



Coxhoe Parish Council

Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults

Policy

Approved February 2022

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1. Introduction and policy statement

Coxhoe Parish Council aims to safeguard the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults with whom we may come into contact with and to protect them from harm as a result of physical, sexual or emotional abuse or neglect.

Coxhoe Parish Council has a duty of care to safeguard from harm all children and vulnerable adults visiting Coxhoe Parish Council's premises or using its facilities and services. All children and vulnerable adults have a right to protection. This Policy will apply to its employees, its Councillors, its contractors and hirers.

A child is defined as a person under the age of 18 (The Children Act 1989).

The Care Act 2014, which covers England, defines the person who should be subject of a safeguarding enquiry as an adult who:

- has needs for care and support (whether or not those needs are being met)
- is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect, and
- as a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse or neglect.

Coxhoe Parish Council will:

- Follow the appropriate guidelines to select appropriate staff/volunteers and to carry out DBS checks as necessary.
- Ensure the safety and protection of all children, young people and vulnerable adults through adherence to the Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy adopted by Coxhoe Parish Council.

This Policy applies to children and young people and to vulnerable adults as appropriate.

2. Policy aims and key principles

The aim of the Coxhoe Parish Council Child Protection Policy is to promote good practice by:

- Providing children, young people and vulnerable adults with appropriate safety and protection;
- Allowing all staff/volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific safeguarding issues.

Key principles of this policy are:

- The Parish Council will strive to ensure that children and vulnerable adults visiting the Council's premises or using its facilities and services can be protected by setting standards of best practice. This will also ensure that Council staff and volunteers are protected and do not place themselves in an unnecessarily vulnerable position.
- The Council believes everyone has a responsibility to promote the welfare of all children, young people and vulnerable adults, to keep them safe and to practise in a way that protects them.
- The Council will give equal priority to keeping all children, young people and vulnerable adults safe regardless of their age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.
- The Council recognises the additional needs of people from minority ethnic groups and disabled children and adults and the barriers they may face, for example with communication or the impact of discrimination.
- The Council sets a standard that all involved will contribute to building a safeguarding culture where staff, volunteers, children and vulnerable adults know how they are expected to behave and feel comfortable about sharing concerns.

3. Safe Recruitment of staff and Disclosure and Barring Checks

Having a sound recruitment procedure is important to ensure that capable, appropriate and safe staff are recruited to work in an environment where children may be present.

A clear appointments procedure should include the following processes:

- Vacancy arises
- Job description and person specification
- Advertising
- Applications received
- Short listing
- Interview with occupational testing as appropriate
- References
- Appointment
- Induction
- Probationary period

Staff who may have substantial unsupervised access to children, young people and vulnerable adults must undertake Disclosure & Barring Service checks. Coxhoe Parish Council identifies its Youth Workers as staff who need to undertake a Disclosure & Barring Service check. In addition, this check must be renewed every three years, to ensure its validity.

The Council acknowledges that although certain Councillors may consult or work with groups of children and young people and vulnerable adults, it is unlikely that this is carried out alone or without parental supervision and as such it does not deem it necessary for its Councillors to undertake Disclosure & Barring Service checks. However, Councillors should understand and comply with the information in this policy regarding good working practices.

The public need to be satisfied that staff employed by the Parish Council who may have access to children are recruited and employed on a safe and sound basis.

4. Good Working Practices

It is important that Council staff and Councillors demonstrate appropriate behaviour to children, young people and vulnerable adults at all times. All personnel should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to protect children and vulnerable adults, and should therefore adhere to the following principles:

- Always work in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations) and encourage an open environment (e.g. no secrets).
- Treat all young people/vulnerable adults equally, and with respect and dignity.
- Always put the welfare of each young person and vulnerable adult first.
- Maintain a safe and appropriate distance with children and vulnerable adults.
- Build a balanced relationship based on mutual trust, which empowers children and vulnerable adults to share in the decision-making process.
- Ensure any person working for or volunteering with the council does not transport young people in their car.
- Be an excellent role model.
- Give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.

Youth Leaders must ensure the following and that all staff are aware:

- Never leave children or young people unattended with adults who have not been subject to a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.
- Plan activities to involve more than one person being present or at least in sight or hearing of others. Alternatively, record, or inform others of their whereabouts and intended action.

- Ensure registers are complete and attendees are marked in and signed out (under 8's must be collected by a parent/carer).
- Ensure that photos or videos of individuals are not taken without written permission from parents/carers/the young person if over 12, and that photos or videos for Coxhoe Parish Council purposes are only taken and stored on devices supplied by the Parish Council.
- Ensure the first aider has access to a first aid kit and telephone and that staff know fire procedures.
- Ensure that where a child or young person needs assistance with toilet trips and when first aid is required, that this is carried out in pairs or in the latter case, that it is carried out where they can be seen.
- When outside, ensure activities, breaks and clothing are suitable for the weather conditions and that shelter is available where possible.

The following will never be sanctioned. You should never:

- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching.
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun.
- Allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.

If any of the following occur you should report this immediately to another colleague and record the incident. You should also ensure the parents of the child are informed:

- If you accidentally hurt a child.
- If a child seems distressed in any manner.
- If a child misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.

All users of Parish Facilities should:

- Ensure that communications, behaviour and interaction with users should be appropriate and professional.
- Treat each other with respect and show consideration for other groups using the facilities.
- Refrain from any behaviour that involves racism, sexism and bullying and in addition to report any instances of such behaviour to group leaders, Parish Councillors, the Parish Clerk or parents and carers, as appropriate.
- Ensure the involvement of parents/carers wherever possible, for example, encouraging them to take responsibility for their children in the changing rooms. If groups have to be supervised in the changing rooms, always ensure parents, teachers, coaches or officials work in pairs.
- Keep a written record of any injury or incident that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.

The Parish Council recognises that the discussion or disclosure of abuse can be deeply upsetting. The Parish Council will seek to offer support to its staff around issues of abuse as appropriate, including contacting other agencies who can assist with support.

5. Allegations against staff and volunteers

All staff and volunteers should take care not to place themselves in a vulnerable position with a child or vulnerable adult. If an allegation is made against a member of staff or volunteer, the person receiving the allegation will immediately inform the Clerk or if more appropriate the Chair of the Parish Council.

The Parish Council will take advice for managing allegations against staff/volunteers from the local authority Safeguarding Team. No attempt should be made to investigate or take action before consultation with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). Contact details are below.

6. Whistleblowing

All staff and volunteers should be aware of their duty to raise concerns about the attitude or actions of colleagues. The Parish Council will adopt a whistleblowing policy. This Policy confirms the Parish

Council's support for whistleblowing, which will be dealt with sensitively and professionally. Staff must raise concerns with their line manager, the Clerk (or the Chair, for the Clerk) who is expected to take appropriate action.

7. The Use of Contractors

The Parish Council uses contractors to undertake work on its premises and land. It is expected that any organisation who has their staff working on Parish Council land will ensure that their staff are recruited safely and that it is appropriate for them to work in an area where children, families and young people may be present. The responsibility will lie with the organisation to ensure that staff on council land are appropriately checked.

8. Bullying

Bullying is when individuals or groups seek to harm, intimidate or coerce someone who is perceived to be vulnerable (Oxford English Dictionary, 2018). It can involve people of any age, and can happen anywhere – at home, school or online (cyberbullying). This means it can happen at any time.

Bullying encompasses a range of behaviours which are often combined. The behaviours can include verbal abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, cyberbullying or online bullying. The emotional effects of being bullied can include sadness, depression and anxiety, and low self-esteem. Children who have witnessed another child being bullied may also be distressed. They may not know the best way to help the person being bullied. They may fear for their own safety and experience feelings of guilt for not stepping in.

There are many reasons why children bully others and it is not always a straightforward situation. Any child can be bullied. The Parish Council will adopt an anti-bullying statement which links to this policy.

9. Disclosure of abuse

If a child or young person says or indicates that they being abused (by an adult or another child) or information is obtained which gives concern that a young person is being abused, the following action should be taken.

The person receiving the information should:

- React calmly so as not to frighten the child.
- Tell the child they not to blame and that they were right to tell someone.
- Take what the child says seriously, recognising the difficulties inherent in interpreting what is said by a child who has for example a speech disability or differences in language.
- Keep questions to the absolute minimum to ensure a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said.
- Reassure the child, but do not make promises of confidentiality, which might not be feasible in the light of subsequent developments.
- Make a full record of what has been said, heard or seen as soon as possible using the Child Protection Report form in Appendix A.
- Inform your line manager or the Clerk (or the Parish Council Chair) immediately.

The person receiving the disclosure should avoid:

- Panicking.
- Allowing their shock or distaste to show.
- Probing for more information than is offered.
- Speculating or make assumptions.
- Making negative comments about the alleged abuser.
- Approaching the alleged abuser.
- Making promises or agreeing to keep secrets.
- Non-action is not an option in Child Protection.

It is important to note that it is not your responsibility to determine whether or not abuse has or is taking place; that is the responsibility of the professional bodies to which the matter will be referred.

10. Suspicion of Abuse

It can be very hard for children, young people and vulnerable adults to speak out about abuse. Often they fear there may be negative consequences if they tell anyone. Some may delay telling someone about abuse for a long time, while others never tell anyone, even if they want to.

It's vital that children and young people are able to speak out and that whoever they tell takes them seriously and acts on what they've been told. Even if a child doesn't tell someone verbally about what's happened to them, there may be other indicators that something is wrong. People who work with children need to be able to recognise the signs and know how to respond appropriately. If you suspect that a child or young person is being abused through your observations, you should inform the Clerk immediately and complete the Safeguarding form in Appendix A. Remember that you must share any concerns you have about a child, even if they ask you not to.

Definitions of what constitutes abuse are described in Appendix C. Abuse can happen wherever there are young people, and young people and adults at risk of any age can be abused. The effects of abuse can be so damaging and if untreated, they may follow a person into adulthood.

Indications that a child may be being abused include the following:

- Unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries.
- An injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent.
- The child describes what appears to be an abusive act involving him/her.
- Someone else (a child or adult) expresses concern about the welfare of another child.
- Unexplained changes in behaviour (e.g. becoming very quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper).
- Inappropriate sexual awareness.
- Engaging in sexually explicit behaviour.
- Distrust of adults, particularly those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected.
- Has difficulty in making friends.
- Is prevented from socialising with other children.
- Displays variations in eating patterns including overeating or loss of appetite.
- Loses weight for no apparent reason.
- Becomes increasingly dirty or unkempt.

It should be recognised that this list is not exhaustive and the presence of one or more of the indicators is not proof that abuse is actually taking place. Any one of those behaviours could be related to other family issues such as family upset or parental separation, divorce or bereavement, therefore abuse cannot be assumed in any case.

11. Reporting Procedures

A flow chart identifying the route of information is shown at Appendix B. This identifies where, when and to whom the information is passed. Information passed to Social Care and Health or the Police must be as helpful as possible and it may be used in any subsequent legal action, hence the necessity for making a detailed record. The report (Appendix A) should be used to record and pass on the appropriate information.

12. Records and Confidentiality

Confidentiality should be maintained at all times. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only.

This includes the following people:

- The designated person in charge or receiving information (the senior Youth Worker, Clerk or Chair)
- The person who received the disclosure
- The person making the allegation
- Appropriate professional bodies i.e. Police, Social Care and Health.

Concerns recorded about a child's welfare should be kept until they are 25. The file should be kept until the child is 25 (Information and Records Management Society (IRMS), 2016).

If concerns have been raised about an adult's behaviour around children, the general rule is that records should be kept in their personnel file either until they reach the age of 65 or for 10 years – whichever is longer (IRMS, 2016; Department for Education, 2018). This applies to volunteers and paid staff. For example: if someone is 60 when the investigation into the allegation is concluded, keep the records until their 70th birthday; if someone is 30 when the investigation into the allegation is concluded, keep the records until they are aged 65.

Records should be kept for the same amount of time regardless of whether the allegations were unfounded. However, if allegations are found to be malicious the record should be destroyed immediately. Information should be kept for this length of time even if the person stops working or volunteering for the organisation. In some cases, records should be kept for longer periods. An exception could be that the information in the records is relevant to legal action that has been started but not finished or the records have been archived for historical purposes (for example if the records are relevant to legal proceedings involving the organisation).

Records will be kept securely and confidentially by the Parish Clerk.

13. Who else can help and contact details

NSPCC

Contact trained helpline counsellors 24 hours a day by email at help@nspcc.org.uk or online reporting form at www.nspcc.org.uk. The helpline is open Monday to Friday 8.00am to 10.00pm or 9.00pm to 6.00pm at weekends (up to date information can be found on the website) on **0808 800 5000**.

Childline

Call free on **0800 1111** or get in touch through www.childline.org.uk.

Durham County Council

Durham County Council's Safeguarding Hub is called First Contact. The First Contact Service is led by the Local Authority and is the single point of contact for all professionals and members of the public who want to make a referral about a child they are worried about or who they feel needs some support.

Staff within First Contact will triage all referrals and determine which ones need to go into the MASH process. There will be some requests that come to First Contact for early help and support for children that won't need to go through a MASH process and can be signposted to other services such as One Point.

If you are concerned about a child, the procedure for making referrals if you have a concern about a child can be found on the LSCB website www.durham-lscb.org.uk or **Durham County Council** <https://www.durham.gov.uk/childprotection>. The process for making referrals is to either ring First Contact on **03000 26 79 79** or email them on firstcontact-gcsx@durham.gcsx.gov.uk.

Details of any observations made by you or to you (e.g. description of visible bruising, other injuries, young persons emotional state). If injuries are present please record size, location and colour, NB – be clear about what is fact and hearsay.

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Action taken so far

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Alleged / Suspected Abuser’s Details (if known)

Name	
Date of Birth	
Relationship with child	
Occupation	
Address	
Telephone Number (s)	
Any Disability	

External Agencies Contacted

Agency	Yes/ No	Contact Name	Contact Number	Date	Time	Details of Advice received
Police						
Social Care and Health						
Other						
(Please name)						

I acknowledge that the details described are accurate and will remain strictly confidential between appropriate reporting channels and myself.

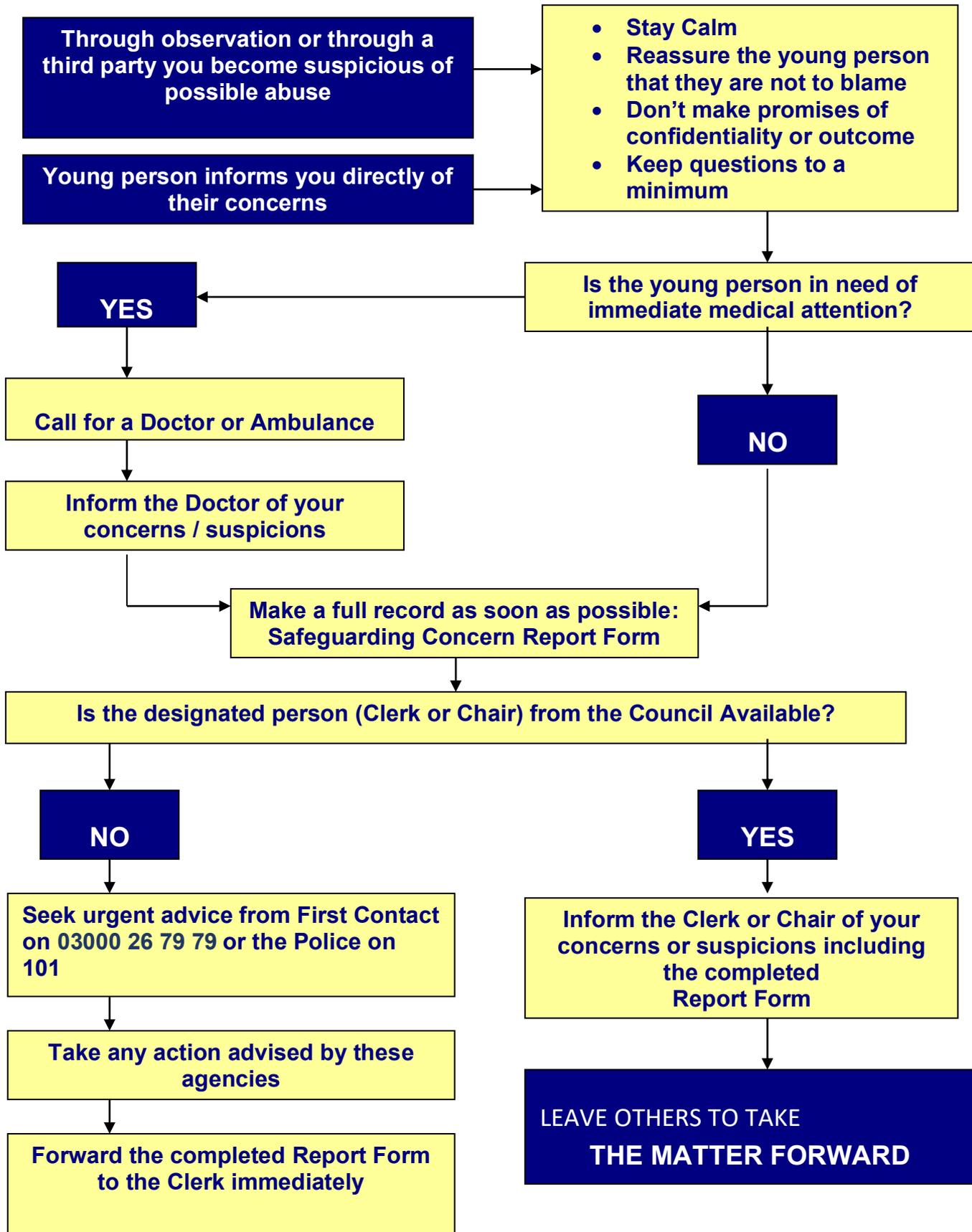
Signed: _____ Date: _____

Please submit this form immediately to:
Your line manager, the Parish Clerk or the Chair as appropriate.

If you have any queries please contact the Parish Clerk on 07988 283287 or clerk@coxhoeparishcouncil.gov.uk.

Appendix B

Procedures for responding to disclosure, allegations and suspicions



Appendix C

Definitions of Abuse

Neglect - where adults fail to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, it is likely to result in serious impairment of the child's health or development (e.g. failure to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.) It may also include refusal to give children love, affection and attention.

Physical abuse - Where adults and or other young people physically hurt or injure children by hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, biting, scalding, suffocating, drowning causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health to a child whom they are looking after.

Sexual abuse - where girls and boys are abused by adults (both male and female) and or other young people who use children to meet their own sexual needs. This could include full sexual intercourse, masturbation, oral sex, anal intercourse and fondling. Showing children pornographic material (books, videos, pictures) is also a form of sexual abuse.

Emotional abuse - is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child as to cause 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 feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It may involve causing children to feel frightened or in danger by being constantly shouted at, threatened or taunted which may make the child very nervous and withdrawn. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child.

In addition to the four main types of abuse, people who live in residential homes or other institutions might experience:

Institutional abuse - when staff in a home or other institution sacrifice the needs, wishes and lifestyle of a person in favour of the institution's regime. For example, by showing lack of respect for a child's' dignity or privacy, or denying them opportunity to make day-to-day choices or decisions about their life.

Financial abuse - deliberate misuse and exploitation of a person's money or possessions. For example, if the child is not allowed to spend their money as they wish, or if someone takes it from them to spend it on themselves.