



Child Protection Policy and Guidelines

Introduction

"All children and young people in Scotland have the right to be cared for and protected from harm and to grow up in a safe environment in which their rights and needs are respected. The welfare of children is paramount."

Aberdeen Child Protection Committee has overall responsibility for ensuring agencies work together to protect children in the city. The **National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2014)** has been agreed as our local guidance.

The **National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2014)** outlines the collective responsibility of all services, professional bodies and agencies that provide child and or adult services' to identify and actively consider potential risks to all children and young people. Every adult in Scotland has a role in ensuring all our children live safely and can reach their full potential.

The **Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014** places a specific duty on services to safeguard, support and promote the wellbeing of children and young people. It builds upon the principles set out in the **Children (Scotland) Act 1995** which places a specific duty on local authorities to investigate if it believes that a child is or is likely to suffer significant harm.

The Aberdeen City Council Child Protection, Corporate Policy and Procedure (2017) sets out the expectations of all staff employed by the Local Authority and emphasises the responsibility of all services, both individually and collectively to work in partnership to effectively protect children and young people. As such it helps guide our working practices with Community Planning Partners.

For the purposes of this policy a child or young person is defined as someone under the age of 18 years.

This aims of this policy

The ultimate aim of this policy is to ensure that all of our children and young people are safe.

To realise this ultimate aim there is a need to ensure that all staff, students and volunteers within our school/service are:

- Aware of their responsibility to protect our children and young people from all forms of neglect, abuse and discrimination and of this Child Protection Policy.
- Able to recognise a situation that presents a risk to children and young people and are able to look out for signs which may suggest a child or young person is:



- *being physically, sexually or emotionally harmed, or put at risk of harm, abuse or exploitation;*
 - *having their basic needs neglected or being cared for in ways that are not appropriate to their age and stage of development;*
 - *being denied the sustained support and care necessary for them to thrive and develop normally;*
 - *being denied access to appropriate medical care and treatment; and*
 - *being exposed to demands and expectations which are inappropriate to their age and stage of development.”*
- Aware of how to record and report identified or disclosed neglect and child abuse.
 - Ensure that all record keeping, including Child Protection Concern Forums and chronologies, are kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998).
 - Ensure that Child Protection incidents are carefully considered and contribute to the Child's Assessment and Child's Plan which will regularly be reviewed in order to ensure that it meets the child/young person's needs.

The policy also aims to ensure that children and young people:

- Are aware of their right to be protected from being hurt or badly treated, **Article 19, UNCRC** and aware of this Child Protection Policy
- Are aware that the information may be shared to keep them safe
- Have experience of appropriate life and social skills to support them in seeking the support of adults who can help them and learn to identify potential risks to their safety and wellbeing through our delivery of the health and wellbeing curriculum

And also ensure that parents,

- Are aware of and understand this Child Protection Policy



We will achieve these aims by:

- Reviewing this policy annually to ensure it remains in line with most recent advice and guidance
- Issuing all members of staff, students and volunteers with this Child Protection Policy upon their arrival to ensure that all staff, students and volunteers are aware of their responsibilities and of how to take action
- Ensuring that all members of staff, students and volunteers know where to access the **Child Protection, Corporate Policy and Procedure, Aberdeen City Council, 2017** and the **National Guidance for Child Protection, 2014**.
- Ensuring that all new staff, volunteers and students complete the Corporate OIL GIRFEC and Child Protection Module within 1 week of their appointment. Full education specific service training should be undertaken within 12 weeks of appointment and thereafter refreshed on a yearly basis.
- Monitoring the impact of this policy to inform working practices
- Ensuring our Health and Wellbeing curriculum provides opportunities to ensure children and young people are aware of adults and services which can support them.
- Ensuring our Health and Wellbeing curriculum supports children and young people to be aware of contexts which may place them at risk of harm and strategies to reduce risk.
- Conveying how we keep our children safe through school/service handbooks

Roles and Responsibilities

“Everyone working with children and their families, including social workers, health professionals, police, educational staff, voluntary organisations and the third sector, as well as members of the community, need to appreciate the important role they can play in remaining vigilant and providing robust support for child protection.”

National Guidance for Child Protection Scotland, 2014, p2

All school/service staff, students and volunteers are well placed to observe physical and psychological changes in a child which might indicate abuse or suggest they are at risk of being harmed. Whilst the statutory responsibility for investigating cases of child abuse rests with social work and the police, teachers, the Named Person and other school staff are well placed to identify, monitor and report possible cases of emotional, physical and sexual abuse.

It is imperative that all staff, students and volunteers have a good understanding of the categories of concern which may indicate that a child is at risk (Appendix 1).



What do staff need to know about Child Protection to be able to see the signs

Staff, students and volunteers need to be able to recognise a situation that presents a risk to children and young people and feel confident to respond in a way that will help protect the child. There is a need to look out for signs which might suggest that a child is:

- Being physically, sexually or emotionally harmed, or put at risk of harm, abuse of exploitation
- Having their basic needs neglected or being cared for in ways that are not appropriate to their age and stage of development
- Being denied the sustained support and care necessary for them to thrive and develop normally
- Being denied access to appropriate medical care and treatment
- Being exposed to demands and expectations which are inappropriate to their age and stage.

There will seldom be one single reason why staff may have concern. More often it will be several things which on their own seem to be relatively unimportant but when looked at alongside other circumstances in the child's life they cause concern. For example, a child or young person may require our intervention if they:

- Have unexplained bruising or injuries in an unusual place
- Appear afraid, quiet or withdrawn or scared to go home
- Appear hungry, tired, unkempt or have poor hygiene
- Are left unattended or unsupervised or are out too late
- Seem to have too much responsibility for their age
- Are speaking or acting in a sexually inappropriate way
- Are misusing drugs or alcohol

In addition, staff is required to raise concerns about a child or young person because of the behaviour of an adult who has responsibility to care for the child or young person, or is involved in their life. The adults may:

- Act in a violent way to other adults, within or out with the household
- Act violently or sexually toward the child or young person, or appear to be grooming them for sex
- Misuse drugs or alcohol chaotically
- Be physically or verbally abusive towards the child or young person
- Appear to be neglecting the child's basic needs or not taking them for medical treatment
- Be exposing the child to inappropriate images, particularly on-line
- Struggle to manage mental health problems.



Who takes action to safeguard children and young people

Each school/service has an allocated Child Protection Co-ordinator. The role of the Co-ordinator is to oversee the timely delivery of Child Protection training and ensure accurate records are kept of this professional learning.

In most cases the Child Protection Co-ordinator will receive concerns from staff, students and volunteers and take action to safeguard children although this responsibility could sit with all members of staff, volunteers and students.

If the Child Protection Co-ordinator is not available a Deputising Senior Manager will most often decide on and take appropriate action. When neither the Child Protection Coordinator nor Senior Deputising Manager is available the responsibility for taking action lies with the individual member of staff, student or volunteer.

Confidentiality

It is essential to maintain strict confidentiality in all child protection matters. All staff, students and volunteers have a duty to pass on their concerns to the Child Protection Coordinator but should not discuss the concerns with anyone who is not relevant to the enquiry. Breach of confidentiality is a serious disciplinary matter and will be handled following the Council's Disciplinary Procedures. All staff, students and volunteers should be aware of their role in any child protection matter and also of the principles set out in the Data Protection Act (1998).

How to take action if you have a concern about a child or young person as a result of:

- **A disclosure of abuse**
- **Suspected abuse**
- **Expression of a concern made by a third party**
- **A staff member witnesses an abusive situation involving another person or staff member.**

Look and listen to the child or young person

Do not interrogate the child/young person or enter into detailed investigations. Be particularly mindful of not asking leading questions. Observe carefully the behaviour of the child or young person.

You should respond to the child or young person without showing signs of anxiety, alarm or shock. You should enquire casually about how the injury was sustained or why the child/young person appears distressed. Do not promise confidentiality, this is misleading, instead be open and transparent about the need to share information (see Appendix 2).



Record it

Make a note of concerns by recording:

- What you have seen
- What the child/young person has disclosed (in the child/young person's words if possible)
- What concerns this has raised

Record the context, time, date and actions taken. Use non emotive, clear, plain English which is understandable to all. Provide as much information about your concerns and use the Child Protection Form available in Appendix 3 wherever possible.

Staff, students and volunteers must not:

- Carry out any sort of investigation into the allegations
- Make promises to the child/young person about what may or may not happen

Report it

If you have a concern about a child or young person, raise this with the Child Protection Coordinator/Deputised Senior Manager without delay. You should never assume that someone else has already reported a concern.

The Child Protection Coordinator will listen carefully to your concern and use the Child Protection Concern Form (where available) to help determine next steps.

If the Child Protection Coordinator or more senior member of staff is not available, the responsibility for taking the following steps rests with the individual with the concern.

If the Child Protection Coordinator judges that further investigation is required they can contact any agency who may have information about the child/young person or their family and discuss concerns and relevant information about the child and their circumstances to inform decisions, enabling child protection. The Child Protection Coordinator should adhere to the principles of information sharing set out in the **Data Protection Act 1998** and only share information which is relevant, necessary and proportionate to the Child Protection concern raised but they should not seek consent to share if they consider the child to be at risk. This could include checking the Child Protection Register.

If the Child Protection Coordinator judges that there is sufficient concern of neglect or abuse then they should contact the Joint Child Protection Team (**01225 306877**) or Emergency Out of Hours Social Work Service (**01224 693936**) and discuss the case. This discussion will lead to a series of actions to be taken. This will include consideration of how parents are to be engaged if appropriate, how the outcome of any investigation will be relayed to you and how the Named Person will be informed (if the Named Person is not the Child Protection Coordinator).

If there are significant and immediate concerns about the safety of a child staff, students and volunteers should call 999 or 101 immediately.



All discussions and actions should be noted on the Child Protection Concern Form with times and dates noted. This should be securely retained with a summary of relevant and proportionate information transferred into the child's chronology.

Deciding not to take action

Any decision not to take further action and the reasons why should be recorded in the child's chronology. It is important that this entry is completed with times and dates noted.

The Child Protection Register

Children and young people are registered on the Child Protection Register in order to alert workers to the fact that there is sufficient professional concern about a child or young to warrant a Multi-Agency Child Protection Plan.

The Child Protection Coordinator can phone to check if a child's name has been recorded on the Child Protection Register.

The Child Protection Register is held jointly on behalf of Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray. Child Protection Committees can be contacted on 01224 523232 or by e-mail ask@childprotectionpartnership.org.uk

What Happens Next

Reported information will be considered by the Police and Children's Social Work. This may result in a joint investigation. Colleagues in Children's Social Work and Police Scotland will advise of any support they require from the Child Protection Coordinator.

Monitoring

This Policy will be reviewed annually. The Care Inspectorate and Education Scotland will check that these policies are up to date and that all staff, students and volunteers understand what they have to do if they have a concern about a child.

Eleanor Sheppard is the officer with the Child Protection Lead for Education Services (tel: 01224 522707) and can be contacted for advice and guidance.

Further information on child protection can be found in the Education Electronic Child Protection file or on the zone.

http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/social_care_health/social_work/childrens_services/childprotect.asp



Appendix 1

What Is Child Abuse?

Child abuse is the term used to describe ways in which children are harmed, usually by adults and often by people they know and trust.

To understand and identify significant harm, it is necessary to consider:

- The nature of harm, either through an act of commission or omission.
- The impact on the child's health and development, taking into account their age and stage of development.
- The child's development within the context of their family and wider environment;
- The context in which a harmful incident or behaviour occurred.
- Any particular needs, such as a medical condition, communication impairment or disability, that may affect the child's development, make them more vulnerable to harm or influence the level and type of care provided by the family.
- The capacity of parents or carers to meet adequately the child's needs; and the wider and environmental family context.

Categories of Child Abuse

- Physical Injury – actual or attempted physical injury including the administration of toxic substances.
- Physical Neglect – child denied food, sleep, clothing, cleanliness, shelter, warmth. Left unattended or inadequately supervised.
- Emotional Abuse/Emotional Neglect – coldness, hostility, criticism inappropriate punishments, isolation, scapegoating. Wilful destruction of a child's confidence.
- Sexual Abuse – when any person by design or by neglect causes the child to be involved in any activity that might lead to sexual arousal or gratification including organised networks. This includes rape, intercourse, lewd and libidinous practices and Child Sexual Exploitation.
- Non-Organic Failure to Thrive/Neglect – failure to meet expected weight and growth norms or developmental milestones. Malnutrition, lack of nurturing and stimulation.

This occurs when a child's essential needs are not met and this is likely to cause impairment to physical health and development. Such needs include food, clothing, cleanliness, shelter and warmth. A lack of appropriate care results in persistent or severe exposure, through negligence, to circumstances which endanger the child. Physical neglect may also include a failure to secure appropriate medical treatment for the child, or when an adult carer persistently pursues, or allows the child to follow, a lifestyle inappropriate to the child's developmental needs or which jeopardises the child's health.



This category also covers children who are left on their own for long periods and do not receive enough stimulation or suffer sensory deprivation, especially in infancy. They may also not experience enough nurturing, nor have many caregivers.

Severe neglect of young children is associated with major detrimental effects on growth and intellectual development. Constant neglect can lead to health and long-term developmental problems socially, emotionally and educationally. Neglect in some cases can result in physical disability and deformity and even death.

In its chronic form, non-organic failure to thrive can result in the child suffering more serious illnesses, a reduced potential height and, with young children particularly, the results may be life-threatening over a relatively short period.

- Vulnerability Factors – issues which can affect the wellbeing and safety of children.

Children may need our support or help but not be victims of child abuse and therefore the concern does not constitute a child protection concern but rather a wellbeing concern. Children may need our support through various difficulties they may experience at certain times in their lives e.g. divorce, new partners in the home, new families, bereavement suicide, moving home, moving school, adoption, fostering etc.

Additional Factors/Risk Indicators

The following factors should act as a prompt for all staff working in an adult or child care setting, to consider how they may impact on a child. Where these co-exist, risk may be increased:

- Domestic Abuse
- Parental alcohol misuse
- Parental drug misuse
- Children or Young People experiencing or affected by disability
- Children and young people experiencing or affected by mental health problems
- Children and young people who display harmful or problematic sexual behaviour
- Non engaging families
- Sudden unexpected death in infants and children
- Cultural issues (Forced Marriage, FGMs, Honour Violence)
- Children or young people who are carers



Harm outside the home

- Forced or Dangerous Labour
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Child Trafficking
- Online and mobile phone child safety
- Children and young people who place themselves at risk
- Underage sexual activity
- Forced Marriage
- Concealed pregnancy

Difficulties such as these should be reported in the same way as you would report concerns regarding child abuse as they are still child protection issues and may require investigation and intervention.



Appendix 2

Listening to the Child

The first steps when listening to a child are crucial. They often feel frightened, confused and vulnerable.

- Be receptive.
- Take it seriously – there is a reason for the child imparting such information.
- Reassure the child they are right to tell, listen carefully, and avoid showing any kind of shock reaction.
- Tell the child you need to seek help. Do not promise to keep secrets.
- Make a careful record of what was said – use the child’s words not your own.
- Do not record or report opinion only factual information.
- Don’t jump to conclusions, speculate or accuse anyone.
- Don’t use leading questions this is not your role and may cause serious legal implications regarding potential prosecution.
- Inform the Child Protection Coordinator without delay.



Appendix 3

Child Protection Concern Form

Greenbrae School

Member of Staff Reporting: _____

Social Work Involvement: Yes/No

Name if known: _____

Name of Child _____ Gender _____ D.O.B. _____

Address _____

Parent/Guardian _____ Carer _____

Date Time	Incident / Concern	Action – please initial or name each action



Appendix 4

Legislative Framework

Child Protection is not entirely governed within a legislative framework, and this list is not exhaustive.

- **The Children (Scotland) Act 1995** which requires Local Authorities to promote the welfare of children in need, and to make enquiries when they receive information that a child may be in need of compulsory measures of supervision. It also requires the Children's Reporter and the Children's Hearing to consider who are deemed to be in need of compulsory measures of supervision.
- **The Police (Scotland) Act 1997**, which requires the Police to guard, watch and patrol in order to prevent crime, preserve order and protect life and property and to pass information to the Procurator Fiscal when an offence may have been committed.
- **The Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995 - Schedule 1** which lists offences against children.
- **Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003**. This act came into force on January 10th 2005. An individual who is disqualified from working in a child care position will commit an offence if they apply for, offer to do, or accept such work. An organisation will have a duty to refer individuals working in a child care position to the DWCL (Disqualified from Working with Children List) if the individual has harmed a child or placed a child at risk and has been dismissed or moved away from access to children as a consequence. Similarly the organisation will have a duty to refer an individual who would have been dismissed but resigned, retired or was made redundant before the dismissal process was completed.
- **Protection of Children Act (2003)** – Implications for Disclosure Scotland applications.
- **Additional Support for Learning Act (2005)**
- **Data Protection Act (1998)** – data should be gathered and processed fairly and held securely and only used for the purpose for which it was collated.
- **Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014**

Legislation and practice are underpinned by the principles from;

- **The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1991)**
- **National Guidance for Child Protection (2014)**
- **Child Protection, Policy and Procedure, Aberdeen City Council, 2017**



- **Human Trafficking & Exploitation (Scotland) Act 2015**

The Zone has up to date information on child protection and can be accessed at the link below.

http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/social_care_health/social_work/childrens_services/chi_ChildProtect.asp