



Our vision:
Fulfilling lives
Resilient communities

Our Mission:
To work with women,
children, young people
and families in our
community,
recognising their
choices, voices and
opportunities to
develop their potential

Our Values:
Accessibility "Always
somebody available to
talk to and give advice"
Respect "My decisions
were respected and my
voice was heard"
Integrity "Venus provide
everything you need and
stand by their values and
principles"
Trust "I believe that if
there is no trust people

Safeguarding Children Policy v8

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Volunteers must report concerns to an employee of Venus for escalation and the employee must make the referral, not the volunteer



Signed:
CEO

Date: 16/08/2023

Review Date: August 2024 or following an incident or review

1. Why does Venus have a Safeguarding Children Policy

Venus is committed to practice that protects children and young people from abuse. This policy informs workers and volunteers within Venus what their responsibilities are in terms of recognising and reporting abuse.

A child is someone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. Once they turn 18, they are legally an adult.

Workers and volunteers at Venus are trained to make sure that all of the services we provide are managed with safeguarding in mind in order to stop and reduce the risk of abuse of children.

Unfortunately, sometimes people who work or volunteer with Organisations such as Venus do so because they intend to target children and may wish to abuse them. To minimise the risk of this happening within Venus, we have this safeguarding policy. Our Organisation aims to protect the children and young people with whom we work.

We use this safeguarding policy along with our wider policy framework to guide the way we recruit and select workers and volunteers. To help us do this, all workers and volunteers must go through an enhanced Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) check. All workers and volunteers are expected at all times to conform to good practice in their work and undertake safeguarding & child protection courses and Early Help training as identified by Sefton LSCB. You may read more about our safer recruitment practices in our Recruitment & Selection Policy.

2. What laws and guidance cover this policy

The Care Act 2014

Criminal Justice & Court Services Act 2000

Protection of Children Act 1999

Police Act 1997

The Children Act 1989 and 2004

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018

Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003

HM Government. Revised Prevent Duty Guidance for England and Wales 2019

Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007

3. What is abuse

So that we can fully understand safeguarding, it's important to fully understand what abuse is.

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human rights. It can be a single act or repeated acts. Forms of abuse can include:

- **Physical abuse** such as: hitting, pushing, pinching, shaking, misuse of medication, scalding, inappropriate restraint, hair-pulling.
- **Sexual abuse** such as: rape or sexual assault; sexual acts to which the child has not or could not have consented, or to which they were pressurised into consenting.
- **Psychological or emotional abuse** such as: threats of harm or abandonment; deprivation of social or any other form of contact; humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, or harassment; verbal abuse; prevention from receiving services or support.
- **Financial or material abuse** such as: theft; fraud or exploitation; pressure in connection with wills, property, or inheritance; misuse of property, possessions or benefits.
- **Neglect or acts of omission** such as: ignoring medical or physical care needs; preventing access to health, social care, or educational services; withholding the necessities of life, such as food, drink, or heating. Poor home conditions can also constitute neglect such as hoarding, poor level of cleanliness home environments, hoarded homes and a lack or erratic home routine.
- **Domestic abuse** – all forms of abuse can be experienced in a family setting by a partner, family member, or with someone with whom there is a relationship.
- **Institutional abuse and poor practice** – disrespect and unethical practice, ill treatment and professional misconduct.

Any of these forms of abuse can be deliberate, or be the result of ignorance or lack of training, knowledge or understanding. Often, if a person is being abused in one way they may also be being abused in other ways.

Children may be more susceptible to being “groomed” prior to abuse taking place. This means that someone wishing to abuse them could deliberately befriend them, making an emotional connection with them in order to inflict abuse on them more easily, usually in

preparation for sexual activity with the child or other exploitation such as forced labour, prostitution or other trafficking.

4. Child Exploitation- (CE)

What is Child Exploitation:

Child exploitation refers to the use of children for someone else's advantage, gratification or profit; often resulting in unjust, cruel and harmful treatment of the child. These activities are to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, education, moral or social-emotional development. It covers situations of manipulation, misuse, abuse, victimization, oppression or ill-treatment. Venus believes that any child or young person involved in any aspect of Child Exploitation are victims first.

Two main types of CE include:

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or nonpenetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside clothing. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet).

Consent

Children aged under 13 cannot consent to sexual activity. Young people aged between 13 – 15 years cannot legally consent to sexual activity although it is behavior that teenagers of a similar age may mutually agree to sexual activity. The key question is whether consent was gained through coercion within an exploitative context. Where this is the case, any consent given by the child will be disregarded.

Young people aged between 16 – 17 years old can consent to sexual activity but an offence will be committed where there is an imbalance of power due to a disparity in ages, where there is an element of duress, abuse or exploitation or where there is an abuse of a position of trust.

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) is where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child Criminal Exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also

occur through the use of technology. CCE often involves gangs and organised criminal networks in exporting illegal drugs into rural or coastal areas within the UK described as 'County Lines'. Criminal exploitation of children is broader than just county lines and includes for instance children forced to work on cannabis farms or to commit theft.

CSE and CCE are closely linked and are therefore assessed and screened for at the same time using the same tools. Young people may experience one or both of these forms of exploitation.

It does happen in our communities

In the areas which Venus covers, it is still not known exactly how many children are being sexually or criminally exploited, however, we know it is happening. There are clear indications that sexual or criminal exploitation is affecting children under 16 years of age across all cultures and including children who are Looked After by their Local Authority. A further feature of exploitation for this age group is a significant link to substance misuse and children missing from home. The most common factors are low self esteem and vulnerability. In some cases, children and young people are drawn into exploitation by peers who are already involved.

Practice and research have shown that children, particularly girls, who are being sexually exploited, have frequently been coerced into this by an older man, who poses as, and whom they view as, their boyfriend. They are physically and emotionally dependent upon him and the relationship may be reinforced by the use of alcohol and drugs. Over time, access to friends and family may become restricted and the child become alienated from their family and statutory services.

Practitioners need to be aware that children and young people are at risk of exploitation through various methods, such as

- Production of abusive images, including use of the internet
- Internet chatrooms and message boards
- Trafficking
- Radicalisation
- Involvement with Gangs and organised crime

Risk factors to CSE and CCE

Research shows that young people are more vulnerable to sexual and/or criminal exploitation where any of the following factors are present:

- going missing regularly/frequently
- family breakdown
- not in full time education
- associating with older people
- domestic violence within the family
- family involvement in sexual exploitation

- children of parents with a high level of vulnerabilities (drug/alcohol, mental health etc)
- children with substance misuse or mental health issues
- experience of physical abuse and emotional deprivation
- experience of child sexual abuse
- experience of being bullied in school
- looked after children in residential care
- Children within the criminal justice service
- Promising children they will receive 'something' (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of complying.
- Through use of technology without the child's immediate recognition, for example the persuasion to post sexual images on the internet/mobile phones with no immediate payment or gain. In all cases those exploiting the child/young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources.

What to do if you suspect a child or young person is being sexually and/or criminally exploited

Professionals working with children and young people need to be aware of the indicators of exploitation and note any changes in behavior that suggests that the child or young person may be involved in or at risk of involvement in sexual exploitation.

Professionals need to take note of children who may show indicators of being groomed and should also be aware of children in sexual relationships that present as consensual but which may be exploitative. Importantly, professionals must share information with others in the child's network. It is often only when all information is available that a true picture of the child's situation comes to light. In some cases, the sharing of information about one child may highlight other children who may also be at risk of sexual exploitation.

If you feel a child is at risk of CSE please refer to Children's services in the Local Authority of where the child resides as per the flow chart in point 19 of this policy.

If the child is in immediate danger please call the police on 999.

5. Forced Genital Mutilation (FGM)

What is FGM?

FGM is the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia for non-medical reasons. It is also known as female circumcision or cutting. FGM is often performed by someone with no medical training who uses instruments such as a knife, scalpel, scissors, glass or razor blade.

FGM can be carried out at various ages such as a female newborn baby, during childhood or adolescence, just before marriage or during pregnancy. It is extremely dangerous and can cause severe pain, shock, bleeding, infections and in some cases death.

There are certain countries who are identified of having an increased risk. These are Egypt, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Sudan, Kenya, United Republic of Tanzania, Guinea and Somalia, Yemen, Iraq, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Niger, Liberia, Cameroon, Gambia, Ghana and Uganda (Unicef.org 2019).

Children are also considered to be at higher risk if FGM has already been carried out on their mother.

What are the signs and indicators of FGM

- A relative or 'cutter' visiting from abroad
- A special occasion or ceremony to 'become a woman' or prepare for marriage
- A female relative being cut – a sister, cousin, older female relative such as a mother or aunt
- Unexpected, repeated or prolonged absence from school

What are the signs that FGM may have happened

- Difficulty walking, standing or sitting
- Spend longer in the bathroom
- Appear withdrawn, anxious or depressed
- Display unusual behaviour after an absence from school or college
- Be reluctant to have routine medical examinations

FGM is child abuse and is **illegal** in the United Kingdom and should be reported as a **safeguarding concern** if you identify a child has had or is at risk of having this procedure carried out. If you feel the child is in immediate danger, to contact the police on 999.

6. Honour Based Violence (HBV)

HBV is violence committed when the family or community feel the victim has not followed what they believe is acceptable behaviour and has brought shame or dishonour to the family. Women and girls are predominantly the victims; however, it can also affect men. In extreme cases, victims can be killed.

Common triggers for HBV are refusing an arranged marriage, defying their parents, talking to a male who is not related to the family, becoming 'western' (wearing make-up or clothes deemed inappropriate, having a relationship outside the approved group, loss of virginity, pregnancy outside of marriage, spending time without the supervision of a family member, reporting domestic violence, attempting to divorce and pushing for custody of children after divorce and being homosexual.

Indicators of potential honor based violence may include

- an extended absence from school or college
- truancy

- a drop in their academic performance
- low motivation
- extensive parental restrictions and strong control of their movements
- self-harm
- depression
- anxiety
- attempted suicide
- eating disorders
- substance abuse
- domestic abuse
- children running away from home

If you are concerned a child is a victim of Honour Based Violence this must be reported as a safeguarding concern, please see point 19 of this policy. If you feel the child is in immediate danger, the police should be contacted on 999.

7. Forced Marriage

A forced marriage is where one or both people do not (or in cases of people with learning disabilities or reduced capacity, cannot) consent to the marriage as they are pressurised, or abuse is used, to force them to do so. This is different to an arranged marriage, whereby both parties provide consent and have a choice whether they marry or not. It has been recognised that children have also been victims of forced marriage. Forced marriage is illegal in the United Kingdom and is reportable to the Local Authority as a safeguarding concern or the Police.

Some families force children to marry because they may

- See it as an important aspect of their religion
- They are worried about the family's 'honor'
- They offer their children to marry in exchange for money
- They don't approve of their child being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender
- Feel pressured by the community or other family members to follow traditions

Indications a child may be at risk of forced marriage or have been forced to marry

- Extended absences from school/college
- A child talking about an upcoming holiday they are worried about
- A fear they will be taken out of education and kept abroad
- Unreasonable restrictions by parents such as not being able to leave the home
- A child going missing/running away
- A child who discloses they are worried they will be forced to marry
- The child coming from a community where forced marriage is part of the culture
- Self-harm
- Suicide attempt
- Domestic abuse

Please see flow chart in point 19 of this policy

8. Hoarding

Hoarding is now recognised as a mental health condition and can be classed under self-neglect as stated in The Care Act (2014). Dependant on the level of hoarding this may be reportable as a safeguarding concern due to the associated consequences of children living in this environment, whilst also being mindful of respecting a person's right to privacy and making unwise decision.

Please review local authority guidance on their website for RAG rating of hoarding and safeguarding referral form.

9. Prevent

Prevent is part of the overall counter-terrorism strategy which is called CONTEST. It aims to stop people, both children and adults, becoming terrorists and supporting terrorism. It is thought those who may be deemed vulnerable are at a greater risk of becoming radicalised. Signs that a child is being radicalised include isolating themselves from family and friends, talking as if from a scripted speech, a sudden disrespectful attitude towards others, increased levels of anger and increased secretiveness especially around internet use.

If you suspect a child is supporting terrorism this is a safeguarding concern which is reportable to the local Authority of where the child resides and it is to be put through as a Prevent referral. As per the flow chart concerns must be documented. **You would not inform the parents as part of a Prevent referral due to the nature of the concern.**

If you feel the child is in immediate danger, the police should be contacted on 999 or the anti-terrorist hotline on 0800 789 321.

A referral under Prevent is in the pre-criminal space if no crime has been committed.

10. How could a risk of abuse be present in the work Venus undertakes

Whilst we make every possible effort to ensure that the workers and volunteers who work for Venus are thoroughly screened and trained, we recognise that organisations such as Venus can be targeted by individuals wishing to gain access to children, young people and vulnerable adults in order to abuse them.

Venus provides outreach support to individuals and families in their homes. This means that workers and volunteers are visiting sometimes vulnerable people and their families in their homes and there will be many times that the worker or volunteer and the individual in receipt of support are alone.

It is envisaged that through training, education and a robust recruitment process the risk of a staff member or volunteer being a perpetrator of abuse is low, yet it is one we must acknowledge.

11. What could stop children reporting that they have been abused

There are frequently very powerful “disincentives” to someone reporting abuse, for example,

- Emotional or psychological threats about retribution that the abuser makes to the person who is being abused.
- Fear that if they report being abused they may lose support services.
- Fear that if they report being abused they will be stigmatised by family, friends and/or the community they live in.
- Not knowing how to report being abused.
- Fear that they will not be believed if they report abuse.
- Feeling that they are powerless to report abuse.

12. What should you do if you suspect someone is being abused

If you suspect that a child or young person is being subjected to abuse, **it is important that you do not ignore your suspicions**. If the child or young person concerned has told you about an abusive situation in which they are the victim, you must assure them that you are taking their concerns very seriously.

You should make it clear to that child or young person that you are unable to keep what they have told you as a ‘secret’, as you will have to pass this information on to the relevant professionals to investigate the situation. This may seem frightening, as the child or young person might just want someone to talk to about what is happening to them. They may get angry or upset once you tell them that you have to tell someone. However, if you were to keep the ‘secret’ then you have become a part of the abusive situation, as you are forced into knowing about a situation and not acting on it. In effect, you are then colluding with it.

It is important that abusive situations are acted on. It can be really difficult for a child or young person to tell of abuse if it involves family members, as the consequences of an investigation can be very serious for the family. This highlights even further, though, the importance of your being clear with the child or young person alleging abuse that it is a very serious matter, and that you will have to inform the appropriate people of your conversation.

Whether you are told of abuse or suspect it due to seeing marks or bruising, hearing comments, witnessing an incident or thinking that someone is trying to communicate through their behaviour, you must not investigate the matter yourself. You will want to give the child or young person a chance to say what they want to say to you, but do not ask lots of detailed questions, as this could jeopardise any possible court proceedings later and could lead to a non-conviction if it is thought (rightly or wrongly) that you gave the child or young person ideas which weren’t there in the first place.

It is important that you listen carefully to what is being said to you. You must write down what has been said as soon as you can afterwards, as it is difficult to recall accurately what has been said at a later date.

Please refer to the flow chart at the end of this policy, point 19 for further information regarding the process of making a referral.

13. Useful telephone numbers:

Sefton MBC Customer Access Team	0151 934 3555
Knowsley MBC Social Careline	0151 443 2600
Liverpool City Council Careline	0151 233 3700
Wirral Borough Council Social Services	0151 606 2008
Halton Borough Council Social Services	0151 907 8305
IDVA Team Sefton	0151 934 5142
Merseyside Police (non-emergency)	101
Hate Crime (See Point 18)	

14. What safeguards are in place at Venus to protect children and young people

As noted earlier, Venus requires potential workers and volunteers to undergo Enhanced DBS checks before starting to work with us, we also take up at least 2 professional references. As part of a new trustee's, worker's, student's and volunteer's induction process, they must familiarise themselves with our policies and procedures. They must also sign a statement that they agree to work within the rules we have set out, including our Code of Conduct and declare they have read and understood this policy.

15. How does Venus manage allegations against workers or volunteers

Venus is committed to promoting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. We recognise that despite our every effort, there may be occasions where concerns or allegations of misconduct are made against a Venus worker or volunteer. Concerns or allegations may be that the worker or volunteer has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed or may have harmed a child or young person.
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against, or related to a child or young person.
- Behaved towards a child or young person in a way that indicates that they are unsuitable to work with children or adults at risk.

Venus has a clear procedure for managing allegations made against its staff and volunteers which is set out in the Disciplinary & Grievance Policy.

16. Documentation

- All relevant information should be documented on Civi records.

- Information should be objective and factually accurate.
- Do not include personal opinions or assumptions. Observations should be explained. For example, it is not appropriate to say “X was very upset”, best practice would be “X appeared to be upset as she was crying and visibly shaking”.
- Dates and times should always be correctly documented.

17. How do we make sure that this policy is put into practice at Venus

Aside from our regular policy review drop ins, we make sure that workers and volunteers are reminded about their duties and responsibilities for safeguarding through one-to-one supervision sessions, and regular policy/training away days throughout the year.

At our weekly team meetings there are opportunities to review, challenge and revise the procedures that we have here at Venus, safeguarding issues are included in this.

Venus facilitates student placements from higher and further education establishments such as Liverpool John Moores University and Hugh Baird College. We make sure that all students placed with us are DBS checked and undergo safeguarding awareness as part of their induction with us. Students participate in ongoing policy review throughout their placements with Venus.

18. Hate crime.

Our Venus Values state that everyone is welcomed, valued and included in our Centre and our Services; an awareness of hate crime and guidelines for reporting incidents should help us make sure this happens.

What is Hate Crime?

The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and the Crown Prosecution Service have a nationally agreed definition of Hate Crime. Hate crimes are taken to mean any crime where the perpetrator's hostility or prejudice against an identifiable group of people is a factor in determining who is victimised. This is a broad and inclusive definition. A victim does not have to be a member of the group. In fact, anyone could be a victim of a hate crime.

Definition of Hate Crime

Any criminal offence which is perceived, by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by a hostility or prejudice based upon the victim's:

- Disability
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation

- Transgender identity
- Crimes against sex workers

Hate crime can take many forms including:

- Physical attacks such as physical assault, damage to property, offensive graffiti and arson
- Threat of attack including offensive letters, abusive or obscene telephone calls, malicious emails or posts on social networking sites such as Facebook, groups hanging around to intimidate, and unfounded, malicious complaints
- Verbal abuse, insults or harassment - taunting, offensive leaflets and posters, abusive gestures, dumping of rubbish outside homes or through letterboxes, and bullying at school or in the workplace

How does Venus deal with Hate Crime?

Our aim is always to give individuals as many options as possible. There are many different ways to deal with hate crime and different ways to report it so we would deal with each case individually.

When a Venus worker or volunteer and an individual in receipt of support make a support plan, they are asked to both consider any issues around Hate Crime and plan actions to take to address it.

If an individual attends an appointment at an advice Drop In at our centre and discloses that they have been a victim of Hate Crime, workers and volunteers are trained to advise the individual to report the incident/s to Sefton Council or the Sigma Team of Merseyside Police via 101 or via Police Facebook and Twitter accounts.

We would also provide information about the various Hate Crime Reporting Centres around Sefton and provide contact details and sign posting information to specialist agencies and organisations – this information can be accessed www.sefton.gov.uk/advice-benefits/crime-and-emergencies/hate-crime

Merseyside Police have appropriate victim care providers they can refer to

If you don't want to report it to the Police you can make a report to Stop Hate UK using the following:

- Telephone 0800 138 1625
- Text: 07717 989 02
- Text Relay: 18001 0113 293 5100
- BSL via stophateuk.org
- Email: talk@stophateuk.org
- Chat: stophateuk.org/talk
- Online: stophateuk.org/tell

- Post: Stop Hate UK, PO Box 484, Leeds, LS7 9BZ

Stop Hate UK are a registered charity and provide the helpline across Merseyside supported by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. The service is confidential.

Sefton Council offers an anonymous hate crime reporting form online, go to:

<http://forms.sefton.gov.uk/hatecrimereport/>

Hate crimes can also be reported through a 24 hour helpline:



We make sure that we display information about hate crime and how to report it within our Centre.

19. Flowchart of actions if abuse is suspected

