

LIFE CHURCH

BATH

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

The legal definition of a child is someone who is under 18 years of age. The terms 'child' and 'children' in this document therefore relate to anyone under the age of 18 years.



The following procedures are also contained in this policy:

- Responding to a child wanting to talk about abuse
- Responding to an allegation or suspicion of abuse

Definitions, signs and symptoms of abuse can be found at the back of the policy

The Child Protection Policy and should be read in conjunction with the following Safeguarding policies, procedures and guidelines:

- Safer Recruitment
- Code of Conduct for All Workers
- Touch
- Praying with Children
- Transporting Children
- Children Meeting in a Private Home
- Communicating with Children
- Taking photos of Children
- Photos and Social Media
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Handling of Disclosure Information

CONTENTS

Church Details	Page 3
Introduction	Page 3
Statement of Intent	Page 3
Description of the activities we undertake with children	Page 4
Understanding Abuse and Neglect	Page 4
Roles and Responsibilities	Page 4
Staff and Volunteers	Page 6
Children	Page 7
Parents	Page 7
Other Bodies	Page 7
Disclosure	Page 8
Allegations or Suspicions of Abuse	Page 9
Allegations of Abuse against Staff or Volunteers	Page 11
Record Keeping	Page 11
Supporting those Affected by Abuse	Page 12
Working with Offenders	Page 12
Supporting Staff and Volunteers	Page 12
Supporting Parents and Members of Life Church Bath	Page 12
Contact Details	Page 13

CHURCH DETAILS

Name: **Life Church Bath**
Address: **1a Forum Buildings, St James's Parade, Bath, BA1 1UG**
Tel No: **01225 463556**
Email address: **connect@lifechurchbath.com / safeguarding@lifechurchbath.com**

Life Church Bath is part of Bath Christian Trust, a private company limited by guarantee.
Registered in England and Wales Number 4122782. Registered Charity Number 1085602.

INTRODUCTION

Life Church Bath is committed to practices which safeguard and promote the welfare of children. We accept and recognise our responsibilities to develop awareness of issues which cause children harm.

We will safeguard children by:

- Promoting an awareness of safeguarding across the whole church community
- Following carefully the procedure for safer recruitment in the selection of staff and volunteers
- Adopting a code of conduct for staff and volunteers
- Supporting staff and volunteers through supervision and training
- Sharing information about safeguarding and good practise with children, parents, staff and volunteers
- Sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know and involving parents and children appropriately
- Supervising any member of our church community known to have offended against a child, or who is under investigation

STATEMENT OF INTENT

It is the policy of Life Church Bath to safeguard the welfare of all children by protecting them from all forms of abuse including physical, emotional and sexual harm.

We are committed to:

- Creating a safe environment in which children can feel comfortable and safe while engaged in any of Life Church Bath's activities such as Life Kids, Found Youth, conferences, festivals, social activities, and any other related Life Church Bath activity
- Creating a culture of dignity and respect towards children
- Reviewing our safeguarding policies and procedures annually.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITIES WE UNDERTAKE WITH CHILDREN

We run age appropriate sessions on a Sunday morning and during the week when we aim to connect children with God and have fun together in a safe environment. A detailed explanation of what happens can be found in the Life Kids handbook and the Found Youth handbook.

UNDERSTANDING ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Defining child abuse is a difficult and complex issue. A person may abuse by inflicting harm or failing to prevent harm. Children may be abused within a family, an institution or a community setting. Very often the abuser is known or in a trusted relationship with the child.

Detailed definitions, signs and symptoms of abuse can be found in the appendix attached to this policy.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Trustees are committed to:

- Endorsing and follow all national and local safeguarding legislation and procedures
- Providing the necessary resources for on-going safeguarding training and development for all its workers
- Ensuring that the premises meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and all other relevant legislation
- Supporting the Safeguarding Coordinator(s) in their work and in any action they may need to take in order to protect children

The Elders are responsible for:

- Following the Safeguarding Policy
- Supporting the Safeguarding Coordinator(s) in their work and in any action they may need to take in order to protect children
- Supporting all those working with children
- Supporting all in the church affected by abuse

The Safeguarding Co-ordinator is responsible for:

- The preparation and implementation of the safeguarding policy and its annual review
- Ensuring that the safeguarding policy and procedures are followed
- Developing a culture of awareness of safeguarding issues to help protect everyone
- Acting as an advocate on behalf of children
- Ensuring that children are supported in finding information on where to get help and advice in relation to abuse, discrimination, bullying or any other matter where they have a concern

- Arranging and making sure workers and leaders attend relevant training
- Keeping accurate records relating to safeguarding concerns confidentially
- Regularly informing the leadership on good practice issues
- Working in partnership with statutory and other agencies
- Collating and clarifying the precise details of an allegation or suspicion, and reporting safeguarding concerns onto statutory agencies

The Deputy Safeguarding Co-ordinator is responsible for:

- Covering in the absence of the safeguarding co-ordinator (eg illness or holiday)
- Being an alternative should ever an allegation be made against the co-ordinator or someone close to them making it inappropriate for them to deal with the issue
- Assisting in the annual review of the safeguarding policy

The Children's and Youth Pastors are responsible for:

- Ensuring that the safeguarding policies, procedures and guidelines are followed in all their activities
- Working with the safeguarding co-ordinator and the deputy safeguarding co-ordinator
- Ensuring that accurate and detailed records are kept

STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Safer recruitment

Life Church Bath will ensure that paid staff and volunteers working with children will be appointed, trained, supported and supervised in accordance with government guidance on safe recruitment.

Please see our Safer Recruitment Policy for full details

Training

Life Church Bath is committed to ongoing safeguarding training and development opportunities for all workers, developing a culture of awareness of safeguarding issues to help protect everyone.

All our workers will receive induction training and undertake safeguarding training at a minimum of every three years, and ideally every two years. This may be in-house training, online or provided through an external agency such as B&NES Local Safeguarding Children Board or thirtyone:eight.

The Children's Pastor, Youth Pastor, Elders and Trustees will undertake safeguarding training at a minimum of every two years.

The safeguarding co-ordinator and deputy safeguarding co-ordinator will undergo child protection training at a minimum of every two years, but ideally annually, through an external agency.

Management of Staff and Volunteers

Life Church Bath is committed to supporting all workers and ensuring they receive support and supervision through regular team meetings. All workers have been issued with a code of conduct towards children which they are expected to follow.

Good Practice Guidelines

As Life Church Bath, working with children, we wish to operate and promote good working practice. This will enable workers to run activities safely, develop good relationships and minimise the risk of false accusation.

As well as a general code of conduct for workers we also have specific good practice guidelines for every activity we are involved in.

Whistle Blowing

We recognise that as a church, we have a duty to conduct ourselves in a responsible and transparent way and to take into account legal requirements, the requirements of funding bodies, the Charity Commission and any other public body.

As a church we will follow the principles contained in the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

Therefore, we expect that all employees (paid or voluntary) to report improper actions and omissions. Whilst all malpractice and acts of omission will be investigated, it is especially important that suspicions of abuse are immediately reported to the Safeguarding Co-ordinator.

CHILDREN

Children have a right to information, especially any information that could make life better for them. Life Church Bath will act to ensure they have information about how, and with whom, they can share their concerns, complaints and anxieties.

When sharing information, Life Church Bath staff and volunteers will be sensitive to the level of understanding and maturity, as well as to the level of responsibility of the people with whom they are sharing.

PARENTS

Parents / those with parental responsibility are ultimately responsible for their child's welfare at all times.

It is the aim of Life Church Bath to communicate clearly with parents primarily through verbal means whenever possible, by email and the website.

We publish a handbook for parents of children in Life Kids and Found Youth, describing the activities we offer and these can be downloaded from our website or collected from The Forum. Our Safeguarding Policies can be downloaded from our website or collected from The Forum. Contact details of the Children's Pastor, the Youth Pastor and the Safeguarding Co-ordinator can be found in these handbooks, on the website and on the notice board at The Forum and are happy to be contacted.

It is important to note that if a disclosure is made, or a safeguarding concern is raised, that the welfare of the child is paramount. Therefore, if it is felt that a child is at risk of harm we may not consult the parents before contacting Social Services or the Police.

OTHER BODIES

Our Safeguarding Policies will be made available to any other appropriate body

DISCLOSURE

We recognise that children may share a worry or concern with anyone they trust. When a child discloses they have been or are in fear of being abused, the first step is to actively listen and then be prepared to take the appropriate action.

Procedure for responding to a disclosure

- Take the matter seriously but don't overreact
- Do not promise confidentiality
- Listen carefully to what the child is saying, allowing him or her to speak without interruption
- Do not question him or her directly but you can use language like 'Tell me about...'
'Explain to me... Describe to me...'
- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in talking to you without making promises
- Say that you believe them, accepting what the child says – it is not your role to investigate or question and take what the child says seriously
- Explain what you will do next and who you will tell, if age appropriate and in age appropriate ways
- Don't talk to the alleged abuser
- Don't talk to parents or the person who brought the child. The decision for this must rest with the Safeguarding Co-ordinator(s)
- Act promptly in reporting the concerns to the Safeguarding Co-ordinator or in her absence, the Deputy Safeguarding Co-ordinator
- Complete a written report, using our 'Record of Concern' form detailing what happened as soon as possible, preferably within one hour, using the child's words or explanations (do not translate into your own words in case you have misconstrued what the child was trying to say)

ALLEGATIONS OR SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE

We recognise that someone working with children may suspect that a child is being abused or is likely to be abused, or that the child has been abused historically.

You have a responsibility to take all such matters seriously, reporting your concerns as soon as possible to the Safeguarding Co-ordinator or, in her absence the Deputy Safeguarding Co-ordinator who will then decide how to proceed.

If the Safeguarding Co-ordinator or Deputy Safeguarding Co-ordinator are in any way implicated, then you have a responsibility to make a direct referral / report to Children's Social Services.

Where parents or those with parental responsibility have concerns regarding a member of staff or a volunteer working with their child, they should speak to the Safeguarding Co-ordinator or, in her absence, the deputy Safeguarding Co-ordinator.

Nothing in this policy prevents a person's rights as a citizen to make a direct report / referral regarding their concerns or to seek advice from organisations such as thirtyone:eight or NSPCC. However, in most cases we feel it is appropriate to report concerns to the Safeguarding Co-ordinator or her deputy and it is our hope that members and visitors will follow the procedures laid out in this policy.

Procedure for reporting allegations or suspicions of abuse

If you suspect that a child is being abused or is likely to be abused, or that the child has been abused historically you have a responsibility to report your concern to the Safeguarding Co-ordinator who will then decide how to proceed.

If the Safeguarding Co-ordinator is unavailable, then speak to the Deputy Safeguarding Co-ordinator.

You should:

- Take the matter seriously
- Act promptly
- Report concerns as soon as possible to The Safeguarding Co-ordinator
- Not carry out or investigate the matter further yourself
- Not discuss your suspicions with anyone other than those mentioned above
- Complete a written report, using our 'Record of Concern' form as soon as possible, preferably within one hour

The Safeguarding Co-ordinator will:

Collate and clarify the precise details as far as possible and decide how to respond, potentially acting on advice from thirtyone:eight.

If there are signs that the child

- Is suffering significant harm through abuse or neglect
- Is likely to suffer significant harm in the future

then the Safeguarding Co-ordinator will contact Children's Social Care. The timing of such referrals should reflect the level of perceived risk of harm, not longer than **within one working day** of identification or disclosure of harm or risk of harm.

- Contact Children's Social Care in cases of non-accidental injury, if concerned about a child's safety, if a child is afraid to return home or if it is felt a child is likely to suffer significant harm in the future
- Contact the Police in an emergency
- Not tell the parents or carers unless advised to do so by Children's Social Care
- Seek medical help if needed urgently, informing the relevant medical professional of any suspicions

For lesser concerns, (e.g. poor parenting indicated by hunger, dirty clothes and smelly)

- Encourage parent/carer to seek help, but not if this places the child at risk of significant harm.
- Where the parent/carer is unwilling to seek help, offer to accompany them. In cases of real concern, if they still fail to act, contact Children's Social Care direct for advice

Contacting Children's Social Care or the Police

When contacting Children's Social Care or the Police the following information will be shared

- Child's name, address and date of birth or age
- Family composition, including the name/s, address and phone numbers of parent/s or person/s with parental responsibility
- What prompted the concerns, including dates and times of any specific incidents, what the child said, including the name of any alleged abuser
- Details of any advice given to the child

Other people who will be informed

- The designated trustee, Jude Clements, and the chair of trustees, Simon Harrison, who would report this to the Charities Commission
- The designated elder, Jonathan Horsfall
- It may also be necessary to inform the Finance Manager, Helen Lotwick, in order to inform the insurance company

- In ongoing situations, it may be necessary to involve other members of Life Church Bath such as the Children's Pastor, the Youth Pastor, Life Group Leader

ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE AGAINST STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

An allegation against a member of staff may arise from many different sources. It could be from a child, a concern raised by another adult, or a complaint by a parent. It may also arise in the context of the member of staff and their life outside work or at home.

If an allegation of abuse is made against a person who works with children (whether a volunteer or paid member of staff) the Safeguarding Co-ordinator, in accordance with Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) procedures may need to liaise with Children's Social Services in regards to the suspension of the worker, also making a referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), Sarah Hogan: 01225 396810.

The Safeguarding Co-ordinator will inform the local authority designated officer (LADO) within **one working day** when an allegation is made and prior to any further investigation taking place.

This procedure should be applied when there is such an allegation or concern that a person who works with children, has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
- Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates he or she may pose a risk of harm to children

RECORD KEEPING

As is well known it can be many years before incidents of abuse come to light. As such the following policy was drawn up and implemented from September 2007.

- We will retain all documents relating to those people working with 0 – 18s, whether paid or unpaid, employees or voluntary workers, current or past members of Life Church Bath, indefinitely. This will include volunteer application forms; self-disclosure forms; references; all disclosure numbers and dates
- Team Rotas will be kept indefinitely. Team leaders will be responsible for recording who served on each week and for noting any changes to the rota
- Registers of children / young people will be kept indefinitely
- A record of what took place at any meeting or event will be kept indefinitely
- A record of any allegation against a worker, whether substantiated or not, will be kept indefinitely.

- We will keep medical forms and permission slips relating to an activity for a minimum period of 10 years
- All records, information and confidential notes will be kept in separate files in a locked filing cabinet. Only designated personnel will have access to these files.

SUPPORTING THOSE AFFECTED BY ABUSE

The Leadership is committed to offering pastoral care, working with statutory agencies as appropriate, and support to all those who have been affected by abuse who are part of Life Church Bath.

When the support required is outside of the skill set currently available from the pastoral care team then a referral to outside organisations who have the relevant skill set may be made. For example: Child Line, Samaritans, Focus Counselling, Breakthrough, TRC

WORKING WITH OFFENDERS

When someone attending Life Church Bath is known to have abused children, is considered to be a risk to children, or is known to be under investigation, the Leadership will, with the Safeguarding Co-ordinator, arrange supervision for the individual concerned and offer pastoral care, but in its safeguarding commitment to the protection of children set boundaries for that person which they will be expected to keep. These boundaries will be based on an appropriate risk assessment and through consultation with appropriate parties and will be specific to the individual.

SUPPORTING STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Support for a member of staff or volunteer about whom allegations have been made is an important and will be managed by the pastoral team during and following any investigation. It will be kept separate from the investigation.

SUPPORTING PARENTS AND MEMBERS OF LIFE CHURCH BATH

Support for a parent or member of Life Church Bath about whom allegations have been made is an important and will be managed by the pastoral team during and following any investigation. It will be kept separate from the investigation.

CONTACT DETAILS

Safeguarding Co-ordinator	Rosie Sherwin	01225 463556 / 07929 946 481
Deputy Safeguarding Co-ordinator	Ruth Martin	07971 925 484
Designated Elder	Jonathan Horsfall	07511 003 496

CONTACT DETAILS OF STATUTORY AGENCIES

The Bath and North East Somerset Children and Families Assessment and Intervention Team (CAFAIT)

(office hours) 01225 396313 or 01225 396312; (out of hours emergency number) 01454 615165

B&NES LADO 01225 396810

If a child lives outside of B&NES the appropriate authority will be contacted.

Police 999

CONTACT DETAILS OF ORGANISATIONS OFFERING SUPPORT AND ADVICE

ChildLine: 0800 1111 or www.childline.org.uk

Thirtyone:eight: 0303 003 11 11

NSPCC: 0808 800 5000

ACTION IS TAKEN IN LINE WITH THE FOLLOWING LEGISLATION / GUIDANCE

The Bath & North East Somerset Community Safety and Safeguarding Partnership Procedures

<https://www.proceduresonline.com/swcpp/banes/>

HM Government's 'What to do if you are worried that a child is being abused' March 2015

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015

DEFINITIONS, SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF ABUSE IN CHILDREN

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. They may be abused by an adult or adults or another child or children.

Child protection legislation throughout the UK is based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Each nation within the UK has incorporated the convention within its legislation and guidance.

Four definitions of abuse below operate in England based on the government guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children (2015)'.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is deliberately physically hurting a child. It may involve hitting, pinching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child.

Physical abuse can happen in any family, but children may be more at risk if their parents have problems with drugs, alcohol and mental health, or if they live in a home where domestic abuse happens.

Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

The following may be indicators of physical abuse

- Injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them
- Injuries that occur in places not normally exposed to falls, rough games, etc
- Injuries that have not received medical attention
- Reluctance to change for, or participate in, games or swimming
- Repeated urinary infections or unexplained tummy pains
- Bruises on babies, bites, burns, fractures etc which do not have an accidental explanation*
- Cuts/scratches/substance abuse*

Emotional Abuse

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 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.

The following may be indicators of emotional abuse

- Changes or regression in mood or behaviour, particularly where a child withdraws or becomes clinging
- Depression, aggression, extreme anxiety
- Nervousness, frozen watchfulness
- Obsessions or phobias
- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration
- Inappropriate relationships with peers and/or adults
- Attention-seeking behaviour
- Persistent tiredness
- Running away/stealing/lying

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person 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 and / or distribution of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child (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.

The legal age of consent to any form of sexual activity is 16 for both men and women. Specific laws protect children under 13, who cannot legally give their consent to any form of sexual activity.

All cases of sexual activity, or suspected sexual activity by children under the age of 16 should be referred to the Safeguarding Co-ordinator.

The following may be indicators of sexual abuse

- Any allegations made concerning sexual abuse
- Excessive preoccupation with sexual matters and detailed knowledge of adult sexual behaviour
- Age-inappropriate sexual activity through words, play or drawing
- Child who is sexually provocative or seductive with adults
- Inappropriate bed-sharing arrangements at home
- Severe sleep disturbances with fears, phobias, vivid dreams or nightmares, sometimes with overt or veiled sexual connotations
- Eating disorders - anorexia, bulimia

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.

The following may be indicators of neglect

- Under nourishment
- Failure to grow
- Constant hunger
- Stealing or gorging food
- Untreated illnesses
- Inadequate care, etc

Child Sexual Exploitation

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a type of sexual abuse. When a child or young person is exploited, they are given things, like gifts, drugs, money, status and affection, in exchange for performing sexual activities. Children and young people are often tricked into believing they are in a loving and consensual relationship. This is called grooming. They may trust their abuser and not understand that they are being abused.

Children and young people can be trafficked into or within the UK to be sexually exploited. They are 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 have no choice. They may lend them large sums of money they know can't be repaid or use financial abuse to control them.

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

CSE does not always involve physical contact; it can occur through the use of technology.

The following may be indicators of Child Sexual Exploitation

- Going missing for periods of time or regularly returning home late
- Skipping school or being disruptive in class
- Appearing with unexplained gifts or possessions that can't be accounted for
- Experiencing health problems that may indicate a sexually transmitted infection
- Having mood swings and changes in temperament
- Using drugs and / or alcohol
- Displaying inappropriate sexualised behaviour, such as over-familiarity with strangers, dressing in a sexualised manner or sending sexualised images by mobile phone ('sexting')
- They may also show signs of unexplained physical harm, such as bruising and cigarette burns

Radicalisation

We recognise that we have due regard to the need to prevent children from being drawn into terrorism. This duty is known as the **Prevent** duty.

Children who are at risk of radicalisation may have low self-esteem or be victims of bullying or discrimination. Extremists might target them and tell them they can be part of something special, later brainwashing them and cutting them off from friends and family.

The following may be indicators of radicalisation and extremism

- Isolating themselves from family and friends
- Unwillingness or an inability to discuss their views
- Increased levels of anger
- Talking as if from a scripted speech
- A sudden disrespectful attitude towards others
- Increased secretiveness especially around internet use

Self harm

The reasons children and teenagers can self-harm are often complicated and will be different for every child or young person. Sometimes a child or teenager may not know the reasons they self-harm.

For many young people, self-harm can feel like a way to cope with difficult feelings or to release tension. The physical pain of hurting themselves can feel like a distraction from the emotional pain they're struggling with.

Some difficult experiences or emotions can make self-harm more likely in children:

- Experiencing depression, anxiety or eating problems
- Having low self-esteem or feeling like they're not good enough
- Being bullied or feeling alone
- Experiencing emotional, physical or sexual abuse, or neglect
- Grieving or having problems with family relationships
- Feeling angry, numb or like they don't have control over their lives

Signs of self-harm in children and teenagers

It can be hard to recognise the signs of self-harm in children and teenagers, but as a parent it's important to trust your instincts if you're worried something's wrong.

The following may be indicators of self-harm

- Covering up, for example by wearing long sleeves a lot of the time, especially in summer
- Unexplained bruises, cuts, burns or bite-marks on their body
- Blood stains on clothing, or finding tissues with blood in their room
- Becoming withdrawn and spending a lot of time alone in their room
- Avoiding friends and family and being at home
- Feeling down, low self-esteem or blaming themselves for things
- Outbursts of anger, or risky behaviour like drinking or taking drugs.

Suicidal Behaviour

Deliberate Self Harm such as cutting or small overdoses may represent a serious desire to commit suicide in response to hopelessness caused by depressive illness, social circumstances or occasionally by a psychotic illness (eg one characterised by paranoid delusions and hearing voices) The injury is often more serious such as deep cuts, large overdoses and so on.

In cases of deliberate self-harm and suicidal thoughts parents will be informed unless it is felt that by doing so would place the child in danger.