

argyll & bute



# Understanding Child Protection

Self-Learning Pack 2011

Promoting Good Practice in Child Protection

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Argyll & Bute Child Protection Committee wish to acknowledge North Ayrshire CPC for the updated contents of this pack.

# INTRODUCTION

Argyll & Bute Child Protection Committee (CPC) has written this **Self-learning Pack – Understanding Child Protection** as an introduction to child protection for staff who do not routinely work directly with children and young people. This pack also provides a useful starting point to learning for staff and volunteers working with children, young people and/or in adult services who are waiting to attend child protection training.

This pack forms a key part of our training materials and offers essential information on child protection issues for those who either may not need to attend a training event or only require introductory level information. The pack includes the changes brought about in practice by the NEW National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland, launched December 2010.

This pack should always be treated as **FIRST STEP** information for those with an interest in this area and does not replace the need to take the further learning steps you may need. We recommend you attend **Level 1 – Child Protection Awareness Raising Training** as the next step after completion of this pack. Professionals, volunteers and members of local community groups can access our full Training Programme and find out how to apply for a place by visiting the Training section of the CPC website: [www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/abcpc](http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/abcpc)

## **What's involved in completing this pack?**

The materials are designed to enable you to recognise a child protection situation and understand your role in ensuring the continued protection of children and young people in Argyll & Bute.

Throughout the pack, activities are provided which are intended to offer an opportunity for practitioners / volunteers and their managers /group leaders to reflect on the learning achieved, and identify future learning needs. On completion, practitioners will have sufficient understanding in child protection to get started, and will be well placed to build on this knowledge by attending CPC training or other available development opportunities.

**Thank you and good luck!**

# AIMS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

## **This Pack is suitable as a first step for**

Those working within Argyll & Bute including Social Services, NHS Highland, Strathclyde Police, Educational Services, Housing Services, Voluntary Organisations, Community Groups and all other organisations with a role in the protection of children and young people. This includes those working in Adult Services.

## **And will provide:**

- An introduction to child protection and
- An opportunity to explore your role in the protection of children and young people.

## **On completion you will have:**

- Examined child abuse in the context of your work
- Increased your knowledge about how to recognise and respond to child protection issues
- Explored the child protection process in Argyll & Bute
- An awareness of your own agency child protection procedures
- An understanding of child protection issues and be aware of further training opportunities
- Have identified your own further learning needs in child Protection

## **On completion of the pack, you will have located and read:**

- West of Scotland Interagency Child Protection Procedures
- Your own agency child protection procedures and relevant documentation used for recording and referring cases where there is concern that a child or young person may have been harmed or may be at risk of harm.

# EXERCISE 1

**Please take time to complete**

**Your local Social Work Service Centre  
Children & Families Team**

Telephone No: \_\_\_\_\_

**Strathclyde Police**

Telephone No: \_\_\_\_\_

**Line Manager**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel No. \_\_\_\_\_

**Designated Child Protection lead officer, Co-ordinator or Advisor (*if different from line manager*)**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel No. \_\_\_\_\_

**Location of your organisations Child Protection Procedures:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Location of National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2010**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Location of West of Scotland Interagency Child Protection Procedures**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Argyll & Bute Child Protection Committee website address:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Social Work out of hours contact:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone No: \_\_\_\_\_

N.B. Refer to Appendix 4

# WHAT IS CHILD PROTECTION?

“Child Protection” means protecting a child from abuse or neglect. Abuse or neglect need not have taken place; it is sufficient for a risk assessment to have identified a *likelihood* or *risk* of significant harm from abuse or neglect. Equally, in instances where a child may have been abused or neglected but the risk of future abuse has not been identified, the child and their family may require support and recovery services but not a Child Protection Plan. In such cases, an investigation may still be necessary to determine whether a criminal investigation is needed. There are circumstances where, although abuse has taken place, formal child protection procedures are not required. Always discuss your concerns. Key services will make the appropriate decision based on information received.

## IDENTIFYING CHILD ABUSE

In order to protect children and young people from abuse, all those working around children and their families should have some understanding of child protection issues and be confident in the recognition of, and response to child abuse.

The following definitions form part of a whole host of Indicators of concern and help identify when child abuse has / or is likely to occur.

- **Physical abuse**
- **Emotional abuse**
- **Sexual abuse**
- **Neglect**

The above definitions are described in some detail below and you should take time to read these, and to familiarise yourself with signs that may concern you. It is also important to consider other indicators of risk such as Parental Drug & Alcohol Misuse, Domestic Abuse, Disability, Challenging Families, Mental Health Problems, Fabricated or Induced Illness, and any other concerns, in any assessment.

### ***Physical Abuse***

Physical abuse is the causing of 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.

## ***Emotional Abuse***

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional neglect or ill treatment that has **severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's emotional development**. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may involve the imposition of age or developmentally inappropriate expectations on a child. It may involve causing children to feel frightened or in danger, or exploiting or corrupting children. Some levels of emotional abuse are present in all types of ill treatment of a child; it can also occur independently of other forms of abuse.

## ***Sexual Abuse***

Sexual abuse is any act that involves the child in any activity for the sexual gratification of another person, whether or not it is claimed the child consented or assented. Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware what is happening. The activities may include 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 a sexually inappropriate ways.

## ***Neglect***

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical 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.

# CHILD ABUSE: RECOGNITION AND RESPONSE

If you have any concern about a child or young person, it is important that you share this information with the relevant people. **Appendix 1** provides a useful summary of the roles and responsibilities of each agency in the protection of children and young people.

## Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is the causing of physical harm to a child or young person. Physical abuse may occur from an actual attack to a child or an adult's deliberate failure to protect them from injury or suffering. Accompanied by neglect, physical abuse is the most common form of maltreatment of children and is the most common cause of child death from abuse.

- A child may be hit, punched, kicked or bitten
- Shaking a child is extremely dangerous and potentially fatal, babies are particularly at risk
- A child may be burned or deliberately scalded
- A child may be squeezed with violence or attempted suffocation
- Deliberate poisoning (household substances, alcohol, drugs or medicines)
- Shut in cupboards / Confined in small places
- Tied or strapped down

### Signs that should concern you:

- Unexplained Injuries (bruising, bruised eyes, fractured or broken bones, burn or bite marks)
- Perplexing illnesses
- Continuous "accidents"
- An unlikely (or no) explanation for an injury
- A continual pattern of accidents or injuries
- A child may be reluctant to change for physical activities at school etc.

### Behavioral indicators Include:

- A child who is very reluctant to return home
- A child who appears withdrawn / in pain or discomfort
- A child who is resistant to going home with one family member
- Self harm, self destructiveness
- Persistent aggression and violent play

## **Emotional Abuse**

All children and young people who are abused are affected emotionally and all types of child abuse are harmful. Emotional abuse is a persistent emotional neglect or ill treatment that has severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's emotional development.

- Children may be verbally abused – told they are stupid, useless, ugly or should never have been born
- Subjected to continuous criticism or faced with unrealistically high expectations
- Their interests and achievements may be ridiculed or compared unfavourably
- Affection given by parents is dependant on the child's behaviour or achievements
- Children may be overprotected to an unrealistic extent
- Communication with the child may be distorted so that the adult uses his/her maturity inappropriately to make the child feel guilty
- Children may have their toys withdrawn, denied or sold by parents/carers as a punishment
- Children may be emotionally damaged by experiences of domestic abuse

### **Signs that should concern you about a child or young person:**

- Child is developmentally delayed
- Child indicates through the use of words and body language that they think they are worthless, stupid or unattractive
- Children expect blame and punishment (or blame themselves)
- Children may harm themselves
- Children may find it difficult to make friends and see themselves as not being likeable
- Children may be mistrusting of adults
- Low self esteem
- Sudden speech and language difficulties
- Significant decline in concentration
- Head banging or rocking
- Compulsive stealing (from parents/carers/teachers)
- Extremes of passivity or aggression
- Running away
- Indiscriminate friendliness

## **Neglect**

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs. Often difficult to assess in practice, some recent child death inquiry reports have highlighted the consequences of neglect on children and this, alongside an apparent increase in neglected children has brought about a renewed focus on neglect.

- Inadequate food – leading to children and young people being malnourished
- Inadequate clothing (for time of year; shoes too tight; ill fitting clothing; dirty and unwashed clothing)
- Neglect of children's basic physical needs (dirty, smelly, unkempt)
- Leaving young children unattended.

### **Signs that should concern you:**

- Child / young person may be too thin
- Child / young person may be tired and lethargic
- Child / young person may arrive at your workplace desperate for food/constantly hungry, eating large amounts
- Child / young person may be regularly dressed inappropriately for the weather
- Clothes may be dirty, smelly or soiled
- Parents may not bring the child on a regular basis
- Frequent lateness and/or unexplained non-attendance at school
- Child / young person may have untreated medical conditions or infections
- Low self esteem
- Ask: are all the children in the family neglected or is it only one child/ young person?

## **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse is any act that involves the child in any activity for the sexual gratification of another person, whether or not it is claimed the child consented or assented. It can include:

- Penetrative or non-penetrative acts
- Sexual fondling
- Masturbation
- Sexual Exhibitionism
- Non contact activities, such as watching pornographic material
- Pornographic Images
- Grooming (including grooming via the internet)

## **Signs that should concern you:**

As with any kind of child abuse, there is no definite list of signs of sexual abuse. The following are not in themselves absolute evidence of sexual abuse. Concerns must be placed within an understanding of the normal range of children's development:

- Highly sexualised behaviour, rather than affectionate physical contact
- Abused children may express their worries and experiences through play
- Sexually explicit paintings or drawings
- Sexual knowledge or curiosity (unlikely for their age)
- Children can tell you unhappy secrets or games that they are uneasy about
- Regression in development
- Self harm
- A child not wishing to go with a certain adult or be looked after by a certain person (i.e. Babysitter)

## **Physical Signs:**

- Pain, itching or redness in the genital or anal area
- Bruising, bleeding or soreness in any orifice

## **A note about Child Sex Offenders**

- Abusers may be extremely frightening and threaten to hurt the child or someone they care about
- Abusers may claim that nobody will believe the child if they tell (and may threaten the child with this)
- Some abusers will attempt to bribe children with presents, treats or money
- Some abusers work to convince children that what they are doing is a normal and acceptable activity within the family or between friends
- Abusers come from all classes, professions, racial and religious backgrounds and can be anyone – family members, neighbours, friends, doctors, community group helpers, even professional colleagues
- Most known abusers are men, but some women sexually abuse their own or other children
- Young people also abuse children. About one third of reported cases involve young people

# WHAT IS SIGNIFICANT HARM IN CHILD PROTECTION?

Child Protection is closely linked to “significant harm”. It is a complex matter and subject to professional judgement based on multi-agency assessment of the circumstances of the child and their family. Where there are concerns about harm, abuse or neglect, these must be shared with the relevant agencies so that they can decide together whether the harm is, or is likely to be, significant.

Significant harm can result from a specific incident, a series of incidents or an accumulation of concerns over a period of time. It is essential that when considering the presence or likelihood of significant harm that the impact (or potential impact) on the child takes priority. Key professionals will take a number of things into account when exercising their professional judgement. There are no absolute criteria for judging what constitutes significant harm, talking to other agencies and sharing / gathering information will be a priority.

## INFORMATION SHARING & CHILD PROTECTION

Sharing appropriate information is an essential component of child protection. To secure the best outcomes for children, practitioners need to understand when it is appropriate to seek or share information.

These general principles should apply:

- The safety, welfare and well-being of a child are of central importance when making decisions to lawfully share information with or about them.
- Children have a right to express their views and have them taken into account when decisions are made about what should happen to them.
- The reasons why information needs to be shared and particular actions taken should be communicated openly and honestly with children and, where appropriate, their families.
- In general, information will normally only be shared with the consent of the child (depending on age and maturity). However, where there are concerns that seeking consent would increase the risk to the child or others, or prejudice any subsequent investigation information may need to be shared **without consent**.
- At all times, information should be relevant, necessary and proportionate to the circumstances of the child, and limited to those who need to know.
- When information is shared, a record should be made of when it was shared, with whom, for what purpose, in what form and whether it was disclosed with or without informed consent.

## THE LEGAL POSITION

Article 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR) guarantees respect for a person's private and family life, his home and his correspondence. Disclosure of information would breach that right unless it is in accordance with the law, or necessary for the protection of an individual, or is in the public interest.

Disclosure of personal information is governed by the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA). Personal data covers both facts and opinions about a living individual, which might identify that person. Purpose - This prevents unauthorised disclosure of a wide range of information.

## WHAT TO SAY TO FAMILIES WHEN SHARING INFORMATION WITHOUT CONSENT

When concerns about children's safety or welfare require a professional or agency to share confidential information without the person's consent, they should tell the person that they intend to do so, unless this may place the child, or others, at greater risk of harm. They should also tell them what information and to whom that information will be disclosed. Each agency should make clear to people using their service that the welfare and protection of children is the most important consideration when deciding whether or not to share information with others. No agency can guarantee absolute confidentiality as both statute and common law accept that information may be shared in some circumstances.

The full document **Data Sharing across the Highland Data Sharing Partnership: Procedures for Practitioners** (2008) is available to download from:

[http://www.forhighlandschildren.org/2-childprotection/publications\\_13\\_2070083751.pdf](http://www.forhighlandschildren.org/2-childprotection/publications_13_2070083751.pdf)

Argyll & Bute Child Protection Committee Information Sharing Guiding Principles are provided in appendix two

## EXERCISE 2

**My Agency child protection procedures are located:**

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I have read the child protection procedures in my workplace setting and / or have accessed the West of Scotland Procedures and relevant documents from the Argyll & Bute Child Protection Committee Website.

**Signed** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

It is important that anyone working with children and young people refers to their own agency child protection procedures (*or the information provided on our website*) whenever there is a concern that a child or young person has been harmed or may be at risk of being harmed.

If I am concerned or worried about a child or young person, I should be aware of whom I need to talk to and how to make a referral.

The designated child protection person in my organisation is:

---

Their contact details are:

---

I should also remember to:

- Record the actions you have taken as soon as practicable, signed and dated preferably within 24 hours.
- Follow a verbal referral with a written referral within 24 hours, to the relevant Social Services Team.
- Discuss with my line manager / designated child protection person

## DEALING WITH A CHILD PROTECTION CONCERN

It is important that practitioners recognise that children and young people are harmed or are at risk of harm from those people who are supposed to care for them. If you are concerned about a child but unsure whether they are being abused, simply discuss your concerns with the identified child protection person in your organisation.

If a child / young person tells you someone may have abused them;

### DO

Stay Calm  
Listen to the Child  
Keep questions to a minimum  
Reassure Child  
Record what the child has said in their own words

### DON'T

Ask too many questions  
Make false promises  
Express shock or anger  
Delay in passing on your concerns

### NEVER

Carry out an investigation into an allegation this is **NOT** your role.

## MAKING A REFERRAL

Once you have discussed your concerns with the designated child protection person in your organisation may decide to pass on your concerns to Social Services or the Police.

You will require share the following information:

- Child's name, address and date of birth
- Parent's address and current whereabouts
- Where the child is and their views where known
- Your details
- Your involvement with the child
- What are your concerns
- Details of alleged abuse
- Whether there are any other children in the household
- Whether the parents / carers are aware of your concerns

### REMEMBER

**YOU SHOULD ALWAYS REFER TO YOUR CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES!**

# THE CHILD PROTECTION PROCESS - A Quick Guide -

## **CHILD PROTECTION REFERRAL**

No further action / Joint Police & Social Work Investigation



## **INITIAL CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCE**

When there are significant concerns that a child may be / or is at risk of abuse



## **DECISION ON REGISTRATION**

The CP conference decides whether child (ren) should be placed on the child protection register and whether a referral to the Scottish Children's Reporter's Authority is required.



## **CHILD PROTECTION PLAN MULTI-AGENCY CORE GROUP**

Multi-agency intervention/support/protection plan



## **REGULAR CORE GROUPS**

A Review of the child protection plan to consider progress being made in protecting the child / young person



## **REVIEW CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCES**

A meeting to consider whether continued Registration is required



## **DE-REGISTRATION**

Ongoing support & services considered

N.B. Following a referral and an initial assessment, there will be a decision made about whether the Child Protection Process will proceed or not.

# The Child Protection Process explained...

## Child Protection Conference

A Child Protection Conference is a multi-agency meeting where information relevant to concerns about abuse, or risk of abuse, is shared and considered, and decisions are made regarding the future protection of children. The roles and tasks of key agency personnel are clarified at a Child Protection Case Conference. A Child Protection Case Conference will be arranged, where it appears there may be risks to child(ren) within a household and there is a need to share and assess information and if it is felt that a child or young person would benefit from an inter-agency **Child Protection Plan** that addresses the risk of significant harm.

## Child Protection Plan

When the conference decides to place a child's name on the **Child Protection Register**, a plan must be agreed by the conference to reduce risk to the child and provide support to the family. This multi-agency plan is referred to as the Child Protection Plan.

## Child Protection Register

The Child Protection Register is the system in place for alerting professionals that there is sufficient concern about a child or young person to warrant an inter-agency **Child Protection Plan**. The local authority Social Work Service are responsible for maintaining a Register of all children who are the subject of an inter-agency Child Protection Plan, which provides a point of enquiry for professionals who are concerned about a child's well-being or safety. The multi-agency **Child Protection Conference** takes the decision of whether or not to place a child's name on the Child Protection Register.

A child's name will remain on the Child Protection Register until such times as the risk to the child or young person is significantly reduced. After the initial Child Protection Conference regular reviews will take place as required until such times as the child is removed from the Register.

## Core Group

Core Groups provide an important mechanism to ensure a co-ordinated approach to the protection of a child. A Core Group is set up in all cases where a decision has been reached to place a child on the Child Protection Register. The primary purpose of the group is the implementation of the **Child Protection Plan**. The purpose of the Core Group is to ensure that an identified multi-agency group of professionals working alongside the family, finely tune the Child Protection Plan, ensuring that the agreed tasks are being carried out, and to continuously review the risk to the child or young person. A child's name will remain on the Child Protection Register until such times as the risk to the child or young person is significantly reduced. After the initial Child Protection Conference regular reviews will take place as required until such times as the child is removed from the Register.

## EXERCISE 3

### Exploring your role

In relation to what you might be expected to do after making a child protection referral, take the opportunity to discuss the implications for you in relation to these tasks with your line manager or the person in your organization responsible for child protection.

#### **Please complete:**

**1. What will your role be in the child protection process?**

**2. What support might you need?**

**3. Do you need any training now?**

**4. What future learning needs may you have?**

N.B. A printable copy of the current Child Protection Training Programme is available from the Training Page of our website;

[www.aryll-bute.gov.uk/abcpc](http://www.aryll-bute.gov.uk/abcpc)

## EXERCISE 4

### Continued Professional Development

You should now have read and completed the exercises within this pack. With your line manager or person with responsibility for child protection within your organisation, please complete the following.

**I have had the opportunity to read this pack and its appendices.**

Signed

---

Date

---

**I have had the opportunity to discuss the implications of this with my line manager or person with child protection responsibility.**

Signed

---

Date

---

We have agreed what my future learning needs in child protection are and these will be met by:

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**Congratulations - Please now print your certificate!**



**Self – Learning Certificate**  
Understanding Child Protection

## **Congratulations**

Now you have worked through the information in this pack and completed all the exercises you can request a certificate from the Child Protection Committee.

The certificate can be either posted or emailed to you. It acknowledges that you have worked through this pack as a first step to learning about child protection, and can be added to your professional development or learning portfolio.

To receive your certificate please email or phone Scott MacDonald on [scott.macdonald2@argyll-bute.gov.uk](mailto:scott.macdonald2@argyll-bute.gov.uk) or 01546 604167 giving you name, and the name of you line manager.

# Appendix I

## Roles and Responsibilities of Agencies involved in Child Protection

All agencies working with children and young people have a shared responsibility for protecting children and young people and safeguarding their welfare. Local authorities have a specific legal duty in terms of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in need in their area. This welfare responsibility is carried out by the local authority department with responsibility for social services. Those bodies responsible for education, health, the police and other agencies with a role in providing children's services also have significant responsibilities for the protection of children and young people. *The NEW National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2010* provides guidance on how agencies and professionals should work together to protect children and young people from abuse and neglect, and to safeguard and promote their welfare. The duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people in need falls upon the local authority as a whole and embraces social work services, education, housing and any other relevant services required to safeguard and promote the welfare of such children and young people.

The roles and responsibilities of agencies in touch with parents and children to promote children's welfare and protection are set out in national guidance on inter-agency co-operation in child protection, and on implementation of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. Agencies working with vulnerable families either directly or indirectly including Adult Services, should be familiar with this guidance.

It's everyone's job to play their part in gathering and sharing of information and to take responsibility for the welfare and safety of vulnerable children. However, the danger of it being everyone's responsibility is that it may in practice become no one's. It is therefore important to identify roles and responsibilities of agencies and individuals that are implicit and explicit in these protocols.

Professionals must always consider these key points

- Children and young people's welfare and safety must be the paramount consideration when decisions are made about them
- Children and young people have the right to safety, stability and security of care
- Children and young people have a right to express their views and for their views to be taken into account when decisions are made about them
- Children and young people have a right to express concerns in confidence in so far as their safety and that of others is not compromised
- Sexual exploitation of children through prostitution is abuse.
- Children and young people cannot consent to their own abuse and exploitation

- Children and young people have the right to be protected from abuse and exploitation.
- Agencies should work in partnership with children and young people
- Agencies should work in partnership with parents/carers
- Agencies should work in collaboration to protect and support children and young people
- It is important to recognise the responsibilities of those with parental duties for children and young people including local authorities where they are acting in *loco parentis*

## **Social Services**

Social Services are committed to the principle of promoting a child's right to be brought up in a safe and loving environment by their family. The welfare and safety of the child, however, is the paramount consideration. Social Services will always take seriously any information received regarding the welfare of a child. Action taken will be informed and sympathetic, and in the best interests of the child. In all aspects of child protection the Social Work Service is committed to working closely with other agencies.

## **Police**

Strathclyde Public Protection Unit within Strathclyde Police has a role to work jointly with key agencies to ensure that all investigations are carried out in a sensitive, sympathetic and child centred manner. A co-ordinated response will be based on consultation and information sharing, and, where necessary, will involve joint interviews by a Police Officer and a Social Worker as part of a multi-agency assessment.

In the majority of cases of child abuse, a criminal offence may have been committed. The Police have a statutory duty to investigate the circumstances and, where evidence of a crime exists, to report the facts to the Procurator Fiscal. Police involvement does not automatically result in an alleged offender being prosecuted. The Police have a duty to pass on information to the Children's Reporter (SCRA) regarding children and young people who are found to be vulnerable, whether or not there are grounds for criminal prosecution.

## **Scottish Children's Reporters Administration (SCRA)**

Under Section 56 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, the Children's Reporter is required to investigate referrals received. In child abuse cases, most referrals are received from the Social Services or the Police, but may originate from other sources, e.g. Schools, Health staff and members of the public. On receipt of a referral, the Children's Reporter will investigate the facts to establish whether these are sufficient to frame grounds of referral for consideration by a Children's Hearing. This involves requesting reports on incidents and/or taking statements from witnesses in order to gather evidence on the abuse, whether physical (involving an injury or neglect), sexual or emotional. Witnesses,

including for example, doctors and health visitors, may be required to give evidence relating to the child abuse.

Where there is sufficient evidence, the Children's Reporter will decide whether compulsory measures of supervision are required and a Hearing is necessary, or whether voluntary supervision, a warning or advice is required.

## **Education**

Educational Services has a role within child protection to identify children and young people who may be victims of abuse. In this role school staff need to be aware of signs and symptoms of abuse. They should observe carefully the behaviour and demeanour of children and young people and, when approached, take time to listen. Any concern or suspicions the teacher might have, no matter how trivial they may seem at the time, should be recorded on their child protection referral form, in consultation with the identified Child Protection Co-ordinator for the school. Where a specific concern is noted as a child protection issue the designated Child Protection Coordinator, using their own agencies child protection procedures, will take the appropriate action, e.g. contact with the Social Work Service or Police.

## **NHS Highland**

NHS Highland are committed to promoting and protecting the health and welfare of all children and young people in Argyll & Bute. Where a specific child protection concern is noted staff will, using their own agencies child protection procedures, contact the designated Child Protection Advisor and will then take the appropriate action, e.g. contact with the Social Services or Police.

## **Housing**

Housing & Homelessness Services have a responsibility to house children and young people. Housing applicants with children and young people may be given priority because of their potential vulnerability, and will be given priority when fleeing domestic violence. Other priorities include young people over the age of 16 for whom the Council has a duty of care and who may need accommodation and support to maintain their tenancy.

Housing staff therefore have a clear responsibility in relation to child protection and should be familiar both with these guidelines and their own child protection procedures for reporting concerns when these arise.

## **Community Groups**

All Community groups staff and volunteers who are employed in a child care position provide a wide range of services and therefore have regular direct contact with children and young people of all ages up to 18 years. Staff are committed to safeguarding and promoting the interests and well being of children and young people with whom they work. Staff will take all reasonable steps to protect children and young people from harm and abuse, and will respect their rights at all times.

All community groups have a responsibility to protect children from harm or abuse and will refer to their own procedures when dealing with concern.

## **Voluntary Organisations**

The voluntary sector in Argyll & Bute plays an important role in supporting children and young people and families.

In the interests of protecting children and young people, each voluntary organisation will have a clear Child Protection Policy detailing its procedures. If an organisation has a concern in relation to the safety or well-being of a child they will always contact social services to share their concern.

## **Local Communities**

The community as a whole has responsibility for the well being of children and young. Members of the public should remain alert to circumstances in which children and young people may be harmed. Individuals can assist the statutory agencies by bringing cases to their attention. Relatives, friends and neighbours of children and young are particularly well placed to do so, but they must know what to do if they are concerned.

Because of the difficult and sensitive nature of the situation, people must be confident that any information they provide will be treated in a sensitive way and used only to protect the interest of the child. They should know that early action on their part is often the best way of helping a family stay together as well as protecting the child.

Contact numbers for those with a concern are listed in **Appendix 4**

# Appendix 2



**The Argyll and Bute Child Protection Committee believes that the effective and timely sharing of information is essential to the protection of children.**

## Information Sharing – Guiding Principles

1. Where there is an immediate and serious child protection concern the presumption is that professionals and agencies will share information, and have the legal authority to do so.
2. Duty to share information, for the protection of children, takes precedence over other duties and over any duty of confidentiality to any child or adult insofar as such disclosures are required in terms of (1) above.
3. If you have concerns about the safety or protection of any child it is your duty to act on those concerns and share them with the appropriate authorities without delay.
4. Where assessments are being made, as to whether or not a child will be at risk of harm, professionals and agencies have a moral duty to share information to assist in that assessment insofar as such disclosures are required in terms of (1) above.
5. Where significant concerns have been identified as to the ongoing welfare or protection of a child, professionals and agencies have a duty to share information on an ongoing basis to contribute to the effective protection of the child.
6. Where any professional or agency holds information and is unclear whether or not to share it they must take advice from their agency.

## Guidance for good information sharing

When asking for information the person making the request will clearly explain

- Who they are
- What kind of information they need
- Why they need it
- What they intend to do with the information
- Who else will the information need to be shared with

In deciding whether to provide information, requested by another agency or professional the following should be considered and recorded;

- Authenticating that the person is who they claim to be and whether they have a legitimate right to request the information and on what basis
- Whether you have any relevant information to share
- Whether that information is already in the public domain, or could be better provided by another professional, agency or by the parents themselves
- What information the service user has already given consent to be shared
- The risk to a child which could warrant breaking confidentiality
- How much information needs to be shared to achieve the purpose of contributing to the protection of a child.
- All decisions to disclose will be fully recorded and written confirmation sent to party requesting the information.



# Minimum Standards

## Statement of Minimum Practice Standards

**All services and agencies within the Argyll and Bute authority area undertake to carry out any work relating to the protection of children to the following minimum practice standards:**

- All staff who work with children will be familiar with child protection procedures and will be able to access quality training opportunities to increase their professional skills.
- All concerns regarding the welfare of a child will be accurately recorded, fully considered and acted upon without delay.
- Services and agencies will share all relevant information to ensure that all children in need of protection receive the support they need when they need it.
- Child protection investigations will be carried out with the minimum necessary duplication and intrusion.
- The views of all children who are the subject to child protection procedures will be actively sought, considered and recorded.
- Every service making a formal child protection referral must confirm it in writing.
- Written feedback will be given on the progress of the referral from the receiving service.
- All children and families and carers will be kept informed of the progress of an investigation and informed of the outcome.
- All children will be offered the support they need no matter where they live.
- All children on the child protection register will have a protection plan which outlines how their short and long-term needs will be met.
- Social work and health services and the police will always contribute to a child protection conference.
- Appropriate agency checks will always be undertaken when children are placed with other adults including members of the extended family.

**These overarching standards are intended to complement existing individual service or agency practice standards. The application of these and other standards will ensure that every child in need of protection in Argyll & Bute will receive the highest quality service available.**

**Where to go for Advice**

**[www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/abcpc](http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/abcpc)**

# Appendix 4

## IMPORTANT CONTACTS AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS

### **National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2010:**

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/12/09134441/0>

### **West of Scotland Interagency Child Protection Procedures**

<http://www.reconstruct.co.uk/procedures/westofscotland>

*Please note this is a web based document and cannot be printed*

### **Social Services:**

Bute Social Work Office 01700 501300

Cowal Social Work Office 01369 707300

Oban Social Work Office 01631 563063

Lochgilphead Social Work Office 01546 462462

Helensburgh Social Work Office 01436 658750

Campbeltown Social Work Office 01586 559050

Islay and Jura Social Work Office 01496 301350

**Strathclyde Police:** 01389 822000 (all calls to Strathclyde Police go through a central contact centre)

**Scottish Children's Reporter's Administration:** 0300 2002217

**NHS Child Protection Advisor:** 07901510199 or 07771937403

**ChildLine:** 0800 1111

**ParentLine:** 0808 800 2222

**Child Protection Helpline:** 0800 022 3222

**Argyll & Bute Women's Aid:** 0870 241 3548

**Out of Hours Social Work Stand-by Service:** 0800 811 505

**Argyll & Bute Child Protection Committee Interagency Training:** 01546 604167