

NEXUS/G/008

# Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults Policy

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## 1. Policy Statement and Purpose

Nexus is committed to ensuring that all our service-users are protected and safe and that those who have been abused or neglected receive support and protection from further harm. All Nexus employees, volunteers and associates share an objective to maintain the safety of the children, young people, adults who use our services. The organisation recognises that a robust Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults Policy is of benefit to everyone involved with NEXUS' work.

The purpose of this Policy and related procedures is to:

- promote the welfare and wellbeing of children, young people and adults and protect them from harm
- prevent harm occurring through early identification of risk and appropriate timely intervention
- identify responsibilities in dealing with reports or suspicions of abuse and/or neglect
- provide clear and robust guidance on how to handle these concerns
- encourage good practice in all aspects of promotion and protection of children, young people and adults at risk.

## 2. Legislation

Nexus will carry out its safeguarding responsibilities under all relevant legislation, regulations and professional guidelines which include the following:

- Children Northern Ireland Order 1995
- Children's Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015
- Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young people in Northern Ireland (HSSPS - March 2016)
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007
- DHSSPS Adult Safeguarding: Prevention and Protection in Partnership (2015)
- Adult Safeguarding Operational Procedures (NIASP 2016)
- The Health and Personal Social Services (Northern Ireland) Orders and the Health and Social Care (Reform) Act (Northern Ireland) 2009
- The Mental Health (Northern Ireland) Order 1986
- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995

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- The Northern Ireland Act 1998, Section 75
- The Human Rights Act 1998 - enacted 2000
- The Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997
- The Criminal Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1967
- The Police and Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1989
- The Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008

### 3. Scope

This Policy and related procedures are designed to promote the safety and protection of children, young people, and adults at risk from abuse, as defined below:

#### **Child or Young Person**

A person under the age of 18, as defined in the Children Northern Ireland Order 1995.

#### **Adult at Risk**

An adult at risk is a person aged 18 or over who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness and who is, or may be unable to take care of him or herself or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation (**DoH No Secrets 2002**).

#### **Abuse (see Appendix 1 for further detail)**

- Neglect or acts of omission
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Psychological/Emotional abuse
- Financial or material abuse (Exploitation)
- Institutional abuse
- Bullying and Harassment

#### **Disclosure**

Any communication received that relates to a child, young person or an adult who is at risk from abuse, whose personal safety is at risk or, whom against which a criminal offence has been committed.

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#### 4. General Principles

The principles of the Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults Safeguarding Policy are to:

- acknowledge that anyone can be the subject of abuse
- actively promote the empowerment and well-being of our service-users through the supports we provide
- champion the right of our service-users to live their lives free from neglect, coercion, intimidation, oppression and physical, sexual, emotional or mental harm
- respect our service-users right to confidentiality in respect of personal information, where this does not impact on their safety or infringe upon the rights of other people
- ensure our service-users right to the protection of the law and full access to the judicial process and criminal justice system
- ensure our service-users who are allegedly victims of abuse should have the highest priority for protection, assessment and support
- protect and safeguard children and young people in line with relevant child protection legislation
- take all reasonable steps to protect children/young people from harm, discrimination and degrading treatment and respecting their rights, wishes and feelings
- carefully consider and respect the wishes and preferences of adults at risk that are essential to the adult protection process
- ensure adults at risk with the capacity to understand abuse and risk of abuse, have the right to refuse intervention even if this leaves them at risk of significant harm, however counsellors may need to act to protect other adults at risk from the same abuser
- ensure adults at risk have the right to full and timely information about their rights, services, what is being done on their behalf and why.

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In supporting the above NEXUS will seek to provide and promote a safe and supportive environment by ensuring:

- all allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to in accordance with the organisation's procedures in an empathic, prompt and secure manner
- best practice in its safe recruitment and engagement of all personnel acting on behalf of the organisation to include qualifications, accreditation and registration
- all personnel working on behalf of the organisation will be subject to appropriate level of criminal disclosure background checks, on initial engagement with the organisation, in line with Access NI criteria and subject to an annual declaration thereafter
- the organisation reserves the right to refuse to employ any person who has a conviction for the abuse of a child, young person, or an adult at risk
- engagement and adherence with legislation, regulations and regional policies and procedures in full partnership with other local agencies and the respective Health and Social Care Trust Gateway Team
- the organisation does NOT investigate instances of abuse as this is the role of other statutory agencies e.g. social services and PSNI
- all service-users (and parents/guardians/carers of under 18's) are aware of the organisation's safeguarding policy and related procedures, including that this may mean we refer cases to investigative agencies in the interest of the child, young person or adult at risk
- the organisation is committed to supporting, resourcing and training those who work with, or come in contact with children, young people and adults at risk and to provide appropriate supervision.

## 5. Responsibilities

### All Staff, Associates and Volunteers

While it is not possible to prevent all abuse, there are a number of steps that all personnel acting on behalf of Nexus can take to reduce the risk of abuse occurring. They should:

- follow the 'Code of Behaviour for Safeguarding' (**Appendix 2**)
- know what abuse is
- understand how it can happen
- be alert to indicators of potential abuse situations

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- know and follow the procedures for reporting concerns and poor practice.
- provide appropriate support through good assessment and practices.

### Appointed Safeguarding Champion (ASC)

Nexus has an Appointed Safeguarding Champion (**ASC**) who provides strategic and operational leadership and oversight for the safeguarding of children, young people and adults at risk. This includes responsibility for:

- ensuring that the Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk Policy is disseminated, implemented
- review the 'Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk Policy' on a biennial basis and pending any legislative or policy change
- providing information and support for staff
- acting as a source of advice on safeguarding matters
- coordinating action within the organisation
- ensuring report is made to Health & Social Care Trusts and other agencies in suspected and actual cases of abuse
- supporting staff to ensure that any actions take account of what the adult wishes to achieve
- ensuring accurate and up to date records are maintained detailing all decisions made, the reasons for the decisions and actions taken
- compiling and analysing records to determine whether accumulation of low-level concerns warrant action
- making records available for inspection.

The Appointed Safeguarding Champion (**ASC**) for Nexus' its Clinical Manager. The ASC delegates responsibility to Senior Managers as Designated Safeguarding Champions (**DSC**) for their relevant areas of control. Each service area also has Appointed Safeguarding Persons (**ASP**) who act as a first point of contact for personnel in their respective service area.

### Designated Safeguarding Champions (DSC) are responsible for:

- liaising with ASC regarding safeguarding policy, procedures, and any reported incidents of concern
- understanding the roles and responsibilities of all the appropriate investigating agencies

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- overseeing and monitor the security of record keeping for their area of responsibility
- ensuring that safeguarding measures are implemented at all events within their service area that may involve children, young people or adults at risk
- managing and supporting all Appointed Safeguarding Persons in their service area.

#### Appointed Safeguarding Persons (ASP) are responsible for:

- receive information from any staff, volunteers, children, parents, or carers who have safeguarding concerns and record it
- advise staff on protection policy, procedures and record keeping in line with organisational practices
- assess the information promptly and carefully, clarifying and obtaining more information about the matter as appropriate
- record statements and information relating to any safeguarding issues
- store all information and recording in a secure manner and in accordance with organisational processes which adhere to the Data Protection Act 2018
- advise the Designated Safeguarding Champion (**DSC**) for their service area of identified safeguarding cases
- report concerns to Nexus' Appointed Safeguarding Champion (**ASC**) in the absence/unavailability of the DSC for their service area (or if the allegation is against the DSC).

#### Human Resources

The role of the Human Resources Department is to:

- ensure the safe recruitment and induction of all staff including all appropriate criminal history checks in line with Access NI criteria
- oversee staff disciplinary investigations if any concerns, disclosures, or allegations of abuse by a staff member are made
- plan, deliver and monitor in partnership with other Nexus departments the appropriate level of safeguarding training required by all personnel acting on behalf of Nexus, dependent on their role
- annually review and update its own policies to reflect child, young people and adults at risk protection needs.

## 6. Training

Safeguarding Training will be provided to staff, associates, and volunteers in line with their role and responsibilities as informed by the:

- Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI) Learning and Development Strategy and Framework (2020-2023)
- NI Adult Safeguarding Partnership (NIASP) Adult Safeguarding Operational Procedures (2016).

Nexus' Framework for Safeguarding Training is detailed below:

- **Level 1**  
All staff, associates and volunteers are inducted into organisational policy
- **Level 2**  
All staff, associates and volunteers that have direct contact with:
  - Children, young people and adults at risk
  - Adult carers/parents and those who have regular contact with children, young people and adults at risk
  - Adults known or suspected of posing a risk to children, young people and adults at risk**\*All staff, volunteers and associates**
- **Level 3 (Basic)**  
All staff/volunteers who:
  - Could potentially contribute to assessing, planning, intervening and evaluating the needs of children, young people and adults where there are safeguarding issues
  - Have a managerial or supervisory role**\*Appointed Safeguarding Persons (ASP)**
- **Level 3 (Enhanced)**  
All staff/volunteers with specialist safeguarding roles and responsibilities including leaders and policy makers  
**\*Appointed Safeguarding Champion (ASC) and Designated Safeguarding Champions (DSC)**



## 7. Values

The values and rights below underpin the organisation's approach to safeguarding children, young people and adults at risk:

- **Dignity:** recognition that everyone is unique, with intrinsic value as a person
- **Respect:** for a person's needs wishes, preferences, language, race, religion, and culture
- **Equality:** the right of people to be treated no less favourably than others because of their age, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion, class, culture, language, race, ethnic origin, or other relevant distinctions
- **Privacy:** the right of the individual to be left alone or undisturbed and free from intrusion or public attention in their affairs
- **Choice:** the right to make choices, and to have the alternatives and information that enable choices to be made

## 8. Confidentiality

Confidentiality and trust should be maintained as far as possible, but all personnel acting on behalf of Nexus must ensure that the safety and welfare of the child, young person or adult at risk has utmost priority.

The degree of confidentiality will be governed by the need to protect the individual and therefore complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. In general the following guidelines should be applied:

- the individual (or their parent/guardian) should be informed at the earliest possible stage of the need to disclose information to protect their safety and, where possible, their permission to disclose sought
- all conversations regarding a safeguarding concern should always be held in a person sensitive environment. Nexus personnel must not discuss the case with anyone other than those involved in the case.
- if Nexus personnel have any concerns about the progress of the case or have any other concerns these must be discussed with the DSC or the ASP dealing with the case.

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Disclosure of information is governed by the Data Protection Act 2018, which allows for disclosure of personal data where this is necessary to protect their vital interests. Other statutory provisions may also be relevant, but in general, legislation does not prevent sharing of information if:

- those likely to be affected consent; or
- the public interest in safeguarding the person's welfare overrides the need to keep the information confidential; or
- it is considered the person is a danger to themselves or others; or
- disclosure is required under court or other legal obligation.

**Whatever happens, it is imperative that we are open and honest with the individual (or their parent/guardian).**

## **9. Supporting Policies and Procedures**

This policy is supported by other organisational policies and procedures aimed at promoting safe and healthy working practices. These include:

CS/G/001 Clinical Governance Policy

CS/G/002 Clinical Note Taking Policy

CS/G/003 Confidentiality Policy

CS/P/007 Clinical Risk Assessment, Management and Mitigation Protocol

NEXUS/G/007 Data Protection Policy

NEXUS/G/003 Privacy Notice

NEXUS/G/001 Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy

NEXUS/G/006 Whistleblowing Policy

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## Appendix 1

### What is Abuse?

Defining abuse is complex and rests on many factors. The term “abuse” can be widely interpreted. However, “abuse” is defined, in the **Department of Health No Secrets Guidance (2002)**, as the *“violation of an individual’s human and civil rights by any other person or persons.”*

Abuse can be historic, current or imminent and may happen as the result of deliberate intent, negligence or ignorance. Examples of abuse:

#### Physical abuse

This includes hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medical/chemical restraint or inappropriate sanctions.

#### Sexual abuse

This is unwanted sexual activity or sexual behaviour that happens under the following circumstances;

- without consent or understanding
- when consent could not be given or when consent was pressured

Sexual abuse includes sexual acts that involve physical contact and non-contact sexual acts, such as:

- indecent exposure
- stalking
- grooming
- forced to look at or be involved in producing sexually abusive material
- forced to watch sexual activities.

#### Psychological/emotional abuse

This includes emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, verbal or racial abuse, forced marriage, isolation or withdrawal of services or supportive networks.

#### Financial or material abuse

This includes theft, fraud, exploitation; pressure in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions; or the misuses or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.

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### **Neglect and acts of omission**

This includes ignoring medical or physical care needs; failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services; the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.

### **Institutional abuse**

This is repeated instances of poor care of individuals or groups of individuals. It can be through neglect or poor professional practice as a result of structures, policies, processes and practices within an organisation. While this in no way condones the abusive practice on the part of individuals, it recognises the powerful influence that organisational culture has on individual behaviour.

### **Bullying and Harassment**

Bullying involves the misuse of power or position and includes behaviour such as:

- offensive or insulting behaviour which makes an individual feel threatened, or taken advantage of
- verbal abuse - e.g. persistent taunting
- physical violence or violent gestures
- abuse by text, email, social media or online
- encouraging others to socially isolate individuals
- circulating malicious texts, emails or social media posts
- physical intimidation

Harassment is defined as any unwanted pattern of conduct that has the purpose or effect of:

- violating the dignity of an individual
- creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive atmosphere for an individual.

It can also occur when an individual rejects the unwanted conduct mentioned above and, as a result, is treated unfairly.

Examples of harassment include:

- embarrassing or otherwise offensive jokes
- unwelcome physical contact or sexual advances
- the expression of any views which are prejudiced in connection with any of the characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation)

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- the expression of lewd comments and innuendo
- the sending of offensive emails, texts and social media messages, etc.
- posting abusive comments/images on webpages, etc.
- displays of pornographic material.

The above should not be considered an exclusive or even exhaustive list of the types of abuse which can be experienced by children, young people and adults.

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## Appendix 2

### Code Of Behaviour for Safeguarding

To provide children, young people and adults at risk with the best possible experience and opportunities when availing of our services and supports, all staff, associates and volunteers are expected to operate within an accepted ethical framework, underpinned by the following principles and actions:

#### Good Practice

- always work in an open environment (e.g., avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication with no secrets) unless it is a counselling or one on one education session. However, counselling sessions must take place in NEXUS offices or approved outreach sites and a third person must always be in the building.
- make the experience of your education or development work informative and enjoyable: promote respect, fairness and dignity
- treat all service-users equally and with respect and dignity
- always put the welfare of service-users first
- contact with service-users outside of sessions should be related to professional matters only and conducted by email or telephone. All contact should be recorded on service-user file or relevant education/training programme file
- maintain a safe and appropriate distance that respects personal space
- avoid unnecessary physical contact. Where any form of manual/physical support is required, it should be provided openly and with the consent of the person. Physical contact can be appropriate so long as it is neither intrusive nor disturbing and the individual's consent has been given
- if a service-user discloses abuse or you suspect they are at risk of abuse or in need of protection the organisation's Safeguarding Procedure (NEXUS/P/008) must be followed
- if a service-user presents in severe psychological distress the organisation's Risk Assessment, Management and Mitigation Protocol (CS/P/007) must be followed
- if a service-user has an accident or is injured this should be documented along with details of any treatment given on a Service-user

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Accident/Incident Form (CS/F/016) and sent to Administration Coordinator for recording purposes.

**In addition, when working with children and young people:**

- involve parents/guardians/carers wherever possible. For example, where children/young people need to be supervised in changing rooms, encourage parents/guardians/carers to take responsibility for their own child/young person.
- request written parental/guardian/carer consent if you are required to transport children/young people in your car
- ensure your car is road worthy and there is adequate, appropriate and up to date insurance
- request written parental/ guardian/carer consent for any significant travel arrangements e.g., overnight stays
- ensure where possible that if a mixed group are taken away on an event, they should always be accompanied by a male and female member of staff
- ensure that at away events adults should not enter a child/young person's room or invite children/young people to their rooms.
- be an excellent role model, this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of children/young people
- always give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism recognise the developmental needs and capacity of the child/young person.

**Poor Practice**

**Avoid:**

- allowing or engaging in inappropriate touching of any form
- making sexually suggestive comments to a service-user, even in fun
- contacting service-users on a personal basis by telephone, text, email, social networking sites or chat rooms
- doing things of a personal nature that the service-user can do for themselves
- allowing allegations made by a service-user to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon
- reducing a service-user to tears as a form of control.

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In addition, when working with children and young people **AVOID**:

- unnecessarily spending excessive amounts of time alone with a child/young person away from others
- taking children/young people alone in a car on journeys, however short
- taking children/young people to your home where they will be alone with you
- sharing a room with a child/young person
- engaging in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
- allowing children/young people to use inappropriate language unchallenged

If cases arise where any of the above situations are unavoidable it should be with the full knowledge and consultation with the **Appointed Safeguarding Person (ASP)** for your respective service area and if appropriate the full understanding and consent of the parent/guardian/carer and the child/young person involved.

If, during your work, a child, young person, or adult at risk:

- deliberately or accidentally hurts themselves
- becomes severely psychologically distressed
- appears to become sexually aroused
- misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done

you should report any such incidents to your appointed direct report for further guidance.

**Please note:**

- If the incident occurs outside of your normal working hours, please report via email at the time for follow-up at earliest convenience.
- In all circumstances, the professional judgement of the personnel acting on behalf of Nexus will be exercised and for most part this **Code of Behaviour for Safeguarding** will only serve to confirm the organisation's standards and expectations. However, inappropriate actions in relation to any of the above may lead to Nexus disciplinary procedures being implemented.



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## Appendix 3

### Nexus Safeguarding Reporting Procedure

- When a safeguarding concern is disclosed or witnessed, you must discuss your concern with the Appointed Safeguarding Person (ASP) within the same working day. The ASP will complete the Nexus Safeguarding Concerns Form, (NEXUS/F/008).
- The ASP will discuss the concerns in detail that are outlined on the Safeguarding form with the Delegated Safeguarding Champion (DSC). They will decide if this is a serious safeguarding concern in line with NEXUS Safeguarding Policy (NEXUS/G/008) and what action to take.
- The DSC may consult with Appointed Safeguarding Champion (CEO) and Local Gateway team to take more direction.

#### **If it is a Reportable Safeguarding Concern:**

- If it is agreed that it is a safeguarding concern the DSC will update the Nexus Safeguarding Form (NEXUS/F/008), recording as much factual detail as possible, including the agreed actions and next steps.
- The DSC will forward concerns on to the relevant agency, i.e. PSNI and or the Local Social Services Gateway Teams. *(See end of this Procedure for importance contact details).*
- The DSC will ensure all details and actions taken are recorded on the on the Nexus Safeguarding Log, (NEXUS/F/009) on the Nexus Safeguarding Teams Channel.
- The DSC will inform the appropriate personnel of interim actions taken re: service provision and case outcome.
- The DSC will update the Safeguarding log if there are further actions to be taken under their Department Tab.

#### **If it is Possibly a Safeguarding Concern**

- The DCS will consult with the Adult Safeguarding Champion (ASC / CEO) and Local Gateway Team, (if directed by the ASC). The DCS will update the Safeguarding Concerns Form, (NEXUS/F/008) with agreed outcomes.

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- If it is a reportable issue the DSC will follow the above actions for reporting safeguarding concerns.

**If it is not a reportable issue**

- The ASP and the DSC will discuss and agree support required for the service user. They will update the safeguarding Concerns Form, (NEXUS/F/008) with agreed actions and or outcomes. And log on NEXUS/F/009).
- The ASP and the DSC will explore learning and identify any training or practice issues and agree associated actions.
- The DSC will report back to all appropriate personnel.
- The DSC will implement any identified training and or service improvement initiatives.

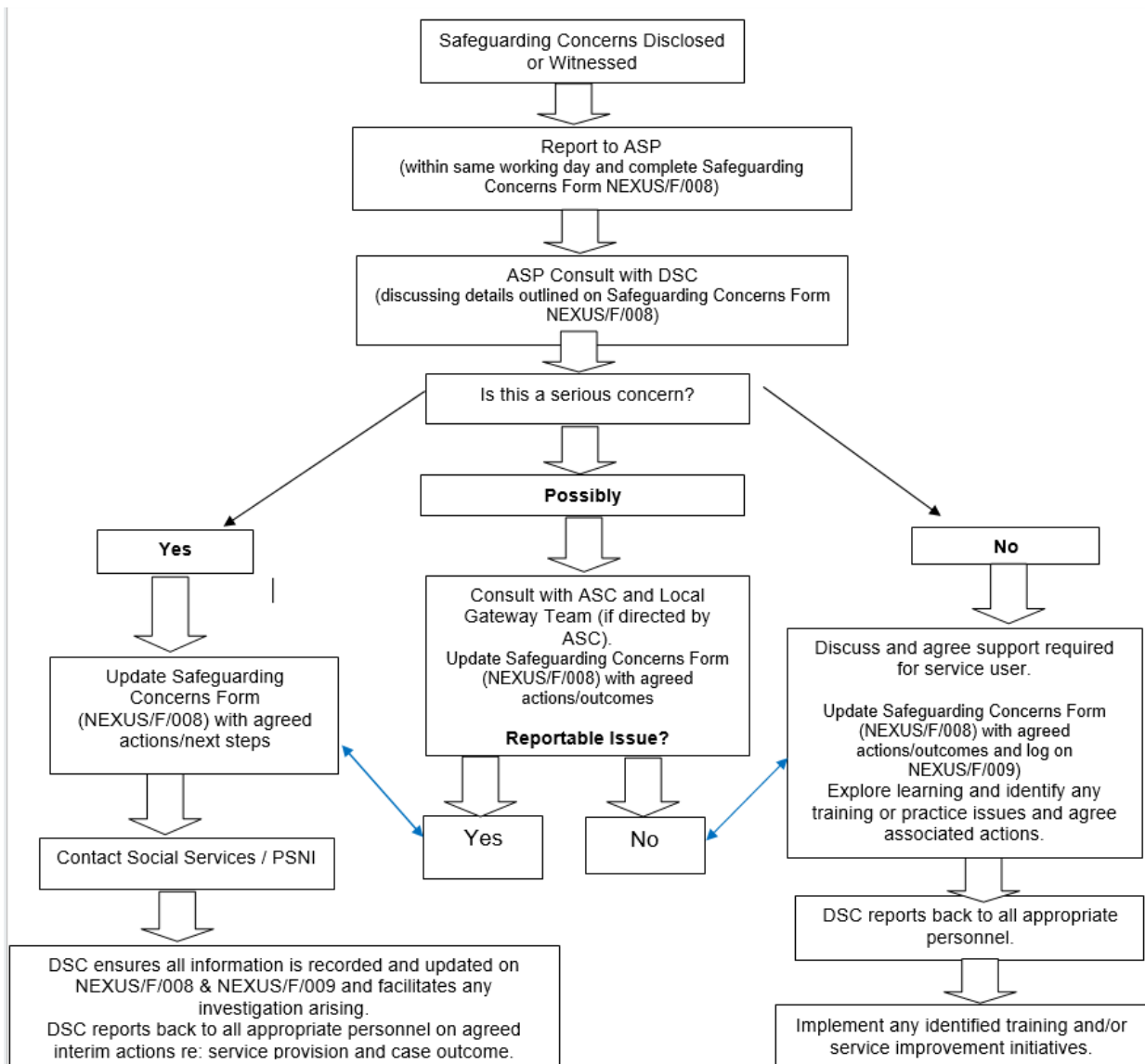
**Review of Safeguarding Concerns:**

- The DCS will review the safeguarding log on a quarterly basis and sign off all closed concerns.
- The DCS will complete the Nexus Safeguarding Position Report using the information stored on the Safeguarding Log

**Important Contact Details:**

- a. PSNI: 101 or 999 in emergencies
- b. Local Social Services Gateway Teams:
  1. Belfast HSCT - 028 9050 7000.
  2. Northern HSCT - 0300 1234 333.
  3. Southeastern HSCT - 0300 100 0300.
  4. Southern HSCT - 0800 783 7745.
  5. Western HSCT - 028 7131 4090.
- c. CEO Email: [joanne.barnes@nexusni.org](mailto:joanne.barnes@nexusni.org)
- d. Link for Nexus Safeguarding Form: [\(NEXUS/F/008\)](#)

## Safeguarding Reporting Procedure Flow Chart



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Appointed Safeguarding Champion (ASC) CEO 028 90 326803	
Professional Services Delegated Safeguarding Champions (DSC)	Professional Services Appointed Safeguarding Persons (ASP)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clinical Services Manager</li> <li>Early Intervention and Prevention Services Manager</li> <li>Head of Professional Services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clinical Coordinator</li> <li>Appointed Clinical Consults</li> <li>YOUR Choice Training Coordinator</li> <li>DSA Helpline Coordinator</li> </ul>
Corporate Services Delegated Safeguarding Champions (DSC)	Corporate Services Appointed Safeguarding Persons (ASP)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HR Business Partner</li> <li>Head of People and Organisational Development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Business Services Manager</li> <li>Communications and Engagement Lead</li> <li>Research and Impact Officer</li> </ul>

This procedure should be read in conjunction with:

- Nexus Safeguarding Policy (NEXUS/G/008)
- Recruitment & Selection Policy, (HR/G/001)
- Domestic & Sexual Abuse Policy, (NEXUS/G/011)
- Whistleblowing Policy (NEXUS/G/006)