

Safeguarding children and young people

Safeguarding children is the process of preventing impairment of children's health and development, and of ensuring they are growing up safely and securely and provided with effective care, all of which collectively enables them to attain greater success in adulthood. Safeguarding also extends to protecting children from abuse or neglect, when it occurs, including the promotion and protection of children's rights

Last reviewed

18 June 2026

Safeguarding children and young people is everyone's business. The Public Health Agency (PHA) is a member of the [Safeguarding Board, Northern Ireland \(SBNI\)](#) and is committed to working with other agencies to safeguard children and young people in line with The United Nations [Convention on the Rights of the Child text | UNICEF](#), [The Children \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1995](#), the [Children's Services Co-operation Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2015](#) and [Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland | Department of Health](#).

The PHA participates in [Children and Young People Services Partnership](#) arrangements to achieve the following outcomes for all children and young people as outlined in the Northern Ireland Executive's [Children and Young People's Strategy 2020-2030 | Department of Education](#).

Children and young people:

- are physically and mentally healthy,
- enjoy play and leisure,
- learn and Achieve,

- live in safety and stability,
- experience economic and environmental well-being,
- make a positive contribution to society,
- live in a society which respects their rights,
- live in a society in which equality of opportunity and good relations are promoted.

Public Health Agency membership of the SBNI representatives:

Ms Emily Roberts: Interim Director of Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professionals

Ms Joanne McClean: Director of Public Health

Ms Amber McCloughlin: Interim Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children and Young People

SBNI Committee	Name / Role
Case management review	<p>Amber McCloughlin amber.mccloughlin2@hscni.net / Interim Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children</p> <p>Emily Roberts Emily.roberts@hscni.net / Interim Director of Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professionals</p>
Policy and procedures	<p>Amber McCloughlin amber.mccloughlin2@hscni.net / Interim Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children</p> <p>Jennifer Donnelly jennifere.donnelly@belfasttrust.hscni.net / Named Nurse for Safeguarding Children, Belfast Trust</p>

Child protection	Amber McCloughlin amber.mccloughlin2@hscni.net / Interim Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children
Domestic abuse	Amber McCloughlin amber.mccloughlin2@hscni.net / Interim Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children
On-line Safety Steering Group	Amber McCloughlin amber.mccloughlin2@hscni.net / Interim Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children

Access key resources and guidance below:

PHA staff responsibilities towards children, young people and their families

Responsibilities of PHA staff towards children, young people and their families include:

- Promoting the rights of children and young people in keeping with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- Seeking the views of children and young people and giving these serious consideration when developing and reviewing services;
- Promoting public awareness of the need to safeguard children;
- Supporting prevention and early intervention approaches and strategies that support children, young people and their families;
- Recognising and responding to child care concerns in keeping with [Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland Procedures Manual](#) and procedures using the appropriate [Gateway Service Teams contact details | nidirect](#);
- Cooperating with the Strategic Planning and Performance Team (SPPG), HSC Trusts and other agencies to promote safe and effective services for children and families, and monitor progress against agreed strategies and action plans.
 - Providing professional advice in relation to the implementation of safeguarding recommendations and strategies in liaison with Strategic Planning and Performance Team (SPPG) and HSC Trust staff.

- Promoting regionally consistent high standards of safeguarding practice;
- Maintaining appropriate levels of professional knowledge and expertise;
- Adhering to relevant professional codes of conduct.
- Further information can be found in the [Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy, Guidance for PHA staff](#).

Regional Safeguarding Children Nursing, Midwifery and AHPs Forum

Regional Safeguarding Children Nursing, Midwifery and AHPs Forum

The PHA has established a **Regional Safeguarding Children Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professionals Forum** for Northern Ireland to support and develop the effective contribution of nurses, midwives and allied health professionals to safeguarding children and young people.

- This forum is chaired by Ms Amber McCloughlin, Interim Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children.

Regional nursing, midwifery and AHPs - associated policy, procedures and guidance

Regional nursing, midwifery and AHPs - associated policy, procedures and guidance

The PHA supports the implementation of regionally consistent safeguarding children practice that is underpinned by agreed policies, procedures and standards:

- [Adoption reports guidance for public health nurses in Northern Ireland \(June 2013\)](#)
- [Care-experienced children: guidance and practice standards \(December 2025\)](#)
- [Care-experienced children: health review completion \(December 2025\)](#)
- [Legal guidance for nursing, midwifery and AHPs \(April 2023\)](#)
- [Multi-agency practice guidelines on female genital mutilation](#)
- [Non-therapeutic male circumcision: regional guidance for nurses, midwives and AHPs \(2025\)](#)
- [Public Health Nursing - initial holistic health review for care-experienced children and young people form.docx](#)
- [Public Health Nursing - initial holistic health review of unaccompanied asylum-seeking child or young person form.docx](#)

- [Public Health Nursing - review holistic health review RHR - annual holistic health review form.docx](#)
- [Public Health Nursing - health plan for sharing at children in care planning and review meetings form.docx](#)
- [Reflective supervision: regional safeguarding supervision policy and standards for nurses and midwives \(2023\)](#)
- [Regional guidance for the transfer of specialist community public health nursing child health records when a child is being adopted \(March 2016\)](#)
- [Regional guidance on refusal to engage \(December 2020\)](#)
- [Regional guidance on recording of nursing midwifery AHP observations interactions](#)
- [Regional guidelines for nurses and midwives when sharing information with the Children's Court Guardian Age](#)
- [Regional safeguarding supervision policy and standards for nurses and midwives](#)
- [Routine Enquiry into Domestic Abuse: Guidance for Midwives, Health Visitors, School Nurses and Family Nurses in Northern Ireland \(February 2026\)](#)
- [Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland \(SBNI\) core group regional policy and procedures](#)
- [Safeguarding children and young people: guidance for PHA staff](#)
- [Safeguarding children and young people policy \(2023\)](#)
- [Safeguarding children learning and development guidance for nurses, midwives and AHPs \(2022\)](#)
- [Safeguarding children summary transfer template \(Word version\)](#)
- Safeguarding children transfer within and between jurisdictions: Regional Process for Specialist Community Public Health Nurses and Family Nurses (under revision, contact amber.mccloughlin2@hscni.net for further details)
- [Sexual health toolkit for foster carers and HSC staff](#)
- [Women who do not present or present late for antenatal care - HSC staff guidance](#)

Breastfeeding: care-experienced children

- [Additional information for the caregiver of a Breastmilk Fed Baby \(2024\)](#)
- [Breastfed Babies website](#)
- [Breastfeeding guidelines - supporting breastfeeding \(2024\)](#)
- [Expressing, Storage and Transportation of Breastmilk \(2024\)](#)
- [Late antenatal guidance](#)

- [UNICEF Assessment of breastmilk expression \(2024\)](#)

Safer sleeping

Safer sleeping resources for the public and professionals

It is recognised that consistent messages about safer sleeping should be provided regularly both in the antenatal period and postnatally. The Public Health Agency, in consultation with practitioners from the key disciplines across all five HSCTs, have developed two new resources to assist practitioners in “having the conversation as opposed to just delivering the message.” The resources include a Parent Information Card and a Risk Assessment Tool for professionals. A brief guidance document to support practitioners in the use of the resources is also included.

- [Reducing the risk of sudden infant death: SIDS risk assessment tool for professionals \(January 2025\)](#)
- [Promoting safer sleeping for infants and reducing the risk of sudden infant death: guidance for professionals \(January 2025\)](#)
- [Safer sleeping: reducing the risk of sudden infant death, leaflet and poster information for parents \(December 2025\)](#)
- [Festive routines may change, safe sleep shouldn't: PHA advice for parents \(December 2025\)](#)

Key resources

- [Action For Children search results 'neglect'](#)
- [Adoption & Fostering Northern Ireland](#)
- [Barnardo's | Research Publications](#)
- [Child protection | Department of Health](#)
- [Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership \(CYPSP\)](#)
- [Children's Law Centre - Children's Rights Change Children's Lives](#)
- [Co-operating to Safeguard Children | Department of Health](#)
- [Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy 2024-2031 | Department of Justice](#)
- [Ending Violence Against Women and Girls | The Executive Office](#)
- [Looked after children | Department of Health](#)
- [MAPNI - Men's Advisory Project - Male Victims of Domestic Abuse](#)
- [Nexus NI](#)
- [NSPCC Learning | Safeguarding and child protection](#)
- [Probation Board for Northern Ireland](#)

- [Protecting children and vulnerable adults | nidirect](#)
- [Safeguarding Board Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2011](#)
- [Youth Justice Agency | Department of Justice](#)
- [Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland](#)
- [VOYPIC](#)
- [Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland \(SBNI\)](#)

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