

Child Protection in Education settings in Argyll and Bute

This document has been updated in July 2022 and replaces the document “child_protection_guidance_may_2018_release”.

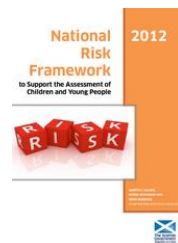
Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures need to be available for Education Service staff to reference at all times and should be discussed with **all** staff annually. The Education Manager for Inclusion and Equality will provide an information refresher slide show to help facilitate this discussion in time for the August in-service days.

Staff attention should be directed towards the following links for policies and protocols.



The National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland has been revised in 2021, updating the previous version which was published in 2014. This guidance sets out the responsibilities and expectations for all involved in protecting children.

[National guidance for child protection in Scotland 2021 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-guidance-for-child-protection-in-scotland-2021/pages/1-1-introduction.aspx)



The National Risk Assessment Framework to support the Assessment of Children and Young People

[National Risk Framework to Support the Assessment of Children and Young People - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-risk-framework-to-support-the-assessment-of-children-and-young-people/pages/1-1-introduction.aspx)

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/publications-practice-and-guidance> this link takes you to the Argyll and Bute webpage with information on Child Protection for professionals.

[Publications, Practice and Guidance \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/publications-practice-and-guidance) this link takes you to multi-agency CP guidance and protocols scroll down to the bottom and it takes you to **Protecting Disabled Children Guidance, Resources & Research section.**

https://argyll-bute-girfec.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/chronology_template_and_guidance.pdf this takes you to the Chronology template and guidance.

[Practitioners – Argyll & Bute GIRFEC \(argyll-bute-girfec.com\)](https://www.argyll-bute-girfec.com/practitioners) this takes you to Argyll and Bute GIRFEC web pages for Practitioners.

[Argyll and Bute Child Protection Committee \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/child-protection-committee) this link takes you to the main web page for the CPC and has links to the CPC annual report and the CPC Strategic Plan 2021-23

Self-learning modules covering a range of relevant topics and the Integrated Children's Services Training Calendar are available through the link- [Child Protection Training \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](http://Child Protection Training (argyll-bute.gov.uk))

Appendix 1 Summary of action required in educational establishments

Appendix 2 Child Protection Recording Form

Appendix 3 Grounds for Concern - Action Guidance for all Education employees

Appendix 4 Grounds for concern - Action guidance for Heads of Establishments and Child Protection Coordinators

Appendix 1

Grounds for Concern Action Guidance for all Education staff

ALL STAFF should follow Action Steps 1 and 2 as outlined below.
(Detailed guidance for staff on these action steps is provided in Appendix 3)

Step 1

Immediately report the grounds for concern to the Head of the establishment or to the Child Protection Coordinator for the service.

If you have direct evidence or suspicion of child abuse then the only way you can protect the child or children is to report the matter immediately. You must ensure that your ongoing involvement is in each child's best interests: you must not wait to gather evidence, nor agree to keep the information secret, nor discuss the matter with others.

Step 2

Follow the guidance given by the head or child protection co-ordinator in relation to recording your concerns, supporting the child and co-operating with subsequent actions to investigate the grounds of concern and to protect the child or children concerned.

The difference between a child and/or young person being protected or being harmed could be you.



Heads and Child Protection Co-ordinators should follow the action points listed below in the order they judge appropriate for the particular circumstances for each case. There should be an absolute minimum of delay in moving through the Action Points.

(Detailed guidance for staff on these action steps is provided in Appendix 4)

Action Points

1. Treat the grounds of concern as reported by the member of staff as a priority for action.

- Consider immediate needs of all children involved.
- Take emergency action if required.
- Gather information and if appropriate seek clarification (not proof).
- Ask staff to record relevant information.
- Store all information in a confidential Incident File

(i) **Act** immediately to ensure medical treatment if a medical emergency exists. First aid and urgent removal to hospital accompanied by an appropriate member of staff should be a priority, followed by immediate notification to social services and police, as appropriate.

(ii) **Report** immediately to the duty senior social worker at the social work area office all cases where you have grounds for concern about child abuse. Discuss with the duty senior social worker the action to be taken, including when and by whom parents will be informed and the child or children interviewed. If a member of staff is alleged to be involved in child abuse then contact should be made with the Director of Community Services or the appropriate Head of Service. Decisions will then be made regarding appropriate action and the involvement of other services.

(iii) **Record** on the same day, the grounds for concern and action taken using the Child Protection Recording Form (see Appendix 2). Send the original report and three copies as detailed on the form. Keep a copy of this information, signed and dated, in the Incident File.

(iv) **Police** help may be required in urgent circumstances such as immediate avoidance of further abuse, immediate pursuit of an alleged abuser, avoidance of destruction of evidence.

2. Cooperate fully with all statutory agencies who may become involved.

3. Support the child or children involved as necessary and appropriate.

Appendix 2

CHILD PROTECTION RECORDING FORM

CHILD

Child's name:	
Date of birth:	
Address:	
Name of school / establishment:	
Stage:	

PARENT / CARER

Name of Parent / Carer:		
Relationship to child:		
Address: <i>(if different from above)</i>		
Telephone:		

SIBLING(S)

Name of sibling:	Date of birth:	School / educational establishment attended:

Name of individual who reported grounds for concern to head of establishment:		Designation:	
Signature:		Date:	
Person contacted by the head of establishment:		Designation:	
Date contacted:		Time:	

GROUNDS FOR CONCERN

IMPORTANT:

Copies of this form must be **password protected** using the official authority password only and emailed to the following people, marked 'confidential':

- Duty Officer or Social Worker with whom the Child Protection concern was initially raised
- Social Work Practice Lead (local team Lead)
- suzanne.harper@argyll-bute.gov.uk (who will make available to the Head of Education, Education Manager – Inclusion and Equality, and Principal Educational Psychologist)
- nhsh.obancpchildhealth@nhs.scot for the attention of the Consultant Community Paediatrician (Responsible for Child Protection)

Appendix 3

Grounds for Concern - Action Guidance for all Education employees

This section provides further guidance for staff when following the steps detailed in Appendix 1.

Education staff must immediately report to the head of establishment or Child Protection Co-ordinator if there are grounds for concern about the possibility of abuse.

Grounds for concern can arise from a wide range of circumstances and will generally be covered by the following circumstances:

- A child states that abuse has taken place or that the child feels unsafe
- A third party or anonymous allegation is received
- A child's appearance, behaviour, play, drawing or statement(s) causes suspicion of abuse
- Any concerns about a child's welfare should be reported to the head immediately

All actions should be taken in the best interests of the child or children. Good practice which protects children requires the careful exercise of professional judgement and skill.

Actions to protect a child, including following child protection procedures, should as far as possible avoid causing any child undue distress or adding unnecessarily to any harm that child has already suffered.

PROOF IS NOT REQUIRED

It is not necessary or indeed safe for a child that a member of staff waits for proof or actively gathers evidence of abuse before reporting concerns. If the member of staff suspects from the information available that there is the possibility of abuse then immediate action to report this to the Head or Child Protection Co-ordinator should be taken.

In everyday circumstances education staff do question children about injuries, behaviour, statements or emotional responses in order to help the child. Staff should continue to do this, but such questioning must stop and immediate action to report the Head or Child Protection Co-ordinator must be taken once the staff member suspects the possibility of abuse.

Staff should always make sure they use open ended questions when questioning children about any matter. Open ended questions encourage children to provide information in the order they wish to give it, with the detail they wish to provide and using their own words to describe their experiences. Direct or closed questions which put suggestions to the child should not be used when questioning children about welfare concerns. This is most important because inappropriate or intrusive questioning

is not in the child's best interests and could contaminate a subsequent social work investigation.

If there is a need for discussion with a third party who has raised concerns about a child, it is important for evidential purposes and for meeting the child's emotional needs that such discussion is not carried out within the child's hearing.

SECRETS SHOULD NOT BE KEPT

At any time during discussion with a child or a third party, staff should not agree to keep secret any information which implies that child might have been subject to abuse or is at risk of future abuse.

It should be explained that while every effort will be made to keep information confidential, if there is cause for concern about a child's welfare, it will be necessary to pass on the relevant information, initially to the Head of Establishment of Child Protection Co-ordinator.

It should also be explained that the information will be treated with extreme sensitivity and will only be conveyed to those professionals who are in a position to protect and support the child.

In discussion with a child, he or she should be reassured that they will be kept informed of what is happening and will be supported by staff as appropriate. Any information subsequently shared with the child should be appropriate to the child's age and stage of development and should not breach the confidentiality of any other parties involved.

If a third party is involved, he or she should be informed on a "need to know" basis that the matter is now being dealt with according to the appropriate procedures. As confidentiality must not be breached there is no need to specify which procedures. The third party can be supported by staff as appropriate.

If the child or third party decides to withdraw from speaking to the member of staff they should be told that they can have further discussion with any member of staff in the future. They should be told that the Head of Establishment or Child Protection Coordinator will be advised that they appear to have some concerns. As appropriate they should be given guidance on sources of support outwith the establishment. The member of staff should then discuss the matter with the Head of Establishment or Child Protection Coordinator.

Staff should be open and honest in explaining the action they plan to take. Their approach at this stage is crucial in promoting the immediate well-being of the child and in enabling future support plans.

REPORTING GROUNDS FOR CONCERN

A member of staff must report grounds for concern about the possibility of abuse to the Head of Establishment or Child Protection Coordinator immediately with or without the consent of the child or children concerned.

The member of staff should not consult with, nor share the information with anyone else other than Head of Establishment of Child Protection Co-ordinator or any person deputising for these individuals.

If the member of staff is from one of the department's support services then he/she should report the matter to the Head of Establishment or Child Protection Coordinator of the establishment the child attends. If the child does not attend an education establishment then the member of staff should report to the manager of their own service.

On no account should staff tell a parent about what has happened at this stage. Involvement of parents will be determined on the advice of Social Work.

On trips or residential breaks, staff should follow the procedures as set out in these guidelines and contact the Head of Establishment or Child Protection Coordinator. If there is an emergency or the head or head's delegate cannot be contacted immediately then the member of staff should contact the local social work or police offices and other emergency services as appropriate to the circumstances.

Staff taking children on trips abroad should make immediate contact with the Head of Establishment, Child Protection Co-ordinator or a designated senior member of staff, who will coordinate any necessary referral procedures. If contact cannot be made with an appropriate senior manager from the establishment, then the appropriate head of service in education should be contacted. Please refer to Standard Circular 3.25 for further information and guidance.

https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/sites/default/files/circular_3-25_school_trips.pdf

EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

On the rare occasions when a member of staff is not satisfied with the Head of Establishment or Child Protection Co-ordinator's decision in response to the grounds for concern, the member of staff should attempt further discussion with them. At this point, it may be helpful to involve the Education Manager – Inclusion and Equality in this discussion to obtain their professional opinion on the matter. If the member of staff is still unsatisfied after further discussion and continues to have concerns about the possibility of abuse, the member of staff can act as a member of the public and refer the matter to the Police, Authority Reporter or Social Work. It is advised that this action is undertaken only in extreme cases and the member of staff should inform the head of their action.

If the member of staff suspects that the Head of Establishment or Child Protection Co-ordinator has been involved in child abuse then this must be reported immediately to the appropriate Head of Service.

RECORDING CONCERNS

The member of staff must record what has occurred as soon as possible on the same day. The Head or Child Protection Co-ordinator will request this and provide guidance as necessary. The record should be dated and signed and should be uploaded to the well-being application on SEEMIS. It may be required as part of the child protection process or as evidence for future criminal prosecution.

SUPPORTING THE CHILD

Education employees have a responsibility to support a child as appropriate within an establishment or service throughout the child protection process. This will normally be in co-operation with other relevant personnel.

CO-OPERATING

Following reporting and recording of concerns, education staff should co-operate fully with subsequent inquiries, investigations and support plans as directed by the Head of Establishment or Child Protection Co-ordinator and in consultation with appropriate agency representatives.

Co-operation could involve attendance at case discussions, child protection planning meetings and reviews if agreed by the Head of Establishment or Child Protection Co-ordinator.

Appendix 4

Grounds for Concern – Action Guidance for Heads of Establishments or Child Protection Co-ordinators

This section provides guidance for Heads / Co-ordinators when following the action points detailed in Appendix 1

Staff must immediately report an allegation or suspicion of child abuse to you if there are grounds for concern about the possibility of abuse.

Grounds for concern can arise from a wide range of circumstances and will generally be covered by the following circumstances.

- A child states that abuse has taken place or that the child feels unsafe.
- A third party or anonymous allegation is received.
- A child's appearance, behaviour, play, drawing or statement(s) causes suspicion of abuse.

Any concerns about a child's welfare should be reported to the Head or Child Protection Co-ordinator immediately.

PRIORITY FOR ACTION

You must treat an allegation or suspicion of child abuse as a priority for urgent consideration and take action which in your professional judgement is in the best interests of the child.

As Head of Establishment or Child Protection Coordinator, your job is to react swiftly and appropriately to an emergency situation or to a situation which causes you to have reasonable grounds for concern about child abuse.

COLLATING INFORMATION

When collating information it is essential that you remember that it is the responsibility of Social Work and Police Scotland to investigate child abuse. Such an investigation,

including detailed questioning of any children, will be carried out by specially trained staff and following structured procedures.

It is **not** your responsibility to:

- Investigate suspected or alleged abuse.
- Evaluate the grounds for concern.
- Seek proof.

It is your responsibility to use your professional judgement and to collate information in order to be satisfied that there is a possibility of abuse. An electronic confidential incident file should be opened for keeping records of all statements and actions taken. Records should be uploaded to the well-being app on SEEMIS.

All staff involved should be asked to make a typed, signed and dated note of all relevant information and these statements should be placed in the incident file. It is vital that the incident file be comprehensive and accurate as it might be used for legal evidence at a later stage.

When collating information you should ensure that:

- The welfare of the child is paramount even if this results in tensions between the rights of the child and rights of the parents.
- A future investigation is not contaminated by the information gathering process.
- All information concerning the child and the circumstances is treated as confidential.
- The sharing and discussion of information is on a “need to know” basis.
- You keep an open mind regarding the information.

SEEKING CLARIFICATION

You may be uncertain as to whether the grounds for concern indicate that there is a possibility that a child has been abused or is at risk of abuse. In such circumstances further questions for clarification of the suspicion may be asked but should not be carried out in order to obtain proof.

For clarification purposes it is appropriate to ask an open question of whoever is making the allegation, e.g. “Could you tell me more?” Such questioning is intended to encourage the speaker to give an accurate account of what has happened, in their own words and without pressure and suggestion.

Great care should be taken if the questioning for clarification is undertaken with the child or young person who may be the subject of abuse. Open ended questions must be used to enable the child to give the information they have, in the order they wish to give it, with the detail they wish to provide and using their own words to describe their experiences.

The child or young person must not be subjected to a series of interviews by different adults. If you consider that additional questioning of the child or young person is necessary for clarification, the member of staff who was initially involved with the child or young person should be supported in obtaining this, where possible.

Consideration should be given as to whether the member of staff should talk to the child or young person alone or with another appropriate adult.

The purpose of any such questioning is to determine whether grounds exist for reasonable suspicion. At the point where reasonable suspicion is established, questioning should stop and the matter should be reported on. Further questioning runs the risk of contaminating the Social Work or Police Scotland investigation.

Initially, in attempting to decide how to respond to the grounds for concern, you may decide to seek advice from relevant education colleagues. In deciding whether or not to proceed in reporting your concerns to Social Work you should err on the safe side in terms of ensuring the child's care and protection.

You may decide to seek advice from a member of Social Work rather than immediately reporting to the duty senior social worker. When doing so you need to be aware that such discussion could result in Social Work deciding to start formal investigative procedures. Should this occur you should then follow the relevant procedure on recording concerns.

IMMEDIATE REPORTING

If a medical emergency exists, you must act immediately to ensure medical treatment. First aid and urgent removal to hospital accompanied by an appropriate member of staff would be a priority, followed by immediate notification of Social Work and Police, as appropriate.

Where it is known or strongly suspected that a child or young person has been the victim of violence or exposed to immediate physical risk, then a formal child protection referral must be made immediately.

You must also immediately contact the police when there are urgent circumstances such as the immediate avoidance of further abuse, the immediate pursuit of an alleged abuser, the avoidance of the destruction of evidence and/or the need for Emergency Child Protection Measures.

In all cases, if you as Head or Child Protection Co-ordinator consider that there is a possibility of abuse then the matter must be reported immediately to the duty senior social worker at the local area Social Work office.

In discussion with the duty senior social worker the following matters should be covered:

- Details of the grounds for concern.
- Reporting the matter to the police and/or local health authority.
- Consideration of whether there are implications for siblings and other children.
- Immediate support needs of child/children involved.
- How and when parents will be informed.
- Further action to be taken by the Head/Co-ordinator.
- Action to be taken by Social Work.

In circumstances where there are grounds for concern about sexual activity which may be abusive involving another pupil or pupils the procedures outlined in Appendix 1 should be followed.

Circumstances where there is sexual activity involving informed consent of children under 16 or involving informed consent of a child under 16 with an adult who is not a relative may or may not need social work action or support. You should err on the side of caution in such cases in terms of the child's welfare and contact Social Work for advice.

When there are concerns about physical or emotional harm and there are indicators that this may have been carried out by another pupil or pupils, then you have to make a judgement as to when such matters are at a level of such severity that referral to Social Work is required. Again, err on the side of caution in terms of the welfare of the children involved.

Any complaint or suspicion that a child or young person has been significantly harmed by a person unknown to them and their family should be immediately reported to the police.

Any complaint or suspicion that a member of staff has been involved in causing significant harm to a child or young person must be reported immediately to the appropriate Head of Service. Decisions will then be made regarding involvement of other agencies.

RECORDING CONCERNS

On the same day that the duty senior social worker is informed you must record the concerns and action taken by staff using the Child Protection Recording Form in Appendix 2. Then action agreed with Social Work should also be recorded.

If there is any difference of opinion on any matter between yourself and the duty senior social worker this should be recorded.

A copy of this report and subsequent reports, as well as minutes of Child Protection Planning Meetings and monitoring meetings, should be uploaded to the well-being app on SEEMIS. The key features of the report as recorded in the Child Protection Recording Form are that it should be:

- Accurate
- Objective
- Concise
- Immediate
- Dated
- Signed
- Confidential

MONITORING – WHEN?

A careful, pre-planned system of monitoring over time is likely to produce a better outcome for a child or young person than a hasty, ill-prepared intervention. Systematic and effective monitoring is a continuous process and requires time and perseverance.

Where there are grounds for concern about child abuse, staff should take immediate action to report these concerns. It would not be appropriate to monitor in such circumstances solely within the establishment.

Monitoring may be identified as appropriate at any stage during the child protection process, in particular to provide ongoing information whilst the formal investigation is undertaken by Community Services: Social Work and the police. Monitoring may also be one outcome of the child protection process.

Monitoring may be highlighted as a role for education staff in the child protection planning meeting. This will be agreed by agencies as part of multi-agency collaboration to protect a child whose name is placed on the child protection register.

In all circumstances the child protection monitoring process should be undertaken by education staff following consultation and agreement with other professionals.

The decision to monitor any subsequent actions should be made on the basis of the level of concern about the risk to the children. The principle that the child's welfare is paramount should always be followed.

MONITORING – HOW?

Monitoring observations should be recorded in an electronic document used specifically for the purpose of monitoring that child. It should be kept confidential and uploaded to the well-being application on SEEMIS and referenced by an entry in Pastoral notes. It may be kept with the incident file held by the Head of Establishment.

The child protection monitoring record should provide a concise, chronological, objective, unbiased account and should not state any opinions. Each entry should be made on the day to which it refers and should be entered in Pastoral notes. The record should be scanned in and uploaded to the well-being app.

The child protection monitoring record may contain a series of incidents depending on the length and intensity of the monitoring period. However care should be taken not to extend the monitoring period indefinitely. A decision has to be made, involving relevant personnel, as to when to terminate the monitoring process.

Monitoring is best carried out by the member of staff who has most contact with the child, knows the child best or is best placed to make systematic recordings. At the primary or pre-school stage this is likely to be the class teacher or child's key worker. In secondary schools this is most likely to be the Named Person in collaboration with subject teachers.

A planned and recorded monitoring process enables staff to contribute more effectively at child protection planning meetings and to provide reports on children which will better assist in the protection planning.

A planned monitoring record stored within pastoral notes enables other professionals to have a clearer understanding of the role of education staff. As a result, expectations are realistic and misunderstandings which can arise between professionals may be reduced.

In general practice it is desirable for education staff to contact parents in order that they can work together to promote a child's welfare. However, when monitoring is being

undertaken as part of a child protection process the decision to involve parents will be taken in consultation with social workers and police.

Activities planned for the purpose of monitoring must be appropriate, balanced and open ended to avoid influencing the child's behaviour. The child or young person should be observed in both structured and unstructured settings as children's behaviour can vary according to the circumstances in which they find themselves.

MONITORING – WHAT?

A child protection monitoring record may include sections as detailed below.

Section A – Record of the Child's Behaviour

As appropriate to the circumstance a monitoring record should be kept and include details of:

- The actual incident/behaviour
- Where it took place
- When it took place
- With whom it took place
- Its duration
- Its intensity
- Its frequency
- The sequence of events
- How the child's behaviour related to the behaviour of others
- Specific questions/behaviours that were used to elicit the child's response
- The child's view or explanation

The information could be detailed under the following headings:

- Attendance
- Behaviour
- Language
- Social Interactions
- Drawings/Writing/Statements
- Physical Indicators
- Contact with parents

Examples of the child or young person's work can be included as appropriate.

Section B – The Monitoring Process

As appropriate to the circumstances this section may include details of:

- Planning meeting
- Time scale of monitoring
- Individuals involved
- action plan

Review date

- Decision as to when to involve parents
- Decision to continue/discontinue monitoring
- Decision on whether to instigate child protection procedures or to re-contact

Community Services: Social Work for further consultation

- Decision regarding storing of the child protection monitoring record

For all cases where you have contacted Social Work, you should complete the child protection recording form (Appendix 2) and send the form and copies to the personnel listed at the bottom of the form.

CO-OPERATING

Following reporting and recording of concerns, education staff should co-operate fully with subsequent inquiries, investigations and support plans as directed by the Head of Establishment or Child Protection Co-ordinator and in consultation with appropriate agency representatives

Co-operation could involve attendance at case discussions, child protection planning meetings and reviews if agreed by the Head of Establishment or Child Protection Co-ordinator.

SUPPORTING THE CHILD

You must ensure that support is available to the child or young person and member of staff as appropriate in the circumstances. This support should include advising and updating the child or young person on what is happening/what is likely to happen next.

You must consider whether there are implications for siblings and other children or young people. This could include a situation where the initial allegation or suspicion of abuse with regard to a specific child or young person has been made by or involves other children and young people for whom the establishment has responsibility. You should consult with Social Work regarding giving information to their parents/guardians. You should decide on appropriate support for these children and young people.

In deciding who should support a child or young person and be present during any subsequent interviews involving social workers and police, the child or young person's view should be given due consideration. There should also be consideration of issues relating to the gender of the adult and the adult's willingness and ability to respond to the child or young person's ongoing needs.

If any child or young person involved is detained beyond the end of the school day you should consult with Social Work regarding issues relating to informing parents or guardians and getting the child or young person home.

Where you require additional information on educational matters, there should be consultation with appropriate members of the Education Central Team.