

Child Protection Policy

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1. Equality and Diversity

Our commitment to equality is central to everything we do at Riverside Scotland. We want our services to be available to as many people as possible and we will not restrict access to anyone on the grounds of race, gender, sexuality, age, culture, disability, and faith.

2. Introduction

This policy sets out:

- a. The definition of Child Abuse and relevant Child Protection legislation and Guidance which the Association will apply.
- b. The strategic context for preventing and dealing with Child Protection issues which the Association will reflect.
- c. The responsibilities of the Association and local partner agencies in relation to identifying and dealing with child protection concerns.
- d. How the Association will ensure effective links are made into local Multi Agency Child Protection Procedures and case conferences.
- e. The approach that will be taken to the sharing of sensitive information and confidentiality.
- f. How the Association will ensure that staff have the relevant knowledge, skills and understanding to respond and deal effectively with any concerns.

3. Legislation and Definitions

The Scottish Government is responsible for Child Protection in Scotland. It sets out policy, legislation and statutory guidance on how the child protection system should work. The key guidance for anyone working in Scotland is [National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 - updated 2023 - gov.scot](#)

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting, or by failing to act to prevent, significant harm to the child. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger. Assessments will need to consider whether abuse has occurred or is likely to occur.

The following shows some of the ways in which abuse may be experienced by a child but are not exhaustive, as the individual circumstances of abuse will vary from child to child:

- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Parental Mental ill Health
- Parental drug and/or alcohol abuse
- Non engaging Families
- Neglect
- Emotional Abuse
- Domestic Abuse

The West of Scotland Child Protection Guidelines sets out the agencies involved, policy and approach that should be taken for Child Protection concerns and cases arising in the West of Scotland, which will be directly applicable to Riverside Scotland customers:

<https://www.nahscp.org/protecting-people/protecting-children-at-risk-of-harm/child-protection-guidance-for-professionals>

4. Strategic context

Child protection must be seen in the context of the wider Getting it Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) approach, the Early Years Framework and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. GIRFEC promotes action to improve the wellbeing of all children and young people in eight areas. These wellbeing indicators state that children and young people must be: healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible, included **and, above all in this context, safe**. The primary indicator for child protection is to keep a child **safe** and, in so doing, attention is given to other areas of wellbeing as appropriate.

GIRFEC has a number of key components:

- a. A focus on improving outcomes for children, young people and their families based on a shared understanding of wellbeing.
- b. A common approach to gaining consent and sharing information where appropriate;
- c. An integral role for children, young people and families in assessment, planning and intervention;
- d. A co-ordinated and unified approach to identifying concerns, assessing needs, agreeing actions and outcomes, based on the wellbeing indicators;
- e. Streamlined planning, assessment and decision-making processes that result in children, young people and their families getting the right help at the right time;
- f. Consistent high standards of co-operation, joint working and communication, locally and across Scotland;
- g. A Named Person in universal services for each child and a Lead Professional to co-ordinate and monitor multi-agency activity where necessary; maximising the skilled workforce within universal services to address needs and risks as early as possible;

The Association is committed to ensuring that child protection concerns are identified and acted upon through the delivery of our day-to-day operations. We will participate fully in local multi agency partnership processes as required, and work to achieve the above objectives to ensure the well-being and safety of all children we come into contact with.

5. Agency responsibilities

No single agency has a monopoly in the identification and management of child abuse. Agencies must work together to assess the level of risk and arrive at appropriate decisions.

Local Authority Housing Services

Local Authorities have a statutory responsibility to house children and young people. Housing applicants with children and young people may be given priority because of their potential vulnerability and will be given priority when fleeing domestic abuse. A range of housing accommodation and related support services is available which provides assistance to children, young people and families. Local Authorities, Registered **Social**

Landlords and a number of voluntary sector organisations all offer a range of responses to the needs of families, children, and young people.

Riverside Scotland

Every staff member has an important part to play in protecting children and young people. All staff must be aware of the Association's Child Protection policy, be alert to indicators of concern in children and young people we come into contact with and respond to any concerns we have about a child.

Frontline employees engage with parents/carers, children and young people in a variety of circumstances, for example, through their responsibilities for addressing tenancy related matters; anti-social behaviour, and property conditions. Children of adults, who misuse alcohol or drugs, can be seen as potentially being in need or at risk. An unborn child of a pregnant woman who is a substance abuser is also deemed as being potentially in need or at risk.

It is not just frontline colleagues who can identify risks or possible abuse, concerns may also be raised through external agencies such as contractors. All staff and contractors therefore have a responsibility in relation to child protection. Riverside Scotland does not act as a lead agency and in most situations the Association's role will be to: identify concerns, submit Child Protection referrals, share relevant information, contributing to risk assessments as needed, and implementing actions following agreement with lead agencies, for example, following an inter-agency case conference. A key role for the Association will be to proactively identify initial risks. Staff must always be aware of risk factors, ensuring all necessary referrals are made to lead/specialist agencies as per the Riverside Scotland Child Protection Procedure.

The Association will appoint a key individual who will coordinate and be the key point of contact within the Association for all Child Protection concerns and issues.

It is important for colleagues to know the limit of their knowledge and expertise and that they must seek the skills and expertise of others or specialist services to ensure the protection of children and young people.

Local Authorities/Social Services

Social Services' role is to promote a child's right to be brought up in safety and security. The welfare and safety of the child is Social Services paramount consideration.

Social Services should always take seriously any information received regarding the welfare of a child. Action taken will be informed and in the best interests of the child. In all aspects of child protection, Social Services are committed to working closely with other agencies.

Social Services has a legal responsibility to enquire into the circumstances of children and young people who may require compulsory measures of supervision, who may have been abused or be at risk of being abused, and to take all reasonable measures to protect them from further harm. This responsibility extends to all children and young people, whether they are in the community with their parents, in the care of others or being looked after by the local authority. It is the responsibility of Local Authorities to undertake Child Protection inquiries and if necessary, formal Child Protection investigations in order to establish:

- Whether or not a child is at risk from harm or suspected harm; and if so,
- Which interventions might be necessary for the child.

- Which, if any, of the protective measures available in terms of the legislation are most appropriate to a child at risk's individual circumstances?

Police

In the majority of cases of child abuse a criminal offence may have been committed. The Police have a statutory duty to investigate the circumstances and, where evidence of a crime exists, to report the facts to the Procurator Fiscal.

Police involvement in cases of child abuse stems from their primary responsibilities to protect children and to bring offenders to justice. The overriding consideration is the welfare of the child.

The Police should be informed as soon as possible when a criminal offence has been committed, or is suspected, against a child.

6. Child protection case conference

A Child Protection Case Conference is an inter-agency meeting where information relevant to concerns about abuse, or risk of abuse, is shared and considered, and decisions are made regarding the future protection of children. The roles and tasks of key agency personnel are clarified at a Child Protection Case Conference. A Child Protection Case Conference will be arranged, where it appears there may be risks to children within a household and there is a need to share and assess information and if it is felt that a child or young person would benefit from an inter-agency Child Protection Plan. It is the Conference that decides whether the children's names are placed on the Child Protection Register.

Child Protection Case Conferences play a key role in the management of child abuse and it is therefore important that all Case Conferences are given a high priority by personnel in the respective agencies involved in child protection. It is extremely important that these meetings are attended by staff identified, as they may be able to provide factual and good quality information which may have an impact on the decision making process.

Social Services are responsible for maintaining a Register of all children who are the subject of an inter-agency Child Protection Plan, which provides a point of enquiry for professionals who are concerned about a child's well-being or safety.

A child's name will remain on the Child Protection Register until such times as the risk to the child or young person is significantly reduced.

Riverside Scotland will ensure that appropriate staff attend all Child Protection Case Conferences as required to inform case management and decision making.

7. Confidentiality

There is a clear requirement across agencies to co-operate in relation to the protection of children seen to be at risk of harm. Riverside Scotland will ensure appropriate mechanisms are in place for staff to submit Child Protection referrals to the Health and Social Care Partnership and or report criminal activity to the Police.

To ensure appropriate protective measures can be put in place, it is recognized that

confidential information will need to be shared with other workers, managers and agencies on a need to know basis.

Where a child is seen to be at risk of harm, this will always override a professional or organisational requirement to keep information confidential, subject to the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulations. However, the disclosure should be limited to the relevant parties only.

8. Principles of reporting and sharing information

All professionals and service providers have a responsibility to act to make sure that a child whose safety or welfare may be at risk is protected from harm.

Inter-agency work is central to effective child protection practice. Sharing information with other agencies is essential to the success of child protection enquiries and to ensuring the ongoing protection of children who may be at risk. The underlying presumption is that sharing information leads to a more effective service to children and information should be shared unless there are sound reasons not to do so.

However, whilst communication and information sharing between professionals should be open there must be due regard to the professional responsibility and legal obligations of both those in possession of and those giving and receiving what is often sensitive personal information. All decisions to disclose information, or decisions not to disclose, should be fully recorded with the reasons behind the decision noted. A copy of this should also be sent to the party requesting the information where appropriate. If the information is intended to be shared, the person who provided the information must be told, unless to do so would place a child or others at greater risk of harm.

Riverside Scotland will ensure that the reporting and sharing of information is implemented in accordance with Good Practice and the above guidance.

9. Training and Development

As an allegation of harm can come to the notice of any member of staff at any time, all staff members will receive training in relation to Child Protection, relevant local procedures and their responsibilities in relation to Child Protection, including the necessary Disclosure Scotland Protection of Vulnerable Groups checks.

Staff responsible for implementing this policy directly will have training appropriate to their needs and to the needs of Riverside Scotland. This includes mandatory training provided by Riverside as well as training provided by our Local Authority partners.

Riverside Scotland will appoint a key individual in relation to Child Protection and they will undertake appropriate Child Protection Training and refresh this training every two years or following any changes in Guidance or legislation.

10. Risks

Riverside's risk appetite in relation to safeguarding children is low. It is fundamental

to our values, the reputation of the organisation, and the risks associated with children's wellbeing and safety that we meet legislative, regulatory and good practice guidance in this area.

The risks that we are mitigating by having this policy are:

- Risks of harm to children that may occur if safeguarding concerns are not recognised, reported and addressed appropriately.
- Risks of non-compliance with key legislation covering safeguarding children.
- Risks of non-compliance with regulatory requirements in registered services or with contractual obligations for our services.
- Risk of reputational damage that may occur through not following key legislation and guidance in relation to safeguarding.

11. Review and Accountability

Riverside Scotland will carry out a review of this policy every three years and aim for continuous improvement in order to reflect the national guidelines, changes in legislation, and developments in joint working. The Association's named person will be responsible for ensuring that the policy is implemented in full and monitor the effectiveness of this policy and recommend policy changes as needed. This policy will be made available to members of the public upon request.