

Operational Policy number:	
Operational Policy title:	Child Protection
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Date:	11/03/2024

Approved By:	
Date:	

1. REVISION HISTORY

Version	Date	Summary of changes from previous version	Name	Date of Next Review
01	01/05/2024	Update Child Protection Policy to adhere to Scottish Government updated guidance 2023 First version of new operational policy format	Maryann Preston	01/05/2026

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3. Abbreviations

CCE: Child Criminal Exploitation

CP: Child Protection

CPC: Child Protection Coordinator

CPPM: Child Protection Planning Meeting

CSE: Child Sexual Exploitation

FGM: Female Genital Mutilation

GIRFEC: Getting it Right for Every Child

HBA: 'Honour-based' Abuse

IRD: Inter-agency Referral Discussion

JII: Joint Investigative Interview

NL: North Lanarkshire

NLC: North Lanarkshire Council

NOC: Notification of Concern

UNCRC: United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

SHANARRI: Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible, Included

HoE: Head of Establishment

CSA: Child Sexual Abuse

HSB: Harmful Sexual Abuse

4. Introduction

- 4.1 The safety and wellbeing of children and young people is paramount. Our children and young people have the right to be protected from all forms of harm and abuse.
- 4.2 The Children (Scotland) Act 1995 gives local authorities a duty to protect and promote the wellbeing of children and young people in need in their area. This includes giving families appropriate support to help ensure their children are getting the best start in life.
- 4.3 North Lanarkshire Policy and Practice Guidance will support the care and protection of children across our establishments, in a way that links with National Guidance. The guidance reflects up to date developments and new thinking. It incorporates our understanding of best practice and what works from various sources, including practitioner and stakeholder experience, inspections, research and learning from Significant Case Reviews.
- 4.4 This policy provides information on how Education and Families will ensure that all establishments in North Lanarkshire have updated national guidance on child protection (CP), including local authority procedures and protocols whilst setting out clear responsibilities to support the care and welfare of our children and young people.
- 4.5 A consistent multi-agency approach will be achieved through an online Policy and Practice Guide for practitioners on the Education and Families SharePoint containing relevant links to statutory guidance, mandatory responsibilities, resources, supports and training information.

5. Legal Framework and Compliance

- 5.1 Where there is a need for urgent action to protect a child at risk of significant harm the most appropriate and proportionate legal routes should be considered. [The Children \(Scotland\) Act 2020](#) received Royal Assent in October 2020. When implemented it will amend many aspects of [The Children \(Scotland\) Act 1995](#) which, in conjunction with the [Children's Hearings \(Scotland\) Act 2011](#) provide the main legislative framework for the protection of Children in Scotland.

- 5.2 **This policy takes account of the following national guidance:**

[National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 – updated 2023](#)

The procedures outlined must always be followed meticulously by all employees and should be implemented in conjunction with [North Lanarkshire Child Protection Policy and Practice Guide](#) which is available on Educations and Families SharePoint.

- 5.3 The National Guidance is in four parts:

Part 1: The Context for Child Protection

Part 2A: Roles and Responsibilities for Child Protection

Part 2B: Approach to Multi-Agency Assessment in Child Protection

Part 3: Identifying and Responding to Concerns about Children

Part 4: Specific Support Needs and Concerns

Further information on national guidance is detailed in section 11 (Scope of Policy), setting out the approach and expectations to child protection in all establishments in North Lanarkshire.

5.4 Underpinning child protection policy and practice is a significant and substantial policy context relating to wellbeing and child protection alongside general principles of participation. See links below for further information.

- [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\)](#)
- [Getting it right for every child \(GIRFEC\)](#)
- [The Promise](#)
- [Trauma Informed Practice Toolkit](#)
- [North Lanarkshire Council and Safe & Together | Improvement Service](#)

6. Risk Management

See risk register "Failure to meet child protection and other care and wellbeing legislation".

7. Health & Safety

No health and safety requirements.

8. Equality or Fairer Scotland Duty

No implications on equality or fairer Scotland duty.

9. Environmental

No environmental implications.

10. Roles and Responsibilities

Role of the Local Authority

10.1 The Head of Establishment is the key employee with responsibility for all child protection issues.

The local authority will support Heads of Establishment through:

- (1) Ensuring that local authority guidance is updated timeously in response to updates in national guidance.
- (2) Ensuring that the North Lanarkshire Child and Adult Protection Procedures and training are updated and available for annual training every August in-service day.
- (3) Ensuring that procedures are in place, so all employees know there is a named child protection co-ordinator in the establishment.

- (4) Ensuring that all staff have a clear understanding of whistleblowing procedures.
- (5) Supporting the development of establishment policy and practice to meet national and local authority guidance.
- (6) Providing mandatory and optional child protection training for all employees.
- (7) Supervising child protection work, including Health and Wellbeing development initiatives.
- (8) Providing relevant information to support Parent Council and all parent/carer understanding of Child and Adult Protection Procedures and Guidance
- (9) Developing links in a multiagency approach to promote the protection of children.
- (10) Monitoring and evaluating the provision made to support and protect children and young people through ongoing self-evaluation and case file audits.
- (11) Maintaining a central child protection register with Social Work for all children who are the subject of an inter-agency Child Protection Plan. This includes unborn babies. The register has no legal status. This is an administrative system for alerting practitioners that there is sufficient professional concern about a child to warrant an inter-agency Child Protection Plan.
- (12) Delegating responsibility to a Senior Education and Families manager to trace a registered child whose whereabouts has become unknown, including notifications and alerts to other areas and services.
- (13) Taking responsibility towards children being educated at home.
Scottish Government guidance on home education is under review. Current guidance should be adhered to. For further information click on the following links:
 - [Scottish Government: Home Education](#)
 - [North Lanarkshire Council: Inclusion services](#)
- (14) Providing services to support our employees when dealing with child protection issues. See support offered by North Lanarkshire Council by accessing the following links:
 - [Health & Wellbeing Support for Employees – My NL](#)
 - [Talk about it | Work well NL](#)

Role of the Head of Establishment/ Child Protection Co-ordinator

10.2 The duties associated with the coordinator's role will be undertaken or delegated by the Head of Establishment, taking account of local circumstances.

These responsibilities include:

- (1) Being familiar with the information contained in the [North Lanarkshire Child Protection Policy and Practice Guide](#).
- (2) Undertaking Child Protection Coordinator training every 3 years.
- (3) Supporting the Head of Establishment in ensuring that all employees refresh child protection training annually and that employees have access to the guidance and Education and Families SharePoint.
- (4) Ensuring that employees/visiting tutors who are not present at annual child protection training are given the self-learning pack to complete.
- (5) Maintaining an up to date and signed register as evidence of employees' child protection training.
- (6) Ensuring the establishment is following expected procedures when there is a child protection concern as North Lanarkshire Council Grounds for Concern Flowchart (**See Appendix A**)
- (7) Ensuring that the establishment Child Protection Policy is updated to reflect local authority and national guidance.

- (8) Displaying Child Protection Coordinator name, photograph and contact details for everyone in the establishment (including visitors) to access if required.
- (9) Undertaking yearly self-evaluation of Child Protection and Safeguarding as required by How Good is Our School/How Good is Our Early Learning and Childcare.
- (10) Auditing using North Lanarkshire Council Child Protection Checklist to quality assure processes and procedures (**See Appendix B**)
- (11) Coordinating support within the establishment for specific children/young people.
- (12) Cooperating on behalf of the establishment/service with inter-agency child protection support plans.
- (13) Liaising with other establishments and external agencies.
- (14) Sharing relevant information with police or social work without delay, provided it is necessary, proportionate, and lawful to do so.
- (15) Being responsible for updating and supporting others to record events effectively on SEEMiS Pastoral notes.
- (16) Reporting all concerns timeously as set out in [North Lanarkshire Policy and Practice Guide](#)
- (17) Recording all events, reports, referrals, medicals, meetings on SEEMiS Pastoral Notes or Wellbeing App
- (18) Creating a chronology of significant events.
- (19) Attending Inter-agency Referral Discussion (IRD), Child Protection planning meeting (CPPM) core group meetings and review meetings as required.
- (20) Activating/deactivating child protection tab on SEEMiS as required.
- (21) Informing a senior manager immediately if an allegation of abuse is made against a staff member.
- (22) Ensuring that all necessary contingency arrangements are made to cover the Child Protection Coordinator role e.g. Head Teacher and CP Coordinator absence, summer provision in nursery settings. This is particularly important for nurseries who operate a provision out with school hours and school term-time.

Role of all employees

- 10.3 Everyone has an individual responsibility to protect children from harm and to work collaboratively ensuring good communication and joint working.

These responsibilities include:

- (1) Listening to children and young people and understanding how to support them. Children and young people's right to protection and participation are enshrined in the UNCRC, predominately in Article 12. Rights are important anywhere and anytime but paying attention to them may become particularly urgent in a setting where children have been exposed to an increased risk of harm.
- (2) Recognising indicators of abuse or neglect, such as changes in behaviour, unexplained injuries, or patterns of absenteeism. Early identification enables timely intervention and support for vulnerable children. (**See Appendix C**)
- (3) Reporting concerns to designated child protection officers or local authorities. Employees are required to follow established procedures promptly and accurately, ensuring that appropriate action is taken to address child protection issues in line with establishment and North Lanarkshire Child Protection Policy. (**See Appendix A**)
- (4) Collaborating with other professionals, including social workers, healthcare practitioners, and law enforcement, to safeguard children effectively. Employees are encouraged to engage in

multidisciplinary discussions and share relevant information to facilitate coordinated responses to child protection concerns.

- (5) Supporting children experiencing difficulties to mitigate risks to children's well-being.
- (6) Mandatory training and professional development refreshed yearly to ensure knowledge and skills necessary for effective child protection practice.
- (7) Creating an environment where children feel safe, respected, and valued. Policies and practices are implemented to prevent potential risks and promote positive relationships, fostering an atmosphere conducive to children and young people's holistic development.
- (8) Whistleblowing if there is need to escalate a concern beyond a senior manager or local authority.



[Figure 1: Expectations from children who may be involved in child protection processes (National Child Protection Guidance, 2023)]

Grounds for Concern

10.4 Grounds for concern about the safety and wellbeing of a pupil can arise from a wide range of circumstances and will generally be covered by the following events:

- (1) a child/young person states that abuse has taken place or that he/she feels unsafe.
- (2) a third party or anonymous allegation is received.
- (3) a child's/young person's appearance, behaviour, play, drawing or statement arouses suspicion of abuse.
- (4) a child/young person reports an incident of abuse which occurred some time ago.
- (5) employees witness abuse.

Responding to Grounds for Concern: Guidance for all Education and Families Employees

- 10.5 Employees must ensure they are fully conversant with their establishment's child protection procedures/protocols, how to access them and who is the designated Child Protection Coordinator (CPC) and how they can be contacted. Any concerns regarding children should be immediately reported to the persons line manager, and to social work or the police.

If an employee has a ground for concern, policy and procedures for notification of concern (NOC), set out in [North Lanarkshire Policy and Practice Guide](#) should be followed along with the expectations below:

- (1) Any grounds for concern should be reported immediately to the Head of Establishment/Child Protection Coordinator. Where the grounds for concern are noted by a member of an external service and the child/young person concerned does not attend an Education and Families establishment, then the employee should report the issue to his/her Head of Service. On no account should employees tell a parent/carer about what has happened at this stage.
- (2) If there is direct evidence or suspicion of child abuse, the matter must be reported immediately. The employee should not wait to gather evidence, nor agree to keep the information secret or discuss the matter with others.
- (3) Employees must follow the guidance given by the Head of Establishment/Service in relation to recording concerns, supporting the child/young person, co-operating with subsequent actions to investigate the grounds for concern and protecting the child or children concerned.
- (4) All information recorded must be relevant, accurate, signed and dated as it may be needed for legal purposes at a later stage. The information should include a clear, succinct chronology of events, all relevant factual information and a summary of the employee response and any agreements reached.
- (5) When attending child protection case conferences, employees should provide an accurate report for the meeting and provide appropriate feedback to the Head of Establishment/Child Protection Coordinator in relation to the outcome of the meeting.
- (6) It is essential that there is no delay in initiating protection procedures even where the Child Protection Coordinator/Head of Establishment is absent from the establishment. In this circumstance, staff should contact the North Lanarkshire Child Protection Development Officer or Education and Families Manager.

11. Scope of Policy

Part 1: The Context for Child Protection

- 10.6 Policy and procedures are for all employees working within education establishments in North Lanarkshire. They should not be regarded as exhaustive or exclusive. Child protection procedures will not in themselves keep children safe, everyone has an individual responsibility to protect children from harm and to work collaboratively ensuring good communication and joint working.

The Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) approach underpins both preventative and child protection processes.

GIRFEC in North Lanarkshire is based on three stages of intervention: universal, additional, and intensive. All are about safeguarding and protecting children from harm; however, the formal child protection system is at the intensive level as it is a specialist, partnership intervention. The universal

and additional stages also illustrate how needs can be met to head off some issues which, if left, may result in Child Protection situations.

Child Protection refers to the processes involved in gathering, assessing and planning what action may be necessary where there are concerns that a child may be at risk of harm.

The child protection process involves:

- (1) Immediate action, if necessary, to prevent significant harm to a child.
- (2) Inter-agency investigation about the occurrence or probability of abuse or neglect, or of a criminal offence against a child. Investigation must extend to other children affected by the same risks as the child who is the subject of a referral.
- (3) Assessment and action to address the interaction of behaviour, relationships and conditions that may, in combination, cause or accelerate risk.
- (4) Focus within assessment, planning, and action upon listening to each child's voice and recognising their experience, needs and feelings.
- (5) Collaboration between agencies and persistent efforts to work in partnership with parents in planning and action to prevent harm or reduce risk of harm.
- (6) Recognition and support for the strengths, relationships and skills within the child and their world to form a plan that reduces risk and builds resilience.

All establishments are required to have their own child protection policy and procedures which should be aligned to the Scottish approach to protecting children's rights and human rights. All staff should have an awareness of updated policy and guidance.

Training should be refreshed on an annual basis for all staff and additionally every 3 years for Child Protection Coordinators. A register of all staff training should be kept up to date within the establishment.

Systems should be in place in all establishments to ensure that the Child Protection Coordinator and their role is known to all children and young people, staff, and visitors.

Part 2A: Roles and Responsibilities for Child Protection

The updated [Child Protection National Guidance in Scotland \(2023\)](#) underscores the pivotal role of education in safeguarding children and promoting their wellbeing. Employees are entrusted with critical responsibilities in identifying signs of abuse or neglect, intervening appropriately, and collaborating with relevant agencies to ensure the safety of children.

Key aspects of the guidance highlight the following:

1. **Early Recognition and Intervention:** Education professionals are tasked with recognising indicators of abuse or neglect, such as changes in behaviour, unexplained injuries, or patterns of absenteeism. Early identification enables timely intervention and support for vulnerable children. (**See Appendix C**)
2. **Reporting Procedures:** Clear protocols are outlined for reporting concerns to designated child protection officers or local authorities. Education staff are required to follow established procedures and policy promptly and accurately, ensuring that appropriate action is taken to address child protection issues in line with school and North Lanarkshire Child Protection Policy. (**see Appendix A**)

3. Collaborative Approach: Collaboration with other professionals, including social workers, healthcare practitioners, and law enforcement, is essential in safeguarding children effectively. Education professionals are encouraged to engage in multidisciplinary discussions and share relevant information to facilitate coordinated responses to child protection concerns.

4. Supporting Children and Families: Education settings play a crucial role in providing support to children and families experiencing difficulties. This includes offering guidance, access to resources, and referrals to appropriate support services to address underlying challenges and mitigate risks to children's well-being.

5. Training and Development: Continuous training and professional development opportunities are provided to equip education professionals with the knowledge and skills necessary for effective child protection practice. This includes training on recognising signs of abuse, understanding legal obligations, implementing safeguarding procedures as well as using frameworks for robust self-evaluation and quality assurance.

6. Promoting a Safe and Nurturing Environment: Education settings strive to create an environment where children feel safe, respected, and valued. Policies and practices are implemented to prevent potential risks and promote positive relationships, fostering an atmosphere conducive to children's holistic development.

Overall, the updated Child Protection National Guidance emphasises the indispensable role of education in safeguarding children and the importance of a collaborative, proactive approach to protecting children from harm and ensuring their well-being.

Part 2B: Approach to Multi-Agency Assessment in Child Protection

Contextual Safeguarding and extra familial harm

Non-familial harm is defined as risks to the welfare of children that arise within the community or peer group, including sexual and criminal exploitation. A key element of non-familial harm is that in general, harm does not arise from the home environment; parents may not be aware that their child is at risk or may be struggling to protect their child and the family from harm against exploiters. Children can be at risk wherever they choose to spend their time, including in schools, in the community or online. Therefore, the location and context the child is in is important.

However, sometimes parental neglect and lack of supervision may contribute to the young person's exposure to extra-familial harm. Children who experience difficulties or instability at home may be more likely to spend more time outside of home and hence be more vulnerable to non-familial harm.

Non-familial harm can take the form of:

- (1) Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)
- (2) Online grooming, sharing of images
- (3) Child Criminal Exploitation including drug dealing
- (4) Modern Slavery and Trafficking
- (5) Gang Activity and Youth Violence
- (6) Radicalisation

Responding to non-familial harm

Child protection procedures should be initiated when there are concerns about a child at risk of non-familial harm. Consideration should be given to initiating an IRD, Child Protection investigation, Child Protection planning meeting and registration. Please see [North Lanarkshire Policy and Practice Guidance](#) for further information.

Part 3: Identifying and Responding to Concerns about Children

Part 3 is about child protection processes, including consideration, assessment, planning, and action required.

Notification of Concern (NOC)

Policy and procedures should be followed as set out in Grounds for Concern Flowchart (**See Appendix A**).

Employees must ensure they are fully conversant with their establishments Child Protection procedures/protocols, how to access them and who is the designated Child Protection Coordinator and how they can be contacted. Any concerns regarding children/young people should be immediately reported to the persons line manager, and to social work or the police.

All relevant documentation to report (NOC) or referral to the Children's Reporter can be accessed in the Education and Families Child Protection SharePoint.

Inter-Agency Referral Discussion (IRD)

An Inter-agency Referral Discussion (IRD) is the formal process of information sharing, assessment, analysis, and decision-making following reported concern about abuse or neglect, including exploitation or trafficking of a child or young person up to the age of 18 years.

Concerns may relate to familial and non-familial concerns, and of brothers/sisters or other children within the same context. This includes an unborn baby that may be exposed to current or future risk.

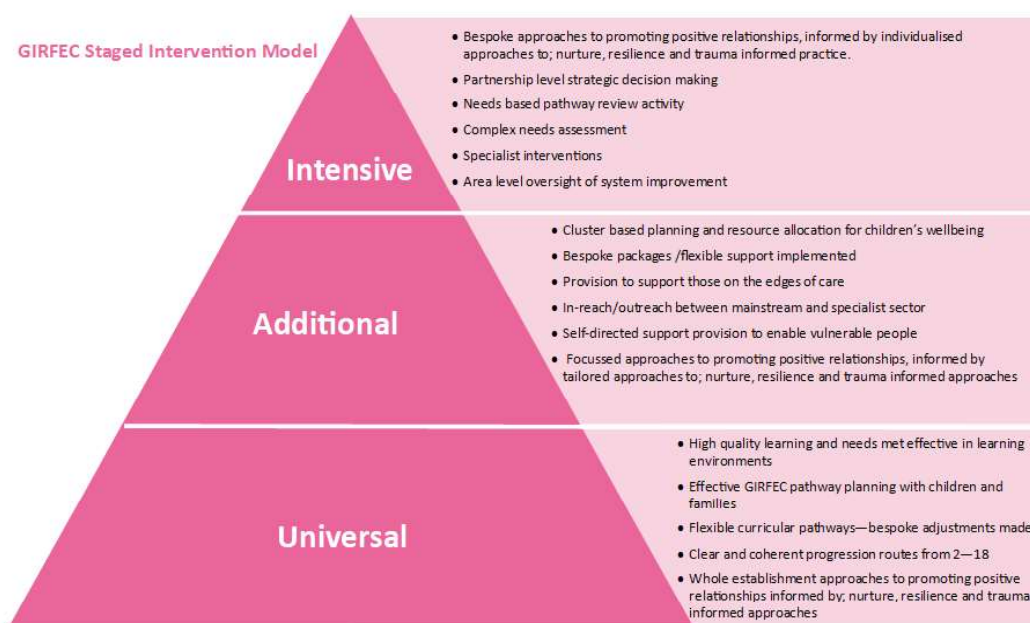
The IRD must be convened without undue delay. The national best practice standard is that an IRD should be convened within 48 hours. Where there is a risk to the life of a child or the likelihood of immediate risk or significant harm, intervention must not be delayed pending information gathering/sharing.

All concerns which may indicate risk of harm must lead to the consideration of an Initial-Agency Referral Discussion (IRD). Education professionals will be expected to provide a report and invited to participate in IRD discussions at short notice.

All information on IRDs (whether conducted or not) should be noted as a significant event on [SEEMiS Pastoral notes](#).

Joint Investigative Interview (JII)

An investigative Interview is a "formal planned interview with a child, carried out by staff trained and competent to conduct it..." (Guidance on interviewing Child Witnesses in Scotland, Scottish Government 2011) National Guidance on Joint Investigative Interviewing of Child Witnesses in Scotland can be accessed [here](#).



The decision to undertake a JII of a child witness will be taken by the core agencies during the Inter-Agency Referral Discussion (IRD). Time-sensitive forensic pressures may require immediate action; however, any such action must always be preceded by discussion between relevant partner agencies. A full IRD must be undertaken as soon as practicable.

Medical

The decision to carry out a medical assessment and the decision about the type of medical examination is made by a paediatrician informed by inter-agency discussion with police, social work and other relevant health staff. Through careful planning, the number of examinations will be kept to a minimum. Children/young people will be supported to attend medicals for child protection purposes.

Getting it Right for Every Child Approach

GIRFEC in North Lanarkshire is based on the model shown, showing three stages of intervention. All are about safeguarding and protecting children from harm; however, the formal child protection system is at the intensive level as it is a specialist, partnership intervention. The diagram also illustrates how needs at the universal and additional level can be met in order to head off some issues which, if left, may result in child protection situations.

The North Lanarkshire GIRFEC pathway has been developed from the National Practice Model and Practitioners should be familiar with the core elements such as the SHANARRI wellbeing indicators, My World Triangle and resilience matrix. The GIRFEC pathway sits within the Empowering Clusters model and with the Planning for Children's Wellbeing Guidance provides the practice guidance for multi-agency planning out with the child protection process.

A named person is an identified point of contact, usually a health visitor from birth to school age, a head teacher or deputy during primary school years and a head teacher, deputy, pastoral care teacher or pupil support teachers during secondary school years. A named person can provide or access information and support for parents, children, or young people.

The lead professional can be drawn from any of the services or agencies which are partners in the child's plan. In child protection cases, the role of the lead professional will typically be taken by the

local authority social worker. The lead professional will be responsible for ensuring the production and review of an agreed multi-agency child's plan.



[Figure 3: Elements in child protection assessment (National Child Protection Guidance, 2023)]

Child Protection Investigation Process

Child Protection Assessment

The general purpose of a multi-agency child protection assessment is:

- (1) Gather, share, and analyse such information about a child/young person, family and relevant context as may be necessary for the purpose of determining harm or risk of harm.
- (2) To inform planning of action and support as necessary to ensure a child's or young person's safety and wellbeing.

Child Protection Case Recording

Good case recording is essential to informing risk assessment and care planning. It is critical in assisting practitioners to identify any patterns and risks when working with a family. Records may also be used as evidence in court or children's hearings and could be viewed by the family if they request access to their file. SEEMiS Pastoral notes should be updated with all information during the Child Protection investigation. **Pastoral notes of significant positive events should also be recorded.**

Chronologies/Wellbeing App

[Chronology](#) is a key tool which professionals in a range of disciplines can use to help them understand what is happening in the life of the child, young person, or family. It is:

- (1) A summary of events key to the understanding of need and risk, extracted from

- comprehensive case records and organised in date order.
- (2) A summary which reflects both strengths and concerns evidenced over time.
 - (3) A summary which highlights patterns and incidents critical to understanding need, risk, and harm.
 - (4) A tool which should be used to inform understanding of need and risk. In this context, this means risk of significant harm to a child.

Chronologies should be created through SEEMiS/Wellbeing App as part of the child protection file:

- [SEEMiS Chronologies](#)
- [Wellbeing app guidance](#)

Child Protection Meetings

When a child protection investigation has been undertaken and indicates that a child is potentially at risk of significant harm a multi professional Child Protection Planning Meeting (CPPM) should be convened.

Practitioners attending are there to take an active part, represent Education and Families and share information to ensure that risks can be identified and addressed. They have a responsibility to share relevant information. Participants need to understand the purpose and functions of the CPPM, and the relevance of their particular contribution.

If the CPPM decides that a Child Protection Plan is required, the child's name **must** be added to the Child Protection Register. Policy and procedures at establishment level should be followed to inform local authority by completing Outcome of Notification of Concern. Child Protection tab on SEEMiS should be activated and digital file updated on Wellbeing App.

Education practitioners will be part of a 'Core Group' of multiagency professionals who meet four weekly. Members of the group are responsible for reviewing the progress of the outcomes set out in the Child Protection Plan and consider whether any changes need to be made to the plan. Members need to ensure that contingency plans are in place should there be concern about the child's safety or wellbeing.

- (1) Recording of decisions at CPPMs, Core Group meetings, CP registration/deregistration should be recorded on pastoral notes.
- (2) All minutes from CPPMs, core groups or plans/reports should be uploaded to the Wellbeing App.

When a practitioner wishes to raise an issue about the process, or disagrees with the CPPM decisions, communication and concerns should be channelled through their agency line management. There should be clearly defined local arrangements for challenging inter-agency CPPM dissent through the use of escalation procedures.

(See **Appendix D** for Child Protection Process Timescales)

Part 4: Specific Support Needs and Concerns

The [National Child Protection Guidance Part 4](#) covers specific areas of concern; and factors that may intersect with these concerns that may require specific attention and support.

Poverty

Actions to prevent and mitigate child poverty at the local level are likely to have both a direct and indirect impact on child wellbeing, safety, and protection.

Most families experiencing poverty provide safe and loving homes and practitioners should be careful not to stigmatise families through highlighting the impact of poverty in families. However, poverty can cause as well as accelerate neglect and the risk of other harms. Consideration of the impact of poverty on children is a core consideration in child protection assessment and family support. Recent research indicates the disproportionate number of children placed apart from their families within the poorest neighbourhoods in Scotland.

Contact NLC's Tackling Poverty Team at TPTeam@northlan.gov.uk for further information and support.

Protection of Disabled Children

Disabled children are children first and foremost. Each child has unique potential. Their needs must be considered in the context of a holistic assessment of the child and the intersecting strengths and risks in their world. The term 'Disabled children' is used in this Guidance to reflect a social model of disability ([A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People, p.7](#)). It is the right of individuals, families and groups to use terms which feel acceptable to them, such as 'children with disabilities'. Further information can be found in the [2023 National Guidance update from page 140](#) onwards.

'Disabled children' is a broad term which may be applied to children with a broad range of physical, emotional, developmental, learning, communication and healthcare needs. The term is applicable when these needs have a substantial and long-term impact on a child's ability to engage fully in normal day-to-day activities. Some children (and some adults) are affected by disabilities and developmental delays that have never been assessed or diagnosed.

Most parents of disabled children provide safe and loving homes. Their expertise, commitment, willingness to work in partnership, motivation and hope are potentially strong protective factors.

However, children with communication impairments, behavioural disorders, learning disabilities and sensory impairments may be additionally vulnerable to abuse and neglect.

Disabled children have an equal right to be safe. Structures, processes and attitudes may open or close doors to safety. Effective protection requires extra preparation and consideration of the impact of any disability for a child within child protection processes.

All employees working with disabled children must have an awareness of child protection processes as described in **Part 3 of this Guidance**. They must understand and know how to respond when a child may be showing or talking about abuse. This entails a supportive approach which protects everyone closely involved – for example by considering siblings' needs and experience.

Some roles and tasks require provision of additional training, guidance, and supervision. For example, practitioners involved in a child protection investigation will need additional guidance and training in relation to indicators of concern; consideration of a child's wishes, feelings, support, and communication needs; and investigative interviewing, as appropriate.

Migrant Families

Child protection concerns relating to unaccompanied children or migrant families, should be addressed by the same inter-agency processes as for a UK national. Cultural differences should be respected in dealing with families but should never be accepted as justification for behaviour that puts children at risk.

Local authorities' safeguarding of children encompasses support for migrant families who have no recourse to public funds. These families face a high risk of poverty and destitution.

Contextual Safeguarding

Contextual safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences in a range of social contexts, and ultimately expanding child protection system objectives beyond their families, to recognise young people are vulnerable to significant harm in these areas.

Although the Contextual Safeguarding approach can be used with many issues of risk of harm outside the family, it is particularly suited to issues of child sexual and criminal exploitation.

A child protection response is required to child sexual exploitation (CSE) and child criminal exploitation (CCE), the manner of which will be determined following an Inter-agency Referral Discussion. ***'Disclosure' is not a prerequisite for a child protection investigation.*** CSE and CCE are under-recognised.

It is the shared responsibility of professionals, parents, and carers to support children's resilience, security, and safe use of online technologies.

Prevent

The aim of the Prevent strategy is to reduce the threat to the UK from terrorism by stopping people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. Radicalisation defines the process by which people come to support terrorism and extremism and, in some cases, to then participate in terrorist activity.

Mandatory e-learning can be accessed on NL Learning Pool:

- [NL Learning Pool for mandatory modules](#)

FGM, forced marriage and honour-based violence

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Article 24.(3) of the UNCRC requires public authorities to take all effective and appropriate measures with a view to abolishing traditional practices prejudicial to the health of children.

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is child abuse. This traditional practice is an extreme form of gender-based abuse, causing significant and lifelong physical and emotional harm. Cultural considerations and sensitivities should not override the need of professionals to take action to protect a child at risk.

Honour-based abuse and forced marriage

A forced marriage is a marriage conducted without the full and free consent of both parties, and where duress is a factor. Duress can include physical, psychological, financial, sexual and emotional abuse. A forced marriage is different from an 'arranged marriage'. An arranged marriage is one in which the families of both spouses are primarily responsible for choosing a marriage partner for their child or relative, but the final decision as to whether to accept the arrangement lies with the potential spouses: both spouses give their full and free consent.

Forced marriage is both a child protection and adult protection matter. Child protection processes will be considered up to the age of 18. Forced marriage may be a risk alongside other forms of so called 'honour-based' abuse (HBA).

Practitioners are not advised to directly engage with the family, as it may aggravate and expedite the risk of a child being taken abroad for a marriage. It is always advisable to contact a specialist organisation or community advisor for support. Contact North Lanarkshire Council Child Protection Officer or Education and Families Manager.

Safe and Together

The Safe and Together Model is based on partnering with domestic abuse survivors and intervening with domestic abuse perpetrators to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children. The Safe and Together approach includes principles and elements essential to safe practice. These are to:

- (1) keep the child safe with the non-abusive parent
- (2) form a supportive partnership with the non-abusive parent
- (3) hold the abusive parent accountable for their abuse

Within this approach, practitioners from statutory and non-statutory agencies work collaboratively and reach consensus to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children living with domestic abuse.

The Promise

The Scottish Government has taken significant strides in implementing initiatives aligned with [The Promise](#), a commitment to reforming the care system for children and young people in Scotland.

By embracing The Promise and implementing its recommendations, North Lanarkshire Council can foster a culture of continuous improvement and accountability within its child protection services. This involves ongoing monitoring and evaluation of practices to ensure they are effective and responsive to the needs of children and families. Ultimately, The Promise provides a framework for North Lanarkshire Council to enhance its child protection efforts and work towards better outcomes for all children and young people within the region.

Further information on child protection linked to this policy can be accessed on:

- [National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 – updated 2023](#)
- [Education and Families SharePoint](#)

Appendix A

Grounds for Concern Flowchart

Action Guidance for the Head of Education Establishment (HoE) or Child Protection Coordinator (CPC).

HoE or CPC identifies grounds for concern, or a formal concern is reported. *Further action is taken immediately.*

HoE or CPC gathers all available information. HoE or CPC assesses the risk to the child or young person, using this information and professional judgement; this may include a preliminary discussion with social work about a concern.

NO
Referral

Referral

If making NO referral to social work department

- Record concern in pastoral notes as significant event and create chronology.
- Use the GIRFEC staged intervention approaches to support child.
- Plan actions to support the child in collaboration with parents and carers.
- Arrange review date and name of reviewer.

If making a referral to the social work department

- Phone duty senior social worker to discuss submission of Notification of Concern (NOC) about a child to Social Work
- Complete and send NOC (Appendix 2) to social work department with a copy to NLC Child Protection
- If the child is known to be subject to a supervision requirement, send a copy of the NOC to Scottish Children's Reporter Association (SCRA)
- Record all information and action taken as a significant event on pastoral notes and create chronology.
- Upload NOC to Wellbeing App and complete actions.

Support through Child Protection Process/IRD

Within 5 working days

- Receive acknowledgement of referral from social work
- Complete and send Notification of NLC Outcome of NOC proforma to NLC Child Protection

NLC Child Protection Checklist

<u>Establishment name:</u>	<u>Date:</u>	<u>Completed by:</u>
This can be used by establishment's Senior Leadership Team to audit Child Protection processes and processes and procedures and by Education Managers as part of quality assurance of Safeguarding and Child Protection. This can be used with all staff working with children and young people including all ancillary staff. 1. Visible signage in the Foyer showing Child Protection Coordinator (CPC) and other school staff with designated responsibility for child protection (CP); especially to visitors. 2. CP policy in place and on website. 3. CPC details on back of visitor badges. Snapshot shows awareness of CPC and other school staff with designated responsibility for child protection (Select and ask 3 random staff/pupils). 4. CPC awareness: ask a few children and young people about knowledge of who the CPC is as well as ways that the school keeps children and young people safe/what would a child do if they felt unsafe 5. CPC knowledge of individual children. Plans are being maintained and used to identify support/interventions. Sample 3-5 additional/intensive level plans. 6. Sample plans from children and young people who are Care Experienced/Child Protection Register. 7. Sample 3-5 single agency chronologies. 8. Copies of CP Procedures and National Guidance for CP (Scotland, 2023) are accessible to staff (on NL SharePoint). 9. Training log is complete and up to date. 10. Staff handout CP Guidance has been updated annually. 11. Review log for administration of medication and speak to the person who administers this; this may include looking at Stage 2 health plans. 12. Review log for First Aid and speak to the First Aider. 13. CPC has knowledge of attendance information, interventions, and support. 14. Review Bullying & Equalities log. Review Compliments/Complaints log and themes. 15. Review all other logs as appropriate e.g., fire/door safety.		

Area		Yes	No		Yes	No		Yes	No
Visible signage in the Foyer showing CPC	Available at front of school.			Available in other places around the school.			General awareness of who the CPC is.		
CP policy and guidance in place	Has review date.			On the website.			Part of staff induction.		
CPC awareness	CPC details on visitor badges.			Children and young people awareness of who CPC are.			Young people aware of C&W process and follow up.		
Individual needs	Knowledge of CP registered children and young people.			CP registered pupils have a plan in place.					
	Knowledge of care experienced children and young people.			All Care Experienced/historical CE learners should have a plan in place and should be considered for a CSP and have one if appropriate.			Plans and CSPs are high quality and up to date.		
Procedures and Guidance	Copies in Head teacher office/Education and Families SharePoint			Staff can access Education and Families SharePoint					
CP Training log	Complete and up to date. Annual updates register available.			Has other training included.			Annual Updates (includes refresher on Prevent).		
Staff CP Self-Learning Guidance Pack	Staff Handout CP Guidance utilised for new employees and log kept.			All staff can access guidance for dealing with disclosure (on Education and Families SharePoint)					
CP Files	All recording of C&W and CP will be on Wellbeing APP. Folders will be available with reports received in paper format.			Organised correctly.			Actions carried out		

Electronic chronologies and overview.	Wellbeing App chronology of significant events available				Appropriate actions			Ongoing monitoring		
PPRs	Stored separately from CP folders.				Organised correctly e.g., in date order.			Do not contain confidential information.		
Log of administration of medicine	Log available in central point where administered.				Double signature (Second signature as a witness).			Medical cabinet locked and emergency medication is easily accessible e.g., EpiPens etc.		
First Aid	Log available.				Consistent information recorded.			Parents/Carers are informed appropriately.		
Attendance	Knowledge of attendance rates/non-attenders.				SEEMiS is used to scrutinise/monitor attendance data.			Appropriate support given to children and young people.		
Bullying log	Bullying log seen.				All aspects completed.			School is acting on trends/patterns.		
Compliments log	Compliments log seen.				All aspects completed.			School is promoting effective practice.		
Complaints log	Complaints log seen.				All aspects completed.			School is acting on issues.		
All other logs as appropriate e.g. CPC coordinator contingency plan	Seen.				Completed.			School is acting on issues.		

Appendix C

Definitions of Harm

Physical abuse - is the causing of physical harm to a child or young person. Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, or scalding, drowning, or suffocating. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes, ill health to a child they are looking after.

There may be some variation in family, community, or cultural attitudes to parenting, for example, in relation to reasonable discipline. Cultural sensitivity must not deflect practitioners from a focus on a child's essential needs for care and protection from harm, or a focus on the need of a family for support to reduce stress and associated risk.

Emotional abuse - is persistent emotional ill treatment that has severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's emotional development. 'Persistent' means there is a continuous or intermittent pattern which has caused, or is likely to cause, significant harm. Emotional abuse is present to some extent in all types of ill treatment of a child, but it can also occur independently of other forms of abuse.

It may involve –

- conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person.
- exploitation or corruption of a child, or imposition of demands inappropriate for their age or stage of development.
- repeated silencing, ridiculing or intimidation.
- demands that so exceed a child's capability that they may be harmful.
- extreme overprotection, such that a child is harmed by prevention of learning, exploration and social development.
- seeing or hearing the abuse of another (in accordance with the [Domestic Abuse \(Scotland\) Act 2018](#)).

Child Sexual abuse (CSA) - is an act that involves a child in any activity for the sexual gratification of another person. Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. A child under age 16 cannot consent to sexual activity at all, so it cannot be claimed that the child consented or assented to such activity. Generally, the position for children aged 16-17 will depend on whether there is consent or a reasonable belief of consent. Some sexual offences, such as sexual abuse of trust ([section 42 of the Sexual Offences \(Scotland\) Act 2009](#)) apply up to age 18 irrespective of consent. The offences of taking or possession of indecent photographs of children ([sections 52 and 52A of the Civic Government \(Scotland\) Act 1982](#)) apply up to age 18, with certain defences related to those in established relationships where the child is reasonably believed to be 16 or over.

Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, indecent images, or in watching sexual activities, using sexual language towards a child, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. Children

who experience sexual abuse may experience multiple forms of abuse and neglect within and beyond the family.

For those who may be victims of sexual offences aged 16-17 and who are at risk of significant harm, child protection procedures should be considered, and must be applied when there is concern about sexual exploitation or trafficking.

Article 19 of the UNCRC sets out requirements on public authorities to take appropriate protective measures. These include appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from sexual abuse; support for the child and for those who have the care of the child; as well as forms of prevention, identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow-up.

Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB) - is developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour displayed by children and young people under the age of 18 years old. Harm may be directed towards self or others. Often, children who have engaged in harmful or problematic sexual behaviours are unique in that society views them differently than if they engaged in other types of hurtful behaviour. However, children and young people who display or engage in harmful or problematic sexual behaviours need to be seen as children first and foremost, recognising that children and young people are developmentally different to adults and responses should reflect this. It is crucial that everyone in North Lanarkshire who works with children and young people should be able to distinguish between sexual behaviour that is developmentally typical and sexual behaviours that are problematic or harmful. This will help us to respond appropriately and provide children and young people with the right protection and support, at the right time.

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) - is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a person under 18 into sexual activity in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator.

The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact. It can also occur through the use of technology.

Children who are trafficked across borders or within the UK may be at particular risk of sexual abuse.

Child criminal exploitation (CCE) - is a cause of significant harm and should trigger child protection processes and consideration of relevant preventative action. CCE is not defined in law but practitioners should be alert to the possibility that some children who are victims of trafficking may be exploited by gangs and organised criminal networks. CCE can be associated with 'county lines', which refers to criminal exploitation by gangs which export illegal drugs into one or more areas (within the UK). Gangs may use dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of 'deal line'. Such gangs are known to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move (and store) drugs and money and often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons. However CCE can also occur in the absence of these features.

[Practitioner Guidance on Criminal Exploitation \(2023\)](#) has been published to support a shared understanding of criminal exploitation of children and adults, and to help assist with early identification of those at risk. The guidance has been developed by a subgroup of the Serious Organised Crime Taskforce; however, it equally applies to child criminal exploitation which is not linked to serious organised crime.

Child criminal exploitation takes a variety of different forms and affects both male and female children. It can include children being forced to work in cannabis factories, being coerced into moving drugs or money across the country, forced to shoplift or pickpocket, or forced to threaten other young people. Any child being forced or coerced to commit crime must be seen as a victim of exploitation.

Child criminal exploitation is often unrecognised and this can mean children are more likely to be prosecuted for offending behaviour, rather than being recognised as victims of exploitation. Children may fear arrest and prosecution. They may be drawn in to CCE through other children.

Child trafficking and exploitation - Child trafficking and exploitation is abuse, and an immediate child protection response is required, and an inter-agency referral discussion (IRD) must be undertaken when there is reason to believe a child may have been trafficked or exploited. This involves the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt, exchange or transfer of control of a child under the age of 18 years for the purposes of exploitation. Transfer or movement can be within an area and does not have to be across borders. Examples of and reasons for trafficking can include sexual, criminal and financial exploitation, forced labour, removal of organs, illegal adoption, and forced or illegal marriage.

Neglect - neglect consists in persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, which is likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. There can also be single instances of neglectful behaviour that cause significant harm. Neglect can arise in the context of systemic stresses such as poverty and is an indicator of both support and protection needs.

Persistent' means there is a pattern which may be continuous or intermittent which has caused or is likely to cause significant harm. However, single instances of neglectful behaviour by a person in a position of responsibility can be significantly harmful. Early signs of neglect indicate the need for support to prevent harm.

The GIRFEC approach sets out the essential wellbeing needs of all children. Neglect of any or all of these can impact on healthy development. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment); to protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; to ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers); to seek consistent access to appropriate medical care or treatment; to ensure the child receives education; or to respond to a child's essential emotional needs.

Faltering growth - refers to an inability to reach normal weight and growth or development milestones in the absence of medically discernible physical and genetic reasons. This condition requires further assessment and may be associated with chronic neglect.

Malnutrition, lack of nurturing and lack of stimulation can lead to serious long-term effects such as greater susceptibility to serious childhood illnesses and reduction in potential stature. For very young children the impact could quickly become life-threatening. Chronic physical and emotional neglect may also have a significant impact on teenagers.

Female genital mutilation - this extreme form of physical, sexual, and emotional assault upon girls and women involves partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. Such procedures are usually conducted on children and are a criminal offence in Scotland. FGM can be fatal and is associated with long-term physical and emotional harm.

Forced marriage - is a marriage conducted without the full and free consent of both parties and where duress is a factor. Duress can include physical, psychological, financial, sexual, and emotional abuse. Forced marriage is both a child protection and adult protection matter. Child protection processes will be considered up to the age of 18. Forced marriage may be a risk alongside other forms of so called 'honour-based' abuse (HBA). HBA includes practices used to control behaviour within families, communities, or other social groups, to protect perceived cultural and religious beliefs and/or 'honour'.

Appendix D

Timescales

All timescales relate to calendar days

Activity	Timescale
NOC to CPPM	Within 28 days
IRD to CPPM	Within 28 days
Planning the CPPM	At least 5 days notice of meeting
Pre-birth CPPM	Within 28 days of the concern or within 28 weeks of gestation
Review CPPM	Within 6 months of CPPM
Review of pre-birth CPPM	May be held within 3 months but requires professional judgement about most appropriate timing
Summary of key decisions and agreed actions from CPPM	Within 24 hours
CPPM Record	Within 10 working days
Child Protection Plan	Within 5 working days
Inquorate Meeting	New meeting must be held within 10 working days