

## Pan-Sussex Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy & Procedures Group - Briefing for staff

The Pan-Sussex Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy & Procedures Group met on 3 October 2022. This briefing provides updates on changes to the policies and procedures reviewed by the group.

### Honour Based Abuse

The government has made it illegal to carry out, offer or aid and abet virginity testing or hymenoplasty in any part of the UK, as part of the Health and Care Act 2022. UK nationals and residents who carry out these practices outside the UK also commit an offence in the UK. Virginity testing and hymenoplasty do not need to be an offence in the country where it takes place.

The Honour based abuse policy has been updated to include information about Virginity testing and Hymenoplasty. Virginity testing, also referred to as, '2-finger' or vaginal examination, is an inspection of the female genitalia, intended to determine whether a woman or girl has had vaginal sexual intercourse. Hymenoplasty is a procedure undertaken to reconstruct a hymen. Some practitioners issue a certificate to prove 'virginity' after a virginity test or hymenoplasty, while some will tell the family or community members whether a woman or girl has 'passed' a virginity test. Virginity testing and hymenoplasty are forms of violence against women and girls and can be precursors to **Forced Marriage of a child**

### Underlying Policy, Principles and Values

This policy has been updated to support professionals with their case recording. The new section talks about the importance of recording the child's story with signposting to the [MIRRA Research Project](#). A new Sussex-wide Statement of Recognition that care leavers have a right to their information has also been introduced: *"All Care Leavers and those who had been supported through Children's Social Care have the right to fully access their childhood care files. Access to this information can have a positive impact on people's lives. The value of these files, and the need for us to promote this right of access, is recognised by the Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnerships and we aim to offer all care leavers support and kindness in what can be a difficult and challenging process."* The [Safeguarding Looked After Children \(children in care\)](#) Policy has also been updated.

### Parent or Carer Involved in Sex Work

This policy has undergone a significant review. The policy now outlines the risks and mitigations when a parent is sex working from home, e.g via a webcam or webchat. The policy now also gives guidance and support to ensure proportionate and relevant sharing of information around parent/carer sex working.

## Safeguarding Children impacted by Domestic Abuse

This policy now has more information on the impact of domestic abuse on child victims; including children with special educational needs and disabilities, children of separated parents and young people experiencing abuse in their own relationships.

## Safeguarding young carers

Each Local Authority is expected to take 'reasonable steps' to identify which children in their area are young carers. Once children are identified the Local Authority must carry out an assessment and ensure that services are provided to meet the identified need. The needs assessment should take into account the wider picture by considering fluctuating needs and the impact on the whole family.

## Information Sharing

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 provides that professionals **do not need consent** to share personal information. Where consent is not sought the family should be **informed** unless doing so may:

- Place the child at risk of Significant Harm e.g. by the behavioural response it prompts (e.g. where fabricated or induced illness is suspected)
- Lead to an unreasonable delay
- Place others at risk (see Violence Towards Staff and Working with families who are uncooperative and/or not engaging with professionals)
- Lead to the risk of losing evidential material.

Informing families of the use of their information can be verbal in most cases, with reference made to relevant existing privacy notices where required. All organisations should have up to date privacy notices on their website that individuals can be directed to if they would like to find out more about how their data might be used.

## Pre-birth planning for care leavers

This new protocol applies to all professionals working with Care Leavers who are expectant parents. This includes partners of the expectant person, even if they are no longer in a relationship. The protocol does not replace current procedures and processes in relation to unborn children however, it provides a variation in respect to the possible need for early intervention for care leavers with whom we have Corporate Parenting responsibility for, and soon to be Corporate Grandparents.

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