

# SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Guidance for PHA Staff



# What is Safeguarding?

**Safeguarding begins with preventative activity which enables children and young people to grow up safely and securely in circumstances where their development and wellbeing is not adversely affected. Safeguarding also extends to protecting children from abuse or neglect when it occurs, including the promotion and protection of children's rights (SBNI 2012).**

All children and young people have the right to be kept safe and to receive appropriate support services having due regard to religious belief, political opinion, race, age, gender, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, people with dependants or without.



## Who is responsible for Safeguarding Children?

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Safeguarding children and young people is **everyone's** responsibility

This leaflet is for all staff in the Public Health Agency. It provides information on our individual and collective responsibility to promote the wellbeing and protection of children either in the course of our work or in our personal lives.

## What is the definition of a child?

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A child/young person is anyone under the age of 18 years. For the purpose of safeguarding, the same principles and responsibilities apply to the unborn baby.

## Where is a child likely to experience abuse or neglect?

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A child or young person may experience actual or potential abuse in any setting for example, their home, the community or in an institution. There are different types of abuse and a child or young person may experience more than one of them.

## When can abuse happen to a child?

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- At any age, from pre-birth up to the age of 18
- In any family
- In any ethnic and cultural background
- With or without disabilities
- At home, at school, in leisure activities, in children's homes - **in fact, anywhere**

## Who might abuse a child?

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It is important to remember that anyone can abuse a child or young person:

- Men and women (any age), other young people
- Parents, parental partners, family, family friends, carers, baby sitters, child minders, faith group members, professional/other staff or volunteers
- Often people who the child or young person knows, loves and trusts
- People from any social, ethnic or religious groups
- Less often: strangers

## Why is it important to prevent child abuse and neglect?

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Child abuse and neglect poses a risk to the health and wellbeing of children immediately or in the future, and in some cases a child may die if concerns are not acted on.

## What are the types of abuse?

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**Physical abuse** is deliberately physically hurting a child. It might take a variety of different forms, including hitting, biting, pinching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating a child.

**Sexual abuse** occurs when others use and exploit children sexually for their own gratification or gain or the gratification of others. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape, or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside clothing. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via e-technology). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

**Emotional Abuse** is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child/young person. It is also sometimes called psychological abuse and it can have severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's emotional development. Emotional abuse may involve deliberately telling a child that they are worthless, or unloved and inadequate. It may include not giving a child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them, or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. Emotional abuse may involve bullying – including online bullying through social networks, online games or mobile phones – by a child's peers.

**Neglect** is the failure to provide for a child/young person's basic needs, whether it be adequate food, clothing, hygiene, supervision or shelter that is likely to result in the serious impairment of a child/young person's health or development. Children/young people who are neglected often also suffer from other types of abuse. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to a child's basic emotional, social and educational needs.

**Exploitation** is the intentional ill-treatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over a child or young person; to take selfish or unfair advantage of a child or young person or situation, for personal gain. It may manifest itself in many forms such as child labour, slavery, servitude, engagement in criminal activity, begging, benefit or other financial fraud or child trafficking. It extends to the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation can be sexual in nature.

NB: Most types of abuse will fit into the above definitions. However, there may be emerging issues to be aware of. Examples include other harm outside of the family: bullying, harassment or violence from peers, crime, gang or paramilitary violence/activity.

## What increases vulnerability to abuse?

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**All children and young people may be vulnerable at different times and for varying reasons. This may increase their risk of abuse and neglect:**

- Babies under the age of 1 year
- Children and young people with any kind of disability
- Children who have experienced adverse childhood experiences for example living in a household where a parent/carer has:
  - Misused alcohol or substances
  - Experienced or been a perpetrator of domestic abuse
  - A significant mental health issue

## How might I recognise abuse or neglect?

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**Be alert to:**

- The types of abuse and neglect
- The factors that may increase vulnerability of a child or young person
- The factors that may increase stressors for parents/carers
- Something that you may see
- Something that you might hear or be told.

It is important to always consider impact on the child or young person.

## How should I respond to abuse or neglect?

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- Listen carefully
- Seek advice from your line manager/safeguarding lead
- Make a record of all observations and actions
- Where you have an immediate safeguarding concern and there is imminent risk to a child or young person, inform the PSNI by ringing 999
- Seek advice from, and/or make a referral to, Children's Social Services in the area where the child/person at risk resides

A child protection referral, should be made by telephone to the Gateway Team or Regional Emergency Social Work Service and followed up in writing using a UNOCINI referral form.

Family support referrals should be submitted to the Gateway Team using a UNOCINI referral form with consent of the parent/carer.

## What are the contact details for Children's Social Services?

| Trust Area    | Referral Phone Number | RESWS  |
|---------------|-----------------------|--|
| Belfast       | 028 9050 7000         | <b>Out of office hours and bank holidays - all Trust areas:</b><br><br>028 9504 9999 |
| Northern      | 0300 1234 333         |  |
| South Eastern | 0300 1000 300         |  |
| Southern      | 0800 7837 745         |  |
| Western       | 028 7131 4090         |  |

## What are the other organisational responsibilities?

**All staff have a duty of care and responsibility to act where a child or young person may be at risk of abuse.**

The PHA Safeguarding Children Policy aims to ensure that all staff understand the PHA's commitment to safeguarding children and young people and their individual, team and organisational responsibilities in relation to safeguarding children and young people. All new staff should read and familiarise themselves with this policy which can be found at: <https://phaconnect.hscni.net/wp-file-download-search/policies/#19-105-safeguarding-children-and-young-people>.

The PHA is a member of the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI). The SBNI is made up of key organisations from the statutory, community and voluntary sectors who work collectively to ensure the protection and wellbeing of children in Northern Ireland. The SBNI Child Safeguarding Learning and Development framework sets out the key minimum learning outcomes to equip staff with the skills, knowledge to promote the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, within the remit of their roles and responsibilities. All staff should discuss their safeguarding children induction, and on-going learning and development needs with their line manager. <https://www.safeguardingni.org/>

Managers must ensure that staff are aware of their role, responsibilities, relevant policies and induction, learning and development and appraisal processes are in place. Managers should support staff with safeguarding children and young people actions.

PHA staff involved in the commissioning process must ensure that the organisations they commission to provide health and social care services maintain procedures to ensure wellbeing of children and young people and the safety of those who may be at risk of abuse or neglect. Where there are concerns about procedures or practice, these must be raised with the organisation (where it is safe and appropriate to do so) and escalated within the PHA via line management.

## How and when do we share information?

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**The confidentiality of children, young people and their family/carers should be protected unless a child or young person is suffering or likely to suffer harm from abuse or neglect.**

Information sharing for the purposes of safeguarding children is key to ensuring the safety and well being of a child or young person by preventing abuse or neglect or responding early to stop it. Information should be accurate, relevant, necessary, and proportionate to the level of need or risk.

Where staff are unaware of what information should be shared, they should seek advice from their line manager.

## Staff Wellbeing

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Safeguarding children can affect staff personally. Staff should seek support from their line manager in the first instance.

More information can be found at <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/directorate-nursing-and-allied-health-professions/nursing/safeguarding-children-and-young-people>.



