

OPDS Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Important Contact Information

Designated Safeguarding Lead

Mrs Candy Edwards
Overseas Personal Development Services Ltd.
40c Waddington Avenue
Old Coulsdon
Surrey
CR5 1QF

Tel: 0203 475 9385
Mobile: 0759 950 2280
E-Mail: candy.edwards@opds.co.uk

Deputy Safeguarding Lead

Mrs Sunny Field
Overseas Personal Development Services Ltd.
40c Waddington Avenue
Old Coulsdon
Surrey
CR5 1QF

Tel: 0203 475 9381
Mobile: 0793 689 9333
E-Mail: sunny.field@opds.co.uk

Prevent Lead

Miss Andrea Sherlock
Overseas Personal Development Services Ltd.
40c Waddington Avenue
Old Coulsdon
Surrey
CR5 1QF

Tel: 0203 475 9384
Email: andrea.sherlock@opds.co.uk

Emergency 24/7 telephone 0784 230 3240



OPDS works within the local authority of London Borough of Croydon

To contact the LADO Jane Parr please call 020 8255 2889 or email jane.parr@croydon.gov.uk

This should be used for reporting a disclosure against a member of staff.

Croydon LSP



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The objective of a Local Safeguarding Partnership is to coordinate local work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and to ensure the effectiveness of what the member organisations do individually and together.

Other Local Safeguarding Partnerships (including links to their website) in areas that we work are:

[Bracknell Forest LSP](#)
[Brighton & Hove LSP](#)
[Bristol LSP](#)
[Buckinghamshire LSP](#)
[Cambridgeshire LSP](#)
[Camden LSP](#)
[Cardiff LSP](#)
[Cumbria LSP](#)
[Denbighshire LSP](#)
[Dorset LSP](#)
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[Somerset LSP](#)
[Southwark LSP](#)
[Staffordshire LSP](#)
[Suffolk LSP](#)
[Surrey LSP](#)
[West Sussex LSP](#)
[Wiltshire LSP](#)

OPDS will always work closely with and follow the guidance from any Local Safeguarding Partnership should the need arise.

Introduction

Students have the right to a safe and secure environment throughout their time in the UK, so they can take maximum enjoyment from a range of activities they choose to participate in. This covers their time whilst at their chosen school/college and their time with a host family during exeat and school holidays.

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OPDS aims to assist all students for whom we are Guardian to achieve their full potential, both academically and in terms of personal development. They must be able to participate in and enjoy any activity and to be treated with dignity and respect.

To enable us to do this OPDS recognises that safeguarding must start at the very top with the Directors and owners. All staff and homestays receive formal Safeguarding training on a regular basis that is renewed every 3 years. Further to this the DSL and DDSL receive DSL training every 2 years. The DSL and/or DDSL oversee all matters and arrangements relating to safeguarding.

Child Protection Statement

OPDS is committed to ensuring that all students are protected and kept safe from harm whilst engaged in services organised and provided by the Company. OPDS will also safeguard the welfare of all students who use their services or who attend activities within its venues, by protecting them from abuse.

OPDS recognises its responsibilities under the terms of the Children Act 2004, and other relevant legislation, to make arrangements for ensuring that its services are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of all students.

This policy applies to all situations within the Company's operation, which could potentially involve a student. This may include OPDS staff speaking to students on the phone or when students stay with host families for short or long holidays.

The policy affects every OPDS staff member, volunteer and anyone working on behalf of and/or representing the Company.

Definitions

OPDS recognises that:

Safeguarding means protecting a person's health, wellbeing and human rights; enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect. It is an integral part of providing high-quality care to our students.

Child protection is measures and structures to prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence affecting children. Child protection means safeguarding children from harm.

The term student is used to refer to anyone for whom we have been appointed Educational Guardian.

The term parent is used as a generic term to represent anyone with legal parental responsibility. The terms staff and volunteers are used to refer to employees, volunteers and anyone working on behalf of and/or representing the Company.

All students, irrespective of their age, class, religion, culture, disability, gender, ethnicity or sexual preference have the right to protection.

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Types of Abuse

Abuse: 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.

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

Emotional abuse: the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and adverse effects on the child's emotional development.

Sexual abuse: involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.

Neglect: the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development.

Child on Child Abuse: This can happen anywhere including at school or at a host family. It can include

- bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying)
- abuse in intimate personal relationships between children (sometimes known as 'teenage relationship abuse')
- physical abuse which can include hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm
- sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault
- sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment

OPDS take peer on peer abuse extremely seriously. Where an allegation of peer on peer abuse has been made our initial response would be to ensure the immediate safety of any child involved.

The threshold for dealing with an issue of pupil behaviour or bullying under the Safeguarding Policy is subject to local authority protocols. When there is 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm' any such abuse will be referred to local authority where the alleged abuse has taken place. In the event of disclosures about pupil-on-pupil abuse all children involved, whether perpetrator or victim, are treated as being 'at risk'.

Some common signs that there may be something concerning happening in a child's life include:

- unexplained changes in behaviour or personality
- becoming withdrawn
- seeming anxious
- becoming uncharacteristically aggressive
- lacks social skills and has few friends, if any

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- poor bond or relationship with a parent
- knowledge of adult issues inappropriate for their age
- running away or going missing
- always choosing to wear clothes which cover their body.

These signs don't necessarily mean that a child is being abused, there could be other things happening in their life which are affecting their behaviour - but we can help you to assess the situation.

You may also notice some concerning behaviour from adults who you know have children in their care, which makes you concerned for the child/children's safety and wellbeing.

The Aims of the Policy

OPDS accepts the moral and legal responsibility to implement procedures and provide a duty of care for students. This includes safeguarding their wellbeing and protecting them when they are engaged in services organised and provided by the Company or when they come into contact with Company staff and volunteers.

The Company Aims To Do This for Students By

- Raising an awareness in the Company and beyond of the statutory "duty of care" relating to them and actively encouraging good practice amongst all staff and volunteers.
- Creating a safe and healthy environment within all its services, avoiding situations where abuse or allegations of abuse may occur.
- Respecting and promoting their rights, wishes and feelings, listening to them, minimising dangers and working closely with other agencies.
- Recruiting, training, supervising and supporting staff and volunteers who work with students to adopt best practice to safeguard and protect them from abuse. The Company also works to protect the staff against false allegations. Staff and volunteers who work with students must pass an Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check, and produce a certificate to prove this, a copy of which is retained by OPDS. This must be renewed every 3 years.
- Responding to any allegations and implementing the appropriate disciplinary and appeals procedures.
- Requiring staff and volunteers to adopt and abide by the Company's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy together with procedures and good practice guidelines that may be published from time to time.
- This policy will be reviewed at least annually.

All students should be reminded that we are here to help them, especially if they are ever concerned about their safety. If they have any worries or feel that they have been asked to do something about which they are uncomfortable, or have been hurt in any way by anyone else, they should feel comfortable to tell us.

OPDS has a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and a Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL) who can be contacted with any concerns. They are trained to help and their contact details can be found at the beginning of this policy.

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We will work closely and supportively with all DSLs within schools where our students are based. Depending on the situation this could be by phone, email, virtual or physical meeting. We will share information with them where needed to ensure the safety and well being of our students.

Alternatively, students can speak to any member of the OPDS team or homestay.

Actions To Achieve These Aims Include:

The general safety and well being of students will be promoted within all Company services so that good working practices are maintained.

All staff and volunteers will complete a formal safeguarding course every 3 years, for which a certificate will be provided and retained within the company files. This will include child protection procedures and good practice to enable them to recognise the potential signs and indicators of abuse. Further training and updates will be provided at least annually by way of newsletter or annual visit.

Procedures will be provided for staff and volunteers describing the actions they should take if they have concerns or encounter a case of alleged or suspected child abuse, allowing them to be confident and able to record and respond to incidents.

The Promotion of the Safety of Students

OPDS recognises its staff could have the potential to abuse students, and will therefore make every attempt to ensure that unsuitable people are prevented from working with them.

Recruitment and Selection

The following procedures will be adhered to for the safety of students:

- All staff with access to them, whether voluntary or paid, must provide at least two references, one personal and one professional. These must be received and accepted as satisfactory to the Company before employment commences. The professional referee must be current, or if the applicant is not employed, be the most recent employer. These references will be verified by phone call.
- References must cover the last three years of employment or, if in education, be provided by the course tutor. Professional referees must be previous employers. Personal referees must not be related to the applicant.
- All new staff with access to students are to be advised that the Company will require them to complete Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service checks.
- Confirmation of employment will be subject to the receipt of necessary clearance.
- DBS disclosures must be renewed every 3 years.
- Where a subsequent DBS check shows concerns, OPDS accepts responsibility to review the circumstances which may lead to staff leaving the company or host families being struck off our register.

Use of Contractors

OPDS and its staff and volunteers take care that contractors doing work on behalf of the Company are all subject to an enhanced DBS check before we use their services. We request that any changes in the circumstances of any contractor be notified to OPDS, such that we can monitor this appropriately.

Induction and Training

The Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy will be given to staff, volunteers and host families to recognise their responsibilities with regard to their own good practice and the reporting of suspected poor practice and concerns or allegations of abuse. The Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy informs members of staff what conduct is expected and advises situations to avoid in order to protect themselves from allegations.

All staff and homestays are advised to read Keeping Children Safe in Education Part 1 which can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>. For staff this is done by a reading checklist of documents they must read when they are first employed and homestays are reminded by regular newsletter reminders.

Procedures

These procedures are to inform staff and volunteers of what actions they should take if they have concerns or encounter a case of alleged or suspected child abuse, i.e. response actions. The procedures apply to all OPDS staff and volunteers.

Responding to Concerns and Allegations General Procedures

It is important that all staff and volunteers are aware that the first person that has concerns or encounters a case of alleged or suspected abuse is not responsible for deciding whether or not abuse has occurred. However, staff and volunteers do have a duty of care to the child or young person and they undertake to report any suspicions they may have to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (Candy Edwards) or the Deputy Safeguarding Lead (Sunny Field).

In general, there are 3 situations that staff and volunteers may need to respond to concerning a case of alleged or suspected abuse:

- Responding to a student disclosing abuse, i.e. they make an allegation of abuse.
- Responding to allegations or concerns about a member of staff or volunteer from your own observation or due to a complaint.
- Responding to allegations or concerns about any other person, i.e. parent, carer, other service user.


OPDS has a named Designated Safeguarding Lead with overall responsibility for ensuring the organisation has appropriate arrangements in place for the management of allegations against staff / volunteers / students. This is Candy Edwards whose contact details can be found at the beginning of this policy.

Reporting Incidents

It is the duty of any Company employee or volunteer to:

- Report any concerns about a child being subject to abuse.


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- Receive a disclosure.
- Report if they are aware of members or colleagues behaving in an inappropriate manner.

All reports are confidential and will be handled in the same way with due respect to the person raising the concern, regardless of the outcome

Detail to be Recorded

You should record in writing all the details that you are aware of and what was said using the child or young person's own words, as soon as practically possible. In your record you should include the following using the form in Appendix 2:

- The date and time of the report
- The student's name, address and date of birth
- The nature of the allegation
- Your observations - e.g. a description of the child or young person's behaviour, physical and emotional state and a description of any visible injuries
- Exactly what the child or young person said and what you said. Record the student's account of what has happened as closely as possible
- Sign and date what you have recorded

Do not ask any leading questions. It is very important that you reassure the child or young person that they have done the right thing in telling you. Inform the child you will pass on this information to someone who can help them.

Allegations or Concerns Against a Member of Staff or Homestay

Any concerns about the conduct of any member of staff or volunteer must be reported to the DSL immediately. Where there is a conflict of interest in reporting the matter to the DSL, it must go straight to the DDSL.

There may be situations when we will want to involve the police immediately if the person is deemed to be an immediate risk to children or there is evidence of a possible criminal offence.

Once an allegation has been received by the DSL or DDSL they will contact the LADO (as part of their mandatory duty) on 0300123 1650 option 3 LADO. Email: LADO@surreycc.gov.uk immediately and before taking any action or investigation.

Following consultation with the LADO, inform the parents of the allegation unless there is a good reason not to.

In liaison with the LADO, OPDS will determine how to proceed and if necessary the LADO will refer the matter to Children's Social Care and/or the police.

Low-level Concerns

Low-level Concerns are recorded to keep pupils safe and to create a culture of openness, trust and transparency.

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‘Low-level concerns’ are those which do not meet the threshold of the harms test (an action which may cause harm or pose a risk of harm to a child) concerning a member of staff/supply staff/contractor or a volunteer.

These low-level concerns may form part of a wider pattern and **need to be recorded and reported to the DSL**. She will keep a record of them, which will include details of the concern, the context in which the concern arose, and action taken. The name of the individual sharing their concerns will be noted; if the individual wishes to remain anonymous then that will be respected as far as reasonably possible.

When a low-level concern has been raised, the DSL will collect as much evidence as possible by speaking where possible with the person who raised the concern, to the individual involved and to any witnesses. Reports about supply staff and contractors will be notified to their employers so any potential patterns of inappropriate behaviour can be identified.

Records of low-level concerns will be reviewed so that potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour can be identified and responded to.

Where a pattern of behaviour is identified, the DSL will decide on a course of action. This might be internal disciplinary procedures, or referral to the LADO if the harms threshold is met.

Please see the OPDS Low Level Concerns Policy for more information. This can be found on our website or can be obtained directly from us.

Emergency Procedure

OPDS does have an emergency procedure for any unexpected incident from a cancelled flight to an act of terrorism. This procedure can be found on our website or can be obtained directly from us.

Whistleblowing

All staff and homestays, 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 our safeguarding arrangements.

If it becomes necessary to consult outside the business, they should:

- Speak in the first instance, to the LADO in accordance with the Whistleblowing Policy
- The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline is also available for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally or have concerns about a way a concern is being handled by OPDS. Staff can call: 0800 028 0285 (line is available from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM, Monday to Friday) or Email: help@nspcc.org.uk.

Whistle-blowing regarding the DSL should be made to the DDSL.

Further information can be found in our Whistleblowing policy.

Confidentiality

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only, i.e. Designated Safeguard Lead, Deputy DSL, Social Services or Police. It is extremely important that allegations or concerns are not discussed with anyone else, as any breach of confidentiality could be damaging to the child or young person, their family, those who are the subject of allegations and any child protection investigations that may follow.

Informing the parents of a student of concerns you may have should be done in consultation with Social Services, where they have had to be involved. Parents will not be informed prior to OPDS contacting Social Services, if they are the subject of the allegation.

However, any individual against whom an allegation has been made has the right to be notified about the cause of concern. This will be done in joint consultation with Social Services and the Police, where the matter has had to be escalated to them. It is important that the timing of this does not prejudice the investigation.

Recorded information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to Designated Persons, in line with data protection laws (e.g. that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure). If enquiries arise from the public or any branch of the media, it is vital that all staff and volunteers are briefed so that they do not make any comments regarding the situation. Staff and volunteers should make no comment and direct all enquiries to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Photography

Staff and volunteers should be vigilant at all times regarding people using cameras or videos within OPDS services and at events or activities which involve students. OPDS seeks parental consent, by signature, on the Guardianship Agreement Contract which is taken out initially.

The Role of the Designated Person

Where information is reported that a person has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or is at risk of suffering significant harm, or otherwise believed to be a child in need, the concerns will be referred to the local Social Services Authority for the area in which the alleged offence has taken place. Support will also be given by reporting the incident to the Police if this is deemed appropriate by the local Social Services Authority.

In General:

The nominated OPDS officials should seek to discuss any concerns with the student's parents and obtain their agreement to make a referral, where necessary. This should only be done where this will not place a child at increased risk of significant harm.

Where the circumstances of the referral indicate the possible commission or attempted commission of a criminal offence, the matter will also be referred to the local Police for the area in which the alleged offence has taken place. This will enable the Police and Social Services to consider jointly how to proceed in the best interests of the child.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will keep the records of reported concerns in a secure place.

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Personal information about referrers, including identifying details, will only be disclosed to third parties (including subject families and other agencies) with the consent of the referrer.

The Concept of Significant Harm

Some children may be suffering, or at risk of suffering, significant harm, either as a result of a deliberate act, or of a failure on the part of a parent, guardian, host family or carer to act or to provide proper care. These children need to be made safe from harm, alongside meeting their other needs.

The Children Act 1989 introduced the concept of significant harm as the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of children.

The local authority has the duty to make enquiries, or cause enquiries to be made, where it has reason to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer significant harm (this is called a Section 47). A court may only make a care order (committing the child to the care of the local authority) or supervision order (putting the child under the supervision of a social worker, or a probation officer) in respect of a child if it is satisfied that:

- The child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm
- The harm or likelihood of harm is attributable to a lack of adequate parental care or control

There are no absolute criteria on which to rely when judging what constitutes significant harm. However, to understand and establish significant harm, it is necessary to consider:

- The family context and the child's development within this
- The wider social and cultural environment
- Any special needs, such as a medical condition, communication difficulty or disability that may affect the child's development and care within the family
- The nature of harm, in terms of ill-treatment or failure to provide adequate care
- The impact on the child's health and development
- The adequacy of parental care

For those children who are suffering, or at risk of suffering significant harm, joint working is essential, to safeguard the children and where necessary to help bring to justice the perpetrators of crimes against children. All agencies and professionals must:

- Be alert to potential indicators of abuse or neglect
- Be alert to the risks which abusers, or potential abusers, may pose to children
- Share and help to analyse information so that an informed assessment can be made of the child's needs and circumstances
- Contribute to whatever actions are needed to safeguard the child and promote his or her welfare
- Regularly review the outcomes for the child against specific shared objectives
- Work co-operatively with parents unless this is inconsistent with the need to ensure the child's safety

Created May 2018
Last Updated October 2023

Appendix 1

Sources of information / support

ChildLine

Offer a free helpline for children and young people in the UK. They can be contacted to talk about any problem using 0800 1111

Information is also available on their website using www.childline.org.uk

NSPCC

Information for children and adults is provided at www.nspcc.org.uk

They can be contacted using 0808 800 5000

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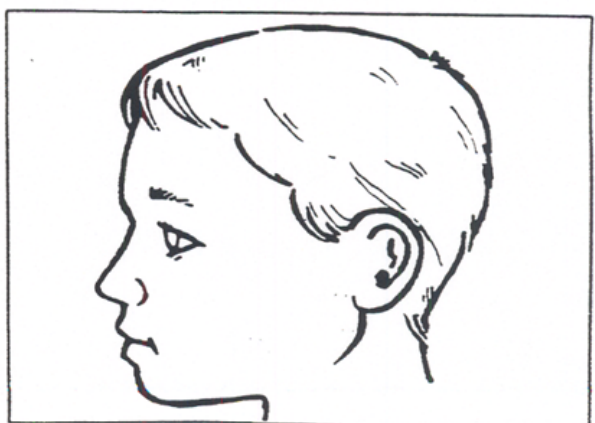
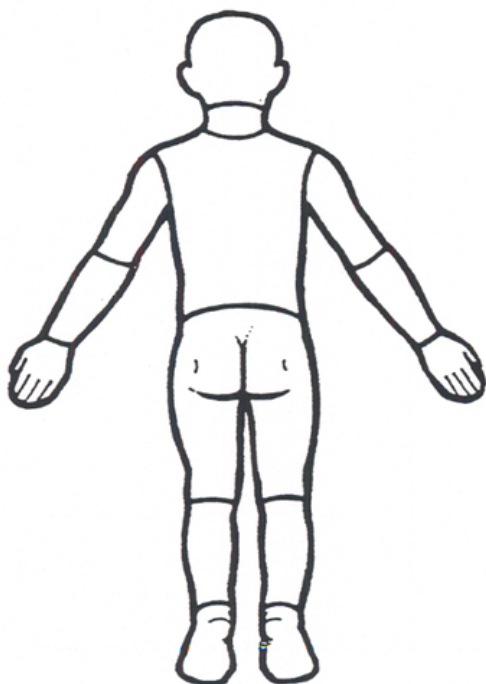
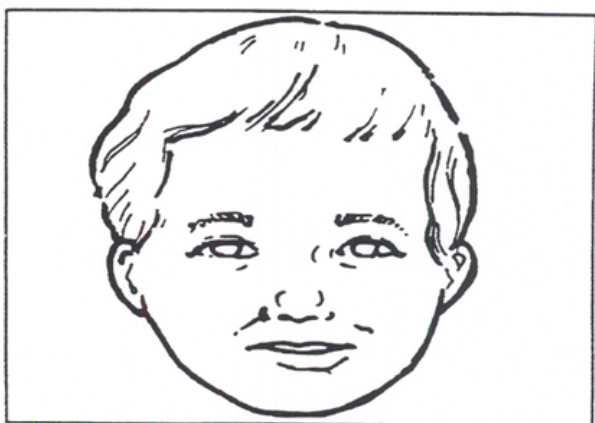
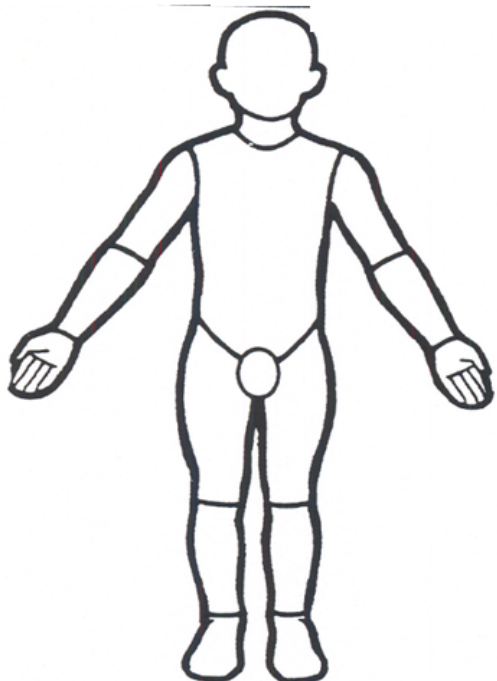


Appendix 2

Child Protection Incident Report Form

Your Details - Person completing the form			
Name			
Position			
Telephone		Email	
Details of the person reporting the concern/disclosure			
Name			
Address			
		Postcode	
Telephone		Email	
Details of any other person present			
Name			
Address			
		Postcode	
Telephone		Email	
Details of the concern/disclosure			
Please use diagrams attached or extra sheets if needed.			
I have completed this form and provided information that is factual and does not contain my own views or opinions on the matter.			
Name		Signature	
Date			

Body Map



Indicate clearly where injuries/marks were seen and attach this to the reporting form.

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