

Child Protection in Gateshead

Information for all childcare providers

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Introduction

This booklet has been produced to raise awareness of child protection and to provide an understanding of the procedures and guidelines in Gateshead.

Early years providers have a duty under section 40 of the Childcare Act 2006 to comply with the welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage 2017 (updated January 2021) which states that early years providers should ensure that:

- they are alert to any issues of concern in the child's life
- they have and implement a policy and procedures to safeguard children. This must include an explanation of the action to be taken when there are safeguarding concerns about a child and in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff. The policy must also cover the use of mobile phones and cameras in the setting, that staff complete safeguarding training that enables them to understand their safeguarding policies and procedures, have up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding issues, and recognise signs of potential abuse and neglect.
- they have a practitioner who is designated to take lead responsibility for safeguarding children within each early years setting and who must liaise with local statutory children's services as appropriate. This lead should also complete child protection training.

(HM Government: Working Together to Safeguard Children July 2018 p. 59)

Responsibility

Child protection responsibility

Local authorities have statutory social services functions in respect of children under the Children Act 1989 and 2004. In Gateshead this is carried out by the Children and Families section of Care, Wellbeing and Learning, who have a legal duty to investigate situations where there are concerns about a child's well-being and where a child may be being abused.

Philosophy and statement of policy

Every child has the right to an upbringing, which promotes his/her emotional, physical, social, intellectual and cultural well-being. Where possible, a child's needs are best met within their own family.

The purpose of the child protection agencies are to promote and safeguard the welfare of children who are thought to be at risk of abuse.

The overriding principle of the Children Act 1989 is that the welfare of the child is paramount.

What is abuse?

Abuse is where a child has a number of needs that have not been met, for example:

- Failure to meet the child's basic needs,
- Not keeping a child safe,
- Direct actions, physically hurting a child or sexually abusing a child.

Child abuse and neglect

Child abuse and neglect is a generic term encompassing all ill treatment of children, including serious physical and sexual assaults as well as cases where the standard of care does not adequately support the child's health or development.

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

Children may be abused in the family or an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children may be abused by an adult or adults or another child or children.

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) sets out definitions and examples of the four broad categories of abuse which are used for the identification of a child in need, or a child subject to a child protection plan:

Physical abuse

Emotional abuse

Sexual abuse

Neglect

These categories can overlap and an abused child can frequently suffer more than one type of abuse.

Physical Abuse

A form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Emotional Abuse

The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of

exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, although it may occur alone

Sexual Abuse

Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse. Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Neglect

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. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers); or
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Children with disabilities

It is difficult for most of us to accept that disabled children could be victimised physically and emotionally and become targets of systematic abuse. The evidence however is overwhelming. These children are often particularly vulnerable because:

- They may be used to invasive procedures being carried out on them and therefore sometimes do not differentiate between abuse and medical procedure.
- They may not have the language to explain an abusive situation.
- They may not be believed when they attempt to explain an abusive situation.
- There is a commonly held belief that disabled children are not abused, this could lead to denial or failure to report.
- Negative attitudes mean that disabled children can be vulnerable to abuse, bullying and especially intimidation

It is therefore important to remember these factors when caring for children with additional needs.

Rights of the child

We should first consider what are the basic needs and rights of a child.

The right to be fed

Children need at least the basic standard of nutrition so that they can grow and develop.

The Right to be safe

Children should be protected from dangers, including the home environment.

Children should be protected from physical and sexual abuse and clues that the child gives regarding this should not be ignored.

The Right to play

Children have a right to play.

The Right not to keep secrets and to refuse touches

Children should understand that some 'secrets' should never be kept. Child abusers often say that a touch or kiss is their 'secret'. This confuses a child who has been taught always to keep secrets.

Explain to children that they can say yes or no to touches or kisses from anyone. Children sometimes do not want to be kissed or hugged; their choice should be respected.

The Right not to talk to strangers

It is never a good idea to talk to a stranger. Most well-meaning adults do not approach children who are by themselves unless they are obviously lost or distressed, teach children to ignore such an approach. Children do not have to be rude, they can pretend not to hear and walk quickly or run away.

The Right to be protected from known people

Most children are abused by people they know, within their own family or by family friends. In child protection it is important not to assume that particular kinds of families are more or less likely to abuse their children. Each child and their family are individual.

The Right to be secure, valued and understood

A child needs love and encouragement to grow. They need to know their needs will be met, understood and not neglected.

The Right to be allowed to be a child

The child's parents and carers need to be flexible, have an understanding of the child and child development.

The Right to protect their own bodies

Children need to know that their body belongs to them, particularly the private parts covered by their swimsuits.

The Right to say "NO"

Most children are taught to listen and obey adults and older people without question. Tell children it is alright to say "no" to anyone that tries to harm them.

The Right to be taken seriously

When children go to an adult for help, they need to know they will be supported. A negative response/reaction may prevent the child from seeking help another time. Where concerns arise as a result of information given by a child, it is important to reassure the child but not to promise confidentiality.

The Right to tell

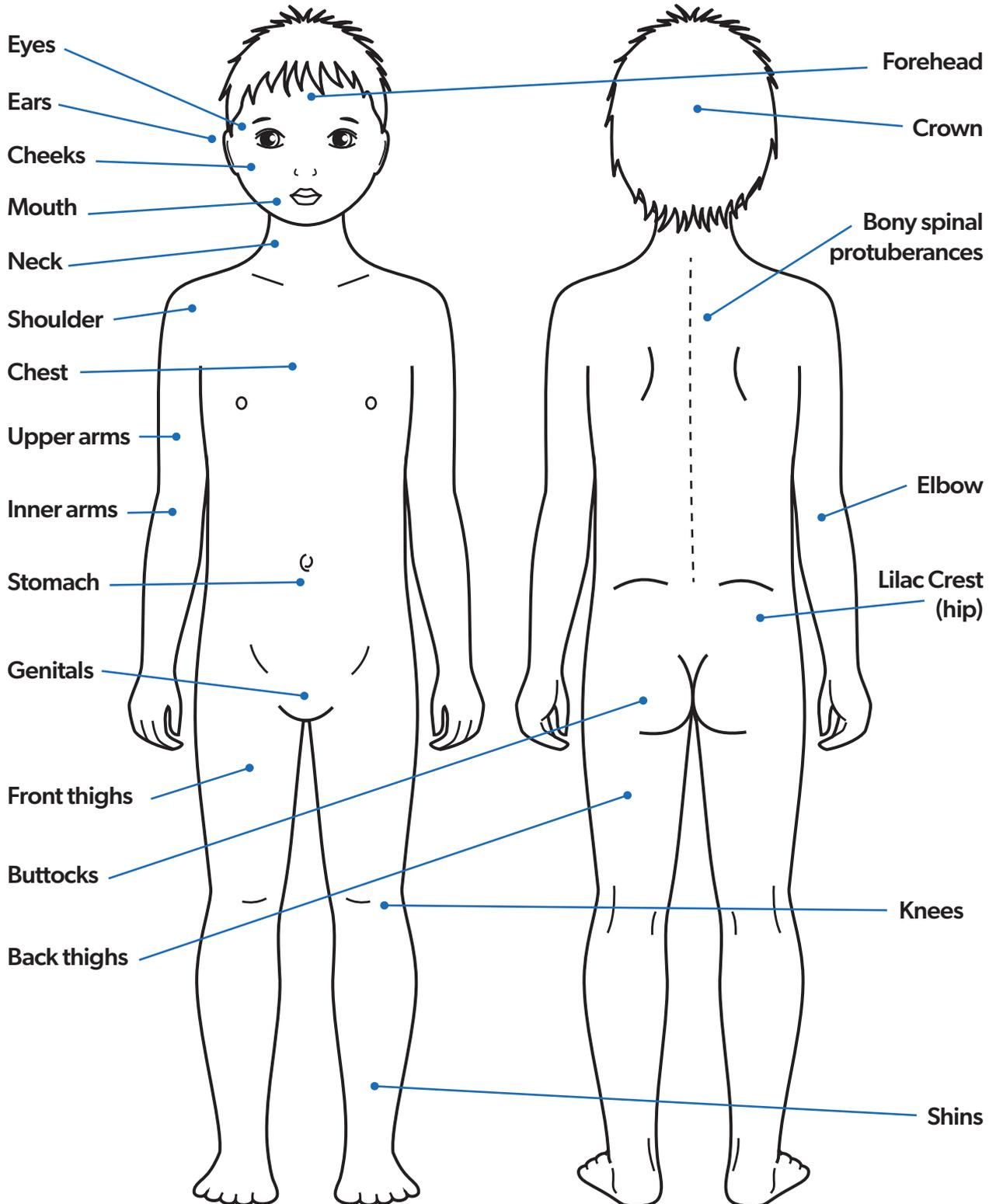
Assure the children you want them to tell you of anything that is worrying them and that no matter what happens you will not be angry with them. Children can be very protective of parents and may not tell you about a frightening experience because they are worried about your feelings towards their parents.

United Nations convention on the rights of the child www.unicef.org.uk

Body map

LESS COMMON sites for injury
(think non-accidental)

COMMON sites for
accidental injury



Working with children

Whilst working with children, carers learn a lot about the child's individual likes and dislikes, personality and needs. Children become very comfortable with their parents/carers and any changes in their behaviour can be quickly noticed. They may often act out a situation that is upsetting them, or they may tell you of an incident that causes you concern. Staff/carers should always listen to what the child is saying, whether it is verbal or non-verbal.

If there has been a disclosure, the staff/carer must not promise the child to keep the information a secret but explain that they need to share the concern with someone who will be able to help.

By having a good relationship and discussing this with the child's parents, these incidents can usually be accounted for e.g. changes in the family circumstances, illness, or addition to the family. However, where a child is at risk or the incident is of a serious nature, you will need to follow <https://www.gatesheadsafeguarding.org.uk/article/9179/Report-concerns-about-a-child>

In cases where there are reasonable grounds to believe that the child is at risk of serious harm, the necessary interagency discussions and referrals should proceed, even when parents are not in agreement. The parents should be fully informed beforehand of what action is being taken and reasons why, except when to inform and/or seek their agreement would place the child at further risk of significant harm or seriously jeopardise the safety of other children, the child's carers or others.

The Prevent Duty

From 1 July 2015, all schools, registered early years and childcare providers and registered later years childcare providers are subject to a duty under section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, in the exercise of their functions, to have "due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism". This duty is known as the Prevent Duty.

In order for schools and childcare providers to fulfil the Prevent Duty, it is essential that staff are able to identify children who may be vulnerable to radicalisation and know what to do when they are identified.

Working with parents

It is always important for carers to have a good working relationship with the parents. It is good practice and usually in the interests of children that wherever possible, agencies and parents should work together to safeguard and promote children's welfare but there will be times when this is not possible.

From the outset you should explain openly and honestly to children, young people and families what and how information will be shared and why. Their agreement should always be sought unless seeking permission would put the child or others at risk of significant harm or an adult at risk of serious harm or if it would undermine the prevention, detection or prosecution of a serious crime, including where seeking consent might lead to interference with any potential investigation.

The child's safety and welfare must always be the overriding consideration when making a decision on whether to share information.

Wherever possible, you should respect the wishes of children and families who do not consent to share information. You may, however, share information if, in your judgement on the facts of the case, there is a need to override the lack of consent.

There should be sensitivity towards the parent's wishes and an active respect for the child's family, including their culture and religion. Your common concern is the child. It is important that the parent is informed from the start on how you will care for their child and have regard for Gateshead Local Safeguarding Children's Board Child Protection Procedures.

<https://www.gatesheadsafeguarding.org.uk/article/9185/GSCP-Policies-procedures-and-guidance#info%20sharing>

Domestic violence and children

Domestic violence, child abuse and neglect

Domestic violence is a crime, which has serious consequences for its victims. It should not be regarded primarily as a relationship problem or as an emotional problem.

Prolonged and /or regular exposure to domestic violence can have a serious impact on a child's development and emotional wellbeing; despite the best efforts of the victim's parent to protect the child. Domestic violence has an impact in a number of ways. It can pose a threat to an unborn child, because assaults on pregnant woman frequently involve punches or kicks directed at the abdomen, risking injury to both mother and foetus. Older children may also suffer blows during episodes of violence. Children may be greatly distressed by witnessing the physical and emotional suffering of a parent. Both the physical assaults and psychological abuse suffered by adult victims who experience domestic violence can have a negative impact on their ability to look after their children.

Where there is evidence of domestic violence, the implications for any children in the household should be considered, including the possibility that the children themselves may have suffered or are likely to suffer violence or other harm.

Where it is believed that a child is being abused, the possibility that there may also be domestic violence should be considered.

Children and animals have one thing in common, both are easy to hurt. Where serious animal abuse has occurred in a household it may indicate an increased likelihood that some other form of violence is occurring and that children may be at risk of harm.

If a child is cruel to animals this may be an indicator, in some cases, that serious neglect and abuse have been inflicted on the child.

Child abuse on the internet

The internet has become a significant tool in the distribution of indecent photographs/pseudo photographs of children. Internet chat rooms, discussion forums and bulletin boards are used to contact children with a view to grooming them for abusive relationships. In addition, there is a growing concern about the exposure of children to inappropriate material through the internet. The exposure of children to abusive or inappropriate images can negatively impact on their health and development.

There is evidence that persons found in possession of indecent photographs/ pseudo photographs of children are likely to be involved directly in child abuse.

Child abuse on mobile phones/ electronic devices

Providers must have a policy in place which covers the use of mobile phones and electronic devices within the setting. These policies will be individual to the setting but must reflect current practice.

Practitioners need to ensure they are safeguarding themselves, as well as the children in their care when using any electronic devices or mobile phones.

In regard to visitors to the setting, it is the provider's responsibility to ensure that procedures are in place that are effective.

Rules and whistle blowing

All staff and childcare practitioners who work with children and families in all agencies and professions are required to address issues of risk to children as part of their professional responsibilities. This overall requirement should not be ignored or delegated inappropriately to other people

The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) role (https://www.proceduresonline.com/nesubregion/files/gateshead_what_is_a_lado.pdf) is to provide advice and guidance to employers and voluntary organisations, liaising with the police and other agencies. The senior manager should contact the LADO within one working day of receiving a complaint/allegation.

If any member of staff/carer has any concerns regarding the handling or safety of a child they should share that concern with their manager/senior, or they should be able to request time to speak in confidence to their manager/senior.

Speaking out or speaking up are other terms for whistle blowing.

There ought to be clear rules and guidance for childcare staff about what is expected around: sexual conduct; relationships of trust; what behaviours are not allowed and intimate care; providing safer care for children.

Providers must put appropriate arrangements in place for the supervision of staff. Supervision should foster a culture of mutual support, teamwork and continuous improvement which encourages the confidential discussion of sensitive issues.

Providers must ensure that all staff:

- receive induction training to help them understand their roles and responsibilities.
- have guidance and training about when and how to make a formal complaint, as part of their induction process.
- are offered regular individual supervision.
- are fully supported by management when raising concerns about misconduct.
- are made aware of their right to support from their management, should they speak out about their concerns.
- are aware that they can bypass their management and raise concerns through OFSTED.

Registered providers must inform Ofsted of any allegations of serious harm or abuse by any person living, working, or looking after children at the premises (whether the allegations relate to harm or abuse committed on the premises or elsewhere).

Common worries

Any concerns about the welfare or safety of a child should be acted on. The type of action will depend on the individual circumstances, but it should always have the wellbeing of the child as its overriding consideration. Whether or not a child's difficulties result from abuse or neglect, the child's welfare needs should be fully addressed.

The parent's permission should normally be obtained before action is taken, unless to do so would put the child at further risk of harm or seriously jeopardise the safety of other children, the child's carers or others.

What should I do if a child discloses?

A wide range of possible situations can fall into the category of a disclosure, which simply means that a child has told you something which causes you concern and to feel that you require some help or advice on what to do next.

- Stay calm and reassuring.
- Explain that you cannot promise to keep what the child has told you a secret.
- Tell the child that you may need someone else to help.
- Listen to and take seriously what the child tells you and tell them whatever the circumstances, they are not to blame for what has happened.
- Do not press for details; some cases need further investigation, it is better for the child not to have to repeat the details unnecessarily.
- Don't make any promises to the child; the situation may cause you to react emotionally. Whilst this is understandable and a natural reaction, sometimes you can make promises which cannot be fulfilled.
- Tell the child that they are right to tell.
- Let the child know that you understand how difficult it is to talk about such experiences.

What do I do if I suspect child abuse?

In many circumstances it is right to talk to the child's parents about your concerns, to check their explanation of the situation. Sometimes it will be right to consult someone before speaking to the parents, for example, if they seem to be implicated in the abuse or if you are anxious about how they might react. See next section if you are not sure what to do and the flow chart if you feel fairly certain that the child is experiencing abuse.

What if I am not sure what to do and need advice?

Sometimes you may not be certain about what is happening to a child but are worried that maybe they are suffering harm or abuse.

DO share your worries with an appropriate professional, if you are not satisfied, whilst maintaining confidentiality.

DO continue to provide a warm and friendly relationship with the child.

DON'T assume that someone else will help the child: they might not.

DON'T be afraid to voice your concerns: you could be saving a child from further physical or emotional trauma.

DO consider if and when to discuss the referral with the child/parents/ carers.

During contact with other professionals, conversation will take place where information and concerns about a family are exchanged and explored. This sort of dialogue is fundamental to good interagency working and is encouraged.

Sharing information is vital for early intervention to ensure that children and young people with obtain the services they require. It is also essential to protect children and young people from suffering harm from abuse or neglect.

https://www.gatesheadsafeguarding.org.uk/media/9804/flowchart-of-when-and-how-to-share-information/pdf/Information_Sharing.pdf?m=636723489668100000

Referral information

All referrals should contain the best available information. This is in the interests of the child because it enables the Duty Social Worker in the Integrated Referral and Assessment team to achieve a quicker response.

The information you give must be:

CLEAR especially about your concerns for the child.

FACTUAL this does not rule out opinion, but opinion and fact should be separated.

COMPLETE all known, relevant information should be included.

UNAMBIGUOUS make sure that there is minimal scope for your information to be misinterpreted.

Referral route flow chart

Referral person records information. (Self / manager / designated person)



Speak to duty social worker from the **Integrated Referral and Assessment team (IRAT)** at Civic Centre 0191 433 2653 or the child's social worker if known.



Pass on your concerns which you will have recorded.



The IRAT will record your information and will ask you to follow it up in writing (securely)



They make an initial assessment of the child.



They will decide if there is to be an investigation.



They may decide that that there is to be no further action or it could be that they confirm that the child is a 'child in need', or in need of protection.



Ofsted are the regulatory body who could be invited to attend an Investigation Meeting. If the referral does not meet the criteria for child protection, then an Ofsted investigation may still need to be carried out.

Incident recording

As soon as possible after the event practitioners involved should record in writing the facts, detailing what has occurred, their actions, and anything that they have observed about the child and relevant others or which the child or other people have told them, **including** what has been discussed with the parent/carer.

The following, more detailed information should be provided if it is available:

1. Child's full name
2. Child's current address and any other current or recent addresses
3. Child's date of birth and gender
4. Child's ethnic, linguistic, religious background
5. Who is in the child's household?
6. Names, date of birth, telephone numbers, addresses, current and recent, of child's parents and other significant adults e.g. substitute carers, or relatives closely involved in the child's care
7. Child's nursery or school: name and telephone number
8. Child's general practitioner: name and number
9. Similar information about any other children, e.g. siblings, who may also be a cause for concern
10. Names and telephone numbers of any other relevant services or professional currently or previously involved.
11. Names, date of birth, telephone numbers and addresses, current and recent, of anyone suspected of harming a child
12. Dates of and personnel involved in any particular events and incidents which have caused you concern
13. Whether you have informed the child/parents about the referral, and whether you have obtained their agreement to refer
14. Details of any particular strengths or resources which the child, parents or wider family have which could be built on in the child's interests

The Child Protection Plan

If an Initial Child Protection Conference or Review Conference makes the decision of whether a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm it will be agreed that the child/children will be the subject of a Child Protection Plan.

The Plan is a working tool that should enable the family and professionals involved with the family to understand what is expected of them and what they can expect of others.

The aims of the Plan are:

- To keep the child safe and prevent further harm
- To promote the child's welfare
- To support their family (and wider family) to care for them if it is in the child's best interest and can be done safely.

The Plan is reviewed on a regular basis.

Guidance for childcare workers

Childcare providers must be alert to any issues for concern in the child's life at home or elsewhere. Providers must have and implement a policy and procedures to safeguard children. A practitioner must be designated to take lead responsibility for safeguarding children in every setting. Childminders must take the lead responsibility for themselves. The lead practitioner is responsible for liaison with local statutory children's services agencies, and with the Gateshead Safeguarding Children Partnership (GSCP).

All those working with children and young people, including volunteers, need to attend a Child Protection awareness training.

Managers/leaders/designated people to attend further Designated Person Training and share information with all staff.

All childcare workers to know how to record accurate factual information of any child concerns.

Childcare workers to understand the importance of recording and confidentiality issues.

Childcare managers to ensure they follow a 'safer' recruitment and selection process when employing new staff, including:

- Police checks (disclosure and barring scheme)
- References
- Employment details and dates
- Health checks

All new childcare staff to have an induction process and a probationary period.

All staff to have supervisions, team meetings, relevant training for continuous professional development (including ongoing Child Protection training every 3 years).

Parents/carers to provide written permission, given before a child's image is used in photographs, videos or social media.

If childcare provider uses CCTV, they need to have a clear procedure for the storage of these records and who has access to them.

Further guidelines

<https://www.gateshead.gov.uk/lscb>

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications>

<https://ico.org.uk>

Useful numbers

Gateshead Integrated Referral and Assessment Team 0191 4333000/2653/2349
(can be contacted for an informal discussion, advice or to answer queries)

Emergency out of hours 0191 477 0844
(Based at Gateshead Civic Centre)

Other numbers

Family Information Service 0191 433 5118

Early Years 0191 433 5117/ 5108
07795542778
07766247442
07795812279
07766247442

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) 0191 433 3554
07714957868

Police (state you are ringing about a child protection matter in Gateshead) 101/999

OFSTED complaints 0300 123 1231
cie@ofsted.gov.uk



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