



National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 Improving Outcomes for Children and Young People in Fife

Introduction to the ambitions of the National Guidance for Practitioners

Introduction

Fife's Child Protection Committee (CPC) established in 2022 a short-life working group to take forward the policy and practice changes that are set out in the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021. This briefing is to provide information for our Practitioner Workforce on how we are implementing the National Guidance for Child Protection (Scotland), which was published on 6 October 2021. An extended period of time was given for implementation to enable key changes asked for within the guidance, raise awareness of what they are and allow partners to consider what this will mean for them **when** we implement. Clear single and multi-agency guidance will be provided before any agreed practice changes are implemented. Fife are aiming towards effecting staged changes by April 2024.

The National Guidance is a resource that directs local partnerships and agencies to inform the development of local multi-agency child protection procedures, processes, and training. It also informs pre- and post-qualifying training and education for all key professions and volunteers.

Structure

[The National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021](#) has four parts:

- Part 1: key definitions & concepts, principles & standards, information sharing & inter-agency principles, legislation.
- Part 2a: collective & single agency responsibilities, wider planning links.
- Part 2b: an approach to multi-agency assessment.
- Part 3: identifying and responding to child protection concerns.
- Part 4: specific support needs and concerns.
- In addition, there are 18 Practice Insights.

Objectives and Ambitions of the Guidance

The Guidance has been revised to ensure consistency with the legislative and policy framework and current practice developments. It incorporates our understanding of best practice from various sources, including practitioner and stakeholder experience, inspections, research, and learning from child protection cases.

'Child' is defined as a child or young person from pre-birth up to 18 years of age, in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) definition. In general, while

respecting the implications of different legal definitions of a 'child', the Guidance considers the protection of unborn babies and children under the age of 18 years.

The broad objectives of this revision are to:

- Ensure children's rights and voices are central to child protection.
- Underline the critical need to engage with families to offer support and reduce the risk of harm.
- Support consistency in understanding key processes when agencies must work together to prevent and respond to significant harm to reduce unwarranted variation.
- Integrate essential changes in legislation and National Guidance.
- Reference key policy, research and practice developments and sources.

The intended outcomes of this revision are to:

- Support a reduction in the incidence of significant harm and child death in Scotland.
- Improve professional inter-agency practice, supervision, management, training and development.
- Promote a shared, rights-based inter-agency ethos of care and protection, as experienced by children, families and communities.
- Support a context in which children and young people receive a more consistent approach to care and protection.

The Guidance is part of a wider child protection improvement programme. It provides an opportunity to reinforce that protecting children and support for their well-being starts from the earliest stages of community-based family support and should be incorporated into broader community planning frameworks.

There is a greater emphasis throughout the guidance on ensuring that children's views are taken into account in all decision making that affects them, whilst working in partnership with families and communities. It is recognised that early engagement and support for families is vital in reducing the risk of harm to children. This is a necessary shift in practice that supports the least intrusive and most supportive levels of intervention at all stages.

Implementation Plan in Fife

Fife CPC have agreed on a work plan to implement the new Guidance. The CPC has several multi-agency subgroups that will review sections of the National Guidance, agreeing on updates to our current policies and guidance.

Further updates will be provided over the coming months using a 7-minute briefing approach. The key contacts for each agency are:

- Health – Child Protection Team (fife.childprotectiontraining@nhs.scot)
- Police – Child Abuse Investigation Team (FifeChildAbuseInvestUnit@scotland.police.uk)
- Social Work – Child Protection Team (swcp.team@fife.gov.uk)
- Education – Child Protection Team (educationcp.support@fife.gov.uk)