



# Protecting Children

information for service providers





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## Introduction

This leaflet is for you if you work with children or come into contact with children. It explains what to do and who to contact if you have concerns about a child. Details are given about what is likely to happen if the child is believed to be in need of protection.

The leaflet should be read in conjunction with existing child protection policies and procedures within your own organisation or agency.

You can access further information including the National Child Protection Guidance 2014 and inter-agency procedures at [www.glasgowchildprotection.org.uk](http://www.glasgowchildprotection.org.uk)

## Everyone's responsibility to protect children

Most children grow up in homes where they are loved and well cared for. However, for a variety of reasons sometimes a child may be harmed or mistreated in a way that is abusive. In such cases it is important that the child and his/her family receive help and support to ensure that the child is properly cared for and protected.



All children and young people deserve the best possible start in life. All adults have a responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, to ensure they are healthy, happy and protected from harm.

This includes:

- . parents
- . family members
- . friends
- . neighbours
- . professionals
- . members of the public
- . voluntary organisations such as youth groups
- . religious organisations

## Child Abuse

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting, or by failing to act to prevent significant harm to the child.

There are different types of abuse, some examples are:

- . physical injury - being hit, kicked, punched
- . neglect - not being properly fed, clothed, cared for or poor hygiene
- . sexual abuse - inappropriate sexual behaviour or language by an adult towards a child



- . Emotional Abuse - basic emotional needs are not met, constantly criticised, ignored, humiliated, treated differently from siblings

## Who might cause harm to a child?

Children are usually abused by a parent or some other adult they know. This could include extended family members such as grand parents, or family friends. It could also include foster carers or residential care staff. There are occasions when a child may be abused by someone outwith their home or family network. This might include someone who grooms a child online.

Abusers come from all walks of life and are not restricted to any social class, religion or culture.

## What might make you worried about a child?

Children will sometimes tell adults they trust they are being abused. More often, workers will notice a change in the child which makes them concerned it could be the way they look or something they do. Sometimes it will be something which is different to quantify 'feeling'.



These are some examples of things you might notice. It is important to remember that not all children who are abused or neglected will display any signs. Equally, a child may display some of these signs for other reasons.

The child may:

- . have unexplained bruising or bruising in an unusual place
- . appear afraid, quiet or withdrawn
- . be afraid to go home
- . appear hungry, tired or unkempt
- . be left unattended or unsupervised
- . have too much responsibility for their age
- . be acting out in a sexually inappropriate way
- . be misusing drugs or alcohol

You can access more information including National Guidance 2014 and inter-agency procedure at [www.glasgowchildprotection.org.uk](http://www.glasgowchildprotection.org.uk)

At times you may be concerned about the behaviour of the parent(s) or carers. This should be assessed, to see if it is having an impact on the child.

The parents/carers may:

- . Be living with domestic abuse
- . Use drugs or alcohol chaotically
- . Struggle to manage mental health problems





## What to do if you are concerned about a child

Sometimes it can be difficult to know whether a child is at risk of significant harm. You might have general concerns about their wellbeing, but not be sure if the child is being abused. Alternatively the child may say something, or you may see something, that makes you believe that the child is at risk of harm.

If you are worried about a child's safety or wellbeing, you should discuss your concerns with your line manager, or the designated child protection person for your organisation. Your agency's child protection procedures will guide you on what action to take.

You can also talk to other agencies who are working with the child, to share your concerns. You could contact the 'Named Person' for the child - this is normally the health visitor or the head teacher. Other people who might know the child include:

- . Social Work Services
- . family doctor
- . nursery staff
- . police officer
- . voluntary or community group
- . Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA)



A list of useful telephone numbers can be found at the back of this leaflet.

Whatever action you take, you should make sure you record your concerns, any action taken, who you have spoken to and the outcome.

You may have general concerns about a child's wellbeing, which you are responding to through your work with the child and their family, but you do not think these amount to a risk of abuse. You should record these in a chronology or some other record of welfare concerns. These should be monitored over time, to see whether there is a build up of concerns that would amount to a risk of significant harm.

## If a child tells you something has happened

Children will sometimes seek out an adult they trust, to tell them about something that has happened to them that they are unhappy about. At other times, a child may say something that the adult is concerned about, even though the child may not be concerned. For example, a young child may talk about their parent's drug use, or a teenager may describe sexual activity with someone older than them.



If a child tells you something that concerns you:

## Do

- . stay calm
- . listen to the child
- . keep any questions to a minimum
- . reassure the child that they are right to have told you
- . tell the child what you're going to do next
- . record in the child's own words what has been said
- . act promptly and immediately report to your line manager or designated child protection officer

## Don't

- . ask unnecessary questions. You can clarify what the child is telling you, but do not probe, or push the child to say more than they want to
- . make any false promises
- . express shock or anger at what is being said to you
- . interpret what the child is saying to you
- . just record and report
- . delay listening to the child or passing on your concerns
- . carry out an investigation into the allegation



The information the child has told you should be shared with social work or police as soon as possible, as they can decide what to do next.

## What to do in an emergency

If you are concerned that a child is at **immediate** risk of harm, you should contact the police on 999, who will be able to respond.

**Do not delay as this could result in serious injury to a child.**

For all concerns about a child refer to your agency child protection procedures and speak to someone.

## What to do if a child tells or you suspect a child is being abused or at risk of abuse

If a child tells you something, or you suspect a child is being abused or at risk of abuse, you **must** report your concerns to your line manager. If there are child protection concerns then a referral should be made to Social Work Services or in an emergency to the Police. This will either be made by your line manager or yourself depending on your organisation's procedures and structure.



If you know that there is an allocated social worker, you should contact them first. Otherwise, you can call the local social work office and ask to speak to the duty social worker. You should state that you are calling with a child protection concern. Alternatively, you can call the police on 101, and ask to speak to the local Family Protection Unit.

When a concern is shared with social work or police, you should give the following details (if you don't have all the details, you should give as much information as you can):

- . the child's name, address and date of birth
- . parents' name and current whereabouts
- . child's current whereabouts
- . your details, for example your involvement with the child
- . what the concerns are and why they have arisen
- . any recent changes in the child's behaviour or presentation
- . whether the child said anything which has made you concerned
- . whether there are any other children in the household
- . whether there are any other agencies currently involved with the family (if known)
- . whether there have been any previous concerns about this child or other children in the household
- . whether the child has any disability or special needs



- . whether there are any cultural or religious factors which need to be taken into account
- . whether the parents are aware of the concerns and, if so, their reaction

You should consider whether to speak to the parents before sharing your concerns with social work or the police. In general it is good practice to let parents know what you intend to do, however, this might place the child in a more dangerous situation or prejudice the outcome of any subsequent social work services or police investigation. If you are not sure what to do, you should contact social work or the police first.

## What action will be taken by police / social work

When Social Work Services or Police receive information about possible child abuse they must act on this information.

They are trying to establish if the child is at risk of significant harm and formal child protection is required. Where this is the case, Social Work Services and Police have a duty to investigate and take any necessary action to protect the child. They will liaise with health services, and all other agencies working with the family.



Usually social work and police will want to:

- . check their own records for information on the child and family members
- . speak to the referrer
- . speak to the child
- . speak to the parent
- . speak to any other people who know the child - other family members, teacher or health visitor
- . make further enquiries if necessary
- . take further action if necessary, such as arranging a medical examination

Sometimes it is necessary to convene an inter-agency Child Protection Case Discussion in order to share information and agree the next course of action.

In the case of an unborn child for whom there may be child protection concerns, a Pre-Birth Child Protection Case Conference may be held to consider what action, if any, is necessary to ensure the protection and welfare of the child following his/her birth.

If it becomes clear either at the initial referral stage or following one of the aforementioned meetings that the child is not at risk and no formal child protection action is required then support and help can still be offered to the child and family.



## At all times the welfare of the child comes first.

It is recognised that this can be a very difficult time for children and their families. It is important that all agencies work together to make this process as smooth as possible to help minimise the stress experienced.

Throughout the process it is important that children and their families are listened to and consulted and given the necessary information, support and help required.

It is also important that agencies are kept informed of what is happening and that feedback is given to the referrer on action taken. If at any point you want an update on an investigation, or to find out the outcome, you can call social work or police for an update.

## What happens next

Once the investigation has been completed the senior social worker and the police sergeant who have overseen the investigation will decide on the next course of action.





### If there are no child protection concerns

One or more of the following may happen:

- . no further action
- . Social Work Services offer help or support to the child and his/her family
- . a case discussion is held to identify the support needs of the child and family and mobilise resources
- . referral to another agency for help or support

### In the case of ongoing child protection concerns

- . An inter-agency meeting (known as an **Initial Child Protection Conference**) will be convened
- . In a small number of cases immediate emergency action may be required to protect the child - **Child Protection Order, Exclusion Order, Emergency Police Powers** (see separate section)
- . Further criminal enquiries, or report to the Procurator Fiscal may be required
- . Referral to the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) may be required



## Initial Child Protection Conference

An initial Child Protection Conference is a meeting to which a range of people will be invited. All those present at the meeting will have knowledge of the child and family.

This may include:

- . nursery staff
- . health visitor
- . teacher
- . social worker
- . general practitioner
- . police
- . housing
- . youth worker
- . worker from voluntary organisation

Parents are invited to attend this meeting, and also children or young people, depending on their age.

The social worker will write a report, which the parents will see before the meeting. Other agencies may also provide written reports, and parents and children can do so also.

There will be a full discussion at the meeting and everyone will have the opportunity to contribute and ask questions. Everyone who attends the Initial Child Protection Conference is expected



to contribute to the discussion, share relevant information and be fully involved in the decision making process.

Following the discussion, when all information has been considered, a decision will be made about what steps should be taken next.

Depending on the circumstances, if there appears to be a risk of future 'significant harm' to the child, consideration will be given to whether the child's name should be placed on the Child Protection Register.

## Disagreement or Dissent

If a parent (or child) does not agree with the decisions made then they can appeal. Advice will be given on the appeal process. If anyone else attending the Initial Child Protection Conference does not agree with the decisions made they can have their dissent recorded within the Minute of the Initial Child Protection Conference.



## The Child Protection Register

The names of children for whom there are concerns of possible future 'significant harm' may be placed on the Child Protection Register. The Child Protection Register is held by Social Work Services and is incorporated into the social work computerised system. The Child Protection Register has no statutory status, it is a mechanism for highlighting children for whom there are serious concerns. Access to the Child Protection Register is strictly controlled. Information about whether a child is on the register will only be shared where it is necessary to protect the child and will be restricted to relevant staff within an agency.

## Core Groups

If a child's name is placed on the child protection register, a child protection plan is agreed and a core group identified. The child protection plan identifies the key risk factors, sets out what needs to be done to support the child and family and reduce the risk of future harm. It also identifies who is expected to do what, including the parents and child, where relevant.

The core group is made up of a small group of people who work with the child and family. The Core Group meet with the child and family on a regular basis to look at the child's protection plan and review progress being made.



Any difficulties progressing the child's protection plan will be identified and changes to the plan will be considered to deal with these difficulties.

The progress of the child's protection plan will be reported to the review child protection conference.

## Review Child Protection Conference

A review child protection conference will be held within three months of the child's name being placed on the child protection register. The purpose of the review child protection conference is to review the child's protection plan.

The review is similar to the initial child protection conference in that again a full discussion will take place and reports will be made available. If there has been sufficient progress then consideration will be given to whether the child's name should be removed from the Child Protection Register. If little progress has been made then consideration will be given to the child's name remaining on the Register or whether further child protection action is required.

If the child's name remains on the Register, the child's protection plan will be reviewed and any necessary adjustments made. A further Review Child Protection Conference will be arranged for between three and six months from this meeting.



## Child Protection Order

If it is believed that a child may be in immediate danger then an application can be made for a Child Protection Order. Under s.37 of the Children's Hearing (Scotland) Act 2011 **anyone** can apply for a Child Protection Order if they have reason to **believe** a child is being treated in such a way that they are likely to suffer significant harm, and they require to be removed to a safe place.

Social Work Services usually apply for the Child Protection Order on behalf of the local authority. Application is made to the Sheriff.

Parents or their legal agents will normally be notified of the application unless doing so would cause an unnecessary delay, or would get in the way of the order being actioned.

If an application is successful, the Sheriff can order a child to be removed from home to a safe place, or prevent the removal of a child, for example, prevent removal of a child from hospital or from their grandparents' home. The Sheriff can attach additional 'conditions' to the Order, for example, a further condition could be that the child undergo a medical examination, or that a person(s) (to be named) will not be allowed to contact the child.

Parents, children and other relevant persons have a right to apply to the Sheriff for the order to be recalled or varied.



This should be done prior to an Initial Children's Hearing on the second day. If no application for recall is made the Order will proceed until the full Children's Hearing on the eighth day.

A child protection order will lapse after 24 hours unless there is an attempt to implement it within this time. It will lapse after 6 days if the child has not been removed to a place of safety.

## Assessment Order

Under s.35 of the Children's Hearing (Scotland) Act 2011, the local authority can apply for a Child Assessment Order where they have reason to suspect that a child has suffered or is likely to suffer 'significant harm' and that an assessment is necessary and that this assessment is being denied.

A Child Assessment Order allows for a child to be seen and where necessary, allows for an assessment of the child's health and development to be undertaken. A Child Assessment Order will state when it will be implemented. This will begin within 24 hours of being granted, and will last up to three days.

On application to the Sheriff for a Child Assessment Order, if the Sheriff believes that the conditions for making a Child Protection Order exist, they will grant a Child Protection Order instead.



## Exclusion Order

Only a local authority can apply for an Exclusion Order s.76 (1) of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.

Where a Sheriff is satisfied that the conditions for making an Exclusion Order exist, a 'named person' can be excluded from the child's family home to ensure the child's protection.

An Exclusion Order can last up to six months and the Sheriff can attach conditions to the Order to ensure the child's protection. For example, powers of arrest without warrant, no contact with the child and/or the 'named person' must not go within the vicinity of the child's home or school.

The 'named person' has the right to appear in front of the Sheriff prior to an Exclusion Order being granted to put forward his/her view and state his/her case.

Where a Sheriff believes the grounds exist for making a Child Protection Order the Sheriff may grant this instead of an Exclusion Order, and the child may be removed from the home to a place of safety.

## Emergency Police Powers

In an emergency situation, where a police officer has reasonable cause to believe that the conditions for making a Child Protection Order are satisfied and it is not practical in the





circumstances to make such an application to the Sheriff then the officer may remove the child to a 'place of safety' under s.56 of the Children's Hearing (Scotland) Act 2011.

The necessity to remove the child must be immediate otherwise a Child Protection Order must be applied for. The power to remove the child only lasts 24 hours thereafter the Police (or another person) need to apply to the Sheriff for a Child Protection Order to secure the child's place of safety.

All children have the right to be protected from abuse and neglect and all adults have a responsibility to ensure they are protected.

## List of local contact numbers

Social Care Direct ..... 0141 287 0555

You can find details of your local social work office on  
[www.glasgow.gov.uk](http://www.glasgow.gov.uk)

Police - Family Protection Unit ..... 101

Glasgow & Partners Emergency

Social Work Services ..... 0300 343 1505

Scottish Children's Reporter Administration ..... 0131 244 2100



## Glossary of Terms

### Assessment of Need

Evaluation of the child and family, identifying areas of need which may require additional support.

### Assessment of Risk

Evaluation of possibility of child abuse occurring in the future.

### Case Discussion (general concerns)

A case discussion is an inter-agency meeting to share information and identify the needs of the child (and family) and agree a plan of action to meet these needs.

### Child

For the purpose of child protection procedures a child is defined as a young person under the age of 16 years or between 16-18 if he/she is the subject of a supervision requirement imposed by a Children's Panel. Young people over 16 who are vulnerable and have a Record of Needs should also be considered under these procedures.

### Child Abuse

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting, or by failing



to act to prevent, significant harm to the child. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger. Assessments will need to consider whether abuse has occurred or is likely to occur. To define an act of omission as abusive and/or presenting future risk a number of elements can be taken into account. These include demonstrable or predictable harm to the child that would have been avoidable except for the action or inaction of the parent(s) or other carers.

### Child Assessment Order

A Child Assessment Order allows for a child to undergo a medical examination or assessment where this has been deemed necessary. This does not supersede the child's rights under the Age of Legal Capacity (Scotland) Act 1991. At all times the child's welfare is paramount.

### Child Protection Case Discussion

Child Protection Case Discussion is an inter-agency meeting to share information where there are child protection concerns which need further clarification. Strengths within the family and the family's capacity to co-operate with agencies should be discussed. Any support required should also be identified and a plan of intervention should be agreed which could include organising a child protection case conference.



## Joint Investigative Interview

A Joint Investigative Interview is a formal planned interview with a child. It is carried out by staff trained specifically to conduct this type of interview. The purpose of the interview is to obtain the child's account of events (if any) which require investigation.

## Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is causing physical harm to a child or young person. Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes, ill health to a child they are looking after.

## Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical, emotional and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or failure to respond to, a child's basic emotional needs. Neglect may also result in the child being diagnosed as suffering from 'non organic failure to thrive', where they have significantly failed to reach normal weight and growth or developmental milestones and where physical and genetic



reasons have been medically eliminated. In its extreme form children can be at serious risk from the effects of malnutrition, lack of nurturing and stimulation. This can lead to serious long-term effects such as greater susceptibility to serious childhood illnesses and reduction in potential stature. With young children in particular, the consequences may be life-threatening within a relatively short period of time.

### Planning Meeting

A Planning Meeting (usually between Social Work Services and Police) is usually held to plan a joint investigation - where it is agreed who does what, and when.

### Pre-Birth Child Protection Conference

An inter-agency meeting which considers the risk of harm to an unborn child and future risks following the child's birth.

### Review Child Protection Conference

An inter-agency meeting which reviews the circumstances of a child whose name is on the Child Protection Register.



## Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is an act that involves the child in any activity for the sexual gratification of another person, whether or not it is claimed that the child either consented or assented. Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or in watching sexual activities, using sexual language towards a child or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

## Significant Harm

Physical or mental injury or neglect which seriously affects the welfare or development of the child.

## Transfer Child Protection Conference

An inter-agency meeting which considers arrangements to transfer cases of a child whose name is on the Child Protection Register where the family moves to another area.



This leaflet has been produced by the Glasgow Child Protection Committee. The Child Protection Committee is made up of representatives from across the main statutory and voluntary organisations in your area. The purpose of the Child Protection Committee is to ensure local agencies work together to protect children. Working together with the community we can be assured that all our children are given the best possible chance in life.

This document is also available on the Glasgow Child Protection Committee website

[www.glasgowchildprotection.org.uk](http://www.glasgowchildprotection.org.uk)