

Aberdeenshire Schools Protecting Children & Young People

Identifying and Responding to Child Protection Concerns

August 2021



Aberdeenshire
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Hyperlinks throughout this presentation should work by clicking on them in full
slideshow view

The aim of this presentation is to:

- Update and refresh schools on Child Protection awareness
- Confirm your school's Child Protection Coordinator
- Support colleagues across the school to be alert to, and aware of signs of potential child abuse and neglect
- Ensure all staff are clear how to respond when faced with a potential Child Protection situation
- Familiarise staff with Aberdeenshire's Child Protection protocols
- Enhance child protection knowledge and signpost to further support and guidance

Head Teacher notes:

Please advise your team who the school's Child Protection Coordinator is.

Child Protection & Getting it Right for Every Child



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Head Teacher Delivery notes:

Child Protection procedures form part of the wider GIRFEC approach to safeguarding, supporting, and promoting children and young people's wellbeing in our schools.

The focus in Child Protection situations is mainly focussed on concerns about the Wellbeing Indicator SAFE. It's important to take time today to make sure that as a school team, we are confident we can identify children and young people who may be at risk of significant harm, and know how to respond so support is quickly put in place.

Even in Child Protection situations, a child's whole circumstances should be considered. For example, if despite discussing concerns and offering support to the family, a child's wellbeing needs under HEALTHY and/or NURTURED are not being met by a parent over a period of time - this could become a child protection concern as neglect.

Child Protection Arrangements in Schools

- **Always take action** if you suspect a Child Protection Concern
- Child Protection Coordinator is your contact in school
- Child Protection Coordinator cover arrangements
- Contacting Social Work or Police
- Initial Referral Discussion (IRD)

If at any time you think a child or young person may be at risk, **you must follow Aberdeenshire child protection procedures and immediately flag up potential child protection concerns to your school's Child Protection Coordinator (CPC)**. This makes sure any risk is explored with appropriate action taken to protect the child.

Where the usual Child Protection Coordinator is unavailable, the cover CPC for this school is (***advise who this is***), or you should contact a member of the senior management team, or another Headteacher.

It is never ok to do nothing - and you should never take a Child Protection concern home with you. Where necessary, the CPC/cover CPC will contact the local Social Work team or Police, in order to discuss the concerns.

Social Work and/or Police will provide advice, and discuss what further action is needed. They will decide whether it is necessary to hold an Initial Referral Discussion (known as an IRD), to decide whether a Child Protection Investigation is required.

Aberdeenshire's IRD guidance is available on the GIRFEC website

<http://www.girfec-aberdeenshire.org/practitioners/guidance/> and some staff may have attended multi-agency IRD workshops held in 2018.

What is child abuse and neglect?

“Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting, or by failing to act to prevent, significant harm to the child. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger.”

National Guidance for Child Protection 2014 (Page 11).

Head Teacher Delivery notes:

The *Children (Scotland) Act 1995* placed legal duties on local authorities to ensure children and young person are protected from abuse, neglect or exploitation.

The *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014* placed certain aspects of the *GIRFEC* approach into law.

The Act is based on the *United Nations Charter on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC). Children and young people’s rights and wellbeing are at the centre of how we support children and young people in Aberdeenshire

Children with Disabilities

Scottish Government research tell us that children with disabilities are at greater risk of harm than non disabled children, yet are under represented within the Child Protection system.

The main contributing factors to this imbalance are thought to be due to the effects of the disability itself, and responses by practitioners.

Children who are very reliant on their carers, and have communication difficulties, behavioural disorders, learning disabilities, and sensory impairments, are particularly vulnerable.



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Head Teacher Delivery notes:

Research tells us disabled children are **approximately 3.6 times** more likely to be abused or neglected than non-disabled children.

Disabled children are particularly vulnerable to abuse and neglect, because they are **more dependent on parents and carers** to have their needs met.

Children with **communication difficulties** may not be so able to tell anyone about their situation. Some children may not understand that what is happening to them is abuse or neglect.

Caring for a disabled child can be very demanding at times, and places additional stress and exhaustion on parents/carers. At times this may impact on a parent's **ability to cope** and meet their child's needs safely.

Children with disabilities, often have more restricted social networks than non-disabled peers. This can increase their experiences of **isolation and vulnerability**.

Reasons for under-reporting abuse/neglect where children have disabilities



- A false belief people would not abuse a disabled child
- Parents/Carers trying their best under difficult circumstances
- Reluctance to challenge parents/carers who are already under stress
- Child or young person is less able to communicate
- Practitioners can struggle to disentangle indicators of abuse/risk from the effects of a child's disability
- Practitioners spending limited time with a child may not recognise behaviours (or changes) which indicate neglect or abuse
- Over reliance on a parent's explanation, without seeking the child's views



There are a number of reasons why **child protection concerns for children with disabilities are under-reported**.

It can be difficult to challenge parents already experiencing stress, and coping with the demands of caring for a disabled child. However we must **always remember** that whether abuse/neglect is intentional or not, the impact on the child is still detrimental, and the risk must be responded to.

When children have communication difficulties or behavioural disorders, their attempts to communicate distress may be misinterpreted as being associated with their disability or condition. While communication with parents is important, we must also maintain professional curiosity and be mindful that children with disabilities can be abused and neglected by their parents. Most children with communication difficulties are able to use some method of communication, so it is **vital that we seek children's views** and provide support which helps them to express themselves.

School staff have ongoing relationships with children, so are well placed to recognise changes in behaviour or presentation, or signs of distress in children with disabilities. Spending time with children, speaking with them, and our own observations (for

example at arrival at school, or home time), can provide valuable opportunities to identify that child may be experiencing abuse or neglect.

Disability & Abuse/Neglect

- Over-medicating children in order to manage behaviours
- Unwillingness to learn a child's communication systems
- Removal of a child's communication system
- Unjustified/excessive use of restraint
- Lack of stimulation or play
- Ill-fitting or missing equipment, e.g specialist footwear or splints
- Rough-handling
- Non-compliance with agreed actions in a Child's Plan

What Can We Do?

- Keep the child at the centre and improve our recognition of issues for children with disabilities
- Understand disability should not be a barrier to investigating child protection concerns
- Refer to Aberdeenshire Guidance on CP and disability.
- Be aware of additional supports available for children with disabilities

Children and young people are also vulnerable to other forms of abuse and neglect. compared with their non-disabled peers. This includes:

- Misappropriation of finances meant to benefit the child
- Denying a child age/stage-appropriate opportunities for development and socialisation
- Confinement to a room, bed/cot, or wheelchair
- Lack of understanding about a disability leading to unrealistic expectations
- Mocking or mimicking a child's behaviour or speech
- Rough handling or limiting calorie intake of non-mobile children, to make it easier to move/handle them

By maintaining professional curiosity, and always keeping the child at the centre, this helps us recognise and respond to abuse and neglect appropriately.

It is important we **do not allow disability to act as a barrier** to exploring a child protection concern further. While Child Protection Investigations are undertaken by trained social work/police staff, information from schools is invaluable. It contributes to our understanding of a child's additional needs, communication methods, and individual characteristics. Additional guidance and support is available to children

with disabilities before, during and after any CP Process **(On Slide 19)**.

Types of Abuse

- Physical
- Emotional
- Sexual
- Neglect
- Specific Indicators of Risk (includes CSE, Trafficking & Female Genital Mutilation, Forced Marriage)

Head Teacher Delivery notes:

The 2014 *National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland* references different types of abuse, which it is important to be aware of. We need to have an understanding of what the types of abuse are, and be alert to the different ways in which children and young people can be at risk of harm.

Indicators of Risk include: Domestic Abuse, Parental Substance Misuse, Parental Alcohol Misuse, Parental Mental Health, Sexual Abuse, Physical Abuse, Emotional Abuse, Non-engaging families, Child Placing Self at Risk, Neglect, Child Sexual Exploitation, Trafficking, Female Genital Mutilation and Forced Marriage. These would be referred to when a child is placed on the Child Protection Register at a Child Protection Case Conference.

Young carers and children with a disability can be more vulnerable to all experiences of neglect or abuse.

Examples of Abuse

Physical abuse

- May involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning, or suffocating. A parent or carer may also be abusive by feigning symptoms of, or deliberately causing, repeated medical examination, or illness/Injury to a child or young person.

Emotional abuse

- Emotional abuse can involve children being made to feel frightened or in danger, being exploited or through corruption. It may involve conveying to a child they are worthless, inadequate, unloved, or only valued when they meet the needs of their parent/carer or another person. Imposing age or developmentally-inappropriate expectations on a child can also be abusive.

Sexual abuse

- Involves any involvement of a child/young person in activity of a sexual nature, whether this is physical contact, coerced sexual acts, exposure to sexually explicit material, or for example, online grooming, or contact via texting/mobile/apps

Head Teacher Delivery notes:

This slide shows examples of how different types of abuse may be perpetrated against children and young people.

Remember - when a child or young person is being abused, they often experience more than one type of abuse, and emotional abuse is present in all other forms of abuse.

Neglect

- Neglect is persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical, emotional and/or psychological needs in an age and stage appropriate manner, and that is likely to result in serious impairment of a child's health or development.
- It may involve failure to; provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, protect a child from physical harm or danger, or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.
- In its extreme form children can be at serious risk from the effects of malnutrition, lack of nurturing and stimulation. This can lead to serious long-term effects, such as greater susceptibility to serious childhood illnesses. In infants and young children, consequences may be life-threatening with failure to thrive over a relatively short period of time.

Head Teacher Delivery notes:

School-based staff are in an ideal position to pick up the early warning-signs of neglect. Our daily contact with children means we are familiar with their usual presentation, and aware of their needs. The positive relationships schools build with our children and young people creates opportunities for them to raise worries with us. It also means we are well placed to discuss any concerns we identify, and to listen to and support children and young people.

It is important to be vigilant to any deterioration or lack of improvement in a child or young person's situation, and to be aware that an accumulation of concerns might suggest neglect.

It is important to discuss neglect concerns at an early stage with parents/carers. There can be many reasons why a parent is struggling to meet their child's needs and discussion helps you to identify the best support for a child or for a parent. It also helps to inform your own assessment of a situation. **If concerns for a child require you to follow child protection procedures, you must act without delay.**

Remember – if in doubt, discuss with your Child Protection Coordinator.

Observations & Behaviours which can indicate a CP Concern?

- Frequently dirty, hungry, inadequately dressed
- **Left in unsafe situation or without medical attention for illness/injury**
- Put down, insulted or sworn at
- **Seems afraid of parents/carers**
- Unexplained and unusual bruising or marks, repeated injuries
- **Burns, scalds & bites**
- Inconsistent explanation about an injury
- **Reluctance to go home**
- Reluctance to remove clothing
- **Change in school attendance pattern**
- Inappropriate sexual awareness, or sexually active
- Unexplained/unusual amounts of money, or more than one mobile phone (can be CSE indicator)
- **Domestic violence in the home**
- Drug or alcohol abuse in the home
- **Unexplained changes in behaviour**
- Difficulty in making friends
- **Distrustful or Excessive attachment to adults**

Head Teacher Delivery notes:

This slide helps you consider some of the physical indicators, behaviours, or signs which may indicate a potential child protection concern.

3 Key Questions in Child Protection

- **Is this child or young person at immediate risk?**
- **What is placing this child at immediate risk?**
- **What needs to happen to remove this risk now?**

If the answer to the first question is yes, Child Protection protocols must be followed immediately

Head Teacher Delivery notes:

*The 3 key questions are in *Aberdeenshire Council's Child Protection in Education Booklet 3*

Management of risk will form part of any discussion with colleagues in relation to child protection concerns

Respond
Calmly

How to respond to a child protection disclosure

Contact Child
Protection
Coordinator

Allow the child to
speak freely



Explain you
need to share

Don't correct the
child's language

Investigation is done
by trained Child
Protection Services

Reassure

OBSERVE, LISTEN, RECORD, REPORT

Avoid leading or
closed questions

Let child know
help will be
provided

Act immediately!

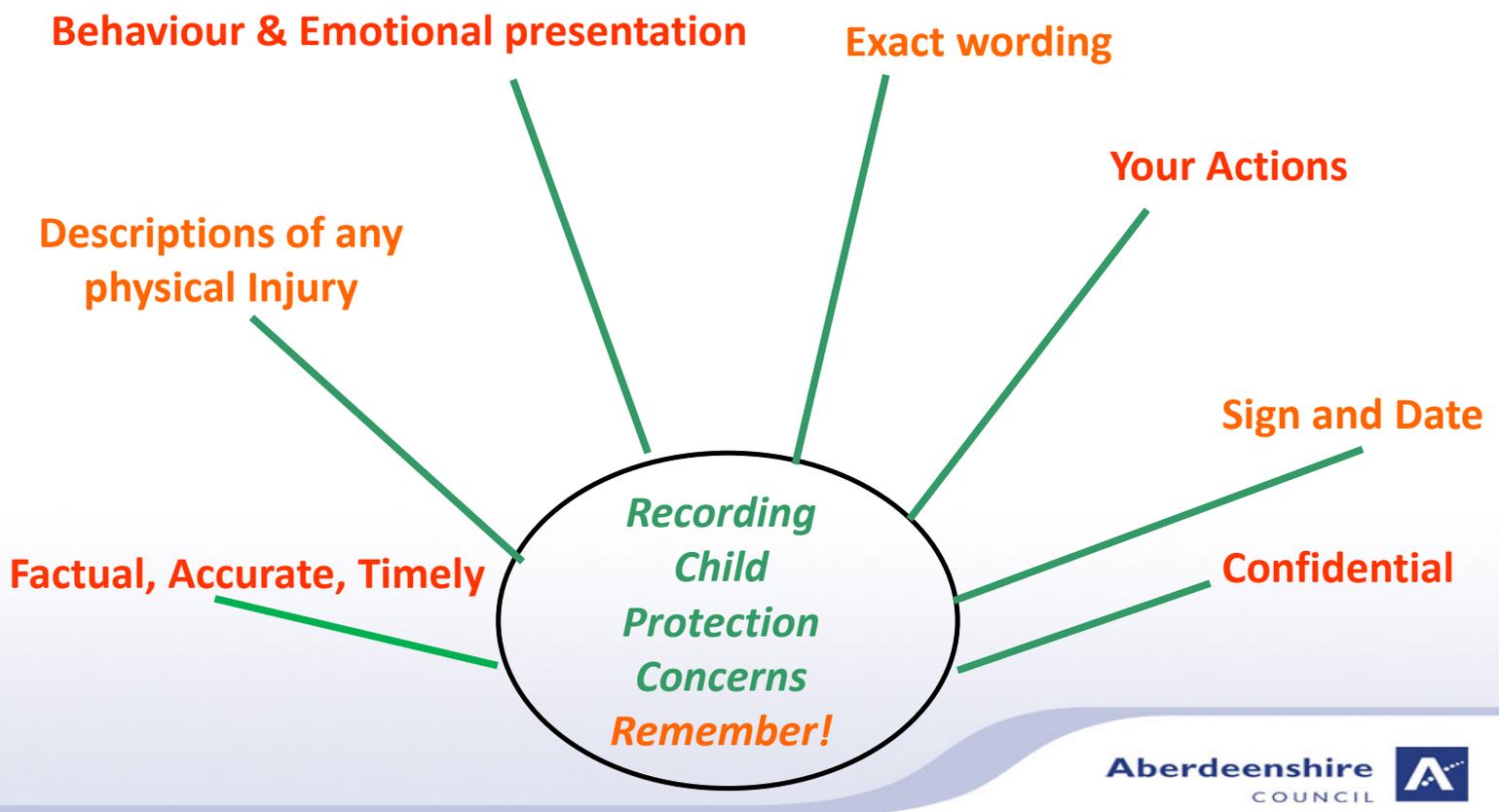
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If a child or young person discloses information:

- **Respond calmly.** Although it can understandably be upsetting to hear about abuse, your focus is to support the child.
- **Avoid showing signs of shock or anxiety.** A child may interpret this as being a feeling you have about them, rather than about what has happened to them, and deter them from speaking further about their situation.
- **Never promise** to keep a secret – but **reassure the child any information sharing will be done sensitively, respecting their confidentiality**, and will only take place with professionals/authorities who need to know
- **Allow the child to speak in their own words** – don't interrupt, or correct swearing
- **Explain that you do have to tell someone else**, so people can decide how best to help and support the child and family
- **Reassure the child** they have done the right thing in telling you. Explain that abuse is **never their fault**, and they are not in trouble
- **Do not offer new information or suggest reasons** for why someone has done something alleged.
- Only ask questions to help you understand or clarify what the child is telling you. **Avoid using closed questions** (for example that require a 'yes or no' answer). These can be leading, or cause a child to think they have to give a certain answer.
- **Pass on information immediately** to the Child Protection Co-Ordinator or senior member of staff.
- If they are not available, contact your local social work team- only trained

police/social work staff carry out **CP investigations**

- **RECORD ACCURATELY AND FACTUALLY**

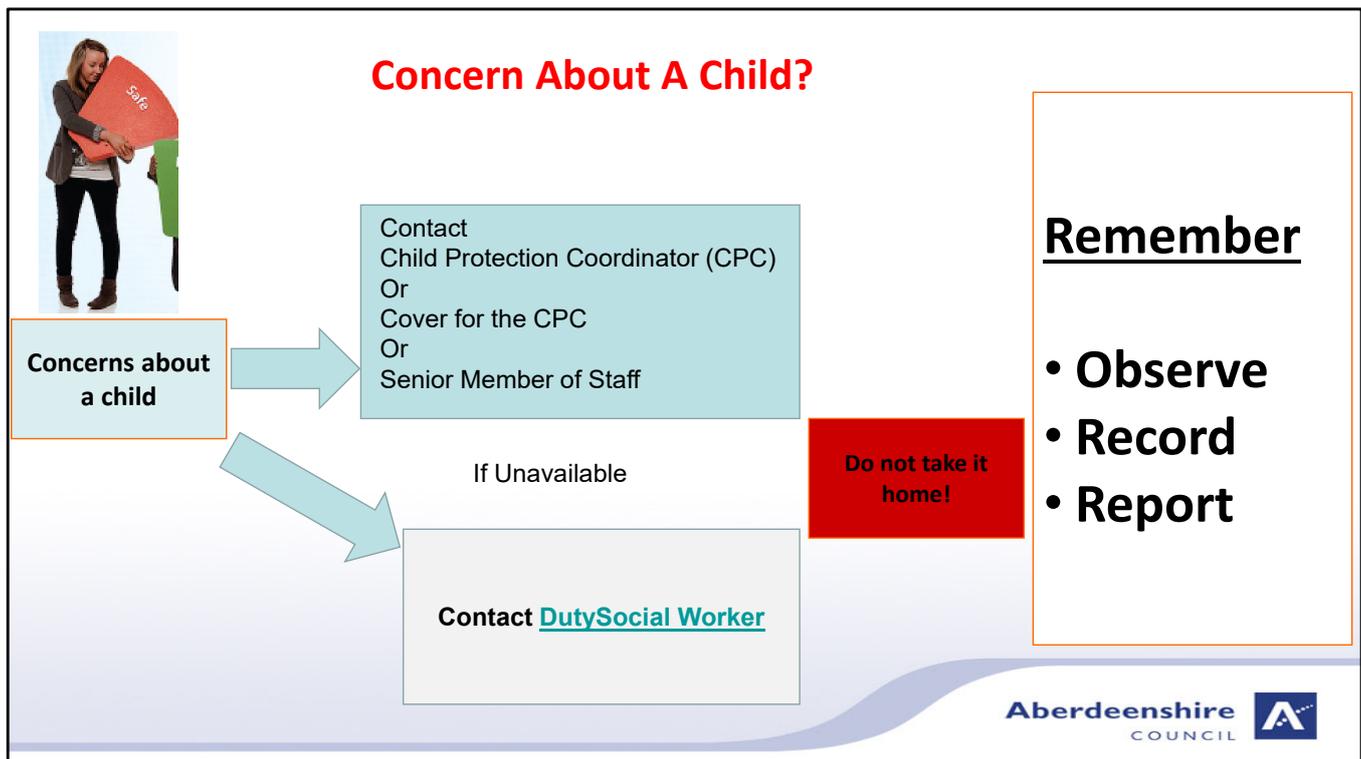


If you become aware of a potential child protection concern, make sure all information you record (whether on pastoral notes or paper documentation), is **clear, concise, and factual**.

Helpful details include the times/date of any observations, exact wording used by a child or parent/carer, and a description of any injuries (size/location) etc

Under no circumstances should staff use any recording equipment such as cameras, mobile phones, ipads to record images/audio of children/young people. This will be done formally through the child protection investigation process if required, and is done by trained staff using specialist equipment.

Updating and maintaining a child's chronology should include any wellbeing concerns which have been previously addressed by the school. This can help identify emerging child protection concerns such as CSE or neglect, and also contributes to the wider assessment of risk/need in a child protection situation.



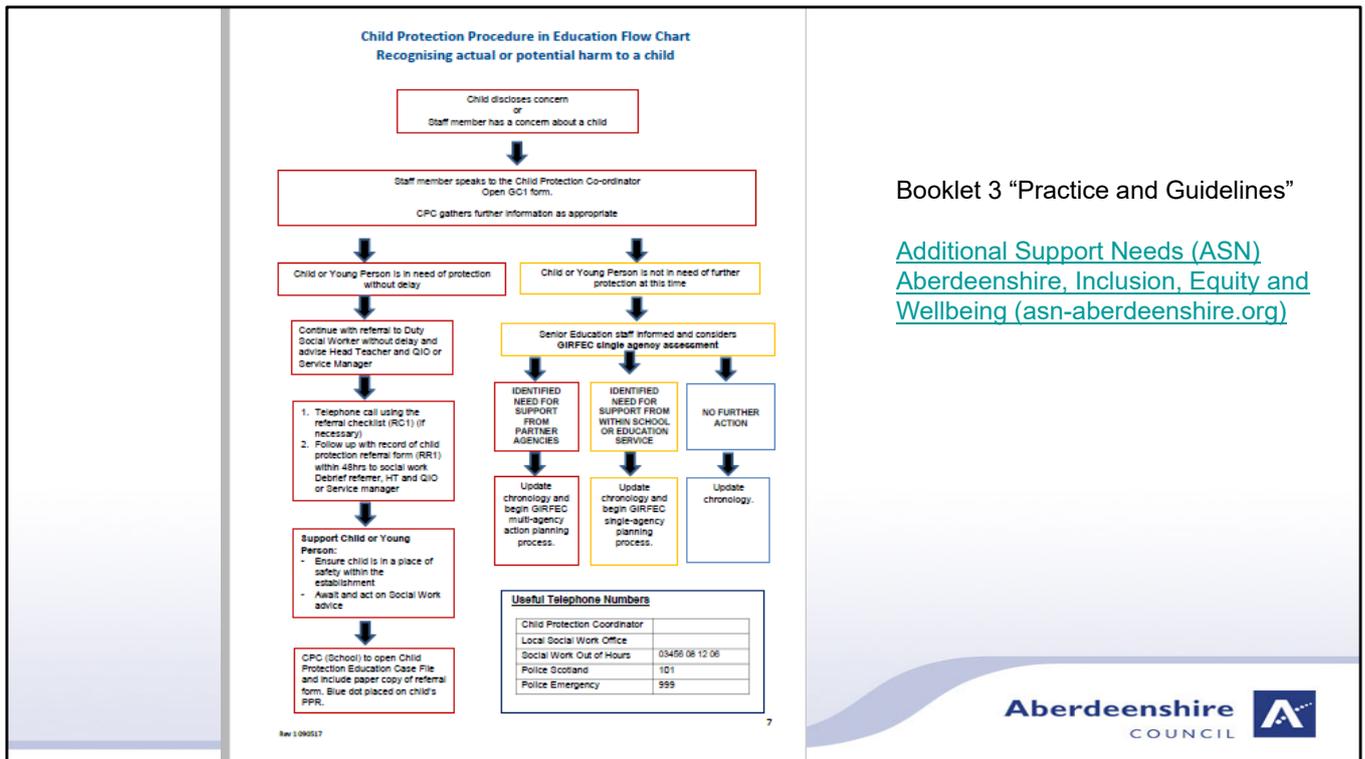
Head Teacher Delivery notes:

Discuss any concerns immediately with the Child Protection Co-ordinator (CPC) or the assigned cover CPC

If the CPC or cover CPC is not available, find a senior member of school staff, or seek advice from another establishment Head Teacher if no one is available in your own school.

If you become aware of an incident out of hours, or it is not possible to speak to a school contact, **DO NOT WAIT**. Immediately contact your local social work team, 'out of hours' Social Work, or the Police.

All up to date contact details for Children's Services Social Work Teams are available on Arcadia <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/children-and-families/children-and-families-team-offices/>



There are **3 Child Protection Booklets for schools**, available on the Inclusion, Equity & Wellbeing website (<https://asn-aberdeenshire.org/child-protection-guidance-and-training/>)

Booklet 1: looks at the Child Protection Context

Booklet 2: looks at Roles and Responsibilities.

Booklet 3: looks at Practice and Guidelines for schools. <https://asn-aberdeenshire.org/child-protection-guidance-and-training/>

This flowchart is taken from the *Protecting Children In Aberdeenshire Booklet 3* and shows the procedure to follow in schools. It takes you step-by-step through from identifying a potential wellbeing concern, to responding to a Child Protection concern.

If a concern is not child protection, the flowchart procedure helps us identify whether this is a wellbeing concern we still need to follow up in a different way, or if no further action is needed. A child's chronology should always be updated where a wellbeing concern has been identified.

Adult Protection

School staff may also become aware of a parent or carer who is believed to be an “[Adult at risk](#)” This is based on a 3 point test and defined as an adult who:

- (a) Is unable to safeguard their own well-being, property, rights or other interests,
- (b) Is at risk of harm, and
- (c) because they are affected by disability, mental disorder, illness or physical or mental infirmity, are more vulnerable to being harmed than adults not so-affected.

You can call the Adult Protection network on [01467 533100](tel:01467533100) for advice

- [Aberdeenshire Council Adult Support and Protection webpage](#)
- 1 hour Adult Protection e-learn on ALDO
- Adult Protection Leaflet available

Head Teacher Delivery notes:

As a member of Aberdeenshire Council you must ALSO act if you “**know or believe**” an adult is at risk of harm. <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/community-care/protection-and-support/adult-protection-and-support/>

Concerns should always be raised. Even if the 3 point test is not met, it can help identify what adult services can do to provide support if needed. Advice is available from the adult protection network at the telephone number on this slide.

More information is also available on the Aberdeenshire Council Adult Support and Protection webpage: <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/community-care/protection-and-support/adult-protection-and-support/>

A 1 hour *Adult Protection* e-learn module is available on ALDO

The Adult Protection leaflet is also available at the bottom of this document

Further Support and Guidance on Child Protection

- [Additional Support Needs \(ASN\) Aberdeenshire, Inclusion, Equity and Wellbeing \(asn-aberdeenshire.org\)](#) Booklets for Schools
- [Attending Child Protection Case Conferences \(CPCC\) - Practitioner Guidance \(1 page\)](#)
- [Aberdeenshire What is CSE – Practitioner Guidance \(1 page\)](#)
- [Reporting Child protection Concerns – Initial Referral Discussions](#)
- [National Child Protection Guidelines \(2014\)](#)
- [Aberdeenshire GIRFEC website Child Protection Section](#)
- [Aberdeenshire Multi Agency Learning & Development Child Protection Training Calendar](#)
- Child protection Leaflets for Parents/Families: [Attending an Initial CP Case Conference](#) and [Information on investigating Child protection concerns](#)
- [CSE Checklist](#)
- Aberdeenshire GIRFEC Website Sections on – [Child Trafficking](#), [FGM](#), [Forced Marriage](#)

Head Teacher Delivery notes: All guidance on this page is hyperlinked and clickable when in slideshow view

The **Aberdeenshire GIRFEC Website** has a Child Protection section with lots more information and resources including new guidance. Please don't save or print documents - access guidance directly from the GIRFEC website or Arcadia to make sure you are using the most up to date version.

New Aberdeenshire CP Leaflets made available in 2018/2019, include one for families on investigation of child protection concerns, a leaflet for families on initial child protection case conferences, and 1-page guidance for professionals on Attending a CPCC, and CSE.

The **Multi-Agency Learning and Development Child Protection** training calendar is also on this website, including a new online basic awareness refresher ALDO course. There is a range of different CP course topics available including online safety and wellbeing of young people

Head Teachers may wish to revisit specific child protection topics in more detail as part of school/cluster meetings or inservice days.

[Additional Support Needs \(ASN\) Aberdeenshire, Inclusion, Equity and Wellbeing \(asn-aberdeenshire.org\)](#)

Booklets for Schools

[Attending Child Protection Case Conferences \(CPCC\) - Practitioner Guidance](#) (1 page)

[Aberdeenshire What is CSE](#) – Practitioner Guidance (1 page)

[Reporting Child protection Concerns – Initial Referral Discussions](#)

[National Child Protection Guidelines \(2014\)](#)

[Aberdeenshire GIRFEC website](#) **Child Protection Section**

[Aberdeenshire Multi Agency Learning & Development](#) **Child Protection Training**

Calendar

Child protection Leaflets for Parents/Families: [Attending an Initial CP Case Conference](#) and [Information on investigating Child protection concerns](#)

[CSE Checklist](#)

Aberdeenshire GIRFEC Website Sections on – [Child Trafficking](#), [FGM](#), [Forced Marriage](#)

Further Information on Child Protection & Disability

- [Support offered by Aberdeenshire Speech and Language Therapy.docx](#)
- [IRD Checklist for Children.docx](#)
- [Support for children and young people during and after CP investigations.docx](#)
- [Child Protection & Children with Disabilities - Full Presentation](#)
- Additional National CP Guidance - [Child Protection and Disability](#)
- [Child Protection & Disability Toolkit](#)
- [Children with Disabilities and CSE](#)
- [Aberdeenshire Support Manual](#) – For children with a range of ASN

As well as national guidance, there is a range of additional local guidance which has been developed by Aberdeenshire Council and partner agencies. This helps professionals to support and meet the needs of children with disabilities before, during, and after a child protection investigation. These are shown on the slide.

Aberdeenshire Support Manual is a toolkit full of detailed and supportive ideas and guidance for meeting the needs of children and young people from 3-18 years, with all varieties of additional support needs. Aberdeenshire Council also has a physical intervention policy which all school staff should be aware of and follow

- [Support offered by Aberdeenshire Speech and Language Therapy.docx](#)
 - [IRD Checklist for Children.docx](#)
 - [Support for children and young people during and after CP investigations.docx](#)
 - [Child Protection & Children with Disabilities - Full Presentation](#)
 - Additional National CP Guidance - [Child Protection and Disability](#)
 - [Child Protection & Disability Toolkit](#)
- [Children with Disabilities and CSE](#)
[Aberdeenshire Support Manual](#) – For children with a range of ASN



Adult Protection Information



Information on the Adult Protection Process

Visit

If you are not safe or someone is harming you a social worker will visit you. The social worker will talk to you. The Social Worker will listen to how you feel. The social worker will talk to you on your own.

The social worker will ask you:

- if you are safe
- if you are worried about being harmed
- if you can keep yourself safe
- if you need help to keep yourself safe
- what can be done to help keep you safe

If we think you are safe we will not do anything.



If you are not safe or being harmed the social worker will talk to you about keeping you safe. **The social worker may:**

- give support to help you live safely
- help you plan ways to keep safe
- talk to the person who is harming you to stop it happening



The social worker will speak to other people about you. The social worker will find out if they think you are safe. The social worker will speak to you about this first. **The social worker may speak to:**

- your family
- people who give you support
- your doctor

The social worker will gather all the information about you. **The people working with you will take action to keep you safe by:**

- Providing support
- Having a meeting
- Agreeing a protection plan

Case Conference

A case conference is a meeting. The meeting will take place if you are not safe or someone is causing you harm. Everyone at the meeting will talk about how to keep you safe.

Your views are very important. Everyone at the meeting will listen to what you say. Your meeting will be in a place where you are able to attend. You will get help to go to the meeting and take part.

You can also ask for an independent advocacy worker. The advocacy worker will support you to tell us what you think. The advocacy worker will tell us about the things that are important to you. The advocacy worker may attend your meeting for you.

At your meeting we:

Will talk about any risks to your health and safety.

Will listen to what you want.

Will listen to what your friends and family say.

Will make a plan about how to keep you safe.

Protection Plan

The social worker will help you to keep you safe. We will listen to what you want. They will write this in a plan. This is called a Protection Plan.

A worker will stay in touch with you to make sure the plan is working well. The worker will help you to stay safe.

Contact us

If you would like more information please contact the adult protection network on 01651 871246

