

Family Routes

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

July 2024



Version History

Version	Author	Date	Next Review	Comment
1.0	Board	30.01.2019	30.06.2019 Reviewed 13.12.21 Next Review 13.12.22	New policy. Approved by Family Routes Board
2.0	Safeguarding Team – Emma Graham, Lynda Wilson & Patricia Gilbert	09/07/2024 Amended 17/12/2024	31/01/2025 Next Review 31/01/2026	Updated Approved by Family Routes Board

1. Introduction

Family Routes recognises its statutory and legal responsibilities to safeguard children and adults at risk who staff may have contact within the course of work. The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995

<https://www.volunteernow.co.uk/app/uploads/2019/04/Keeping-Children-Safe-Our-Duty-to-Care.pdf>

defines a “child” as a person under 18. In this policy, the term child or children will be generally used, but the same principles and procedures are understood to apply to adults at risk. The policy on safeguarding seeks to ensure the fundamental right of each child and adult at risk to be protected from harm.

This policy is underpinned by the principle that the welfare of the child is paramount, as set out in the [Children \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1995](#).

The policy as specific to vulnerable adults or adults at risk is further outlined in appendix 1.

The policy applies to all staff and workers within Adoption Routes, Fertility Counselling Service (NI), Next Step and Therapeutic Education Support Service in Adoption (TESSA).

The aim of this policy is to promote good practice in child protection and the safeguarding of children who come into contact with staff, and to communicate to staff and service providers our commitment to fulfilling our duties in safeguarding children and the procedure to be followed in cases of suspected abuse.

All Social Work staff employed by Family Routes are registered with NISCC.

2. Legal Context

Family Routes will carry out its responsibilities under all relevant legislation, regulations and professional guidelines which include the following:

Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995

Children’s Services Co-operation Act (Northern Ireland) 2015

Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young people in Northern Ireland (Department of Health)

Human Rights Act 1998

Adult Safeguarding: Prevention and Protection in Partnership (DHSSPS 2015)

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools 2017 (Department of Education Guide for Schools)

3. Definitions

3.1 Safeguarding

Safeguarding is more than child protection; it starts with preventative education and activities that enable children to grow up safely and securely in circumstances where their development and wellbeing is promoted. It entails support for families and early intervention to meet the needs of children and continues to child protection.

3.2 Child Protection

Child Protection is the activity that is undertaken to protect individuals who are either suffering harm or who are likely to suffer harm. Child Protection is part of the Safeguarding process. It focuses on protecting individual children identified as suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. This includes Child Protection procedures which detail how to respond to concerns about a child. Child Protection is a vital part of Safeguarding.

3.3 Abuse/Harm

The Children (NI) Order 1995 defines harm as ill-treatment or impairment of a child's mental or physical health, physical, intellectual, educational, social or behavioural development.

Child abuse may take a number of forms including:

- Neglect
- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Emotional Abuse
- Exploitation

Definitions can be found in Appendix 1.

4. Safeguarding Team

Family Routes Designated Child Protection Officer (DCPO) is responsible for coordinating and over-seeing safeguarding policy and procedures. However, at times, it may be deemed necessary to call a meeting of the Safeguarding Team.

4.1 Membership of the Safeguarding Team

Membership will be drawn from the following role holders, depending on need:

Designated Child Protection Officer (Chair) – - Emma Graham - 07587137534
CEO – Lynda Wilson - 07710047028
Fertility Counselling Service Manager - Patricia Gilbert – 07772829020 (Designated CPO for Adults)
Next Step Service Manager – Patricia Gilbert - 07772829020
TESSA Co-ordinator – Emma Graham

4.2 Roles and Responsibilities

The DCPO, in liaison with the Safeguarding Team where appropriate, will coordinate and oversee Safeguarding and Child Protection on an on-going basis to:

- (i) Produce, maintain and develop and make available the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures for staff.
- (ii) Ensure that staff are aware of the Safeguarding Policy and Procedure.
- (iii) Liaise with the appropriate staff to ensure the promotion of awareness of Safeguarding issues in the programmes where they will have contact with children.
- (iv) Co-ordinate action by staff when a report is made about suspected child abuse at Family Routes or any educational or other setting, and referrals to Social Services and/or the PSNI and/or the Gardaí where necessary.
- (v) Ensure all core staff receive updated training at least every two years and provide information to Core and Sessional Staff about training opportunities and appropriate updates as required.
- (vi) Provide information to Sessional Staff about training opportunities and request updated Safeguarding training evidence every two years.
- (vii) Be available to provide advice, guidance and information relating to child protection issues to all staff.
- (viii) Where there is any potential conflict of interest the DCPO must seek independent advice. This may take the form of an exploratory telephone call to the Gateway Team prior to a referral being made.
- (ix) The DCPO ensures that appropriate communication takes place in relation to Safeguarding issues i.e. with partner agencies, RQIA.

The designation of members of staff for the purpose of overseeing Safeguarding should not, however, be seen as diminishing the role of all members of staff in being alert to the signs of abuse of a child, and understanding the procedures to be followed.

In the absence of the DCPO a service manager will be available.

5. Photographs and Images

Staff must take great care when photographing children for legitimate purposes. Photographs of children may be taken in professional settings or at on-site events if permission has been sought and granted in line with the policy of the organisation. Personal equipment should not be used to photograph children, images must be stored securely and destroyed within an acceptable time period or when work with the child or young person concludes.

6. Support to Staff

All concerns raised under this procedure will be treated seriously and a decision made about whether or not a referral should be made to the outside agencies. Any staff member who follows the procedures in this policy in making a report of suspected or actual harm of a child by any person, will, where he/she has made the report in good faith, receive the full support of Family Routes.

7. Procedures for staff reporting suspected (or disclosed) abuse

Where a member of staff has a concern for a child or has information relating to suspected/admitted/known abuse of a child, the procedures are as follows:

Initially where a matter is disclosed by a child to a staff member, he/she must inform the child that the information cannot be kept confidential as it will have to be passed on to the DCPO/service manager and/or appropriate agency. Listen carefully to the child and offer reassurance.

(i) All such disclosures/concerns should be reported promptly and without delay to the DCPO in the first instance, to include full details of what has been observed or shared by the person making the report.

(ii) The DCPO, in liaison with the deputy DCPO and members of the Safeguarding Team, if appropriate, will decide if a referral to external agencies needs to be made, namely, Social Services and/or P.S.N.I. and/or Gardaí, always taking care to avoid undue delay.

(iii) The DCPO will maintain a record of events using the pro-forma in Appendix 2 and ensure that this record is appropriately and securely stored.

Note 1: If the DCPO is absent, substitute all references above to the DCPO to deputy DCPO.

Note 2: If the concern raised is about the DCPO, the complainant should report the information directly to the CEO.

Responding to Non-Recent Allegations of Abuse

It is possible that non-recent allegations of abuse can be made a number of years after the actual incident. This may be because of a change in circumstances for either the survivor or the alleged perpetrator. Any non-recent allegations must follow the current NNI safeguarding procedures. If there are grounds for concern then statutory authorities must be informed (Police or /HSCT Gateway Teams).

The following points should also be considered;

Clearly establish with the adult complainant if there may be any children currently at risk of harm from the person they are saying abused them as a child.

Advise the person making the complaint that they should inform the Police. Encourage them to do so while acknowledging the brave steps they have already taken in beginning to talk about their experience as a child. It is important that the person knows that there is a likelihood that an abuser will not have stopped abusing after their individual abuse ended and if the person harmed them they could be continuing to cause harm to others. This needs to be done without reinforcing the inappropriate guilt the survivor may already have for not coming forward earlier.

If the complainant refuses to talk to the statutory authorities but has provided you with enough identifying factor's then this information **MUST** be shared with the police. This breach of the complainants' confidence is only appropriate if there is any potential that the alleged perpetrator is still a risk to children or could face prosecution (i.e. they are alive). Remember, the welfare of any children currently at risk is paramount. This must take priority over any request of confidentiality from the person providing you with the information/complaint. This should be explained to them at the earliest possible stage

Offer support to the complainant when making a formal complaint to the police.

Signpost the complainant to support agencies that can provide counselling for example; In Northern Ireland - NEXUS <http://www.nexusni.org/> Belfast 028 9032 6803 L'derry 028 7126 0566 Enniskillen 028 6632 0046

When an adult making a complaint chooses not to report the matter to the police and you have already discussed the possibility of any child still being at risk you **MUST** follow Family Routes reporting procedures and inform the Police or Gateway Team immediately of any identifying features of the allegation including the name of the alleged abuser. The person making the complaint should be informed that this is the organisation's moral and legal responsibility (Criminal Law Act 1967). If the individual wishes to remain anonymous this should be respected but again explaining that without any further co-operation there may be little action the Police can take to protect others. Encourage them to talk directly to the Gateway Teams, if not the Police, in order to enable social services to consider if there is any action they can take to protect children at risk, as their threshold for intervention is lower than the evidence required for any criminal justice prosecution.

8. Procedures for Sessional Staff

Upon commencement, staff will be issued a copy of the Safeguarding Policy of the organisation.

Where a member of staff has a concern for a child or has information relating to suspected/admitted/known abuse of a child, the procedures are as follows:

(i) Staff will report the concern to their names point of contact within the organisation who will notify the Designated Child Protection Officer and action will be taken in line with their procedures.

(ii) The member of staff will inform the DCPO of Family Routes that a Child Protection concern has been reported within their work setting.

(iii) When a member of staff is concerned that the above procedures have not been carried out appropriately or adequately, the DCPO will consider the concerns, in liaison with the deputy DCPO and members of the Safeguarding Team, if appropriate, and take appropriate action, if deemed necessary.

Guidelines for responding to an allegation There is not one simple set of rules to follow when you respond to these situations. However, the following key points should guide the actions of staff and volunteers who are told of abuse.

DO

- Stay calm
- Listen & hear
- Give the person time to say what they want
- Let the child talk- don't interview
- Reassure them that they are safe and they have done the right thing in telling
- Tell the person what will happen next and it will be dealt with appropriately.
- Explain that you must tell, but you will maintain confidentiality
- Record in writing what was said as soon as possible
- Report to "the designated person" immediately
- Record your report

DON'T

- Panic
- Promise to keep secrets
- Question unless for clarification
- Enquire into the details of the abuse
- Make a child repeat the story unnecessarily
- Rush into actions
- Make/pass judgment on alleged abuser
- Take sole responsibility Note – It is essential that you record the exact information (using the child's words) rather than recording your interpretation of the Child's statements.

Once a concern has been reported to the DCPO/deputy DCPO the staff member should not take any further action or discuss the matter further with anyone else unless advised otherwise by the Safeguarding Team. Deliberate failure to abide by this requirement may result in disciplinary action.

As a third party supplier I agree to the above Terms and Conditions

Print Name: _____

Organisation: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 1

Definitions of Abuse

(extracted from Cooperating to safeguard children and young people in Northern Ireland 2016 and Department of Education (2017) Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools)

Neglect is the failure to provide for a child's basic needs, whether it be adequate food, clothing, hygiene, supervision or shelter that is likely to result in the serious impairment of a child's health or development. Children who are neglected often also suffer from other types of abuse.

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

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

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

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

Note: these types of abuse apply equally to children with disabilities but the abuse may take slightly different forms, for example, lack of supervision, or the use of physical restraints such as being confined to a wheelchair or bed.

Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults These forms of abuse apply for Safeguarding concerns relating to vulnerable or at risk adults working with Family Routes. In the case of disclosures by adults, the client should be offered support and informed that a safeguarding concern may be raised within the organisation. Should the disclosure relate to ongoing risk to other children or vulnerable adults, Family Routes will be obliged to report this to the relevant authorities. Anonymity of the client will be maintained unless permission is given to disclose.

Family Routes

******Restricted Information******

Notification of Suspected/Admitted/Known Safeguarding Concern relating to a child, young person or known adult to Designated Child Protection Officer

Name of Person Submitting Report	
Role	
Name of DCPO or Family Routes Staff Member receiving Report	
Date of Report Submission	
Has consent been given for Referral? If not, please explain	
Please complete as much information as known on the form below.	

Child, Young Person or Adult's Details:

<i>Family Details</i>	
Family Last Name:	Alternate Last Name:
First Name:	
Family Home Address:	
Post Code:	
Telephone:	
Gender:	
On CP Register: Yes/No	
Disability or Special Need: Yes/No (please detail)	
Primary Language Spoken:	

Primary Carer Name Contact Number Address (leave blank if same as above)	
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<i>Cause for Concern</i> Reason for report - include as many details as possible as regards what was said/seen/heard and whereby the person making the report. Include date and time of disclosure/incident	
Are immediate actions required to safeguard this child, young person or adult? If yes, please proceed directly to contact one of the below services: Gateway Team Mon – Fri 9am – 5pm 03001234333/02894424459 Regional Emergency Social Work service. Available 5.00 PM – 9.00 AM Monday to Thursday and 5.00 PM on Friday to 9.00 AM on Monday. There is a 24 hour cover over public holidays 028 9504 9999 NSPCC Helpline on 0808 800 5000 Local Police Station	
Signed by Person Reporting	

Signed by DCPO or Member of Safeguarding Team			
Action Taken			
Date	Agency Contacted	Staff Members Involved	Details/Advice Given

Appendix 3

Online Safety Guidance

We will seek to keep young people safe online by:

- Providing clear directions to staff on how to behave online
- Supporting and encouraging the young people using our service to use the internet, social media and mobile phones in a way that keeps them safe and shows respect for others
- Supporting and encouraging parents and carers to do what they can to keep their children safe online
- Ensure that all Sessional Staff develop an online safety agreement for use with young people and their parents or carers
- Developing clear and robust procedures to enable us to respond appropriately to any incidents of inappropriate online behaviour, whether by an adult or a child or young person
- Reviewing and updating the security of our information systems regularly
- Ensuring that user names, logins, email accounts and passwords are used effectively
- Ensuring personal information about the adults and children who are involved in our organisation is held securely and shared only as appropriate
- Ensuring that images of children, young people and families are used only after their written permission has been obtained, and only for the purpose for which consent has been given
- Providing supervision, support and training for staff and volunteers about online safety

