

Merton Mencap

**Safeguarding Children & Young People
Policy & Procedure**

Last reviewed
September 2025

Next review
September 2026

**This policy and procedure has been adopted by Merton Mencap
through its Executive Committee which remains responsible for its review**

Merton Mencap

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE POLICY & PROCEDURE

- **Definitions**

“child” “children” & “young person	refers to someone aged under 18
“SEND”	special educational needs & disabilities
“staff and staff members”	all Merton Mencap employees, bank workers, agency workers and volunteers (including trustees)
“abuse”	a selfish act of oppression and injustice, exploitation and manipulation, caused by inflicting harm or failing to act to prevent harm, and can take a number of forms including physical, sexual, emotional, financial, bullying, neglect, and institutional

Legislation

This Policy & Procedure has been drawn up on the basis of law and guidance which seeks to protect children and young people, in particular:

- Children & Families Act 2014
- Care Act 2014
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012
- Children Act 2004
- Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Data Protection Act 1998
- United Convention of the Rights of the Child 1991

And on relevant government guidance on safeguarding children and young people, in particular

- London Child Protection Procedures and Practice Guidance
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)

Related Merton Mencap Policies & Procedures (P&P)

Reference should be made to the charity's related documents available at [Policies and Procedures - Merton Mencap](#)

- Care Planning & Delivery P&P
- Safe Use of Hoists & Slings P&P
- Missing Service User P&P
- Recruitment (P&P)
- Health & Safety P&P
- Whistleblowing P&P
- Complaints P&P
- Online Safety P&P
- Code of Conduct

Scope

This Policy & Procedure applies to all Merton Mencap staff.

This Policy and Procedure relates to children and young people aged under 18 years of age attending the charity's services and activities.

Purpose

We believe that children and young people should never experience abuse of any kind.

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to ensure that we always promote the wellbeing and welfare of the children and young people using our services, help prevent them from abuse and respond effectively if concerns are raised or observed.

Policy commitments

We recognise that the needs and welfare of any child or young person is paramount. We will take into account their care needs, wishes and feelings when providing our services and activities.

We demonstrate our commitment to safeguarding by

- adopting a 'child and young person-centred approach', eg ensuring that each person has a care plan based on their care needs and wishes and there are allocated staff members to care for them
- identifying Safeguarding Leads
- making safeguarding training level 1&2 mandatory for all staff, and senior safeguarding training mandatory for managers and safeguarding leads
- having a Safeguarding Committee which monitors the effectiveness of our safeguarding practice
- being a Merton Safeguarding 'Champion'
- making safeguarding a standard agenda item at interviews, inductions, staff supervision, team meetings, and meetings with trustees
- making sure a child, young person, parent, carer, staff members or the public know how to express safeguarding concerns to us without fear of doing so
- responding quickly and effectively if concerns are raised or identified
- working in partnership with relevant agencies, including reporting concerns to statutory agencies
- publishing this Policy & Procedure

Children and young people with SEND are more likely to be at risk of abuse.

Barriers to identifying abuse may include

- the child or young person not recognising that their experience was abuse
- the child or young person feeling unsure and nervous about reporting
- communication barriers (eg child or young person is non-verbal)
- assumptions that indications of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood or injury relate to the child or young person's disability without further exploration

- being more prone to peer group isolation (plus harm from peers) than children and young people without SEND
- the potential for being disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying without outwardly showing any signs

Nominated Safeguarding Children Advisor (NSCA)

We have identified leads for safeguarding who have responsibility for

- being the first point of contact for safeguarding matters within the organisation (ie the NSCA or deputy NSCA in their absence)
- managing safeguarding incidents including referrals to statutory agencies if a child or young person is suffering or likely to suffer abuse
- ensuring staff are provided with training, support and supervision at a level appropriate to their role
- monitoring and reporting on safeguarding practice within the organisation, eg providing details of incidents, including safeguarding, at trustee meetings
- chairing the charity's Safeguarding Committee
- representing the charity at Merton's Safeguarding Champion meetings

See 'Appendix 1 - Contacts' for details of the NSCA.

Types of abuse and possible indicators and signs

Abuse can take several forms including physical, sexual, emotional, financial, bullying, neglect, discrimination, radicalisation, modern slavery and institutional. Training and information is provided so staff understand these forms and can recognise possible signs.

Indicators and signs of abuse may include:

- Unexplained changes in behaviours or personality
- Becoming withdrawn, seeming anxious or uncharacteristically aggressive
- Physical indications, eg unexplained bruising in unusual areas
- Lacking social skills and having few friends, if any
- Poor relationship with parent or carer
- Knowledge of adult issues inappropriate for their age
- Running away or going missing
- Frequently choosing clothes which cover their body
- Being homeless (or at risk of being so)

Children and young people with SEND are more at risk of experiencing abuse. We recognise that some behavioural indicators of abuse may be part of a disability condition, rather than indicators of abuse, and that the absence of indicators does not necessarily mean abuse or neglect has not occurred.

We will treat all allegations, disclosures or potential indicators and signs of abuse seriously whatever the situation, for example even if the child or young person has a history of making false allegations.

All staff must

- be alert to the risks abusers pose to children and young people
- be aware of the types of abuse, their potential indicators and signs, and act straight away in the event that a child or young person has been harmed or is at risk of being harmed

Merton Mencap recognises that research, including lessons from serious case reviews, has shown that where there is presence in a family of domestic violence, drug or alcohol misuse or parental mental ill-health there may be a greater possibility that a child or young person may experience abuse.

The law empowers anyone who has actual care of a child or young person to do all that is reasonable in the circumstances to safeguard their welfare, eg staff should take all reasonable steps to offer a child or young people immediate protection.

Response

Early Help

Staff are required to recognise if a child or young person (and their family) may benefit from an Early Help Assessment from the local authority in order to prevent a problem, which is also known as Early Help or Early Intervention.

Such support may be beneficial in the case of

- poor attendance at our services and activities
- poor general health
- parents and carers experiencing difficulty coping or having mental ill-health
- domestic abuse, potential substance abuse

Disclosure or allegation of abuse

If any party makes a disclosure or potential allegation of abuse to staff (eg child, young person, parent, public), staff should:

- listen to what's being said without displaying shock or disbelief
- allow the person to talk freely
- give reassurances that what is being said will be taken seriously
- avoid criticising the alleged perpetrator
- avoid giving assurances of confidentiality
- thank them for disclosing and reassure them they were right to do so
- make a written record, eg record word-for-word what was said
- avoid undertaking their own investigation
- explain to the person that the matter will be passed to the appropriate person at Merton Mencap who will be able to decide how the matter should be taken forward

Signs or indications of abuse

Staff identifying a potential indicator or sign of abuse should note what was seen or said and act straight away, following the Procedure, below.

Procedure

It is **imperative** that if staff have reason to believe that abuse has taken place or may take place in the future, they refer this directly to the charity's NSCA and **do not** discuss this with other staff members, with a parent/carer or with the child concerned.

It is **not** the role of staff to investigate cases of potential abuse or seek further clarification. Information must be recorded accurately so that appropriate action can take place by the NSCA and any statutory agencies.

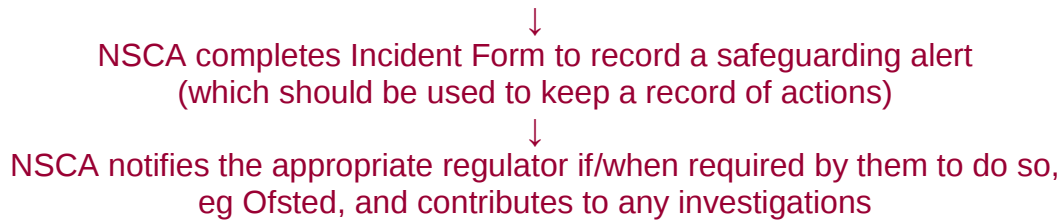
A. Immediate risk of harm

If a child or young person is at immediate risk of harm of abuse and/or a criminal offence will/is/has taken place:

Contact Merton Mencap's Nominated Safeguarding Children Advisor (NSCA) **without delay** who may need to contact the police on 999

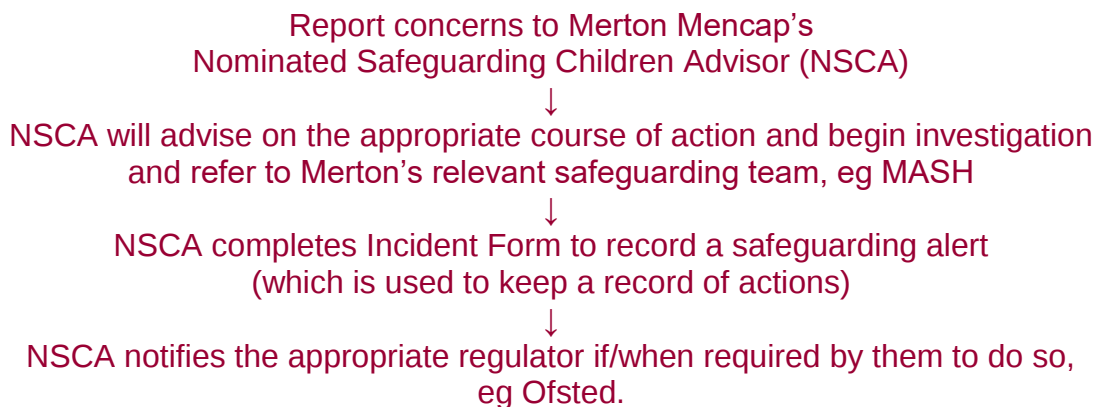


NSCA makes a referral to Merton's relevant safeguarding team (MASH) and follows Merton's procedure, eg completing a formal referral,



B. No immediate harm

If a child or young people is not in immediate danger, staff must still act straight away:

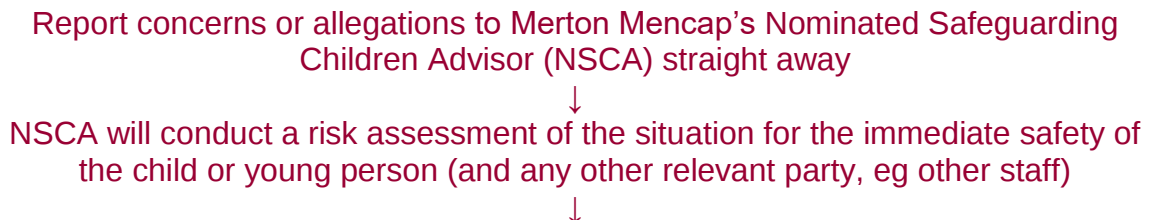


C. Allegations or concerns against staff

Allegations or concerns relating to abuse by staff must be taken seriously.

Any allegation or concerns against staff that they have behaved in a way that has harmed or may have harmed a child or young person, may have committed an offence against or related to a child or young person, or behaved in such a way that indicates they are unsuitable to work with children and young people will be managed by the NSCA in accordance with the London Child Protection Procedures.

Procedure



NSCA contacts Merton's Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for advice and to establish whether the matter meets the threshold for the LADO's involvement

If the matter *does not* meet the LADO threshold, the NSCA may still conduct an internal investigation.

If the matter *does* meet the LADO threshold, a statutory investigation will take place.

It may be necessary to suspend staff from further working while any investigation(s) takes place.

If the outcome of an investigation involving the LADO is that the staff member has been found to be unsuitable to work with children and young people, the NSCA will manage a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service and advise other relevant parties, eg statutory agencies Ofsted, and manage the staff member's employment status with the charity accordingly.

If the outcome of any investigation (ie with or without LADO) is that the allegation or concern is unsubstantiated or unproven, the NSCA will manage the outcome in liaison with HR and the Chair of Trustees.

Investigations

Merton Mencap is committed to collaborating with statutory agencies involved in any investigations relating to safeguarding.

We recognise that a criminal investigation by the Police will usually take priority over all other lines of enquiry. In the case of incidents which have been reported to the Police, the NSCA will check with the Police before conducting any internal or disciplinary investigation to ensure ours does not comprise the Police investigation in any way.

The NSCA will liaise with Merton's relevant safeguarding team, Police and other statutory agencies in regards to any investigation. The NSCA will ensure that any internal investigations that Merton Mencap is required to undertake is conducted quickly and efficiently.

Record keeping and confidentiality

Personal information about children, young people and families should not generally be shared without legitimate interest or without the consent of the person concerned. However, in the context of safeguarding children and young

people, in the public interest, confidential information may need to be shared without such consent.

Save in cases of emergency, staff who feel information relating to a child or their family needs to be shared, must refer to the NSCA for guidance.

It will normally be justified, in the public interest, to share confidential information without consent:

- where there is evidence or reasonable cause to believe that a child or young people is suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm
- to prevent significant harm

The amount of confidential information disclosed and the number of people to whom it is disclosed should be no more than is necessary to meet the public interest in protecting the health and wellbeing of the child or young person. This approach applies whether any proposed disclosure is within Merton Mencap or to an outside agency.

All matters relating to safeguarding matters must be recorded on the Incident Form, which acts as a log/summary of actions, and stored securely.

In the event that data relating to safeguarding incidents is required to be shared with third parties, eg Merton council, Police, this must be done so securely, for example password protecting documents for email and providing the password in a different communication method, eg verbally.

We will maintain safeguarding records in line with our retention schedule in our Data Protection Policy

Written records are completed to show the services and activities provided by the charity. These include a written register of the children and young people, the staff, any visitors and a de-brief of the session. These records are kept in a relevant filing system.

Revision

Merton Mencap will review this document annually.

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

Appendix 1 - Contact Details

Merton Mencap	
Nominated Safeguarding Children Advisor (NSCA)	Andrew Whittington Direct: 020 8646 0965 Mobile: 07767 670 134 Email: chief.executive@mertonmencap.org.uk
Deputy Nominated Safeguarding Advisor (Deputy NSCA)	Jane Birchmore Direct: 020 3963 0594 Mobile: 07581 668012 Email: stream.leaderchildren@mertonmencap.org.uk
Chair of Trustees	Richard Drummond Email: Richard.drummond@mertonmencap.org.uk

Merton Council	
Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub	020 8545 4226 or 020 8545 4227 or 020 8770 5000 (out of hours) Email: mash@merton.gov.uk MASH Team 12th Floor, Merton Civic Centre London Road, Morden SM4 5DX
Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)	Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) Tel: 020 8545 3187 Email: lado@merton.gov.uk

NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children)	
National 24 hour Child Protection Helpline	0808 800 5000 www.nspcc.org.uk/helpline
NSPCC free 24hr helpline for children, Childline	0800 1111 www.childline.org.uk

Other	
Reporting serious incidents	How to report a serious incident in your charity - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
Ofsted	Report a serious childcare incident - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Internal Audit Guidance

Check	Evidence
Staff know where to find a copy of this safeguarding policy and procedure Staff have been provided with the Staff & Induction Handbook	Check with staff at all levels of the organisation
Staff know who the nominated person(s) for safeguarding children is, and how to contact them	Ask staff Ask staff what they would do if that person was unavailable Ask staff their experience of contacting the nominated person (eg responsiveness)
Staff are aware of types of abuse and indicators and signs	Ask staff this question Ask staff what could indicate signs of abuse Ask staff about confidentiality and safeguarding (e.g. what they would do if a person who was being abused disclosed this to staff and they asked that staff keep it a secret)
Staff know how to record a safeguarding concern	Ask staff what form they would use to record a safeguarding concern Ask staff what is important about making a record of a safeguarding concern Look at the Incident Forms and check their quality and whether safeguarding alerts have been followed up
Safeguarding is a standard feature of supervision and appraisal meetings	Ask to see a supervision/ appraisal forms and check whether safeguarding was discussed
Safeguarding is a standard feature of Team Meetings	Ask to see the minutes of team meetings to check whether this is the case
Incidents including safeguarding are standard agenda items at trustee meetings	Ask to see the CEO's report for ECMs to check whether safeguarding is a standard reporting item
Safeguarding Committee meetings are	Check Safeguarding Committee and

taking place with minutes distributed at ECMS	ECM agenda & minutes
Safeguarding is a standard agenda items for all trustee meetings at ECMs	Ask to see minutes of ECMs to check that incidents, including safeguarding, is managed as a standard item
All staff have completed safeguarding training	Check main training records