

Policy & Procedure

Child protection



Agency Responsibilities

St. Andrew's Children's Society is not a child protection agency in its own right. It is our duty to pass on any allegations, concerns or other incidents with a child protection element to a child protection agency. The Agency has a Child Protection Officer who has undergone the accredited child protection training currently approved by local authorities and other child protection agencies in Scotland. The Society follow the National Guidance published in 2010.

We currently have adoptive parents and foster carers across East Central Scotland and as far north as Perth and Dundee and as far south as Eyemouth. We now also have an office in Aberdeen which operates within a 60 mile radius of the city and also includes Angus & Moray. Those families have children placed with them from all over the United Kingdom. This geographical area is covered by 16 local authorities. Whenever we make a placement we would expect to follow the child protection procedures of the local authority that placed the child, therefore we need to have copies of that authorities procedures at the point of placement or as soon as practicable after placement.

If there is some reason why that local authority cannot act with appropriate urgency (perhaps because of geography) then we would negotiate with that authority to decide who should pass a referral on to the local authority where the child lives.

Procedure/duty of care

The following procedure applies when anyone in the Agency is alerted to a child protection related matter:

- Child Protection Referral to this Agency.
- This referral is passed to the designated Child Protection Officer.
- The Child Protection Officer discusses the referral with the Director.
- The Child Protection Officer notifies the relevant officer of the local authority that has responsibility for the child concerned. If there are difficulties in passing on this referral immediately to that Local authority then the Director and the Child Protection Officer consider whether the Local authority where the child lives should be notified. A report of the referral will be registered with the Care Inspectorate via its electronic reporting medium.
- The Agency will co-operate fully with the investigating Authority.
- The Child Protection Officer will keep an Agency record of all such incidents.

Roles & Responsibilities

St Andrew's Children's Society is voluntary adoption and foster care agency with offices in Edinburgh & Aberdeen. As such, it has no statutory powers or duties. We are, however a childcare agency and consequently, our first priority is the safety and well-being of the children and young people placed with

our adopters and foster carers.

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It is not agency staff's role to investigate child protection allegations but to ensure that any concerns about the welfare of a child or young person are shared with our colleagues in the statutory sector.

Good practice guidelines

St Andrew's Children's Society offers a service to adoptive families and foster care households. This often involves direct contact with children & young people both informally and when working directly with children and young people. The following guidelines should be used if, during the course of our work, a child or young person makes an allegation of abuse or neglect.

It is important that the child or young person is listened to, supported and respected. The child or young person's family will also have a key role in this regard assuming this is not allegation against a family member. Children & young people need reassurance that they have done the right in sharing this information.

Any concerns or allegations made by a child or young person should be reported to the Agency's Child Protection Officer as soon as is practicable. In the event that this person is not available, then the worker should report this information to a member of the Agency's management team.

It is important when gathering information that Agency staff avoid making promises about sharing this information or indeed begin to interview a child or young person which could compromise a subsequent child protection investigation.

Information sharing / consent

As previously mentioned, it is not possible to give a child or young person reassurance that the allegation they have made will go no further. Allegations may need to be investigated by the police and may result in the perpetrator being the subject of a criminal investigation. Parental consent when there are child protection concerns.

Note taking and record keeping

It is important that the recording of any allegations are done as soon as is practically possible. This should include the date time and name of the person reporting the allegation as well as any significant information about the young person's physical and emotional presentation.

Allegations against staff

Since many of the children we place have come from abusive and neglectful birth family circumstances, it is imperative that they do not suffer further abuse at the hands of adults within the Looked After system. We also have to deal with sometimes vulnerable adults who have had adverse life experiences that have affected them. Our staff team are on the 'front line' and have to deal with extreme and provocative behaviour on occasions. The Society has a duty to support our staff to deal appropriately with such behaviour and it is crucial that staff members talk to their line managers about any situations that they feel may put them in potentially vulnerable situations during the course of carrying out their work.

We know that children in the wider looked after system have occasionally suffered abuse at the hands of social work staff in the past and as an agency we must focus on the needs of children in these circumstances. We also have to acknowledge that because of often quite complicated reasons children on occasion have made false allegations of abuse by staff. We must treat every allegation with the seriousness it demands and the following procedure will be followed in every case since the point of any investigation of an allegation must be to get to the truth

Procedure

- We expect staff members to communicate with their line manager at the earliest stage if they feel that a child or adult is likely to make an allegation against them. It is imperative that all the relevant professionals involved in the particular situation are made aware of any such concerns immediately.
- All allegations concerning a child will be dealt with using our Child Protection Procedure (see procedure – Child Protection).
- The Management Team will discuss what support it is appropriate to offer to the staff member during the investigation of the allegation. It may be appropriate for the staff member to be offered support from an independent source outwith the Agency and this will be discussed on a case by case basis.
- If an allegation has been discovered to have no basis then a clear plan needs to be agreed that will allow for thorough exploration of the reasons why the allegation was made and what work needs to be done to repair relationships and to prevent a re-occurrence in the future. This plan would normally be formulated by the Management Team in discussion with the staff member involved.
- If an allegation is proven or leaves a significant degree of doubt then the Management Team would invoke the Agencies Discipline Procedure. This would be done irrespective of any legal proceedings.

Safe recruitment including service users and staff

All service users will be subject statutory checks CRBS/Disclosure Scotland to ensure that there is no information which may indicate that they may present a risk to a child or young person. These checks also include a full medical by a suitably qualified medical practitioner for prospective adopters and foster carers.

Checks undertaken to ensure Fitness of prospective employees.

CRBS checks/pvg scheme checks will be undertaken when the offer of a job has been accepted.

The agency will also make a cross reference check with the registers of the Scottish Social Services Council and /or other professional organisations.

Two references will be taken up once a verbal acceptance has been received. One of these references will be from a present or most recent employer.

Internet safety

This aspect of safe caring is now explored during the preparation of prospective adopters and foster carers and is also part of the Agency's foster care training programme. In general terms, families are advised to be mindful of the many positive aspects of the internet as well as the potential risks this can present for vulnerable children and young people. (See Child Sexual Exploitation policy).

False Reporting

If it becomes evident that a report has been made as the result of false or inaccurate information no action will be taken if the Agency is satisfied that the employee was acting in good faith. If an employee has deliberately and maliciously submitted a report that he/she knows to be untrue then this would usually be viewed as a disciplinary matter.

Staff training and development

St Andrew's Children's society is committed to the ongoing training of staff in the area of child protection. The Agency has quarterly practice development forums and child protection will be the subject of one of these sessions.

Most of the Agency's staff have completed the accredited Child Protection course. Our more recently qualified staff members will be undertaking the Child Protection training offered by Stirling University This course is a Postgraduate/Graduate Certificate in Child Welfare and Protection.

Links to key Legislation/Guidance & Procedures

An exhaustive list is not necessary, however, a minimum list of key legislation / guidance / procedures should include the following:

National Guidance for Child Protection (2014) <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2014/05/3052>

Inter-agency Child Protection Procedures – Edinburgh and the Lothian's http://emppc.org.uk/file/Child_Protection/Inter-agency_Child_Protection_Procedures_Edinburgh_the_Lothians_24-8-12.pdf

Getting it Right for Every Child Guidance <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Young-People/gettingitright>

National Framework for Child Protection Learning and Development in Scotland (2012)
<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0039/00391307.pdf>

Local Information Sharing Policies (Edinburgh and the Lothian's)
http://emppc.org.uk/file/Child_Protection/Edinburgh_and_Lothian_-_A

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/creating-a-fairer-and-more-equal-society/supporting-pages/the-united-nations-convention-on-the-rights-of-the-child>.

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United Nations Convention of the Right of the Child



The key rights relevant to the Work of St. Andrew's Children's Society:

- Article 2:** We will ensure that children have the right to enjoy all human rights, without discrimination
- Article 3:** We will always ensure that the best interests of the child are of primary consideration
- Article 4:** We will take measures to implement children's economic, social and cultural rights to the maximum extent of their available resources
- Article 6:** We will ensure that children have the right to life and to development 'to the maximum extent possible'
- Article 12:** We will ensure the right for children to participate and express their views
- Article 16:** We will safeguard the right to private and family life
- Article 19:** We will work to ensure the right to protection from child maltreatment
- Article 23:** we will promote the right for disabled children to enjoy a 'full and decent life', and their right to 'special care' and assistance
- Article 24:** We will play our part to ensure the right to enjoy 'the highest attainable standard of health'
- Article 27:** In our assessment work with adopters and foster carers we will ensure that children have the right to a standard of living adequate for their development
- Article 28:** We will work with our adopters and foster carers to promote the right to education for the children in their homes.