

1. Statement of Policy

Chief Pleas believes that the health, welfare and safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults in Sark is paramount and that all people without exception have a human right to be protected from abuse of any kind regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, gender identity, lifestyle or family make-up, or beliefs.

Everyone on the Island of Sark has a duty to recognise abuse and take action to protect children, young people and adults at risk of abuse or neglect. The whole community has a part to play in preventing, identifying and reporting neglect and abuse.

2. Definitions

Anyone could be at risk of abuse or neglect. A person may be more or less vulnerable at different times in their life.

Definition of child

A child is legally defined as any person under the age of 18. Education staff may use the words 'young people' to describe teenagers though this definition does not exist in law. It is important to be clear that any young person up to their 18th birthday is legally regarded as a child.

Definition of vulnerable adult

A vulnerable adult is someone aged 18 years or over who 'is or may be in need of support by reasons of mental health or other disability, age or illness' and 'is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation'.

Vulnerability may be caused by something inherent to the person – for example, having a learning disability or mental health issue or frailty due to old age – and this can be lifelong, acquired or temporary. However, not everyone with a learning disability or mental health issue will be vulnerable. What makes someone vulnerable is the interaction of their personal characteristic with an inability to protect themselves from harm at this moment in time.

Vulnerability may exist as a result of the circumstances a person is living in, for example being homeless, living in an abusive relationship or having a mental health crisis of some kind. Again, what makes someone vulnerable in these circumstances is an inability to protect themselves against significant harm. Vulnerability due to such circumstances can be short-term or long-term.

3. Types of abuse

There are lots of different types of abuse, including:

Physical abuse - someone being hit, slapped or kicked, being locked in a room or restrained inappropriately.

Sexual abuse - someone being made to take part in sexual activity when they have not given consent, or are not able to give consent.

Emotional or psychological abuse - someone being shouted at, bullied, being made to feel frightened or pressurised into decisions.

Financial abuse - stealing, fraud, withholding or misusing someone's money or possessions.

Neglect and acts of omission - includes not giving someone the care that they need.

Modern slavery - human trafficking and forced labour.

Domestic abuse - when abuse occurs between partners or by a family member.

Discriminatory abuse - poor treatment or harassment because of someone's age, gender, sexuality, disability, race or religious belief.

Self-neglect is also a form of abuse. This is when someone chooses not to look after themselves. It might include not eating, or refusing help for their health or care needs and this has a significant effect on their wellbeing.

Abuse can be:

- something that happens once, or something that happens several times;
- something that is done deliberately;
- something that is unintentional; or
- a crime

Abuse can happen anywhere, at any time. It can happen in:

- someone's home;
- the school (for children);
- a place of employment (for adults);
- a club or other voluntary activity;
- public places.

Abuse can be committed by anyone. This includes:

- a partner or relative;
- a friend or neighbour;
- a paid or volunteer carer;
- someone in a position of trust;
- a stranger;
- more than one person.

4. Signs of abuse

There are many signs of abuse.

For adults this includes when someone:

- looks dirty or is not dressed properly;
- has an injury that is difficult to explain;
- seems frightened around certain people;
- seems unusually sad or withdrawn; or
- finds money is missing

For children and young people:

The following signs may suggest **physical abuse**:

- any bruising to a baby (pre-walking stage);
- multiple bruising to different parts of the body;
- bruising of different colours indicating repeated injuries;
- fingertip bruising to the chest, back, arms or legs;
- burns of any shape or size; and/or
- an injury for which there is no adequate explanation.

The following signs may suggest **sexual abuse**:

- something a child has told you;

- something a child has told someone else;
- a child who shows worrying sexualised behaviour in their play or with other children;
- a child who seems to have inappropriate sexual knowledge for their age; and/or
- a child who may be visiting or being looked after by a known or suspected offender.

The following signs may be present in children whose parents are overcritical and distant, or who are unable to meet their children's **emotional** needs:

- excessive behaviour, such as excessive bedwetting, overeating, rocking or head banging;
- self-harm, such as a child cutting or scratch themselves;
- attempted suicide;
- persistently running away from home;
- high levels of anxiety, unhappiness or withdrawal; and/or
- seeking out or avoiding affection.

The following signs may suggest **neglect**:

- squalid, unhygienic or dangerous home conditions;
- parents who fail to attend to their children's health or development needs;
- children who appear persistently undersized or underweight;
- children who continually appear tired or lacking in energy; and/or
- children who suffer frequent injuries due to lack of supervision

5. Dealing with reported suspicions and allegations

Concerns for the safety and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults could arise in a variety of ways and in a range of situations. For example, a child, young person or vulnerable adult may report or show signs of abuse, someone may hint that a child, young person or vulnerable adult is at risk or that a person on the Island is an abuser, or someone may witness abuse.

It is not always easy to recognise a situation where abuse may occur or has taken place and most Island residents are not experts at such recognition. However, each person has a responsibility to act if they have any concerns about someone's behaviour towards a child, young person or vulnerable adult. It is important that the recipient of any complaint or accusation that a child or vulnerable adult has been or is being abused listens carefully without making or implying any judgment as to the truth of the complaint or accusation.

The process for reporting a suspicion or allegation is included as Appendix A.

6. DBS Checks

All people working and/or volunteering with children, young people and vulnerable adults will be subject to a DBS check, prior to employment or activity. There are two types of check available from the DBS:

- **Standard** - contains details of all spent and unspent convictions, cautions, reprimands and warnings held on the Police National Computer (PNC) that are not 'protected'. Protected convictions and cautions are normally old and minor; they are filtered by the DBS so they are not disclosed and they must not be taken into account by employers.
- **Enhanced** - contains the same information as the standard check but also any relevant and proportionate information held by the local police forces. This includes a check on whether a person is barred from working with children or adults in regulated activity (particular types of work with children and adults).

Sark has a duty to refer an individual to the DBS if they have been removed from working in regulated activity with children and/or adults because they caused harm to children/adults or posed a risk of causing harm. The duty to refer is absolute and overrides any concerns about data protection. This will be completed by the Island Safeguarding Officer following advice from the Law Office in Guernsey.

7. Rights and Responsibilities

Chief Pleas endeavours to:

- Establish and maintain an environment where children and vulnerable adults feel safe, can talk freely about their feelings and experiences in structured ways, and are listened to.
- Take effective, timely and robust action to protect children and vulnerable adults and report concerns according to the procedures outlined in this policy.
- Ensure there is a commitment to safe recruitment, selection and vetting of staff; ensure all relevant staff are adequately aware of and supported in child protection and safeguarding reporting, know who the Designated Safeguarding Leads are and how to implement this procedure.
- Ensure that Islanders are aware of this safeguarding policy and that staff and volunteers working or volunteering with children, young people and vulnerable adults attend appropriate safeguarding training
- Ensure that the relevant agencies are notified if abuse is identified or suspected, following the procedures in this policy.
- Ensure that enhanced DBS checks are undertaken for all staff who do direct work with children and vulnerable adults where this might involve support work and/or one-to-one work.

Staff and volunteers working with children, young people and vulnerable adults:

- Staff and volunteers must make sure they are familiar with the safeguarding policy and procedures and able to follow procedures if appropriate.
- Staff and volunteers are responsible for their professional and personal conduct and should comply with professional standards where they exist.
- Staff and volunteers should always take action according to this policy if they have safeguarding concerns.
- Staff and volunteers must declare any relevant existing or spent convictions. Failure to do so will be regarded as gross misconduct, resulting in dismissal.

Responsibilities of agencies on Sark:

- Agencies on Sark have a duty to protect children and vulnerable adults and to investigate where there is a reason to suspect that a child or vulnerable adult may be suffering significant harm
- Agencies do not have a duty to take action where the threshold of harm has not reached 'significant' but they may choose to do so.
- Agencies have the duty to decide if what someone is experiencing amounts to 'significant harm'.
- The Constable has a duty to investigate when an alleged crime – or evidence of a crime – has taken place.

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- Whether the significant harm a child or vulnerable adult experiences constitutes a crime is the responsibility of the Constable and the authorities on Guernsey to decide.

Rights of those who report abuse:

- All those reporting abuse of a child or vulnerable adult, or making an allegation or expressing concern, whether they be staff, students, carers or parents will be reassured that they will be listened to and taken seriously and that their concerns will be acted on in accordance with this policy.
- This includes a respect for confidentiality and support for staff members reporting concerns of abuse.
- Children and young people will be given immediate protection from the risk of reprisals or intimidation.

Rights of children, young people and vulnerable adults:

- Children, young people and vulnerable adults have the right to see this policy.
- Children, young people and vulnerable adults will be listened to and taken seriously if they disclose abuse or neglect and that their concerns will be acted on in accordance with this policy.
- Children, young people and vulnerable adults have the right to receive sensitive, fair and respectful treatment during the processes undertaken in line with this policy.
- Children, young people and vulnerable adults have the right to have their wishes and feelings taken into account when safeguarding decisions about actions are being made.
- Children, young people and vulnerable adults have the right to be consulted and informed about decisions made about them, including if the actions taken by the MASH under this procedure are against their wishes, and to receive information about the actions taken and their outcomes.

Appendix A

Reporting a suspicion or allegation

To ensure that all of the details of an allegation are captured for any future investigation, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the matter being raised. Where possible, allegations should be recorded on a 'pink form' (see below) to ensure that all details are comprehensively reported; where this is not possible allegations should be reported by email, letter or report. All referrals from a Designated Safeguarding Lead should be accompanied by a 'pink form'. Pink Forms (which are located next to the red letter boxes) should be handed to the Island Safeguarding Officer or placed in one of the two red letter boxes located in the foyer of St Peter's Church and the downstairs hallway of the Committee offices, where they will be collected by the Island Safeguarding Officer.

It is impossible to promise complete confidentiality when a concern is raised, or an accusation made. This is because the Island owes a duty of care to its residents and visitors that cannot be fulfilled unless action is taken on the basis of information that may have been provided in confidence. The duty of confidentiality must be weighed against the duty of care, in case of potential or actual harm of an individual. However, at all stages, only those people who need to be made aware of an incident or concern should be informed.

Where an individual suspects or is informed that a child, young person or vulnerable adult has been, is being or could be harmed, the individual aware of these suspicions or allegations must contact the Designated Safeguarding Officer for the school or church, the Doctor, the Constable or the Island Safeguarding Officer. People who are worried about sharing concerns about abuse are encouraged to speak with an appropriate agency for general advice (for example, the NSPCC Child Protection Helpline on 0808 800 5000 or Childline on 0800 1111) or speak directly to the Island Safeguarding Officer by telephoning 07781 105772 or emailing safeguarding.officer@gov.sark.gg.

Where a complaint of abuse is reported, the Island Safeguarding Officer will carefully consider the information available and decide on the appropriate course of action. Such situations may require contact with members of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (who include the Constable, the Doctor, the Designated Safeguarding Lead from the school and the church, and the Procureur) to either investigate the matter or determine any necessary action. Consideration will also be given to whether it is necessary to notify the relevant agencies on Guernsey. In emergency circumstances (for example, where there is certain immediate and significant danger to an individual or a criminal act has been witnessed), a referral to the Constable and/or to the police and social services on Guernsey will be made. In such cases, a criminal investigation may follow.

Current Designated Safeguarding Leads **UPDATED 2025**

Constable	Charlie Turner
Doctor	Dr Bruce Jenkins
School	Simon Smith
Church	Belinda Dunks
Procureur	Kathleen Dewe
Island Safeguarding Officer	Sharon Boerenbeker

Referral (Pink) Form

CONFIDENTIAL - RECORD OF CONCERN

Name of person causing concern	DOB
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Nature of the concern
<div data-bbox="1197 748 1557 761">Continue overleaf if required...</div>

Address of person causing concern		Tel
		Mobile

Body diagram

The diagram consists of two main figures of a human body, one facing forward and one facing backward, both standing with arms slightly away from the body. Below these two figures are four detailed drawings of hands, arranged in two pairs. The left pair shows the palms facing each other, and the right pair shows the backs of the hands facing each other. The entire diagram is rendered in simple black lines on a white background.

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APPENDIX 1

Name of Person raising concern		Date
Address		Tel
		Mobile
Signature of Referrer		

Concerns cont'd.....

Action taken	Date	Signed/Name

Summary of concern/closure/next steps