



National Guidance
for Child Protection
in Scotland 2021:
Stakeholder Supportive Statements



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
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Minister for Children and Young People, Clare Haughey MSP

Children and young people have the right to be protected from all forms of harm and abuse.

This updated guidance rightly has more of a focus on listening to the views of children and working collaboratively with families. There is also a stronger emphasis on the range of issues that impact on the wellbeing and safety of children, such as poverty and poor housing, which is part of all care and protection planning.

Whilst there are specific responsibilities associated with certain professional roles, everyone has a job in making sure children are safe.

Bill Alexander and Professor Brigid Daniel, National Guidance Steering Group Chairs

As Chairs of the Steering Group we heartily welcome the launch of the revised National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland. The fact that the Guidance required revision reflects the extent to which policy and practice had outstripped the previous 2014 version, as we continue to develop and enhance our approaches to protecting children and supporting families. In particular, with ever closer multi-disciplinary working, a growing recognition of the impact of poverty on children's lives and increased attention to listening to the views of children and young people it was clear that a more holistic approach to Guidance was required.

The revision of the Guidance was not a quick process – and deliberately so. It was a comprehensive, considered and consultative exercise, that involved practitioners, managers and service users in extensive co-production. The Steering Group was keen to ensure that there was detailed consideration of the current legislative, policy and practice landscape. This culminated in a formal consultation that yielded an incredibly rich set of responses that will continue to be a valuable source of ideas for further development. That such a wide range of individuals and organisations took the time to respond is testament to the real sense of collective responsibility for children and young people's wellbeing in Scotland.

Along with the implementation of the UNCRC and taking forward The Promise within the framework of a refreshed Getting it right for every child, there has never been a better opportunity to make Scotland the best place for children to grow up.

We wish to thank all of the members of the Steering Committee for contributing their time, commitment and knowledge. We would also wish to thank the many colleagues and others who have contributed so much to this process, not least the core team of drafters and editors for their perseverance and expertise.

Paul Carberry, Director for Scotland, Action for Children

At Action for Children, our mission is to protect and support children and young people. We do this to realise our vision that every child and young person in the country has a safe and happy childhood and the foundations they need to thrive.

While the primary responsibility for safeguarding and protecting children and young people may rest with their parents and carers. This responsibility must and should be a national shared responsibility. As such we have services that help keep children safe. We provide practical and emotional care and support, ensuring children's voices are heard. This also includes offering Family Support which develops tools and strategies to assist families in creating safe and loving family environments.

That is why as an organisation we were pleased to contribute to the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021. This guidance is more inclusive of young people's views, opinions, and needs. It is a well thought out and clear document, which is user friendly and accessible.

As such we commend this guidance and urge everyone to work together to implement them. We hope it will ensure that a wide spectrum of understanding, knowledge, experience, and views will be brought together for the betterment of children. The document offers the opportunity for real national shared ownership over child protection.

Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES)

ADES fully supports implementation of the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021, and will work with our members to ensure that they continue to contribute to national and local partnerships working for children and young people's wellbeing and safety.

Barnardo's Scotland

Since the early 1990s, Barnardo's Scotland has been tackling child sexual exploitation and abuse in Scotland, supporting victims, raising awareness in communities, and calling for national leadership.

Sadly we know that children in every community are still at risk of abuse and exploitation and that the true scale of the issue remains largely unknown. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and new ways of working, makes the implementation of this new and updated guidance ever more urgent.

As the world changes and evolves, so do the risks facing young people. We know all children can become victims of sexual abuse and exploitation: girls and boys, from every ethnicity, religion and cultural background; LGBTI young people; and those with disabilities. Children who have already experienced neglect and abuse are especially vulnerable, but with new technologies all children are at risk of being

groomed online, often by adult predators using the cover of anonymity to “befriend” them.

At the same time, evidence from our services supports growing concerns about the rise in child criminal exploitation – where children are coerced into engaging in criminal activity, often linked to gangs, drugs, serious violence, and sexual abuse. At Barnardo’s we don’t just respond to the challenges of today, we seek to prevent problems from occurring tomorrow continuing to work in partnership with National and Local Government, police, health bodies and local communities to support families, keep children safe from harm, and give young people the tools and resilience they need to achieve a positive future. Although we have come a long way in increasing awareness and improving support for the victims of exploitation and abuse, there is still much to be done.

The National Guidance for Child Protection 2021 presents an opportunity to further reduce child harm, to improve partnership working and information sharing between agencies and to provide children and young people with a more consistent approach to care and protection. Barnardo’s Scotland is fully committed to guidance implementation and will continue to work with the Scottish Government and all other partners to ensure children and young people are protected from abuse, exploitation and neglect.

Peter Macleod, Chief Executive, Care Inspectorate

The Care Inspectorate welcomes the revised guidance. It is everyone’s job to promote the safety, protection and wellbeing of all our children and we were pleased to contribute as a member of the steering group.

Up-to-date and comprehensive guidance is a crucial tool for all those who work with or come into contact with children, young people and families. This revision will help services support their safety and wellbeing through continuous improvement and greater consistency of practice.

We recognise implementation takes time and the degree of change required in local areas will vary across Scotland. Our scrutiny will take account of the stage children’s services partnerships are at in implementing the guidance. We will support improvement, highlight strengths and good practice, and seek assurance that Scotland’s children are growing up safe, loved and respected.

The Centre for Excellence for Children’s Care and Protection (CELCIS)

CELCIS, the Centre for Excellence for Children’s Care and Protection, welcomes and supports this new and comprehensive national child protection guidance. It provides a shift in content and tone which we know is necessary if we are all to further support the protection and wellbeing of children in Scotland in ways that are aligned with the principles of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and can uphold The Promise and ‘Getting It Right For Every Child’ (GIRFEC). We can be in no doubt that to be truly effective, all of our planning and all

of our practice must be led by the individual and holistic care and protection needs of each child.

This guidance is informed by these principles and comes at a time when we have witnessed a period of unique and intense demands on Scotland's multi agency workforces like no other as they have responded to the needs of infants, children, young people and their families during COVID-19. Close collaboration in working with third sector organisations has made for quick and effective responses to need children and their families have for early help. This new guidance can build on this and light the way for strengthening cross agency working with a renewed focus on consistent early help to prevent harm and ensure protection for children who need this.

As we work to keep children safe and families together wherever this is possible, guidance to inform national procedures and local practices is now essential. All those who are engaged directly with the development and wellbeing of children make a valuable contribution in their child protection responsibilities and responses. The guidance offers a practical resource to help leaders and their workforces maximise the effort needed to create the readiness, planning and design to implement new and stronger ways for agencies to work together.

As a member of the guidance Implementation Group, at CELCIS we look forward to being part of realising this change.

Children 1st

Children 1st welcomes the publication of the new National Guidance for Child Protection and in particular, the shift in language and tone to reflect Scotland's commitment to the realisation of children's rights.

We look forward to working with the Scottish Government and partners to ensure this guidance is implemented comprehensively and effectively. For Scotland to be a country which has children's wellbeing at its core, it will be crucial that this is built on an understanding of how trauma and abuse affect children and what trauma recovery means in practice, in order to keep children and their families safe.

Alan Small, Chair, Child Protection Committees Scotland

All members of Child Protection Committees Scotland are delighted that both revised national child protection guidance and guidance for conducting a Learning Review have been published today. In moving from Significant Case Reviews to Learning Reviews, CPCScotland hope that the emphasis will be on learning and improvement rather than blame and hindsight. As we and all of our partners know, child protection is a highly complex area, one which requires trauma-informed responses. Professional responses also need to be agile and adaptable, designed specifically to suit the needs of individual children and young people at the same time as protecting their rights, and the new guidance for child protection sets a bar for consistent responses across the country.

CPCScotland has been involved in and supported the production of both pieces of guidance throughout and our members have made significant contributions to the content. As key bodies for developing, implementing, and improving child protection strategy across and between agencies and communities, local Child Protection Committees will also have a key role in ensuring the new guidance is implemented effectively and consistently. Despite the considerable strains presented to child protection agencies and frontline staff by the pandemic, CPCScotland expects that this new guidance will support continuous improvement in child protection plus provide a transparent and proportionate culture of learning about how we can do things differently and more effectively.

Coalition of Care and Support Providers in Scotland (CCPS) Children, young people and families committee

CCPS welcomes the aspiration of the Guidance to promote children's rights and foster partnerships with families to safeguard children and young people. We look forward to working with children, families and communities, as well as with Child Protection Committees and other statutory partners, to support the implementation of the Guidance, recognising the significant contribution the Third Sector has to realising those aspirations.

Councillor Stephen McCabe, COSLA Children and Young People Spokesperson

The National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 is a crucial resource for local partnerships and agencies. This resource will have a vital role in informing the development of multi-agency child protection procedures, processes and training. The National Guidance has been fully endorsed by the COSLA Children and Young People Board which includes all education and children services convenors as well as representatives from local authority social work, education and public health. We all recognise that the pandemic has had a severe impact on our most vulnerable children and young people and as such it is crucial that our workforce have the right tools to support them in the right way and the National Guidance provides that.

The protection of children and young people is of paramount importance and it is also vitally important that we take a rights based approach to the work that we to achieve this. I welcome the fact that the Guidance is rights focussed and will sit alongside and integrate with incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC).

Gayle Gorman, Chief Executive, Education Scotland (and HMI)

Education Scotland fully endorses the new National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021. This revised guidance incorporates current legislation and policy, ensuring children rights and voices are at its core. The key role of the education workforce in protecting children is affirmed throughout the guidance and aligns with

Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) and the ambitions of The Promise. This greater emphasis on ensuring children's views are taken into account in all decisions that affect them and working in partnership with families and community supports is a positive shift given the recent incorporation of UNCRC into Scots Law.

Representation from Education Scotland will be included in the steering group looking at national support needs for practitioners, managers and leaders to ascertain common needs to help implement the new guidance locally and regionally.

In addition, HM Inspectors recognise that schools, settings and services will need time to plan and implement changes to their local practice as the result of the refreshed National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021. There is an acknowledgement of the continuing pressures of COVID-19 and the paused school inspection programmes to enable schools, setting and services to concentrate on planning, organising and delivering learning for children and young people during the ongoing challenging circumstances. The Scottish Government also recognises these challenges and therefore anticipates that a period of 1 – 2 years will be needed to assess, plan and implement any required changes. There will be no expectation to align with the revised guidance immediately after its publication.

HM Inspectors would like to reassure practitioners that when the inspection programme is resumed, full consideration of the impact of COVID-19 will be taken into account. HM Inspectors will continue to support staff in their self-evaluation of safeguarding and child protection approaches using the quality indicators as set out in How good is our school? (4th edition) (HGIOS4) quality improvement framework. This support will include professional dialogue with relevant staff around the revised National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 to ensure they are beginning to consider the new guidance in the development of policies and practices.

Robbie Pearson, Chief Executive, Healthcare Improvement Scotland

Protecting children requires a culture and ethos which recognises that whilst there are responsibilities associated with certain professional roles, *everyone* has a role to play in making sure children 'are alright'.

Healthcare Improvement Scotland has a critical role in driving forward the quality of health and care services for children and young people, and we share the aspiration of the Scottish Government that all children and young people grow up loved, safe and their rights respected and upheld in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). For many years we have actively participated in the joint inspection for children's services, working with partner agencies including the Care Inspectorate, and Her Majesties Inspectorate of Constabulary and Education Scotland. This activity – alongside other critical work streams – is part of our efforts across the organisation to reflect key issues for children and young people and maximise our opportunities to positively impact their experiences and outcomes. Also, as a corporate parent, we are fully committed to fulfilling the ambition and aspirations of The Promise and prepare for the changes in the years ahead.

The new National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 describes the care and protection responsibilities and expectations of everyone who works with, or comes into contact with, children and young people, families and carers in Scotland. This is a vital next stage to help achieve our national goals. We have been proud to participate in the revision of this guidance and now look forward to contributing to the implementation steering group to help local areas engage with the guidance, to support a fuller picture of support needs for practitioners, managers and leaders emerges.

NHS Ayrshire and Arran (NHSAA)

NHSAA is fully committed to transforming the lives of children and young people, protecting them from harm and helping them to build a healthy future. We look forward to supporting the implementation of the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021, which clearly describes the responsibilities and expectations of everyone who works with children, young people, parents and their families to protect children from abuse, neglect and exploitation.

NHSAA were delighted to have had the opportunity to contribute to the consultation and also share views on the updated National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland. We welcome the integration of the *Child Protection Guidance for Health Professionals (2013)* within the structured sections as this clearly defines the role, function and contribution of all health practitioners and designated services to child protection processes. This guidance will also inform and underpin our local child protection procedures, guidance and training as well as providing an excellent framework for practice, whereby the ethos is to work alongside children and families where possible to ensure the child's experience, needs, wishes and feelings are central.

NHSAA welcomes that the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 is integral to the rights-based Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC), recognising the safety and wellbeing of children are inseparably connected and requires a continuum of preventative and protective work. The collective responsibilities of agencies to work together to prevent harm from abuse and neglect from pre-birth onwards is evident throughout, with a clear commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Karen Wilson, Director of Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professions (NMAHP), NHS Education for Scotland

The National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland defines the commitment to prioritise the rights and protection of children. It provides essential guidance for agencies on working well together and NHS Education for Scotland (NES) share this commitment, recognising our key role in workforce education across the range of professionals and agencies we work with. We will support the implementation of this guidance within the work we do to promote consistency and effective interagency partnerships and to work together to ensure a range of learning opportunities are available. At NES, we recognise our role as NHS practitioners to protect the public

and we will be responsive to education and learning needs to ensure those who safeguard the needs children, young people, families and communities feel confident and competent in carrying out their responsibilities. Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) informs our work in promoting children's rights, alongside our established commitment to a trauma informed and responsive nation and workforce. We will therefore continue to promote the knowledge, skills and values in the provision of workforce education and integrate the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland.

Cathie Cowan, Chief Executive, NHS Forth Valley

We welcome this new national guidance and the importance it places on supporting and protecting children and young people at each stage in their lives. This work begins before they are born and continues during and after pregnancy. Local midwives, health visitors and school nurses all have a vital role to play in improving the health and wellbeing of children working closely with parents and families.

However, we also recognise that other factors such as education, employment and housing all have a major influence on the lives and experiences of children and young people. That's why it's more important than ever for organisations, voluntary organisations and local communities to work together to coordinate services and support and target resources to where they are need most.

This guidance provides greater clarity and consistency as well as highlighting best practice which will help drive forward positive changes and improvements across Scotland.

NSPCC Scotland

The conditions created by the pandemic increased the risk of abuse and neglect for many children living in Scotland, and underlined the need for us all, including education, health and support services, to work together to protect our youngest in society. This new national guidance gives clear and important messaging about how we can do this to improve the care and protection of children across the country.

We are particularly heartened to see that the guidance on pre-birth assessment and planning has been strengthened. For this to be truly realised it's crucial that local teams have the resource and capacity to support families at the earliest possible stage to prevent problems escalating.

Samantha McCluskey, Detective Chief Superintendent, Head of Public Protection, Police Scotland

Protecting Children from abuse and neglect is everyone's job but as an agency with statutory responsibilities, Police Scotland remains fully committed to ensuring this is a priority for all officers and staff.

We welcome and support the publication of the revised National Child Protection Guidance. Working closely in partnership with key stakeholders and partner agencies, Police Scotland has fully contributed to each stage of its development and revision.

The guidance explains the current care and protection responsibilities of everyone who works with or has contact with children and young people. In addition, the guidance sets out the future change, development and improvement to the child protection system that will come from incorporation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), The Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Act, The Promise and the implementation of the Scottish Child Interview Model. Police Scotland is already invested in training our officers in these policies and practices.

A key principle for Police Scotland is inclusion – ensuring our service is accessible for and responsive to the needs of all people in Scotland, including our unique remote and island communities. The guidance supports our focus to achieve consistency in policy and practice nationally, whilst remaining flexible to the needs of communities and key partners locally. This applies from the point of identification of risk, through the application of protection measures to the investigation of cases.

We recognise the strength of a co-ordinated and committed multi-agency approach to protecting children and welcome the emphasis the guidance places on Interagency Referral Discussion. It supports Police Scotland's ambition to achieve national consistency and improved outcomes for children.

Reducing harm and protecting children is a priority for Police Scotland and we are committed to working with our partners locally and nationally to fully implement the guidance, improve services and ensure support is available when it is most needed.

Marianne Cochrane, Chair of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health Child Protection Subcommittee

As the Chair of the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health Child Protection Subcommittee I have been fully committed to the development of this guidance. The medical/paediatric contribution to Child Protection processes is often crucial and we value being involved in writing this document, describing our roles and responsibilities. It is also providing our partners with clear expectations of medical and clinical colleagues and the processes that underpin our medical assessments. This is new to this guidance and offers more detail on the many types of medical assessments that are available.

Paediatricians are often advocates of the children they see and the guidance keeps children's rights and the child's voice at its core. I look forward to seeing the values of this document in practice!

Scotland's Executive Nurse Directors (SEND)

Health boards seek to achieve the best health and care outcomes for children, young people and their families and advocate that all children and young people grow up loved, safe and their rights respected and upheld in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 describes the care and protection responsibilities and expectations of everyone who works with, or comes into contact with children and young people, families and carers in Scotland.

SEND welcome that the previously separate guidance for health professionals – the 'Pink Book' – has been integrated within the new guidance and more clearly defines the role, function and contribution of health practitioners and designated services to child protection processes. This integration underlines the multi-agency nature of child protection and the key role health staff have in the early identification of abuse and neglect particularly within the Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) continuum. Also, as corporate parents, health boards are fully committed to fulfilling the ambition and aspirations of The Promise and prepare for the changes in the years ahead. This includes a greater emphasis on supporting practice that ensures that a child's experience, needs, and wishes are central, recognises both risks and strengths, and which works in partnership with families and communities.

SEND now look forward to supporting the implementation of the guidance across the boards and whilst a degree of variation is to be expected, there will be greater consistency in what children and families can expect in terms of support and protection in all parts of Scotland through the implementation of this Guidance.

Neil Hunter, Principal Reporter/Chief Executive, Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA)

SCRA has been proud to contribute to the revision of the national guidance for child protection in Scotland. The extent and detail of the information contained within the guidance is not only extraordinary, but also reflective of the complexity and multiplicity of challenges that face our children and young people. The guidance, information, and tools provided will be of enormous benefit and support to everyone working with, or supporting children and young people. We welcome the ethos across the guidance that agencies must, wherever possible, work alongside families in an open, transparent and respectful way, providing dynamic and resonant help and support to alleviate difficulties they might face. This is consistent with Scotland's ongoing commitment to GIRFEC and a rights based approach. Interference in the lives of children and their families must be justified, proportionate and subject to challenge. SCRA and our partners in the Children's Hearings system are hugely supportive of this approach and will work with the spirit and values of this guidance.

SCRA is delighted to welcome and support this revised guidance, and wish to pay tribute to the efforts of those who constructed this incredible body of work, and the many who responded to consultations and discussions along the way. The publication of the guidance is a significant step forward for child protection in Scotland.

Social Work Scotland

In the collective endeavour to protect and enhance the wellbeing of Scotland's children, the revised National Child Protection Guidance should provide us with a firm foundation on which to organise and direct local partnership. At the core of those partnerships is social work, fulfilling its unique statutory responsibilities and bringing its deep expertise and leadership. Social Work professionals engaged extensively in the development of this revised guidance, and Social Work Scotland welcomes the guidance's new emphasis on children's rights and voice, prevention and early intervention. Our priority must be on protecting children, wherever possible, through effective multi-agency support before incidence of significant harm; a focus on getting it right for every child. Where formal child protection measures are necessary, we hope the revised guidance will help bring greater clarity and consistency across national practice, and equip us to learn together about how to continuously improve. We look forward to working with Scottish Government and partners, national and local, to ensure the necessary resources and time is available to make implementation possible.