting communications.

We recognise that using the Internet (and other forms of technology) is an important part of the lives of the children and young people we work with.

In accordance with Dreamscheme Northern Ireland's Safeguarding Policy, we recognise that we must take all possible steps to protect young people from significant harm or risk whilst using the Internet or any other form of technology.

We also recognise the importance of establishing and updating procedures to ensure workers are protected whilst they work with children and young people.

All workers are responsible for reading any policies produced regarding safeguarding and communication matters and are expected to adhere to the guidelines in the current policies.

Anything suspicious or worrying from a young person online should be raised with the Senior Management.

3.6 Transport

In general, it is advisable to avoid the use of private cars for transporting young people to and from events.

Where it is necessary to use private cars the following guidelines to be adhered to:

- Drivers must be insured to drive the vehicle.
- Cars must not be overcrowded as insurance cover will be invalidated (one young person per seatbelt). Seat-belts must be worn at all times.
- Leaders cannot charge for transporting children or their insurance will be invalidated.
- 'R' drivers must not transport anyone under 18 and all drivers should have at least 3 years' driving experience if transporting children.
- Always ensure that you are not alone in your car with a child or young person. If this is not possible when leaving a child home, inform another leader of where you are going and have the child sitting in the rear seats. It is good practice to text the child's parent as you are about to leave.
- If travelling in groups ensure each leader knows which children they are responsible for.

- Written parental consent must be obtained if transporting children to an event.

3.7 Residential programmes and sleep overs.

Residential programmes often become the highlight of any organisation's youth programme. Whilst recognising the tremendous impact residential trips can have on a young person's emotional, physical and spiritual development the leader in charge should note the following:

- The residential centre must have adequate insurance cover regarding your group and the activities your group hopes to engage in. Insurance should especially cover high risk activities e.g. canoeing, rock climbing etc
- The centre should inform you of its rules and regulations. Make every effort to be aware of its timetable e.g. whether it has a lights out time, meal times, what time it expects the group to arrive and to depart.
- The centre must provide access to First Aid/GP in the event of an emergency.
- The centre must also provide separate sleeping accommodation for males/females. (* See note).
- Parental (or guardian's) consent is essential when taking any young person away as part of a residential programme.
- The young people should be fully informed of the nature of the residential, i.e. what is expected from them. They should never be coerced/forced into any activity with which they are uncomfortable.

3.8 Photographs

The following guidelines should be adhered to:

- Permission (verbal or written) should be obtained from all the people (young people and adults) who will appear in a photograph, video or webcam image before the photograph is taken or footage recorded.
- It should be made clear why that person's image is being used, what use you will make of it, and who might want to look at the pictures.
- Children and young people should not be identified by name or other personal details. These details include email, phone or postal addresses.
- When using photographs of children and young people, it is preferable to use group pictures.
- Carefully consider location and pose.
- Do not insist that a child participates.
- Obtain written consent from parents or carers before using photographs on a website.
- Individuals should not take photos at Dreamscheme events or post any photos online

Young people taking photographs of each other

Leaders should encourage young people to be sensible when taking photos or videoing each other, especially if they are to be posted on the internet. Young people should be encouraged to let their friends know if their intention is to post photographs online, giving them the opportunity to object. Young people may need to be reminded that once photographs are on the internet they have no control over where they end up.

Section 4: Responding to Disclosure of Abuse

It is not the responsibility of anyone from Dreamscheme to decide whether or not a child or young person has been abused. **It is however everyone's responsibility to report concerns.** If you are unclear about the nature of the information (and therefore which category the disclosure falls into), advice must be sought from the Designated Officer or the Police or Social Services.

In the context of your role within Dreamscheme never allow allegations made by a child or young person to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.

4.1 How to Listen to a Disclosure

It is important to listen carefully to the information a child or young person discloses. When listening to a disclosure the following good practice is required:

1. React calmly so as not to frighten the child/young person.
2. Listen to the child/ young person.
3. Do not show disbelief.
4. Tell the child/young person that he/she is not to blame and that he/she was right to tell.
5. Take what the child/young person says seriously, recognising the difficulties inherent in interpreting what a child/young person says, especially if they have a speech disability and/or differences in language.
6. Do not pre-suppose that the experience was bad or painful - it may have been neutral or even pleasurable. Always avoid projecting your own reactions onto the child or young person.
7. If you need to clarify, keep questions to the absolute minimum to ensure a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said.
8. If you need to clarify or the statement is ambiguous, use open-ended, non-leading questions.
9. Do not introduce personal information from either your own experiences or those of other children or young people.
10. Reassure the child or young person.

When receiving a disclosure:

1. Avoid panic, showing shock or distaste.
2. Avoid probing for more information than is offered.
3. Avoid speculating or making assumptions.
4. Avoid making negative comments about the person against whom the allegation has been made.
5. Avoid approaching the individual against whom the allegation has been made.
6. Avoid making promises or agreeing to keep secrets.
7. Avoid giving a guarantee of confidentiality.

4.2 Reporting a disclosure

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1. Record all incidents reported or observed on an Incident Form
2. Inform the Designated Officer ASAP
3. One copy of report to Designated Officer within 24 hours
4. Ensure confidentiality - only "need to know basis" (reference confidentiality statement)
5. The designated person will be responsible for taking the next steps and informing the appropriate authorities.
6. The Designated Officer will store any report in a safe and secure environment
7. See flow charts in Appendix 2 for further guidance

USEFUL NUMBERS	
Health and Social Care Trusts Gateway	028 9050 7000 028 9504 9999 Out of Hours
NSPCC Helpline	0808 800 5000
PSNI Public Protection Unit	028 9065 0222 Ask for the local Public Protection Unit
Childline	Freephone 0800 1111
Child Protection in Sport Unit	028 9035 5756

4.3 Dealing with concerns about a colleague

The vast majority of people who work with children are well motivated and would never harm a child. Unfortunately a few do and it is essential that the organisation creates a culture that makes staff / volunteers willing and comfortable in voicing their concerns, particularly those about someone with whom they work or whom they know. Again, the organisation's safeguarding procedures should be followed. See Appendix 2 for further guidance.

When the concern is about possible abuse outside the organisation, see Appendix 3 for further guidance.

During an investigation, support should be given both to the individual who voices concerns and to the suspected abuser. Once the investigation is completed, the organisation must decide what action, if any, is necessary to prevent a similar situation arising again.

If you do not know who to turn to for advice or are worried about sharing your concerns with a senior colleague, you should contact the Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT) Gateway Team direct (or the NSPCC on 0808 800 5000).

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APPENDIX 1

Dreamscheme Northern Ireland – Reporting of Incident Form

Please use this form to record any concern you have about a child. If you need help in completing this form please talk to the leader in charge of your organisation or the Designated Person. The completed form will be given by the organisation leader to the Designated Person.

Child's name		
Address		
Age	DOB	Phone

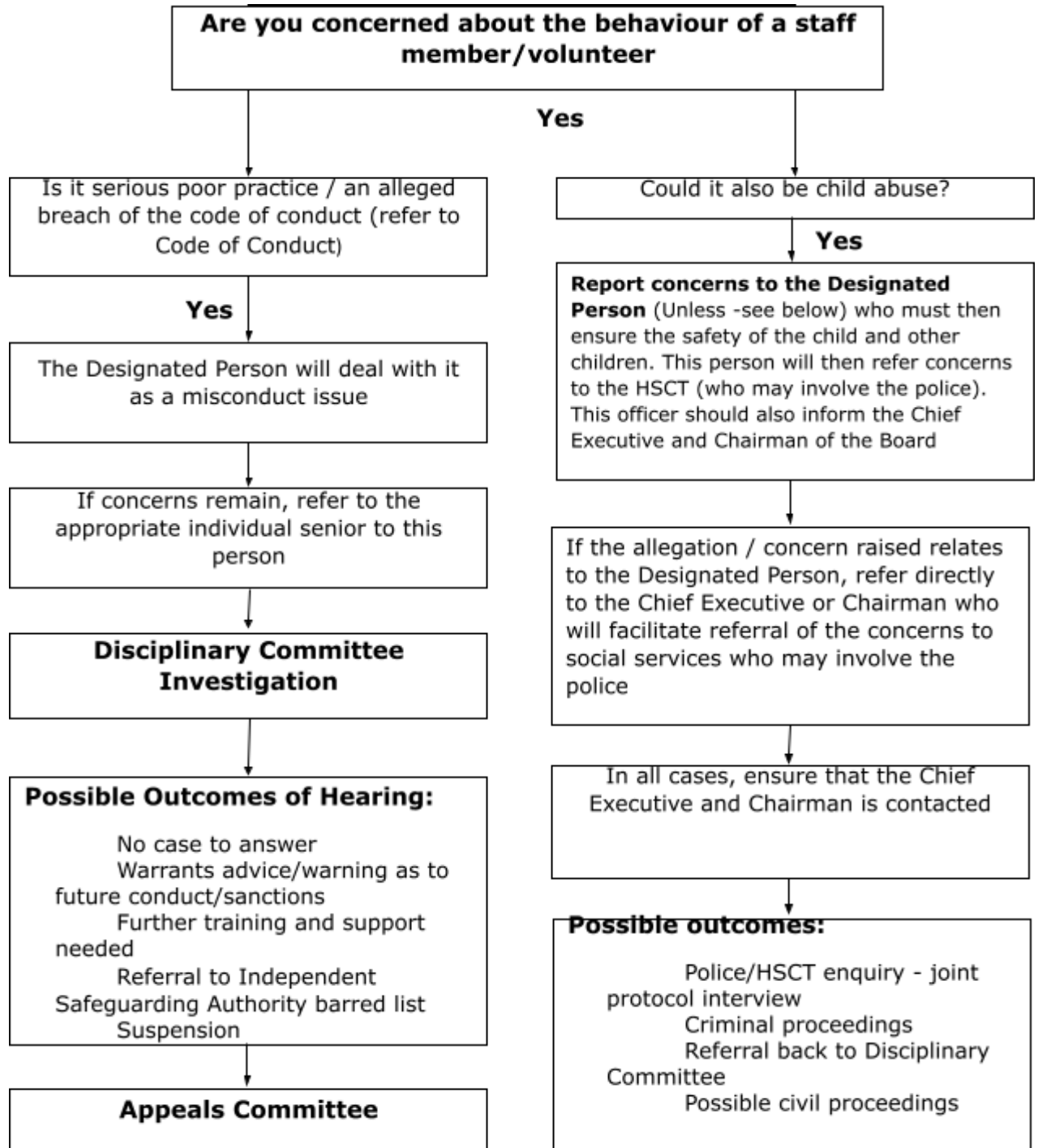
State, as clearly as possible, why you are concerned, from whom you received the information and when. If possible include the details of the person(s) causing concern in relation to the child.

Name of person making the report:
What is the nature of the concern?
Are there any visible injuries?
Has any medical attention been sought/needed?
Has the child disclosed any relevant information?
Has anything been said to the child, in response?
Who else has been consulted on this matter?

Signature:	Date:
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Appendix 2

INTERNAL CONCERNS FLOW CHART



Appendix 3

External Concerns Flow Chart

When the concern is about possible abuse outside the organisation, follow the procedure below:

