



North Ayrshire Child Protection Committee

# Understanding Child Protection

## Self-learning Pack

Promoting Good Practice in Child Protection



*Care Protection Commitment to North Ayrshire's Children*

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# Introduction

North Ayrshire Child Protection Committee offers this pack as a learning opportunity to ensure staff / volunteers working with children and young people have as a minimum, a foundation knowledge of child protection. This new **Self-learning Pack – Understanding Child Protection** has now been added to our training materials in 2008, and offers essential information on child protection issues for those who may not need to attend a training event, only require foundation level information, or are waiting to start their training with us.

It should always be treated as **FIRST STEP** information for those with an interest in this area and does not replace the need to take further learning steps as required. Professionals, volunteers and members of local community groups can access our full Training Programme and find out how to apply for a place from our wide range of other courses by visiting the Training section of our website. **Level 1 – Child Protection Awareness** is recommended as the next step after completion of this pack.

## What's involved in completing this?

The materials are designed to enable staff to recognise important aspects of the child protection process and understand their role in ensuring the continued protection of the children and young people that they work with in North Ayrshire.

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 foundation knowledge in child protection to get started, and will be well placed to derive maximum opportunity from CPC training and development opportunities available.

North Ayrshire Child Protection Committee would wish to acknowledge the support of Fife Child Protection Committee & Argyll and Bute Child Protection Committee who are responsible for much of the content of the pack.

## *Caren McLean*

Child Protection Training & Development Co-ordinator – North Ayrshire Child Protection Committee

# Aims and Learning Outcomes

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

Staff / volunteers within North Ayrshire including Social Services, NHS Ayrshire & Arran, Strathclyde Police, Educational Services, Housing Services, Voluntary Organisations, Community Groups and all other organisations working with North Ayrshire's Children & Young People.

## **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 North Ayrshire
- An awareness of your own agency child protection procedures
- A foundation knowledge of child protection 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:**

- North Ayrshire Inter-Agency Child Protection Procedures and /or
- Information for Service providers Booklet
- 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 Services Reception Services Office /  
Children & Families Team**

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

**Strathclyde Police contact (Public Protection Unit)**

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

**Line Manager/Designated Child  
Protection Co-ordinator**

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

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

**Child Protection Advisor (Health)**

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

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

**Location of own agency Child Protection Procedures:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Location of North Ayrshire Child Protection Inter-Agency  
Procedures:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**North Ayrshire Child Protection Committee web address:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Out of hours contact:**

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

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

N.B. Refer to Appendix 2

# 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.

Child Abuse is classified under the following five categories in Scotland:

- **Physical abuse**
- **Sexual abuse**
- **Emotional abuse**
- **Physical neglect**
- **Failure to thrive**



Each of these categories is described in some detail below and you should take time to read these, and to familiarise yourself with signs that may concern you in the following section. Child Protection relates to children who suffer abuse at the hands of their parents / carers or someone living in their family.

## ***Physical Abuse***

Actual or attempted physical injury to a child - Where there is definite knowledge, or reasonable suspicion, that the injury was inflicted or knowingly not prevented.

Physical Injury may include a serious incident or a series of minor incidents involving bruising, fractures, scratches, burns or scalds, poisoning, attempted drowning or smothering, induced and fabricated illness and / or serious risk of actual injuries from a deliberate act of harm.

## ***Sexual Abuse***

Any child may be deemed to have been sexually abused when any person(s), by design or neglect, exploits the child, directly or indirectly, in any activity intended to lead to the sexual arousal or other forms of gratification of that person or any other person(s) including networks. This definition holds whether or not there has been genital contact and whether or not the child is said to have initiated the behaviour.

Activities involving sexual exploitation, particularly between young people, may be indicated by the presence of one or more of the following characteristics – lack of consent; inequalities in terms of chronological age, developmental stage or size; actual or threatened coercion.

## ***Emotional Abuse***

Failure to provide for the child's basic emotional needs such as to have a severe affect on the behaviour and development of the child.

This may include situations where, as a result of persistent behaviour by the parent(s) or care giver(s), children are rejected, denigrated or made scapegoats; inappropriately punished; denied opportunities for exploration, play and socialisation appropriate to their stage of development or encouraged to engage in anti-social behaviour; put in a state of terror or extreme anxiety by the use of threats or practices designed to intimidate them; isolated from social experiences, preventing the child or other family members from forming friendships.

Children who are left on their own for long periods, are under stimulated or suffer sensory deprivation, especially in infancy; who do not experience adequate nurturing or who are subject to a large number of care givers, may also come into this category.

Sustained or repeated abuse of this type is likely, in the longer term, to result in failures or disruptions of development of personality, inability to form secure relationships and may additionally have an effect on intellectual development and emotional attainment.

## ***Physical Neglect***

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 can result 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 development needs or which jeopardises the child's health.

## ***Failure to Thrive***

Children who significantly fail to reach normal growth and developmental milestones, (i.e. physical growth, weight, motor, social and intellectual development) where physical and genetic reasons have been medically eliminated and a diagnosis of non-organic failure to thrive has been established.

Factors affecting a diagnosis may include inappropriate relationships between the care giver(s) and child, especially at meal times, for instance the persistent withholding of food as punishment and the sufficiency and/or suitability of the food for the child. In its chronic form, non-organic failure to thrive can result in greater susceptibility to more serious childhood illnesses, reduction in potential stature, and with young children particularly, the results may be life threatening over a relatively short period.



# 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 actual or likely physical injury to a child / 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.

### Behavioural 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 pattern of deliberate uncaring or emotionally cruel treatment of a child.

- 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

## **Physical Neglect**

Neglect is the failure to care for a child. 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 defined as the actual or likely sexual exploitation of a child or adolescent who is dependent or developmentally immature. Sexual Abuse leads to the sexual gratification of adults and includes:

- Full sexual intercourse
- Sexual Fondling
- Masturbation
- Oral and Anal Sex
- Sexual Exhibitionism
- 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 from young children, rather than affectionate physical contact
- Abused children may express their worries and experiences through play (with dolls or small figures)
- Sexually explicit paintings or drawings
- Children masturbating regularly
- 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 or bleeding in the genital or anal area



## 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

## Information Sharing & Child Protection

In November 2002 the Scottish Executive published *It's Everyone's Job to Make Sure I'm Alright*, the report of a national audit and review of child protection practice in Scotland. In common with other reviews of public services to support child welfare and protection, the report concluded that some children experience very serious levels of hurt and harm and live in conditions and under threats that are not tolerable in a civilised society.

The report highlighted problems for agencies and professionals in getting the right information at the right time to enable them to support and protect children effectively. In particular, insufficient use was made of inter-agency information, especially information from health and education services. The report recommended that professionals be aware of their responsibilities towards the care and protection of children and that where children are at risk of abuse and neglect, information must be shared promptly with other relevant agencies.

Decisions about when to involve other agencies, when to break confidentiality, and when to refer to the Children's Reporter, are difficult and complex. Various factors will come into play, such as the age of the child(ren), the degree of risk the child faces and support available to the family.

This short guide produced gives advice to agencies about when it is necessary to share personal and confidential information about people using their service with other professionals, to safeguard and protect the welfare of children who may be vulnerable or at risk. It is designed to help staff approach this complex area with greater clarity and confidence.

### The Legal Position

All professionals and agencies are required to keep confidential information given to them during the course of their work. Information given to professionals by their patient, client or service user should not be shared with others without the person's permission, unless the safety of the person or other vulnerable people may otherwise be put at risk.

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.

## Parents & Children

Parents and children may be reluctant for information about them to be shared with other professionals, particularly where there are concerns about the child(ren)'s welfare or safety. Parents may fear that they will be denied help, disadvantaged, stigmatised or blamed if other professionals or agencies are given any information about them. This may have been their experience in the past. They may also fear investigation by the police or child protection agencies making enquiries. Contact with these agencies may be stressful even if there is no cause for concern. In most circumstances users of services can rely on confidentiality as their guiding principle. But there are important exceptions to this.

If there is reasonable concern that a child may be at risk of harm this will always override a professional or agency requirement to keep information confidential. All professionals and service providers have a responsibility to act to make sure that a child whose safety or welfare may be at risk is protected from harm. They should always tell parents this.

## Confidentiality

Confidentiality is an important factor in enabling service users to engage confidently and honestly with agencies. All agencies should respect the need for other professionals and agencies to protect their relationship with their primary client and support the requirement to maintain confidentiality as far as possible. Sometimes professionals will need to share specific information with staff in their agency or other professionals in order to provide treatment or other forms of help. In most cases sharing this information should be based on informed consent by the patient or client. Where it is necessary to obtain informed consent, this should be obtained before sharing information.

If there are worries about a child's care, development or welfare, professionals in touch with the family must co-operate to enable proper assessment of the child's circumstances, provide any support needed and take action to reduce risk to the child. This will normally require them to share relevant information.

## What kind of information?

Agencies working with adults, families, children and young people will gather a great deal of information of different kinds. Not all information gathered or held by a professional or agency will be confidential although all personal health information is 'sensitive' under the Data Protection Act.

- Information may be held by several different agencies - a family's address, family members' dates of birth, who lives in a household, details of children's schooling, a child's status on the Child Protection Register.
- Information may be held by one agency - previous convictions (stored by the police and Disclosure Scotland), or details of response to a period of supervision under a probation order, amounts of drugs prescribed to a parent during a drug withdrawal programme, details of injuries to a child, or allegations of assault.
- Information may be in the public domain - examples include court appearances or criminal convictions reported in the local paper, names and addresses on the electoral roll.

- Other agencies may ask for a professional assessment or opinion to help them decide how they may help a child or family.

## Asking for and giving information

When any professional or agency approaches another to ask for information they should be able to explain:

- what kind of information they need;
- why they need it;
- what they will do with the information; and
- who else may need to be informed, if concerns about a child persist.

It is not helpful to contact another professional and ask for everything they know about a family, because you are worried about a child. If staff are not sure what kind of information the other agency may have or what they might need to know, they should explain the task so that the other person may better understand how they may help.

## 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 *Information Sharing about Children at Risk – A Guide to Good Practice* (2003) is available in PDF format from the Scottish Government website: [www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk)



## 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 relevant documents from the North Ayrshire Child Protection Committee Website.

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

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It is important that anyone working with children and young people refers to their own agency child protection procedures (or if small organisation / community group - *Information for Service Providers Booklet* (from 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:

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I should also remember to:

- Record the actions you have taken as soon as practicable, time 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 staff / volunteers 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.

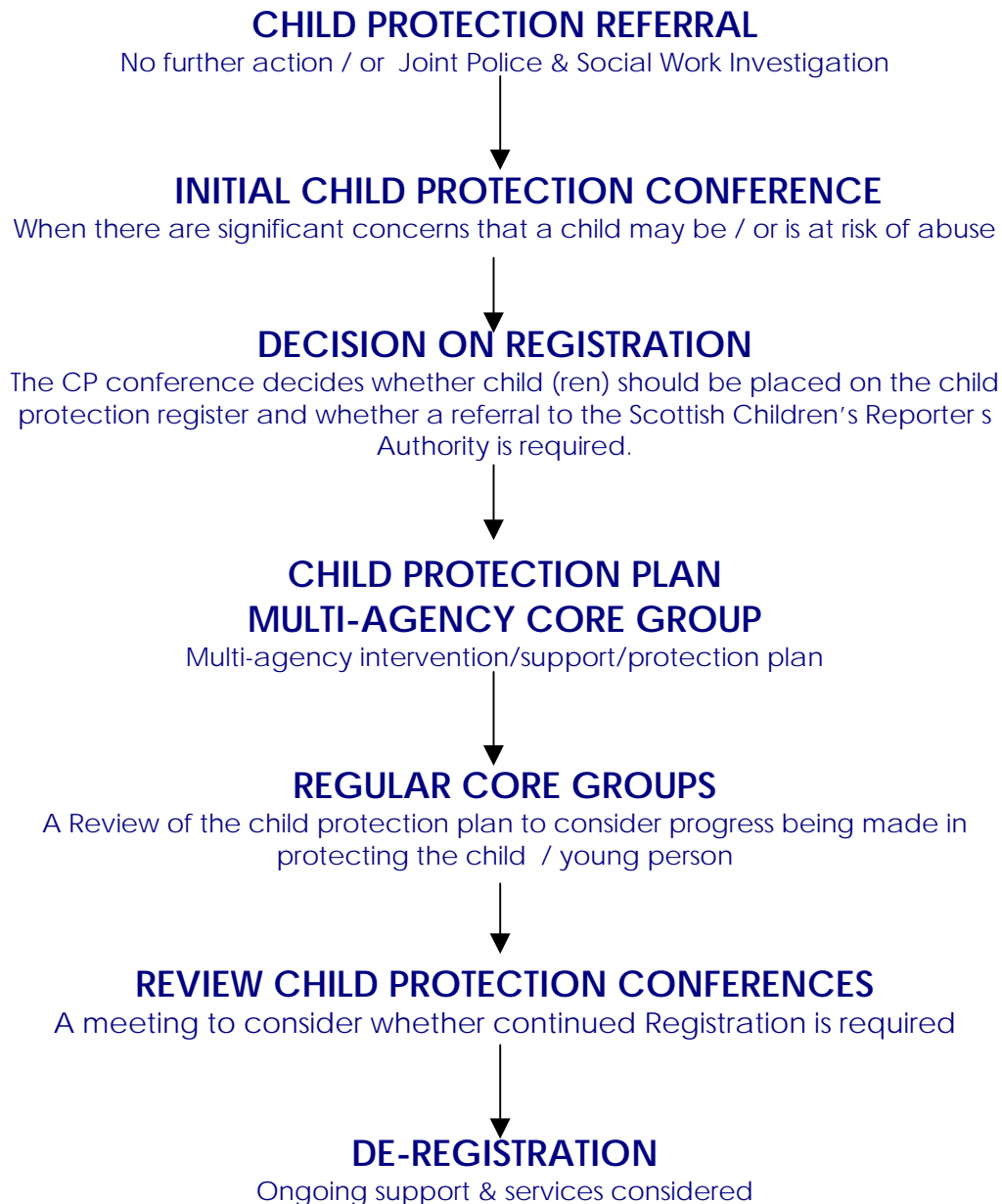
You will require to pass on the following information:

- 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 -



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**.

## 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 under established categories of physical abuse; emotional abuse; sexual abuse; neglect and failure to thrive.

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 Case Conference, the first review takes place three months later and subsequent review conferences take place at six monthly intervals, or earlier if considered necessary.

## 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.



## Exercise 4

# Continued Professional Development

You should now have read and completed the exercises within this pack.

Along 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

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Date

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**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

This is to certify that \_\_\_\_\_ (name)

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\_\_\_\_\_ has visited North Ayrshire Child Committee Website and completed the above named self –learning pack as a first step to learning about Child Protection in North Ayrshire.

Signed by \_\_\_\_\_ (group leader / line manager )

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Date \_\_\_\_\_

*Thank you for completing this pack  
Caren McLean  
Child Protection Training & Development Co-ordinator  
North Ayrshire Child Protection Development Team  
01294 835659*



### **NOTE TO THOSE READING CERTIFICATE:**

North Ayrshire Child Protection Committee offers this new **Self-learning Pack - Understanding Child Protection** to assist people learn about child protection issues. It is designed for those who may not need to attend a training session, or only require foundation level information, or are waiting to start their training with us.

[www.childprotectionnorthayrshire.info](http://www.childprotectionnorthayrshire.info)

## 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. *Protecting Children - A Shared Responsibility* 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 vulnerable families 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 should 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**

The Ayrshire Public Protection Unit within Strathclyde Police 'U' Division 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 Co-ordinator, using their own agencies child protection procedures, will take the appropriate action, e.g. contact with the Social Work Service or Police.

## NHS Ayrshire & Arran

Staff within NHS Ayrshire & Arran are committed to promoting and protecting the health and welfare of all children and young people in North Ayrshire. 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

North Ayrshire Council's Housing 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 or may refer to the document "*Protecting Children in Community Groups*" available from the North Ayrshire Child Protection Committee website.

## Voluntary Organisations

The voluntary sector in North Ayrshire 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

## 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 2**

## Appendix 2

### Important Contacts and Telephone Numbers

Social Services – Reception Services	Kilbirnie	01505 684551
	Irvine	01294 324800
	Saltcoats	01294 605261
	Arran	01770 600742
Strathclyde Police – Ayrshire Public Protection Unit		01563 505092
Scottish Children’s Reporter’s Administration		01294 278151
Child Protection Advisor (Health)		01294 322028
ChildLine		0800 1111
ParentLine		0808 800 2222
Child Protection Helpline		0800 022 3222
North Ayrshire Women’s Aid		01294 602424
Out of Hours Social Work Stand-by Service		0800 811 505
North Ayrshire Child Protection Development Team	For website and CP training information only	01294 835659



[www.childprotectionnorthayrshire.info](http://www.childprotectionnorthayrshire.info)