

Protecting Vulnerable People



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DOCUMENT HISTORY

Date	Author/Editor	Summary of Changes	Version No.
Various	Various	Various annual changes	unnumbered
December 22 - January 2023	SF, Management team and QI Sub Group	Updated to include links to Adult Protection policies. Clarification on process post reporting, contact details updated	V3
March 2023	SF	Update of emergency contact numbers for LA	V4
October/ November 2023	SF/LAL	Update of CP Policy Links including FV information. Update flow chart re reporting New section re informing families re CP, change in timing of comms with families. Inclusion of Appendix for AP and clearer terminology re child/young person/adult	V5
April 2024	KM/RK/Safeguarding Sub Group	Update information re lead officers and safeguarding trustee. Update to flow chart re reporting What happens next section moved to appendix	V6

CONSULTATION AND RATIFICATION SCHEDULE

Name of Consultative Body	Approval / Consultation	Date
Board	NA	
Quality Improvement Group	Approval and consultation	Jan 2022
Service User Forum		
Parent Consultation	Rachel Keenan, consultation and recommendation for inclusion	November 2023

Stirling, Clacks and Falkirk Child Protection Lead Officers Stirling/Clacks AP Lead Officer	Consultation and recommendations for inclusion	October 2023 November 2023
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CROSS REFERENCE TO OTHER POLICIES / STRATEGIES

This policy should be read in conjunction with:	Detail
Policy 1	Whistle Blowing
Policy 2	Social media
Policy 3	Confidentiality

EQUALITY & PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Log Number: (year) / (no:)	Date completed:
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KEYWORDS: protection, abuse

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PLUS' designated **Safeguarding Lead Officer** is **Karen Moffat**. In her absence, please contact Safeguarding officers either **Lillian Campbell, Sarah Noble or Lesley-Anne Livesey, Safeguarding Trustee Maureen Howie**. Please note that these staff members are normally only available during office hours, unless they are scheduled to be on call. A manager will always be available to support out of hours **07775619574**

If you feel that someone is at risk of **immediate harm**, then phone the police on 999 and call Social Work on:

CYP Stirling	01786 404040
CYP Falkirk	01324 506400
CYP Clacks	01259 225000
Adults Stirling	01786 404040
Adults Falkirk	01324 506070

Adults Clacks	01259 727010
Out of hours ALL Forth Valley Areas	01786 470500

1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this policy is to promote good practice by providing children, young people and adults ('people') with safety and protection whilst in the care of PLUS. Staff and volunteers will be trained to make informed and confident responses to specific issues about an individual's ('person') well-being.

Child Protection

The National Child Protection Guidance: [Supporting documents - National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 - updated 2023 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/supporting-documents-national-guidance-for-child-protection-in-scotland-2021-updated-2023/pages/1-1-introduction.aspx) gives additional information on dealing with specific concerns that may impact adversely on children and young people.

The Forth Valley Child Protection Guidance can be found at the following link: <https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/glowblogs/fvpp/child-protection/child-protection-policies-procedures-and-guidelines/>

Adult Support and Protection

The Adult Support and Protection Act and Code of Practice can be seen in more detail at the following link: [Preface - Adult Support and Protection \(Scotland\) Act 2007: code of practice - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/preface-adult-support-and-protection-scotland-act-2007-code-of-practice/pages/1-1-introduction.aspx)

The Forth Valley Adult Support and Protection Guidance can be found at the following link: [FV Adult Support and Protection Multi Agency Guidance \(clacks.gov.uk\)](https://clacks.gov.uk/fv-adult-support-and-protection-multi-agency-guidance/)

2. SAFEGUARDING SUB GROUP

PLUS takes our responsibility in relation to safeguarding children and adults very seriously. As a result, we have set up a new Safeguarding sub group of our Board.

The purpose of this group is to provide additional internal quality management of safeguarding concerns. The sub group will directly report to the Board of Directors to ensure robust governance arrangements are in place to protect the safety and wellbeing of people using the service.

The scope of activities this group will be responsible for is detailed within the Terms of Reference for the group and will include, but is not limited to;

- Review of Protecting Vulnerable People Policy and all safeguarding processes.
- Contribute to review of all other relevant policies and procedures that involve safeguarding.
- Evaluation of Safeguarding training to ensure fit for purpose at all levels of organisation.
- Quality assurance of all safeguarding incidents, by reviewing documentation, to ensure that child and adult protection concerns are responded to appropriately.

- Ensure a suitable person is appointed to undertake a written review of instances where child and adult protection procedures are not followed appropriately and verify action taken to address any failings.
- Ensure that any concern regarding staff conduct and fitness to work with children and vulnerable adults are investigated, appropriate action taken and reported to the SSSC (or any other relevant professional body) where appropriate.
- Provide additional advice and support as necessary to Senior Management team responding to safeguarding concerns.

3. GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES

Duty to report safeguarding concerns

PLUS has a duty of care to safeguard all, including vulnerable adults, from harm. All suspicions and allegations of concern, potential harm and poor practice will be taken seriously and will be responded to swiftly. All staff and volunteers have a responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate staff member in PLUS. (See Figure 1, page 4)

At PLUS, we work with both children and young adults. We will refer to ‘person’ or ‘young people’ (YP) throughout the document as a collective term for all vulnerable people we support.

There are differences in the approaches that need to be taken in protecting children and vulnerable adults, especially if there is the need to involve other agencies including the Police. There are also many aspects in common. If harm is suspected a member of core staff should be involved immediately and they will deal with the implications of the age of the person concerned. The following therefore applies to work with all those that PLUS supports.

One of the advantages of connecting with people over social media and other electronic communications is that it is an additional channel through which safeguarding issues can be raised or detected – either through direct disclosure by a person, or through observations made by a volunteer/staff member (see section 4 regarding risks associated with online activities).

If in any doubt report your concerns verbally to your line manager or another senior colleague. This may include the event coordinator or the manager on call.

REMEMBER THE 4 Rs:

RECOGNISE	REPORT	REFER	RECORD
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People with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to abuse. This may be because:

- they might be less able to report abuse
- they might be less able to protest
- they might be more dependent on others and less accustomed to exercising individual control
- they might require more help with intimate body care
- they may rely on others to identify illness and to administer medications or modify their diet
- differences in appearance or behaviour may be attributed to disability rather than abuse.

It is not the responsibility of PLUS staff to decide if abuse is occurring **but it is their responsibility to act on any concerns. Ignoring the possibility may harm the person concerned by allowing the abuse to continue.**

4. ONLINE SAFETY

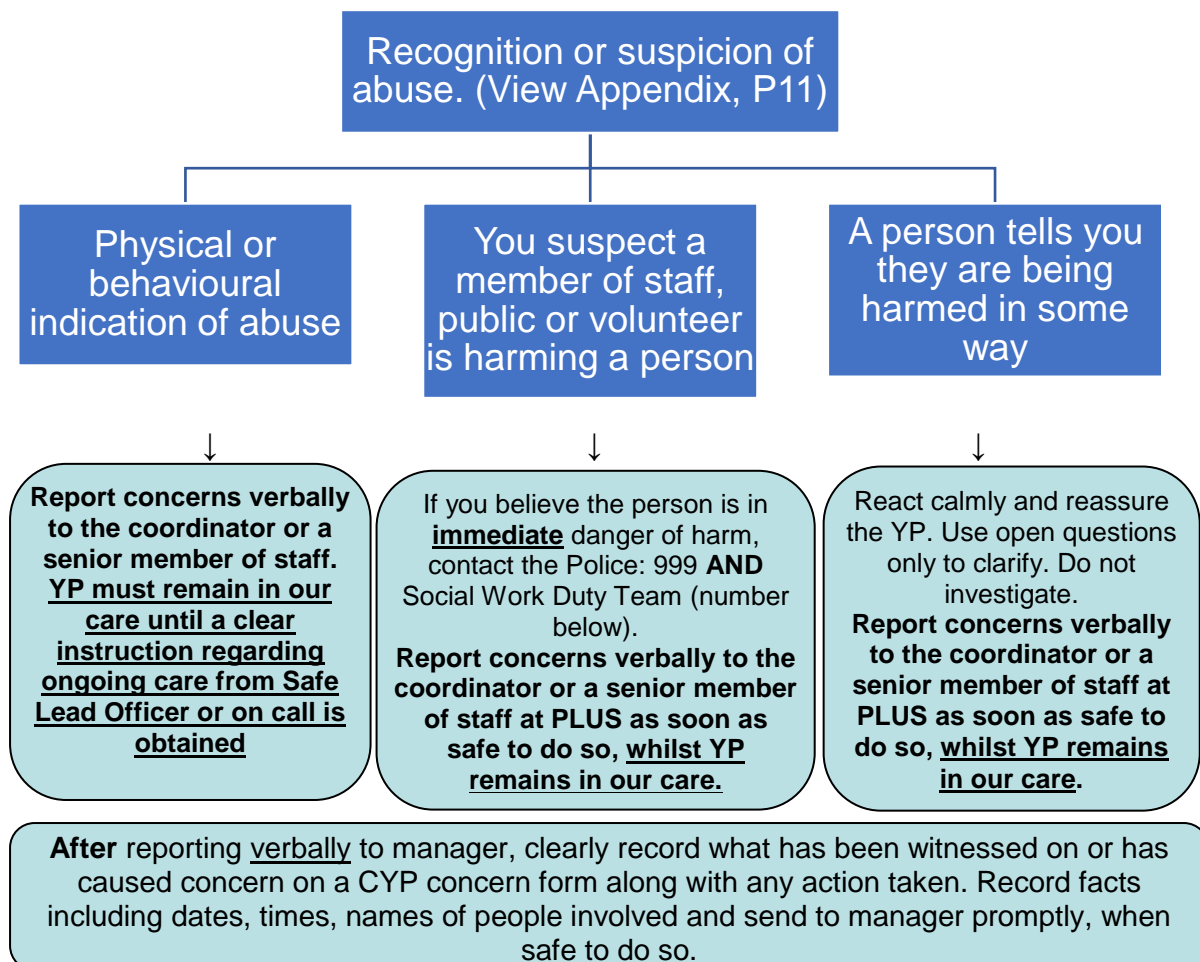
We also need to be aware that people are at risk from online abuse and exploitation. It is essential that all staff are aware of these risks and how to protect those we support, especially during any online sessions.

Workers must:

- Ensure that consent has been given for the online activity to take place
- Only engage in activities that have been planned by PLUS
- Use PLUS devices and only use PLUS email addresses where provided
- If you are using your personal device, then please ensure that your details are hidden. Please ask if you do not know how to do this
- Report any concerns immediately to the relevant manager
- Engage in any training opportunities organised by PLUS

Workers should not share personal emails or social media platforms with anybody who uses PLUS services. (Please refer to the PLUS Social Media Policy).

5. REPORTING PROCEDURE FOR SUPPORT STAFF (FIGURE 1)



No member of staff should go home worrying about a young person. If you have any level of concern that a young person is at risk of abuse, you **MUST** report this in the first instance to the event coordinator. The on-call manager should be contacted on 07775 619 574 to agree appropriate further action. For events during the day contact the PLUS office on 01786 450086 and speak to a manager. All reports must be made prior to a young person returning home.

6. GUIDELINES IN THE EVENT A PERSON DISCLOSES A CONCERN

If someone tells you something you need to be very careful in how you respond to the information. Comments made on the internet should be considered the same as if they were made in person. If a person tells you something concerning using electronic media, or you observe alarming interactions/input which they or others around them generate on social media, you should report it and record all available evidence (e.g. by taking screenshots).

Do:

- Listen carefully to any person who tells you (through drawing, behaviour or words) that they are being harmed.
- Be careful in asking questions. Use open questions (See page 7) to clarify the details and do not make assumptions.
- Take what is being said seriously. Never dismiss what a person tells you as lies or exaggeration.
- Stay calm, do not appear shocked or angry as this may reinforce the person's sense of shame or prevent them from confiding in you.
- Let the person know that you believe them but do not make a promise of secrecy.
- Support, comfort and reassure the person.
- Write down exactly what was said, and in the person's own words, as soon as you get the opportunity. Don't write it down while talking to the young person as this might prevent them from disclosing the harm. Stick to the facts of what was said not your feelings.
- Verbally pass the information to the coordinator or a member of core staff as soon as you can.
- Explain what you have to do next, that is, you need to share the information to help keep them safe and contact a senior member of staff.
- Keep to the facts and what was said in your report.

Don't:

- Try to investigate. You only need to check the person is safe and how they are dealing with this.
- Make personal comments or judgements about the situation.
- Make promises to keep secrets.
- Ask CYP to delete any evidence from phone
- Ask to view any pictures that you have been made aware of
- Give sweeping assurances, including about confidentiality.
- Confront the perpetrator- abuser/person harming.
- Keep the information to yourself.
- Exaggerate or trivialize another worker's concern.
- Discuss personal issues about a person or their family with other people except with senior staff.

Remember, it is not your job to decide what is happening or to investigate your suspicions. It is your responsibility to pass on information or concerns to a senior member of staff.

7. COMMUNICATION

Communication methods should always be relevant to the person. When a disclosure is made to you please be aware of the following:

Non-verbal communication



- Sit at the same eye level as the person
- Have good eye contact if the person is comfortable with this (some people with autism find eye contact difficult)
- Acknowledge the conversation – for example nod
- Open body language – e.g. don't fold arms
- Be engaged in the conversation be actively listening
- Never look shocked or disgusted by what is being said

Verbal communication



- Allow the person to talk – try not to interrupt
- Be prepared to allow silences, it may take time for the young person to find the words they need to use or they may prefer to use a communication aid. Let them know you understand their need to share information and you will help them do this
- Don't talk about yourself or bring the conversation around to you
- Keep questions to a minimum and try to ask only open questions (see below)
- Don't offer a solution, or tell them what to do
- Thank the person for sharing and tell them exactly what you will be doing next
- If appropriate keep the young person updated on the action taken and what they should expect. Please seek advice from a senior member of staff if you are unsure of what to say

If the person is nonverbal then please note and record any signs of harm or changes in behaviour and alert the coordinator.



Open Questions

Open questions are questions that require more than a one word answer such as 'yes' or 'no'. Open questions are useful to help you find out more about a person or a situation.

TIP - If you can answer a question with 'yes' or 'no' then you are answering a closed question.



8. SUPPORT FOR STAFF

PLUS recognises that being involved in any process in which a person may be at risk of harm, or has been harmed is stressful for all. Supporting our staff is essential. As soon as it is safe to do so, a 'hot' debrief will be arranged with the staff members involved, typically on the same day. Following this, a 'cold' debrief will take place within five working days. Debriefs may be conducted by different members of staff, depending on when and who the concern was originally reported to e.g. on call member of staff or Project Coordinator.

The debrief provides an opportunity for the staff member to share their concerns, to discuss the process and reflect on any support needs, training requirement or learning which may have arisen. This includes support for the Safeguarding Officer and any managers involved.

It is important to note that it might not be possible to share the outcome of your concern. This may be due to confidentiality or the fact that the situation may be under investigation by another lead professional, such as social work or the police.

9. INFORMING PARENT/CARERS/LEGAL GUARDIANS OF SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS

At Plus we recognize that parents/carers/guardians are crucial to safeguarding their children or young people. However, the decision to inform parents/carers/guardians of a child or adult protection concern will be taken in conjunction with the relevant authorities (police or social work). The Safeguarding Lead Officer or Designated Officer will advise on whether the parents/carers/guardians can be notified of the concern. This is because there are situations when informing parents/carers/guardians of child or adult protection concerns will increase the risk to child. Situations can include (but are not limited to): familial physical, sexual or emotional abuse, when the family is suspected of exploiting the young person, where fabricated or induced illness is suspected, forced marriage is suspected.

In the case of allegations of abuse made against other children, we will normally notify the parents or carers of all the children involved. We will think carefully about what information we provide about other children involved, and when. We will work with the Police and/or Local Authority Children's Social Care to make sure our approach to information sharing is consistent.

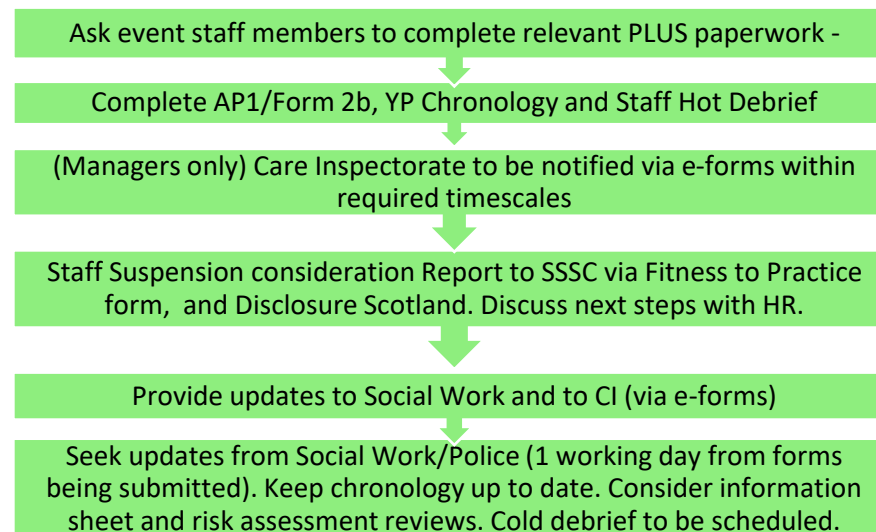
10. LEAD AND DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING OFFICER REPORTING PROCEDURE. (FIGURE 2). Once a concern has been shared with manager/on call via verbal dialogue, guidance below to be followed by senior staff.

NOTE: All concerns of abuse and disclosure of harm must be reported to social work immediately and before the child or person leaves the care of PLUS. Social Work will advise accordingly. If an allegation of potential criminal activity has been made and/or the individual is in IMMEDIATE danger, then POLICE MUST BE NOTIFIED

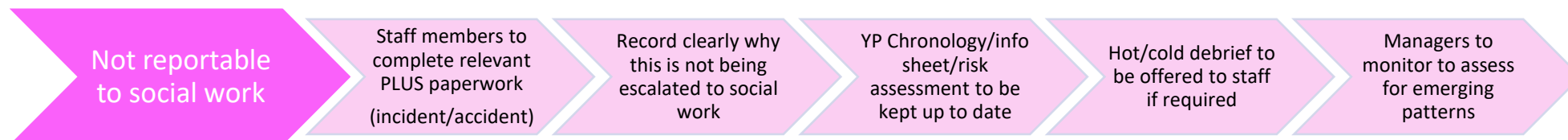
Please review the concern raised in relation to the following:



Actions to be taken by management/out of hours



Situations that are not of a Safeguarding nature may not require a report to social work or police (incidents/accidents). However, there is still a requirement for staff to work through the following process to ensure we can continue to best support the young person.



As mentioned under section 7, following staff reporting their concerns and any subsequent measures taken by PLUS, it might not be possible to share the outcome of any investigation.

11. ESCALATION

There may be a situation which arises whereby PLUS staff believe our reported concerns are not being taken on board, perhaps if there is disagreement in terms of the thresholds for child or adult protection interventions.

If a situation like this arises, PLUS will contact the Service Manager that has line management responsibility for the social work team involved in the assessment and decision making process, in the relevant local authority.

This will allow the situation to be given further scrutiny. Further guidance on escalation can be viewed on the Forth Valley Guidance for Escalation page below.

<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/glowblogs/fvpp/child-protection/child-protection-policies-procedures-and-guidelines/fv-multi-agency-guidance-for-escalation-09-11-2020-3/>

12. GUIDANCE FOR OUT OF HOURS STAFF

If you receive a call from any member of staff with concerns about the welfare of any individual supported by PLUS or any other vulnerable person, then your first responsibility is to assess if there is risk of immediate harm.

To support your assessment, consider the following:

- **Are they at risk of harm right now?**

Phone the police immediately.

- **Are there signs of abuse?** (refer to p11-13)

- **Are they at risk from their carer/legal guardian? Are they safe to go home?**

Phone social work and the police immediately, phone the person who is on back up. Check chronology form on SharePoint for any already recorded information.

In all events, notification to the Care Inspectorate to be made on the day, after discussions with social work/police

- **The individual is not in immediate harm**

Contact Social Work to share concerns and clarify what next steps PLUS should take eg speak to family. If no history on PLUS Chronology document then share this with social work to find out if they have further history. Follow flow chart P10.

- **Record Keeping**

Make sure that factual records are kept of all conversations, including full names, job roles, dates and times.

This includes completing the welfare form on SharePoint and updating the chronology for the YP.

- **Debrief**

Person on call to offer hot debrief to the workers involved as soon as possible once the incident is over. Cold debrief to be offered by Project Coordinator or Manager within 5 working days.

13. APPENDIX 1: WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE AND CHILD NEGLECT

(adapted from: National guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 part G)

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment. Abuse or neglect may involve inflicting harm or failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be maltreated at home; within a family or peer network; in care placements; institutions or community settings; and in the online and digital environment. Those responsible may be previously unknown or familiar, or in positions of trust. They may be family members. Children may be harmed pre-birth, for instance by domestic abuse of a mother or through parental alcohol and drug use.

The following tables have been shared via training with Stirling and Clackmannanshire Health and Social Care Partnership and provide insight to the range of indicators staff should be aware of.

Possible Indicators of Abuse and Harm in Children and Adults

Emotional & Psychological	Physical	Sexual	Sexual Exploitation	Neglect
Presenting with low self-esteem	Unexplained injuries or burns	Bruises, scratches, to the thighs or soreness in the genital area	Missing from education	Constant hunger or tiredness
Self-harm	Refusal to discuss injuries	Recurring urinary infections/Sexually transmitted disease	Withdrawn and refuses to talk or appear afraid to talk	Poor personal hygiene
Suicidal Intent	Implausible explanations	Self-harming / suicide attempts	Significantly older boyfriend/girlfriend	Poor state of clothing/Unkempt appearance
Verbal threats	Untreated injuries, or delay in seeking attention	Fear of particular individual	Disclosure of assault followed by retraction	Untreated medical problems
Humiliation	Hiding of body to avoid injuries being seen	Sexual acts to which the Young person or adult at risk has not consented	Reports of going missing	Low self-esteem
Controlling	Hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking	Intimidation of a sexual nature (examples include Stalking, Indecent Exposure, Harmful Sexual behaviour)	Moving away from family/friends	Stealing
Intimidation	Misuse of medication	Acting out in inappropriate sexual way with toys or objects	Unexplained money/gifts	Significant Lack of Growth/Weight Loss.
Coercive Control	Restraint or inappropriate sanctions		Signs of branding, tattoos with male names	Lack of essential food, clothing or shelter
Harassment			One among a number of unrelated people found at one address	Malnutrition and/or dehydration
Isolation			Adults loitering outside place of residence	Living in squalid or unsanitary conditions
Stalking				Hoarding Behaviour
				Pressure sores or ulcers

Signs of Abuse and Harm in Children and Adults

Human/ Child Trafficking	Substance Use	Online Exploitation	Financial Harm	Honour Based Violence includes:
Has no passport/ID	Growth deficiencies, both prenatally and after birth.	Only wanting to chat to that specific person	Theft	Threats of disowning
Limited freedom of movement	IQ's in the mild to severely restricted range.	Requesting private chat	Fraud	Forcing someone to do things against their will. Be particularly reluctant to undergo normal medical examinations
Significantly older boyfriend/girlfriend	A small head and brain. Joint, limb, ear and heart malformations.	Wanting to keep the friendship secret	'Bogus Caller' activity	Threats of murder.
Not registered with GP/School	Children born with neonatal abstinence syndrome – NAS.	Sharing photos online	Pressure in connection with wills, property, inheritance, financial transactions	Control of association e.g. girlfriends, boyfriends, friends and colleagues
Lives with a number of other unrelated children/people	Chaotic home environment.	Wanting to meet up	Scamming	<u>Forced Marriage</u> Decline in performance and attendance
Withdrawn and refuses to talk or appear afraid to talk	Chaotic lifestyle	Passing photos about		Being withdrawn from school by those with parental responsibility
Malnourished	Childhood trauma	Blackmailing		Unreasonable restrictions – house arrest
Registered at different addresses	Early experimentation with substances	Scamming		Sibling forced to marry/Truancy
False documentation	Having a family member known to use substances	Bullying		<u>Female Genital Mutilation</u> Taken out of school. Talk of a special occasion or ceremony to 'become a woman'
Pattern of homeless	Homelessness	Coercion		Refusing to take part in physical activity
		Intimidation		

14. APPENDIX 2: ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE

In addition to the policy links in the Introduction (page 2), additional resources are available on the Forth Valley Practitioner Pages. This will offer additional guidance for staff.

<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/lowblogs/fvpp/>

15. APPENDIX 3: WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Once you have reported your concern verbally to a senior member of staff, you must provide a written report. Once notified, the senior member of staff will follow the process below (figure 2) to decide how to progress. Please note, the member of staff who leads with the next step might not be the member of staff you reported your concerns to. Following your report, you will be offered a debrief by a senior member of staff (see section 7).