



**Aberdeenshire**  
COUNCIL



**PROTECTING CHILDREN AND  
YOUNG PEOPLE IN EDUCATION**  
Book 3 Practice Guidelines

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## 1. The Context

Every child or young person has the right to be safe and protected, and to feel safe and protected from any avoidable situation or acts which might result in that child:

- Being physically, sexually or emotionally harmed in any way.
- Put at risk of physical, sexual or emotional harm, abuse or exploitation.
- Having their basic needs neglected or experiencing that their needs are met in ways that are not appropriate to their age and stage of development.
- Being denied the sustained support and care necessary for them to thrive and develop normally.
- Being denied access to appropriate medical treatment.
- Being exposed to demands and expectations which are inappropriate to their age and stage of development.

Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014

## 2. About the Guidelines

These guidelines, set out in a series of three booklets, apply to all Education staff. They also apply to all other employees, volunteers and others working with children and young people in educational establishments. This guidance will be updated as required to take account of changes in legislation and practice.

These guidelines will assist all employees who work with children, young people and families by:

- Developing an ethos which safeguards and promotes the welfare and wellbeing of all children.
- Providing clear guidance for all staff on the roles and responsibilities involved in child protection.
- Ensuring that staff respond appropriately when abuse is identified.
- Describing the processes and procedures that all staff must follow in response to disclosure, allegation or suspicion of child abuse.
- Ensuring effective interagency communication, collaborative working and provide a consistent framework for practice.

## 3. Child Protection Measures

Formal child protection measures can be broadly divided into a number of different stages:

- Recognising actual or potential harm to a child.
- Sharing concerns and initial information-gathering.
- Joint investigation/assessment.
- Medical examination and assessment.
- Child Protection Case Conferences.
- Developing a Child Protection Plan.

Education staff have a key role to play in recognising actual or potential harm to a child and in sharing concerns and initial information gathering. Social Work and/or Police staff lead on joint

investigations, assessments, case conferences and planning. As the investigating services, Social Work in conjunction with the Police, will determine the extent to which any risk to a child requires immediate action.

#### **4. Recognising Actual or Potential Harm to a Child or Young Person**

Concerns about actual or potential harm to a child or young person may arise over a period of time or in response to a particular incident. Concerns may arise as a result of direct observation or reports from the child or young person themselves, from a third party, or from concerns raised anonymously.

A child who has been abused and/or neglected may show obvious physical signs of injury or maltreatment. However, an assessment of whether a child is experiencing, or likely to experience, harm should also look closely at the child's behaviour and development. Some common behaviours which may indicate a cause for concern are detailed in the appendix section of this document.

#### **5. Significant Harm and the Nature of Risk**

Significant harm and the nature of risk are defined in Book 2 of Protecting Children and Young People in Education. Harm means the ill treatment or the impairment of the health or development of a child. Significant harm is determined by comparing the health or development of a child in relation to what might be reasonably expected of a similar child.

Risk is part of everyday life. GIRFEC practice model tools present a series of tools which are integral to the use of risk assessment: the Wellbeing Indicators; the My World Triangle; the Resilience Matrix and the National Risk Framework 2012. These can be found on the GIRFEC – Aberdeenshire website, [www.girfec-aberdeenshire.org](http://www.girfec-aberdeenshire.org).

From a child protection perspective, it is the risk of significant harm that is central. There are no absolute criteria for judging what constitutes significant harm; sometimes, it can be a single traumatic event, such as a violent assault or poisoning; often, it is a combination of significant events which can interrupt, change or damage the child's physical and psychological development. The challenge for practitioners is identifying which children require protective measures.

Where concerns are raised about the potential significant harm to a child, they must be considered child protection concerns. Failure to properly identify risk can lead to serious, and even fatal, outcomes for children.

#### **6. Key Questions When the Safety of a Child is Raised**

When considering the immediate needs of a child or young person once a concern about their possible safety is raised, it is essential that practitioners consider the following questions:

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

When a Child Protection Co-ordinator reaches a decision to contact Social Work and/or the Police with a child protection concern, this should be progressed without delay.

Contact may be made by phone or in person, and broadly the outcome of the contact will be:

- That the child is considered to be at risk of immediate or significant harm.
- That the child is considered to be a “child in need”.
- That no further action is identified as being required.

Regardless of the outcome, the discussion must be entered into the child’s chronology by the Child Protection Co-ordinator.

Where a concern has been raised but no further action is required, the five GIRFEC questions should be used and a single agency assessment considered.

Staff should be aware all contact will be recorded by Social Work staff.

## **7. Responding to Concerns About Children and Young People**

All notifications of concerns about children or young people should be taken seriously. Staff responsible for responding to these concerns should be aware that even apparently low-level concerns may point to more serious and significant harm.

When a Child Protection referral is made to Social Work or the Police they will check to determine whether or not they already know the child/family. Initial enquiries with relevant other agencies will be made to help inform an initial assessment of risk. In most cases, the child, parent or any other person will not be contacted at this stage.

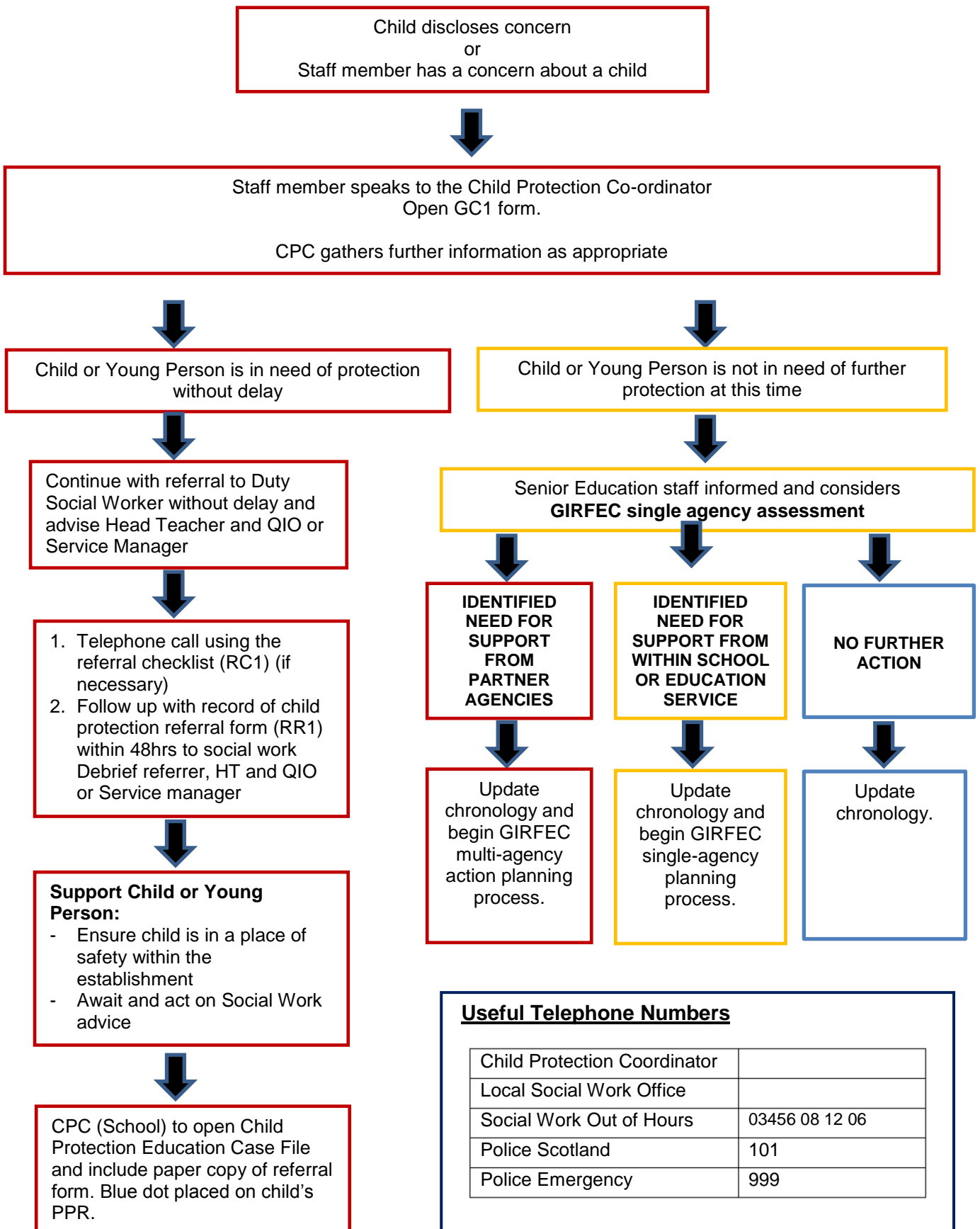
In Aberdeenshire, allegations of child abuse are investigated by Social Work and Police officers who will also liaise with their Education and Children’s Services and Health colleagues, where appropriate. The information gathered from the initial enquiries will be used to review initial assessment of risk and to determine what further action, if any should be taken.

Where concerns related to child protection arise, the Child Protection Procedure in Education must be followed. Any immediate risk should be considered by Child Protection Co-ordinators and actioned as a matter of urgency. Where a child is thought to require immediate medical assistance, this should be sought without delay from the relevant health services.

Where immediate risk is not identified, practitioners should consider the health and wellbeing of the child and the five GIRFEC questions should be used.

The process of responding to child protection concerns in diagrammatical form is shown overleaf.

## Child Protection Procedure in Education Flow Chart Recognising actual or potential harm to a child



### Useful Telephone Numbers

Child Protection Coordinator	
Local Social Work Office	
Social Work Out of Hours	03456 08 12 06
Police Scotland	101
Police Emergency	999

## 8. Responding to Concerns About Children and Young People

### All staff

If any member of staff has a concerns relating to a child or young person at risk from any form of abuse, the procedure in outline below, and detailed in the Child Protection Procedure in Education Flow Chart shown above, must be followed. Members of staff must:

- Remember that the role of the educational establishment or other services is to observe, record and report. Do not investigate.
- Discuss your concerns immediately with the Child Protection Co-ordinator (CPC) for your establishment or if he or she is unavailable the Depute Child Protection Co-ordinator. If neither are available speak to any senior member of staff.
- Ensure that the information you have is accurately recorded using form GC1.
- Be aware that the CPC will consider this information and may gather further information, dependent upon the situation.
- Maintain confidentiality at all times.
- If the incident occurs out of hours, or it is not possible to speak to the CPC or Depute, then it is important that you do not wait. Immediately contact the Out Of Hours Emergency Social Work Service on 03456 081206 or if you believe a crime has taken place the Police, directly.

Additional guidance on how to react to a disclosure can be found in the appendix section of this document.

## 9. Child Protection Co-ordinator (CPC)

Child Protection Co-ordinators are responsible for ensuring that appropriate action is taken in response to concerns being reported. Child Protection Coordinators must follow the Child Protection Procedure in Education Flow Chart.

- The CPC will gather further information from appropriate sources as a matter of urgency.
- The CPC will make an assessment and determines whether or not the child is in need of protection without delay.
- If an immediate risk exists the CPC will contact Social Work to share concerns. CPCs will ensure that any information is accurately recorded on the appropriate form (GC1) with reasons for the decision reached.
- The CPC will share information that is relevant, necessary, legitimate, appropriate and proportionate with others, including the Head Teacher, Service Manager, and Quality Improvement Officer.
- The CPC will co-operate fully where additional information or clarification is needed by Social Work or the Police.
- When feedback is available the CPC must ensure this is recorded on RR1 and on the appropriate chronology.

## 10. Recording Decisions and Actions

When the CPC has reached a decision to contact Social Work and /or the Police with a child protection concern this should be progressed without delay. Contact may be by phone or in person. Social Work or the Police will determine:

- That the child is considered to be at risk of immediate or significant harm.
- That the child is considered to be a “child in need”.
- That no further action is identified as being required.

Regardless of the outcome the fact of the discussion must be entered into the child’s chronology by the CPC.

### Recording where a child is considered to be at risk of imminent or significant harm:

- If the discussion above concludes that a child may be at risk of significant harm the Social Work Service will advise the CPC of next steps.
- Under these circumstances it is probable that Social Work or the Police will contact the establishment for additional information/ clarification. The Child Protection Coordinator will record that the conversation took place and the essence of it using RR1 and open an Education Child Protection File.
- When the outcome of the concern is feedback to the establishment the Child Protection Coordinator should record this in the Education Child Protection File.

### Recording where the child is considered to be a “child in need”.

- If the outcome of the discussion with Social Work or the Police is that the child should be considered to be “in need”, this should be recorded by the Child Protection Coordinator in the child’s chronology together with agreed actions in response to the child’s needs.

### Additional recording where it is considered that no further action is required.

- If the outcome of the initial consultation with Social Work or the Police is that no further action is required this should be recorded in the child’s chronology by the CPC.
- The Child Protection Coordinator will ensure that form GC1 is filed in the restricted access area of the Pupil Progress Report (PPR) or Child Protection Education File if already open.

## 11. Informing Parents and Carers

The most important aspect of child protection procedures is keeping children and young people safe from harm. When, how and by whom parents and carers are informed should always be discussed with Social Work or Police Scotland colleagues as part of the referral process. CPC should not inform parents or carers prior to this discussion.



## **12. Case Conferences**

If a child or young person is believed to have been exposed to significant harm, or to be at risk of significant harm a meeting of professionals may take place to decide whether or not the child's name should be placed on the Child Protection Register.

A Case Conference is a non-statutory multi-agency meeting organised by the social work service. It is central to child protection procedures. Its function is to:

- Bring together all the information from people who work with the child.
- Use this information to analyse and to assess the extent to which the child is at risk of abuse.
- Agree what measures need to be taken by various agencies to protect the child or promote their welfare.
- Place the child on the Child Protection register and if it is considered necessary to put a Child Protection Plan in place.
- Appoint a Key Worker and identify a Core Group to implement the plan.

Participants, who are asked to provide a written report at least two days ahead of the conference, are required to speak to their report. Those who attend the Case Conference will be asked for their professional opinion as to whether the child's name should be entered in the Child Protection Register.

If the child is placed on the Child Protection Register a review meeting will be arranged for a later date; the Core Group will be expected to meet prior to the review to ensure the progress of the plan.

## **13. Child Protection Register**

The Child Protection Register is a confidential database of children deemed to be at risk of child abuse.

The Register can be accessed by Police and Social Work. Every ECS establishment should know which children are on the Child Protection register and have measures in place to provide additional support if required. Placing a name on the Register does not itself protect the child. Protection comes from the multi-agency Child Protection Plan.

## **14. Allegations Against a Member of Staff or Other Known Adult**

On occasion Child Protection concerns may be identified or raised in relation to someone working in an Aberdeenshire Council educational establishment or service. This may include staff of that establishment or service, visiting Aberdeenshire Council employees, or workers not directly employed by Aberdeenshire Council.

Throughout, the first and paramount consideration must always be the safety of children and young people. However, in order to separate responsibilities towards the child from responsibilities towards the staff member about whom concern has been expressed, different individuals from within the establishment should be tasked with the responsibility of taking forward each respective area. In addition, a Head of Service will assume the overall responsibility for ensuring that the response of the Service is co-ordinated and effective.

In all cases the following advice must be followed:

- Any member of staff who is concerned or receives concerns about the conduct of other staff towards a child must immediately report this to the establishment's Child Protection Co-ordinator.
- The Child Protection Co-ordinator is responsible for immediately reporting the concern to the Head Teacher or head of establishment who will immediately inform the relevant Head of Service Education.
- The role of the Child Protection Co-ordinator is to ensure that standard child protection processes are followed.
- The role of the Head Teacher is to ensure that appropriate authority processes in relation to staff conduct are followed and to ensure that quality personal support is available to those concerned.
- In many instances, the police and social work will conclude that the matter should be investigated by the police. It is therefore important to avoid any action that may prejudice this investigation, including alerting the alleged perpetrator and alleged child victim(s).
- As each situation is unique, it is important that direction is taken from the police and social work on the actions to be taken.
- At an appropriate stage consideration should be given as to whether there is a necessity for the member of staff to be removed from the establishment, without prejudice, but pending the conclusion of the police/social work investigation. This decision should be taken by the Head Teacher after consultation with the Child Protection Officer, Head of Service and after appropriate discussion with a senior officer from Human Resources.
- Where the Child Protection Co-ordinator is the Head Teacher, the Head of Service will arrange for a substitute to be appointed to oversee personal support of staff. If the concern is about the most senior member of staff or the Child Protection Coordinator, the member of staff must report this to the appropriate Head of Service.

## Appendix 1 - Possible Signs of a Cause for Concern

<p><b>Physical Abuse</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Injuries, particularly if they are recurrent.</li> <li>• Improbable excuses given to explain injuries.</li> <li>• Refusal to explain and discuss injuries.</li> <li>• Untreated injuries or delay in reporting them.</li> <li>• Admission of punishment which appears excessive.</li> <li>• Fear of parents being contacted.</li> <li>• Fear of returning home.</li> <li>• Fear of medical help.</li> <li>• Arms and legs kept covered in hot weather.</li> <li>• Withdrawal from physical contact.</li> <li>• Self-destructive tendencies.</li> <li>• Aggression towards others.</li> <li>• Chronic running away.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Emotional Abuse</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fear of parents being contacted.</li> <li>• Admission of punishment which appears excessive.</li> <li>• Physical, intellectual and emotional development lags.</li> <li>• Significant decline in concentration.</li> <li>• Sudden speech disorders.</li> <li>• Over-reaction to mistakes.</li> <li>• Continual self-deprecation.</li> <li>• Fear of new situations.</li> <li>• Inappropriate emotional responses to painful situations.</li> <li>• Neurotic behaviour (e.g. rocking, constant hair-twisting, excessive thumb-sucking).</li> <li>• Self-mutilation.</li> <li>• Extremes of passivity or aggression.</li> <li>• Drug/solvent abuse.</li> <li>• Compulsive stealing/scavenging.</li> <li>• Indiscriminate friendliness.</li> <li>• Socio-emotional immaturity.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sexual Abuse</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hint about secrets they cannot tell.</li> <li>• Say that a friend has a problem.</li> <li>• Ask if you will keep a secret if they tell you.</li> <li>• Seem to be keeping secret something which is worrying them.</li> <li>• Begin lying, stealing, blatantly cheating in the hope of being caught.</li> <li>• Have unexplained sources of money.</li> <li>• Exhibit sudden inexplicable changes in behaviour, such as becoming aggressive or withdrawn or regressing to younger behaviour patterns.</li> <li>• Stop enjoying previously liked activities, such as music, sports, art, scouts, brownies.</li> <li>• Be reluctant to undress for gym.</li> <li>• Become fearful of or refuse to see certain adults for no apparent reason.</li> <li>• Having terrifying dreams.</li> <li>• Act in a sexual way, inappropriate to their age.</li> <li>• Draw sexually explicit pictures depicting some act of abuse.</li> <li>• Start wetting themselves.</li> <li>• Have urinary infections, bleeding or soreness in the genital, anal or throat areas.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Neglect</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constant hunger.</li> <li>• Emaciation.</li> <li>• Constant tiredness.</li> <li>• Poor personal hygiene.</li> <li>• Poor state of clothing.</li> <li>• Untreated medical problems.</li> <li>• Frequent lateness or non-attendance at school;</li> <li>• Low self-esteem.</li> <li>• Destructive tendencies.</li> <li>• Neurotic behaviour e.g. rocking; constant hair-twisting; excess thumb-sucking.</li> <li>• Limited social relationships.</li> <li>• Chronic running away.</li> <li>• Compulsive stealing or scavenging.</li> <li>• Significant lack of growth.</li> <li>• Weight loss.</li> <li>• Hair loss.</li> <li>• Poor skin or muscle tone.</li> <li>• Circulatory disorders.</li> </ul>

## Appendix 2 - Responding to a Disclosure and Guidance on Making Notes

The following points should be noted when responding to any disclosure.

- Stay calm.
- Do not promise to keep secrets.
- Tell the child or young person that you might have to let someone else know, but you will tell them who it is and what you are going to say.
- Listen to the child or young person and let them know you take what they say seriously.
- Give the child or young person time to say what they want to say.
- Try not to show alarm no matter how difficult the information.
- Do not ask any leading questions or suggest who might be responsible, no matter that clues may be contained in the information.
- Reassure the child or young person that they are doing the right thing by telling someone.
- Tell the child what action you are going to take.
- Do not ask the child to repeat their disclosure to another person.
- Remember that you too may need support as listening to an abused child is difficult.

As soon as practicable, using the language used by the child or young person, make a handwritten note using form RFC 1 in detail of the information shared with you. Record the date and time of the disclosure and sign the note. Share your information with the Child Protection Coordinator immediately.

### Guidance on Making Notes

- Notes should be made carefully, accurately and factually and as soon as practicable after the event. Hand written notes are acceptable.
- All notes must be signed and dated, with name and post held printed clearly.
- Signs of physical injury should be described in detail and/or sketched.
- At no time should photographic records be taken.
- Any relevant comment by the child or by an adult who might be the abuser, should be recorded, preferably quoting the words actually used.
- Opinion should be restricted to the demeanour of the child.
- The personal opinions of members of staff must not be included.

## Appendix 3 - Advice for Supporting the Child

The following points should be discussed with Police and Social Work if a child or young person is to be interviewed within Education and Children's Services premises:

- Whether the Child Protection coordinator has a role in the interview.
- How the child or young person should be informed by the Police/Social Work about what may be done to keep them safe.
- The team/establishment will provide a supportive role before and after the process.

NB: It is the role of the Police and Social Work to decide whether or not to involve the parents or carers at this stage.

The Police and Social Work may decide that a Joint Interview will be carried out with the child. This is a particular interview carried out by a specially trained Police Officers and a specially trained Social Worker. Police and Social Work will make arrangements for this to take place.

A Joint Interview needs to be video recorded to keep a record of the interview. This requires special equipment and as such the interview may need to take place at particular locations which have this equipment. Where appropriate, the decision might be made to make use of portable equipment.

## **Appendix 4 – Advice for Feeding Back to Referrer**

Raising concerns in relation to child protection may be difficult for those involved. It is important that anyone in that position receives reassurance that their concerns have been taken seriously, and appropriate action taken. However, it is equally important to maintain confidentiality at all times.

As soon as possible after the submission of form RRI the CPC should contact the person who raised the concern to thank them for their actions, explain that all cases are processed in line with Aberdeenshire policy. The referrer should be advised that policy has been followed and that, for reasons of confidentiality, no details can be shared.

## **Appendix 5 - Record Keeping and Report Writing**

Careful maintenance of Child Protection Records is vital. Information gathered may be required for a Child Protection Conference or, less frequently, for legal proceedings. The following advice must be strictly applied. Staff must not alter the wording or format of any forms provided for use.

It is vital that procedures are followed precisely and information and events are recorded accurately, factually and in detail. Information gathered may be required for a Child Protection case conference or, less frequently, for court action. It should be noted that the content of reports may be required to be made known to the families concerned and therefore reports must be factual. The following advice must be strictly applied:

- Records and reports should be kept in an authority Child Protection Education File and stored securely.
- When a Child Protection file is opened, this should be identified on the outside of the child's Pupil Progress Record (PPR) with a round blue sticker.
- All Child Protection Education File should be stored alongside PPRs.
- CPCs must ensure they comply with service arrangements to ensure Child Protection Education Files are accessible during holiday periods.
- A record should be kept of when records are consulted and by whom.

- Establishments should have a system for alerting staff dealing with a Child Protection issue to the existence of existing confidential material, should the Child Protection coordinator be unavailable
- All Child Protection information must be retained in the Child Protection File whether or not the child's name is currently entered in the Register.
- Current or previous Child Protection concerns must be highlighted to any receiving school at the point of transfer.
- Material relating to Child Protection should never be removed.

## **Appendix 6 – Forms**

GIRFEC Concern Sheet (GC1)

Child Protection Telephone 16-18 Referral Checklist (RC1)

Child Protection Record of Referral Form for Establishments (RR1)

*For completion by staff when they become aware of child welfare concerns, in accordance with government, local authority and school child protection policy and procedures. The designated Child Protection Co-ordinator will monitor concerns and respond to them as appropriate. This information will be disclosed only to those staff who need to know for the purposes of child protection. Concerns will usually be shared with parent/carer, unless to do so may place a child at increased risk of harm.*

Name of Child		Date of Birth	/ /
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Name of person making this record		Role of person making this record	
Date of concern	/ /		
Nature of concern			
Attach additional sheet(s) if necessary			
Action taken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Considered 5 GIRFEC questions</li> <li>Update chronology</li> <li>Consider who to inform</li> <li></li> </ul>		
Signed Designation		Date	/ /

Reviewed by :	(Signature)		
Any further action taken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chronology updated <input style="width: 30px; height: 15px;" type="checkbox"/></li> <li>Others informed (please detail) <input style="width: 30px; height: 15px;" type="checkbox"/></li> </ul>		
Date	/ /		
Final outcome			
Signature		Date	/ /



**Child Protection  
Telephone Referral Checklist**

RC1

1. Ask to speak to the Duty Social Worker, Senior Practitioner or Duty Manager in that order, stating clearly you wish to make a child protection referral
2. If none of the above are available immediately provide the details of the child you wish to refer (this will allow for any records to be located) and establish how soon you will be contacted.
3. When you speak with the relevant worker, note their name and designation
4. If details not left previously, identify the child, spelling out their name/date of birth/ address/ parents (carers)/ siblings if known
5. Inform the Duty Worker if you are aware that the child is staying anywhere other than the address you have already provided
6. Explain clearly the exact nature of your concern about the child – detailing how, when and why you came to be concerned and what action you have already taken.
7. Provide details of all others who are aware of this information
8. Establish any immediate action social work intend to take
9. Establish who will inform parents/carers and when this will be done
10. Check whether the child (and/or siblings) should be collected/dismissed as normal and establish what should happen if this is not to be the case
11. Check what you are able to say if parent/carer arrives before any action is taken by social work/ police
12. Confirm when you can be expected to receive feedback and from whom – if action is to be taken that evening it is important that you receive feedback by the beginning of the next school day.
13. Establish what further action will be required from the school
14. Email a copy of completed Child Protection Record of Referral Form within 48 hours, ensuring copy is posted to Senior Child Protection Officer



**Child Protection Record of Referral Form for Establishments**

School / Establishment			
Name of Child/Young Person:			
Date of Birth		Sex	Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female <input type="checkbox"/>
Class/Group/Project		Age	

Concerns, including name of member of staff who raised initial concern	
Actions taken including details of Social Work / Police contacted	

Referred by		Date	
Report sent to (please specify)			
Signed			

Information shared with	Social Work	Police	Other (Please State)
Response received from	Social Work <input type="checkbox"/>	Police <input type="checkbox"/>	Other (Please State) <input type="checkbox"/>
Date			

**This form should be filed in the Child Protection Education Case File if open or confidential section of PPR**