

# WATFORD SCHOOLS TRUST POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN

## A. Policy Statement

Watford Schools Trust is a charity operated by volunteers and paid staff. We believe that all human beings are of equal worth in the sight of God and aim to follow Biblical principles in all that we do.

Therefore:

- We commit ourselves to the nurture, protection and general welfare of children at risk of harm (Appendix A). Keeping children safe is of paramount importance and the need to provide adequate care for children is at the forefront of our activities.
- It is the responsibility of each one of us to protect children at risk of harm from all forms of abuse and to report any disclosures of abuse in addition to suspicions or concerns.
- In order to achieve this, we are committed to supporting, resourcing and training those who work with children at risk of harm. We will provide appropriate supervision, recognise mutual accountability and commit to an annual review of our safeguarding policy, procedures and practices.
- In fulfilling our commitments, we will work, in partnership, as appropriate, with parents, carers, statutory agencies and other organisations.

Watford Schools Trust has adopted the above principles; all regular volunteers and staff are presented with a copy and expected to follow the procedures and guidelines as set out in this document.

## B. Statutory Compliance for Watford Schools Trust

The standards in this policy build on and incorporate legislation and government expectations for children at risk of harm. This includes HM Government 'Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)' and new safeguarding duties under the Care Act 2014. The guidance is for statutory agencies and voluntary organisations alike and covers all the expectations of government in relation to safeguarding children in England.

We commit to the following standards:

- 1) **Adopt a policy statement on safeguarding the welfare of children at risk of harm**  
The policy statement included in this document has been adopted following approval by the Trustees of Watford Schools Trust. It is reviewed annually, and is available on our website,
- 2) **Plan the work of the organisation so as to minimise situations where the abuse of children may occur**  
We have established and will maintain and review clear procedures to fulfil this policy. They are set out in detail in this document are under constant review, with any updates necessary given in writing at least annually.

- 3) **Introduce a system whereby children may talk with an independent person.**  
Our procedures discourage the formation of exclusive relationships, and our activities are organised in such a way that children have access to a number of people. We are, though, committed to listening to children and giving them the opportunity to talk about any worries or concerns that they may have. We publicise relevant contact numbers of independent organisations (see Appendix D).
- 4) **Apply agreed procedures for protecting children to all paid staff and volunteers.**  
We have established minimum procedures for all workers and training and comprehensive procedures for workers in direct contact with children. All workers are required to comply with this policy.
- 5) **Give all staff and volunteers clear roles.**
  - a) All paid staff have a written job description and are given a contract. They are instructed to read the Watford Schools Trust Policy and Procedures for Safeguarding Children.
  - b) All Trustees are instructed to read the Watford Schools Trust Policy and Procedures for Safeguarding Children.
  - c) 'Regular volunteers' are given a clear written role profile and asked to read the Watford Schools Trust Policy and Procedures for Safeguarding Children.
  - d) 'Occasional volunteers' are briefed on the Watford Schools Trust Policy and Procedures for Safeguarding Children and are given a summary to read. They are asked to sign their acknowledgement that this has been done.
- 6) **Use supervision as a means of creating a safeguarding culture across the organisation.**  
All staff and regular volunteers plan and review their work and report to their Line Manager on a regular basis.
- 7) **Treat all would-be paid staff and regular volunteers as job applicants for any position involving contact with children.**  
All potential employees/volunteers will be fully DBS checked unless they are going into a school for a one-off visit accompanying a paid Watford Schools Trust staff member. We have comprehensive application and selection procedures for all workers.
- 8) **Obtain at least 2 references for potential employees/regular volunteers from people who have experience of the applicant's paid work or volunteering with children.**  
We require a reference from at least 2 people (church leaders or equivalent) for each applicant, seeking information which includes character and relationship assessment. We inform referees if work involves direct contact with children.
- 9) **Explore all applicants' experience of working or contact with children in an interview before appointment.**  
All staff and regular volunteers are interviewed prior to appointment. Occasional volunteers are assessed for their suitability.

**10) Find out whether an applicant has any conviction for criminal offences against children.**

All workers are required to sign a declaration disclosing a criminal conviction or caution. This includes, subject to certain exceptions, disclosing convictions which for other purposes are 'spent', as posts involving direct work with children are exempt from the provision of section 4(ii) of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 194 (Exemptions Order 1975).

All employees are required to apply for an Enhanced Disclosure with barring list check from the Disclosure and Barring Service.

**11) Make paid and voluntary appointments conditional on the successful completion of a probationary period.**

We have a system of specific and general induction for staff, leading into an initial 3 month work review, and an on-going review process. The on-going review process applies to all who work with children at risk of harm.

**12) Issue guidelines on how to deal with a disclosure and/or concern of abuse.**

Comprehensive guidelines are established and reviewed annually. These are to be read by staff and regular volunteers. Responsibility for ensuring they are implemented and reviewed lies with the Line Manager/Trustees.

**13) Train paid staff and volunteers, their line managers or supervisors, and policy makers.**

We provide and give access to training for the safe care of children including increasing understanding of the prevalence of abuse, along with the signs, symptoms and indications of abuse.

<b>C. Safer Recruitment</b>
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- 1) The standards listed above are applied to our safe recruitment procedures, specifically standards 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 13. Watford Schools Trust will undergo careful recruitment and selection procedures as stated in this policy. Staff, regular volunteers and occasional volunteers are appointed (or excluded from service) at the discretion of the Trustees.
- 2) All applicants must complete an application form, which will include, but are not limited to questions on the following:
  - details of any criminal record
  - mental and physical state of health of the applicant
  - details of driving offences, and
  - details of 2 referees.
  - Motivations for applying
- 3) The application form will also contain :
  - an explanation that applicants will be required to request an Enhanced Disclosure from the Disclosure and Barring Service (subject to Update Service registration status)

- the fact that Watford Schools Trust has a policy on Employing People with a Criminal Record and that the existence of a criminal conviction does not necessarily rule out acceptance of an applicant.
  - A commitment to the safeguarding policy.
  - All potential employees will be interviewed by the Line Manager and at least 1 other person.
- 4) 2 references will be required for each applicant. If there are concerns about either or both of the references, additional references will also be taken up. Communication with referees will include a statement about the significance of the information being requested, the importance of the role of the employee and the paramount importance of the safety of children at risk of harm.
- 5) Once an application form has been received and the person deemed suitable for employment, a Disclosure will be requested from the DBS. Once the Disclosure has been processed and deemed satisfactory, the applicant's employment is confirmed.
- 6) Individual cases will be considered on merit, but as general guidance convictions or cautions in the categories listed below exclude an applicant from appointment:
- any form of abuse involving children at risk of harm
  - any types of serious violence, and
  - recent offences involving misuse of substances such as drugs or alcohol.
- 7) Some forms of physical emotional or mental illness may make an applicant unsuitable for service.
- 8) Applicants from overseas or those living in England and Wales for a short time may not be eligible for a Disclosure from the DBS. Every effort will be made to take whatever measures are available according to the comparative methods in their own country, but where there is any doubt as to the availability of a thorough check the application will be refused.
- 9) All those who seek employment with Watford Schools Trust as paid staff or volunteers are required to apply for an Enhanced Disclosure with barring list check from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), unless they are registered with the update service (see below), which will require renewal every 3 years.
- 10) Potential Trustees of Watford Schools Trust are required to apply for an Enhanced Disclosure before their appointment is confirmed. On appointment Trustees DBS checks will be carried out every 3 years.
- 11) Those with criminal convictions, cautions, cases pending, reprimands or bindovers are not necessarily unable to take up positions with Watford Schools Trust, which abides by its policy on 'Employing People with a Criminal Record'.
- 12) Watford Schools Trust abides by the Code of Practice established by the DBS.
- 13) Verification of identity and processing of applications is carried out by the Lead Verifier (or another specifically assigned Verifier).

- 14) We advise job applicants before they submit an application that, should they be successful, they will then need an Enhanced Disclosure.

## **Volunteers**

All volunteers are required to apply for an Enhanced Disclosure, with barring list check if working in schools on a regular basis, on appointment and every three years thereafter.

## **Update Service**

- 1) Where an individual has registered a disclosure certificate with the DBS update service, Watford Schools Trust will accept registered disclosure certificates that comply with the following criteria:
  - The disclosure is for the 'Child Workforce' category and
  - It is an 'Enhanced Disclosure'.
  - There is a barred list check if the individual is expected to be in regulated activity.
- 2) Where the online disclosure check contains information about cautions, convictions, reprimands or warnings or other relevant information the procedure below on handling disclosure information will be followed.
- 3) The responsibility to renew a subscription to the update service is with the individual not Watford Schools Trust.
- 4) For disclosures that are registered with the update service these will be checked on an annual basis.

## **Handling Disclosure Information**

- 1) Disclosures must be seen by the Lead Verifier.
- 2) If a Disclosure contains information about cautions, convictions, reprimands or warnings or other relevant information, advice on how to proceed is sought by the Lead Verifier.
- 3) Information recorded on the Disclosure may be shared by the Lead Verifier only with those directly involved in the particular employment decision.
- 4) Information recorded on the Disclosure is only shared if it is likely to affect the employment decision, which is then made in accordance with Watford Schools Trust's policy on Employing People with a Criminal Record.
- 5) If additional information is received from a police force, action follows the procedure outlined in the letter and is not shared with the applicant or anyone other than those making the employment decision, and only with those people if the police letter received does not forbid it.
- 6) The date and disclosure number of all checks are recorded in Watford School Trust's DBS file.
- 7) In extreme circumstances, when a disclosure check has not been successfully completed prior to the start of an event, and the individual is not registered with the update service,

then the relevant School would need to be contacted to ask if they will allow the person onto the premises.

### **Renewal of Disclosures**

- 1) Disclosures are normally renewed on a rolling three-year basis.
- 2) For disclosures that are registered with the update service these will be checked on an annual basis.
- 3) If, in the intervening years, declarations completed by those working with children suggest changed circumstances, a new Enhanced Disclosure is requested.

<b>D. Code of Conduct</b>
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- 1) All those working with children on behalf of Watford Schools Trust will treat them with respect and dignity, which should be reflected in attitude, behaviour and speech.

Watford Schools Trust acknowledges that it has a duty of care for a child participating in an event organised by them.

- 2) Work will take place in a public area so that contact between the workers and children is in sight of others.
- 3) Workers will avoid forming exclusive relationships or those which could be seen as showing favouritism to individual children.
- 4) Promises of confidentiality will be avoided and items shared with the school and Lead Verifier.
- 5) It is normally inappropriate for workers to initiate physical contact with children, and workers should be cautious of contact initiated by children, except in exceptional circumstances such as the need for medical attention or to prevent harm.
- 6) The use of any corporal punishment is strictly prohibited i.e. any form of physical discipline is not acceptable.
- 7) Any physical contact with children in the area of discipline will be purely in terms of an intervention which prevents the child exercising violent, or other inappropriate, behaviour and/or from hurting themselves or others. Minimal force will be used, for the minimum time necessary and witnessed by another team member or school staff member. A record of any such intervention must be made.

Workers and volunteers are in a 'relationship of trust' with children and must take care that an abuse of that trust does not occur. Any behaviour which might allow an intimate relationship (emotional, physical or sexual) to develop between themselves and a child must be avoided.

- 8) This relationship of trust is also in place outside of the school in any communication between workers and children, whether in person, by letter, email, telephone, text messaging, social media apps or any other means. Any communication or direct contact

with a child will therefore be characterised by transparency and integrity and must operate within Watford School Trust's policy on safeguarding children.

### Online Events

For any contacts made by email or Zoom, a Watford Schools Trust account should always be used.

## E. Reporting Concerns

Whilst workers are in schools they may be told about various personal situations or matters which given concern about the mental health or general wellbeing of a child. In the majority of situations, being prepared to give the time to listen and care without being judgemental will be of great value and assistance. In some cases it may be possible and appropriate to offer advice and prayer. However, workers must understand the importance of safeguarding and understand that it is possible that the nature of our work may increase the likelihood of children disclosing an issue which puts them 'at risk' or suggest that they have been or are being abused. Such disclosures may cover a range of potentially harmful situations including physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, spiritual abuse, bullying and peer-to-peer abuse. Definitions of these terms are covered in Appendix C.

Whether the matter raised is a concern of disclosure of potential or actual abuse the following procedure must be followed by all workers.

- 1) Give the person time to talk freely but without fear of being overheard. Treat them with respect and acceptance. Always accept what is being said at this stage. Do not ask questions other than to clarify what is being said. Never put words into the person's mouth and be careful with your tone of voice so as not to appear shocked or angry or to show disbelief.
- 2) Do not promise to keep the disclosure 'secret'. Explain that you must share this information with the School's Child Protection Officer who may in turn call upon other people who will be able to help.
- 3) Stay with the person until you feel they have said all they want to say. Try to avoid leaving them in a distressed state.
- 4) Inform the School's Child Protection Officer as soon as possible.
- 5) Make a written report of what happened on the safeguarding concern form provided as soon as possible (not in the person's presence). Do not interpret, only record what was said as verbatim as possible.
- 6) The Lead Verifier will be aware that workers or volunteers involved in handling these situations may also need appropriate help throughout the process and afterwards. Counselling support may be appropriate, see Appendix A.
- 7) Although Watford Schools Trust is committed to safer recruitment and to the upholding of the Code of Conduct and the procedures described in this document, it remains possible that there may be individuals employed or volunteers who may be a risk to children.

Once a disclosure or allegation of abuse is made, the Trustees of Watford Schools Trust should be informed.

- 1) If an allegation is made against a worker, the same process must be followed except that it must exclude the individual who is the subject of the allegation. The worker will normally be asked to leave the school immediately until the investigation has been carried out. It cannot, though, be assumed that this is the course of action which it will be required to be followed in every circumstance.
- 2) Any worker who is concerned about the way an allegation or disclosure has been handled will contact the Lead Verifier who is the operational lead for safeguarding.
- 3) At every stage, procedures will show respect for people and will involve careful consultation, not hasty reaction.
- 4) Any concerns or allegations of non-recent abuse should follow the same process.

#### **F. Processing of personal data**

The Lead Verifier will contact our contracted safeguarding advisors for advice in the first instance.

In all circumstances referrals to the relevant statutory agencies, including the LADO will be made when the advice given by our safeguarding advisors is to do so. If a Watford Schools Trust employee becomes aware of a concern relating to Watford Schools Trust which they become aware of they should immediately contact the Lead Verifier.

Information and personal data relating to safeguarding matters will be gathered, recorded and stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act, 2018, and Watford Schools Trust's Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notice. This will be done in compliance with IICSA (Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse).

#### **G. Responsibilities**

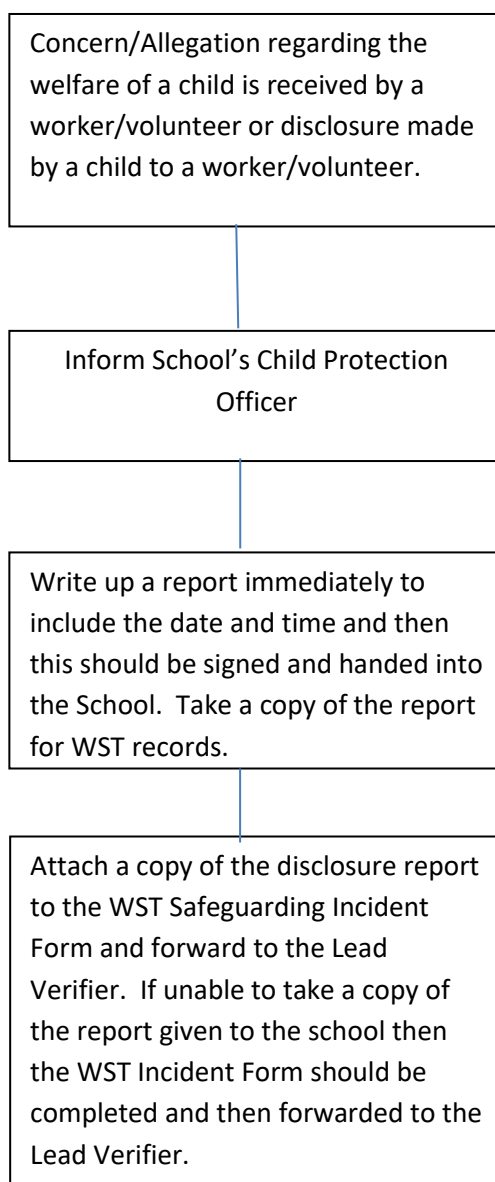
The Board of Trustees is responsible for the approval of Watford Schools Trust's safeguarding policy.

A named trustee (currently Angela Steed) is the designated lead person for safeguarding. She is responsible for reporting, as necessary, individuals to the DBS and reporting notifiable cases to the Charity Commission.



## **APPENDIX A: Reporting Information Concerning the Welfare and Protection of a Child**

### **FLOWCHART FOR REPORTING INFORMATION CONCERNING THE WELFARE AND PROTECTION OF A CHILD**



**APPENDIX B – WATFORD SCHOOLS TRUST  
SAFEGUARDING INCIDENT FORM**

<b>Contact details of organisation</b>	07732 021488
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<b>Name of Designated Person for Safeguarding (DPS)</b>	Angela Steed
<b>Contact details of Designated Person for Safeguarding</b>	01923 710372

<b>Name of concerned person or to whom disclosure was given</b>	
<b>Contact details of concerned person or to whom disclosure was given</b>	

**SCHOOL - CONTACT DETAILS**

<b>Name</b>	
<b>Address</b>	
<b>Phone number / Email address</b>	

## THE INCIDENT

Name: (of person/child for whom there is concern)

What happened? (Nature of concern/disclosure made - use the person's own words if known)

When did it happen? (date, time)

Where did it happen? (specific location)

Who was allegedly involved and in what way? (includes witnesses)

## ANY ACTION THAT HAS BEEN TAKEN

Have the carers or parents / guardians been informed?  
(Please tick)

Yes	No	
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If so, when and by whom?

Have the statutory authorities been informed?

Yes	No	
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If so, please complete the table:

*Example:*

Authority	School				
Name	Mrs B				
Position	Head Teacher				
Email contact	head@school.com				
Phone contact	077....				
Contacted by	Schools Worker				
Date & time of contact	1.30pm 1/4/15				

Has the WST DPS been informed?

Yes	No	
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If so, when and by whom?

Any other action taken:

**FUTURE ACTION TO BE TAKEN**

What action needs to be taken?

Who is responsible for this?

Date for this to be done by .....

**SIGNATURES...**

Signature of Schools Worker: \_\_\_\_\_ Date & time: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of WST DPS: \_\_\_\_\_ Date & time: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX C

### Glossary

<b>Watford Schools Trust 'The Trust'</b>	Watford and District Schools Christian Worker Trust (Registered charity number 1010876)
<b>Trustee</b>	Trustee of the Watford Schools Trust
<b>Staff / Employee</b>	Any individual employed on a paid basis by the Watford Schools Trust and working in any capacity
<b>Volunteer</b>	Any individual working with the Watford Schools Trust in a voluntary capacity
<b>Regular volunteer</b>	Any volunteer who is regularly helping to deliver lessons and/or assemblies in schools, including representing the Trust without being accompanied by a paid member of staff
<b>Occasional volunteer</b>	Any volunteer who helps support Trust activities on an occasional basis but is always accompanied by a paid member of staff including for example, but not limited to 'Prayer Space' or 'It's Your Move'
<b>Workers</b>	Anyone engaged in activity on behalf of Watford Schools Trust, either as an employee or volunteer.
<b>Child</b>	Anyone under the age of 18
<b>DBS</b>	Disclosure and Barring Service
<b>Regulated Activity</b>	Regulated Activity' (as defined by the Protection of Freedoms Act, 2012) involving a substantial degree of contact with children including unsupervised activities such as teaching, supervising, training or providing advice/guidance on well-being (this applies to most people working with, or responsible for, children in a Church situation, including the Church leader, Pastor, Minister, Vicar).

## **APPENDIX D**

### **Definitions of abuse**

#### **Children**

#### **1. Abuse and Neglect**

##### **ENGLAND**

##### **Abuse and Neglect (Children)**

The four definitions of abuse below operate in England based on the government guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)'.

##### **What is abuse and neglect?**

Abuse and neglect are forms 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 a stranger for example, via the internet. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

##### **Physical abuse**

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

##### **Emotional abuse**

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

It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

##### **Sexual abuse**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in

preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

### **Neglect**

Neglect is 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. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

## **2. Spiritual abuse**

Spiritual abuse is a form of emotional abuse. It is characterised by a systematic pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour in a religious context. The means of coercion and control may include: manipulation and exploitation, enforced accountability, censorship of decision making, requirements for secrecy and silence, coercion to conform, control through the use of the Bible or teaching, requirements of obedience to the abuser, the suggestion that the abuser has a 'divine position', isolation as a means of punishment, and superiority and elitism. (Dr L Oakley)

## **3. Peer-on-peer abuse and bullying**

Peer-on-peer abuse is any form of physical, sexual, emotional abuse, and coercive control between children. It is an issue of serious concern throughout England and is a significant risk facing children.

Bullying is the repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. It can happen face to face or through online platforms.

### **Useful Contacts**

Watford Schools Trust                      North Bushey Baptist Church, 218 Park Avenue, Watford,  
Herts, WD23 2BD   Telephone 07974 979346

Thirtyone:eight – 0303 003 1111 Option 2   Email: [helpline@thirtyoneeight.org](mailto:helpline@thirtyoneeight.org)

Childline – 0800 1111   [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

National Whistleblowing Advice Line – 0800 028 0285

Non-Emergency NHS – 111

Dated: 20<sup>th</sup> June 2023