

Child Protection and Wellbeing Procedure

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

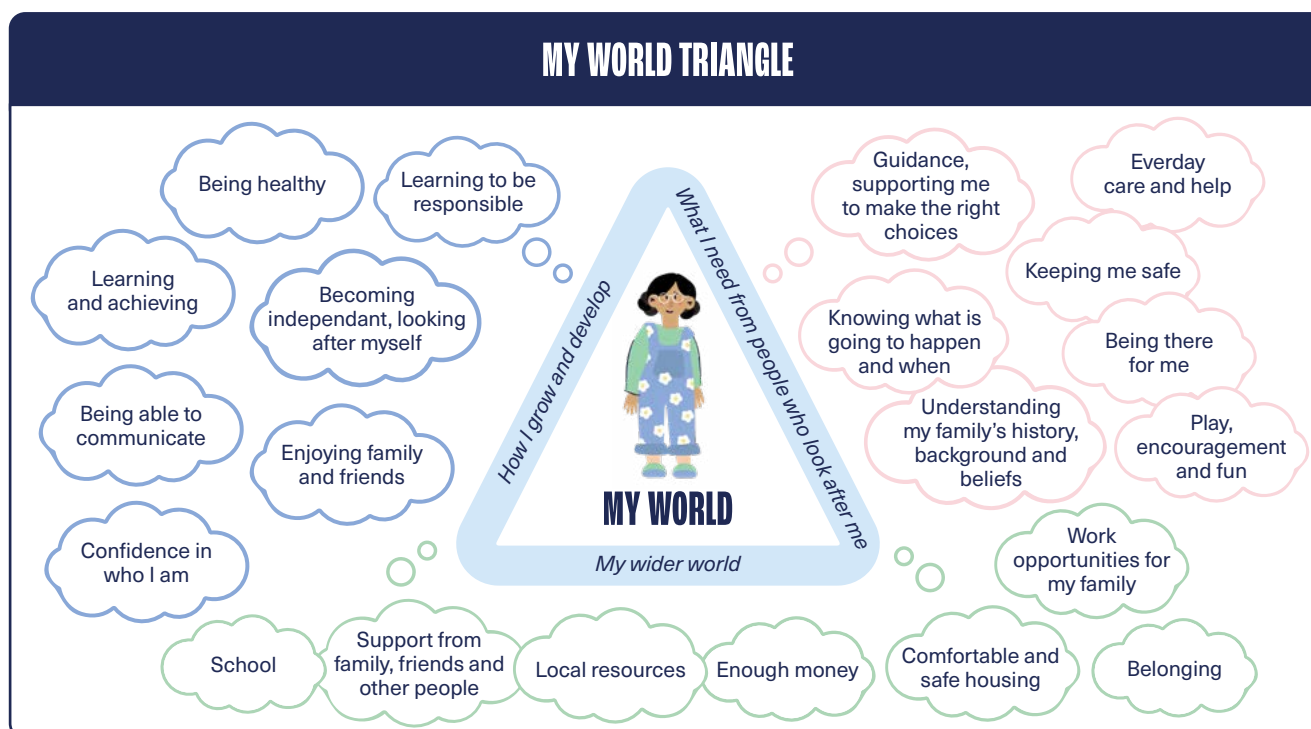
At Children First our ambition is for every child in Scotland to be safe, loved and well within their family network. As a charity we offer emotional, practical and financial support to help families to put children first and campaign to uphold the rights of every child. Children First is committed to protecting children by preventing harm through abuse, neglect, trauma and online harm. We will promote their wellbeing by respecting, protecting and fulfilling children's human rights.

This procedure details the action which all colleagues should take when there is a concern for a child's wellbeing or protection. We recognise that not everyone works directly alongside children and families but the responsibility to maintain awareness and respond appropriately to a concern for a child's safety or wellbeing belongs to everyone in Children First. The respective line management arrangements for reporting such concerns may vary slightly and are clearly detailed in this procedure for everyone to follow.

This incorporates five stages:



The procedure applies to all children and young people under 18 years of age including babies and pre-birth. Any consideration of a child's wellbeing and protection requires an understanding of a child's wider world.



The whole child or young person: physical, social, educational, emotional, spiritual & psychological development

Working to keep children safe needs relationships to be at the heart of all we do; our relationships with ourselves, children and families, our colleagues and partners. This is 'Our wider world.'



The first step in protecting children and preventing harm involves building a relationship with children and their families so that we can obtain the best possible understanding of their experience, wellbeing and safety. We have to be curious for children and have the ability and awareness to RECOGNISE when there might be a concern about a child's wellbeing or protection. Concerns can arise in different ways including:

- *Something a child says.*
- *Something reported to you by the child's family, friends, a third party or anonymously.*
- *Direct observations of the child, their parents/carers or their environment.*
- *In response to a particular incident.*
- *A series of events or indicators over a period of time which, whilst not necessarily of concern in themselves, are of concern when considered together.*
- *Collective information shared between the team around the child and family.*
- *The impact of discrimination and inequality within society.*

Concerns about a child's wellbeing and protection can arise because of their care and experiences. Children and young people can be harmed, victimised and/or exploited in different settings:

- *At home.*
- *Within a family or peer network.*
- *At school or college.*
- *In their community and across communities.*
- *In care placements or institutions.*
- *In the digital and online environment.*

Those involved or responsible could either be well-known to the child including family members or someone who was previously unknown. Children and young people are increasingly victimised and targeted online by individuals they know and don't know, and can be victimised and exploited in their communities by individuals and organised crime gangs.

A child's wellbeing can also be harmed both before they are born by exposure to domestic violence towards a mother or, parental alcohol and drug use or, through self-harm.

Although the recognition of concerns may arise during the course of our work directly with children and families, concerns requiring a response could equally arise through our involvement in a fundraising activity, service visit or day to day work on behalf of Children First.

CHILD WELLBEING

GIRFEC sets out eight indicators which can be used to assess a child's wellbeing known as SHANARRI.

GIRFEC OUTCOME	DESCRIPTION	CHILDREN FIRST OUTCOMES
SAFE	Growing up in an environment where a child or young person feels secure, nurtured, listened to and enabled to develop to their full potential. This includes freedom from abuse, neglect, victimisation and exploitation in the physical world or online.	SAFE
HEALTHY	Having the highest attainable standards of physical and mental health, access to suitable healthcare and support in learning to make healthy and safe choices.	RECOVERY WELLBEING
ACHIEVING	Being supported and guided in learning and in the development of skills, confidence and self-esteem, at home, in school and in the community.	ACHIEVING
NURTURED	Growing, developing and being cared for in an environment which provides the physical and emotional security, compassion and warmth necessary for healthy growth and to develop resilience and a positive identity.	RELATIONSHIPS
ACTIVE	Having opportunities to take part in activities such as play, recreation and sport which contribute to healthy growth and development at home, in school and in the community.	WELLBEING COMMUNITY
RESPECTED	Being involved in and having their voices heard in decisions that affect their life, with support where appropriate.	VOICES RECOVERY WELLBEING
RESPONSIBLE	Having opportunities and encouragement to play active and responsible roles at home, in school and in the community and where necessary, having appropriate guidance and supervision.	COMMUNITY
INCLUDED	Having help to overcome inequalities and being accepted as part of their family, school and community.	VOICES RECOVERY COMMUNITY

These are the areas which need to be considered to enable all children to reach their full potential. The SHANARRI indicators should be used, alongside the other [GIRFEC tools](#), to help recognise the support needed by a child or family and help early support to be identified. There will be many concerns raised in respect of a child's wellbeing which will require action within GIRFEC but do not need a child protection investigation. Instead, a co-ordinated response between more than one service alongside the child and their parents/carers may be necessary to provide the appropriate support.

CHILD PROTECTION

The child's right to safety and protection is paramount at all times. Children can experience abuse or neglect that can involve inflicting harm or failing to act to prevent harm. There are many reasons why people may harm or neglect children and many different types of abuse, including six highlighted by Child Protection Scotland:

Physical abuse	Sexual abuse	Emotional abuse
Neglect	Online abuse	Child exploitation

It is important that you have an understanding of the signs and indicators of the different types of abuse and neglect as well as how they can intersect with one another. Detailed information can be found in [Part 4 of the National Guidance for Child Protection](#).

A constant vigilance to the presence of any of these indicators is key to preventing harm and protecting children. This should not lead to any immediate assumptions about the level of risk for an individual child but prompt further curiosity and consideration in relation to all the relevant aspects of a child and family's circumstances in their physical world and online context.

We build trusting, respectful relationships with children and their families to reach a better understanding of the child's individual needs and the many barriers and challenges which their parents and carers may face. We provide practical and emotional support to families to try and prevent any harm or risk escalating. This enables us to be aware of when a child's safety is being impacted upon and when we must act to prevent harm. This can be an immediate or gradual process of growing concern.

A child protection investigation is required when there are concerns that a child may have experienced or may experience **significant harm** and these concerns relate to the possibility of abuse or neglect. An investigation is triggered when these concerns reach social work and the police and we have a responsibility to notify them in such instances. There is no legal definition of significant harm and it is important to consider how it has or will impact on the child's health and development. It will be important to use professional judgement about the severity and immediacy of the risk of harm with reflection and discussion with others especially your line manager. This involves considering a range of aspects relating to professional judgement ([detailed in National Guidance](#)) but which include:

- *The child's age and stage of development.*
- *The child's experience, needs and feelings.*
- *The attachment of the child to their parent/carers and those important to them.*
- *The impact on the child's health and development, short, medium and longer term.*
- *Any additional needs such as a medical condition, communication impairment or disability, that may affect the child.*

- *The nature, degree and extent of any physical or emotional harm.*
- *The duration and frequency of any abuse and neglect.*
- *Parents or carers response to the concern and their ability to protect and care for the child.*
- *Changes to child's behaviour, activities, contacts and circumstances.*
- *Extent of any premeditation or intent.*
- *The level of any threat or coercion.*

RECOGNISING: THE CHILDREN FIRST VALUES

Whether we recognise a possible child wellbeing or protection concern, Children First will provide a service based on our core values of love, strength and purpose and a commitment to building strong relationships with the families we work alongside. These core values are set out in the [Children First Way](#) and describe how we:

- *Work with the whole family when in the best interests of the child.*
- *Build relationships.*
- *Are kind and compassionate.*
- *Get to the heart of the matter.*
- *Are practical.*
- *Listen to families.*
- *Do whatever it takes.*
- *Know the importance of community and partnerships.*
- *Protect children's rights.*
- *Are always hopeful.*

This approach means that in seeking to RECOGNISE any child wellbeing or protection concerns, we:

- *Prioritise the human rights of the child in all we do.*
- *Build our understanding of the child's experience in the context of their individual and family circumstances.*
- *Get to know the strengths as well as the concerns of the child and their family.*
- *Intentionally seek to understand the impact of poverty, trauma and discrimination on the child and their family.*
- *Understand the uniqueness of the child, their needs and the family's capacity to meet these needs by carefully considering past and present circumstances.*
- *Intentionally ask children and young people about their online activity and any concerns or worries they may have about this.*
- *Are vigilant to changes in the child's circumstances which could increase their risk of harm.*

When we recognise a wellbeing or protection concern for a child, consideration should always be given to the needs and potential risks to other children in the same household or family network and to children who are likely to become members of the same household or family network.

[d/Deaf](#) and disabled children can be at greater risk due to a range of factors including:

- *Communication support needs.*
- *Network of carers involved in providing intimate personal care.*
- *Increased isolation.*
- *Lack of a d/Deaf and disabled child-centred practice approach.*

The effective protection of d/Deaf and disabled children requires specific preparation and consideration of the impact of any disability for a child and any protected characteristics. We need to create ways in which we can listen and hear children through whatever way they communicate or language that they use.



Once you have recognised a concern then it is your professional responsibility to respond in an appropriate and timely manner and not ignore any concern. The National Guidance sets out seven thematic principles to guide our practice.

RESPONDING TO A CHILD IN IMMEDIATE DANGER

When you think there is immediate danger to a child in an emergency situation where their welfare or life is threatened:

- a) Gather the basic facts and contact Police Scotland on 999 without delay.**
- b) Share this concern with your line manager immediately to establish any further action required within your role.**

RESPONDING TO A CONCERN FOR THE SAFETY OF A CHILD

When you have a concern for a child's safety or think there might be an imminent risk which could result in significant harm then immediate action must be taken.

What to do:

- a) Discuss with your line manager or any available manager (see Appendix 1 for more details about who to contact).**
- b) Gather the basic facts by listening to children and families to understand what has happened to them.**
- c) Obtain the views of other key people and partners involved in supporting the child and family.**

- d) Focus your attention on the child's needs, rights, voice and experience. This requires recognition of risk of harm to a child; risk of harm to others from a child and recognition of the context in which such risks occur.
- e) Consider what you know about the risk to the child's safety by reflecting on some key questions set out in **Munro's risk assessment model**:

1) What has been happening?
2) What is happening now?
3) What might happen?
4) How likely is it?
5) How serious it would be?
6) A combination of seriousness and likelihood leading to an overall judgement of risk <i>Professor Eileen Munro (2008)</i>

It is not your responsibility to investigate the concern but to listen and then respond appropriately. If a child shares a concern with you directly, then there are some simple [guidelines](#).

NON-RECENT ABUSE

An adult may choose to share information with you explaining that they experienced non-recent abuse when they were a child. It will be important to respect their trust and look to provide the help and support they need.

You should ask them if they would like to report the matter to Police Scotland and offer to support them in doing so, as appropriate. It is also important to understand and explain that there might be circumstances where information may need to be shared without their consent. If this is the case, you can reassure the individual that you would be passing on the information in order to keep current children safe and there would be no pressure on them to make a statement about their own experience unless they felt they wished to do so.

If the information provided makes you believe that a child may be currently at risk from the individual about whom the allegation has been made then you have a responsibility to pass the details of this individual and any children they may be in contact with to Police Scotland and the relevant social work service.

CHILD PROTECTION CONCERN OR ALLEGATION AGAINST COLLEAGUE OR FORMER COLLEAGUE

If you have a child protection concern or an allegation is made about a current or former Children First colleague then this must be taken seriously and you should inform your line manager or Service Manager immediately.

The Service Manager will then liaise with the Assistant Director and People and Culture team to decide what further action is required and if any external agencies such as the police or social work need to be informed.

In any situation, if you do not think that a child protection concern which you have raised is being managed appropriately then you should look to discuss this with a more senior manager in Children First.

If you remain concerned then you can refer to the organisation's [Whistleblowing Policy](#).

RESPONDING TO A CHILD WELLBEING CONCERN

When we have a concern which is or could potentially impact on the general health and development of a child, we will act to prevent this causing harm to the child. In accordance with GIRFEC we will support families to:

- *"Make sure children and young people can receive the right help, at the right time, from the right people."*
- *"Help children to grow up feeling loved, safe and respected so that they can realise their full potential."*

What to do:

- 1) Be vigilant to the child's presentation, key relationships, status and situation to protect their safety and promote their wellbeing
- 2) Share with a line manager:
 - a) any significant change to a child's presentation, relationships or situation that gives concern for the child's health and development.
 - b) any concerns about a child or key family member due to changes or new information that may impact on the child's health and development.
- 3) Share any concerns you have for a child's wellbeing with their parents and carers.
- 4) Work with other key people and partners, in particular the lead professional, to promote and support the child's wellbeing.

REPORT - INTERNAL



The first point of contact when it comes to reporting a child wellbeing or protection concern should be your line manager. (If your regular line manager is not available then you should make contact with any available manager, see Appendix 1 for more details about who to contact). If your line manager is outwith children and families services (CFS), they will liaise with a CFS manager who can provide guidance on any subsequent actions to take.

Child protection concerns should be reported without delay and be given priority whilst only being shared with those who need to know.

What to do

- 1) Share all that has been learned in getting to know the child and family with your line manager.
- 2) Outline your initial evaluation of the situation including the strengths, needs and risks which are present.
- 3) Discuss this information and your reflections with your line manager.
- 4) Reach agreement with your line manager on the actions to be taken putting the child's right to safety first.
- 5) If necessary, the Assistant Director should be contacted to support and enable a plan to be agreed.

REFER - EXTERNAL



The decision to raise a concern for a child's safety or wellbeing to social work and/or police will be agreed between you and your Children and Family Service line manager. This is an important part of local and national child protection guidance.

What to do

- 1) Phone social work to provide verbal details of the concern and set out your professional opinion about the situation.
- 2) A written **Child Notification of Concern form** should then be provided to social work within 24 hours of the telephone call. Alternatively you may be required to use a locally agreed template set out in the local Child Protection Procedures.
- 3) Share the Child Notification of Concern with the appropriate Assistant Director.
- 4) Review and update 'Our Plan' and child's 'Safety Plan' together with children and families.
- 5) Consider the support, advocacy and recovery needs of children and family members during this process.
- 6) Escalate any concern to an Assistant Director when a child's right to safety is not respected, protected, or fulfilled by a partner agency.
- 7) Share immediately with an Assistant Director and Director of CFS when a child we have a connection with is significantly harmed, injured, or dies.

In an emergency outside office hours, you should notify any concern by contacting the local out of hours/emergency social work service and/or the police.

When sharing information about a child or family with Social Work, it is good practice to be open and transparent about your concerns and to seek to work cooperatively with parents or carers. Practitioners should therefore usually inform parents or carers (and the child depending on their age and level of understanding) that they are going to make a notification.

Notifications can be made without first informing parents or carers if it is thought that to do so would place a child at risk.

A notification of concern must be made even if it is known that Children First or Children's Social Work are already connected with the child or family.

SIGNIFICANT INCIDENT PROCEDURE (CEX-P001)

Significant incidents can potentially take place in any area of our work. It is impossible to identify every scenario which may constitute a significant incident and if you are unsure as to whether or not an event would be constituted as such then you should discuss this with your line manager or an Assistant Director/Director.

In relation to the wellbeing and protection of children or adults, it is not for reporting routine notifications but when there has been an incident that impacts or could impact significantly on the charity or when significant learning can be drawn from it.

What to do

1. Share details of the incident with your line manager immediately.
2. Share details with Assistant Director (CFS) and Director (CFS).
3. Share with line manager and Assistant Director any “near miss” situation for a child with whom Children First is connected.
4. Follow the [Incident Report Procedure \(CEX-P001\)](#).
5. Complete a [Significant Incident Report \(CEX-F001\)](#) within 24 hours.

RECORD



The effective recording of child wellbeing and protection concerns is an essential component of keeping children safe. In recording your work, your records should:

- *Record key details of what you have seen and heard in respect of the concern.*
- *Be completed as soon as possible after any incident and every time you speak to another individual about what happened.*
- *Be accurate and kept up to date.*
- *Written in plain English avoiding jargon.*
- *Use the exact words used by the child, young person or family member.*

In line with the Recording Our Work policy, child or adult protection concerns must be recorded within 24 hours.

The approach to recording reflects the staged process outlined in this procedure. This begins with the introduction process that supports us in starting to understand the risk and strengths relating to a child's safety and wellbeing, through our time in getting to know children and young people and their families. This allows us to both understand their story relating to trauma and adverse experiences and supports us to think about the impact of this on children. The approach to recording our work also provides the opportunity to reflect on a child's safety and wellbeing and consider and record worries, as they arise through the use of support activities or collating significant events as a key timeline moment to inform our understanding of strengths and safety.

Once the concern in question has been managed appropriately, it may be important to consider the need to both create a key timeline event in respect of the incident in question and reflect this in a joint or multiagency record. You can find more information on doing so by clicking [here](#).

Further details on Recording Our Work in relation to child wellbeing and protection can be found in the additional guidance documents: [Safety and Wellbeing](#) and [Dynamics – Safety and Wellbeing Records](#).

DATA PROTECTION RESPONSIBILITIES

Data protection law is not a barrier to sharing necessary information in relation to child protection. Appropriate information about a child protection concern should always be shared in line with this procedure without delay. Data protection law does not stop or hinder this process.

To ensure we comply with our data protection responsibilities, it is important that we have open and transparent conversations about information sharing with children and families when we begin working alongside them and continually as our work alongside families develops. The [Information Sharing and Privacy Notice for Children and Families](#) has a section that lets families know when information may need to be shared with third parties including when children and families have not been informed.

It is important to know that children and families have the right to request copies of their personal data from Children First, otherwise known as a subject access request. This may include copies of notifications of concern. The Head of Information Governance and Data Protection Officer is responsible for subject access requests and should always be informed of any such requests made locally.

If you are ever unsure about data protection and its relationship with our child protection obligations the Head of Information Governance and Data Protection Officer is available to offer advice.

ORGANISATIONAL CONCERNS

Children First promotes an open and transparent culture in which all concerns about adults working in the organisation are shared responsibly with the right person, recorded and managed appropriately.

An organisational concern, increasingly referred to as a **low-level concern** is any concern – no matter how small, and even if no more than causing a sense of unease or a 'nagging doubt' - that an adult in Children 1st may have acted in a way that:

- a) Does not meet our standards, values or Children First expectations encapsulated in the [Code of Conduct](#) including inappropriate conduct outside of work and
- b) does not meet the threshold of a child protection investigation.

The term 'low-level' concern does not mean that it is insignificant. This behaviour can exist on a wide spectrum, from the inadvertent or thoughtless, or behaviour that may look to be inappropriate, but might not be in specific circumstances, through to that which is ultimately intended to enable abuse.

Sharing an organisational or low-level concern is important in creating a safe organisation and culture and allows colleagues to be supported to address behaviour early and ultimately protect children. Every colleague can raise a low-level concern with their Children First line manager, a Children's Services Manager or a People and Culture colleague.

For more information about the term Low-Level Concern please [click here](#) for explanatory note.

APPENDIX 1

Contacting a manager

- *The most important step is to have a discussion with a manager.*
 - *Don't delay in doing so if your own line manager is not available.*
 - *You can follow the steps below to identify an available manager.*
 - *You can contact ANY of the relevant managers detailed below.*
 - *Details of all of these managers can be found on Personio.*
-

HOW TO CONTACT YOUR MANAGER

