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# Underlying Policy, Principles and Values

## 1. Safeguarding and Promoting Children's Welfare

Throughout this Manual, safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined as:

* Protecting children from maltreatment;
* Preventing impairment of children's health or development;
* Ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and
* Undertaking that role so as to enable those children to have optimum life chances and to enter adulthood successfully.

Protecting children from maltreatment is important in preventing the impairment of health or development. Protecting children from maltreatment and preventing impairment of children's health or development are necessary, but not sufficient to ensure that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.

Young people at serious risk of harm through Domestic Abuse or through frequent Running Away are likely to have significant needs. Agencies and professionals need to ensure that the safeguarding process responds effectively to the needs of children at risk of suffering violence within the community. This may involve both the perpetrators and victims of violent activity.

To achieve this, children need to feel loved and valued, and be supported by a network of reliable and affectionate relationships. If they are denied the opportunity and support they need to achieve these outcomes, children are at increased risk not only of an impoverished childhood, but of disadvantage and social exclusion in adulthood. Abuse and neglect pose particular problems.

The NEL SCP is committed to ensuring that families in North East Lincolnshire have access to a wide range of services and professional support to help them bring up their children. The NEL SCP believe that in the great majority of cases, it should be the decision of parents when to ask for help and advice on their children's care and upbringing. However, professionals do also need to engage parents early when to do so may prevent problems or difficulties becoming worse. Only in exceptional cases should there be compulsory intervention in family life: for example, where this is necessary to safeguard a child from suffering Significant Harm. Such intervention should - provided this is consistent with the safety and welfare of the child - support families in making their own plans for the welfare and protection of their children.

## 2. Child Protection

Child protection is part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. This refers to the activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering or likely to suffer Significant Harm.

Effective child protection is essential as part of wider work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. However, all agencies and individuals should aim pro-actively to safeguard and promote the welfare of children so that the need for action to protect children from harm is reduced.

## 3. Principles Underpinning all Work to Safeguard and Promote the Welfare of Children

The North East Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Partnership and all managers, employees, professionals, volunteers, carers, independent contractors and service providers must ensure that their practice reflects an approach which is:

1. Child-centredSome of the worst failures of the system have occurred when professionals have lost sight of the child and concentrated instead on their relationship with the adults. The child should be seen by the practitioner and kept in focus throughout work with the child and family. The child's voice should be heard and account taken of their perspective and their views.The over-riding principle is that the needs and rights of children come first i.e. the safety and well-being of the child are paramount. Where the rights and needs of the child conflict with those of adults, whether parents/carers or professionals, any conflict must be resolved in the child's favour. The NEL SCP strongly endorses theUN Convention on the Rights of the Child;
2. Rooted in child developmentThose working with children should be informed by a developmental perspective which recognises that, as children grow, they continue to develop their skills and abilities. Each stage, from infancy through middle years to adolescence, lays the foundation for more complex development. Plans and interventions to safeguard and promote the child's welfare should be based on a clear assessment of the child's developmental progress and the difficulties a child may be experiencing. Planned action should also be timely and appropriate for the child's age and stage of development;
3. Focused on outcomes for childrenWhen working directly with a child, any plan developed for the child and their family or care giver should be based on an assessment of the child's developmental needs and the parents/caregivers' capacity to respond to these needs within their community contexts. This plan should set out the planned outcomes for each child and at review the actual outcomes should be recorded.The purpose of all interventions should be to achieve the best possible outcomes for each child recognising each is unique;
4. Holistic in approachHaving an holistic approach means having an understanding of a child within the context of the child's family (parents or care givers and the wider family) and of the educational setting, community and culture in which he or she is growing up. The interaction between the developmental needs of children, the capacities of parents or care givers to respond appropriately to those needs and the impact of wider family and environmental factors on children and on parenting capacity requires careful exploration during an assessment.The ultimate aim is to understand the child's developmental needs within the context of the family and to provide appropriate services which respond to those needs. The analysis of the child's situation will inform planning and action in order to secure the best outcomes for the child, and will inform the subsequent review of the effectiveness of actions taken and services provided. The child's context will be even more complex when they are living away from home and looked after by adults who do not have parental responsibility for them;
5. Ensuring equality of opportunityEquality of opportunity means that all children have the opportunity to achieve the best possible development, regardless of their gender, ability, race, ethnicity, circumstances or age. Some vulnerable children may have been particularly disadvantaged in their access to important opportunities and their health and educational needs will require particular attention in order to optimise their current welfare as well as their long-term outcomes in young adulthood.
6. The NEL SCP recognise that children and families can suffer from discrimination because of race, ethnic origin, religion, culture or disability. The partnership is committed to promoting equity of service, and to working in a non-discriminatory manner. NEL SCP recognises the challenge of working in Lincolnshire where minority groups are often small and isolated.The principle of equal opportunities also means that children in minority groups have an equal right to protection from abuse, and that the same standards should apply when assessments are being made. Cultural factors neither explain nor condone abuse or Neglect, and it must be acknowledged that children from all backgrounds can be abused or neglected.
7. Involving of children and familiesIn the process of finding out what is happening to a child it is important to listen and develop an understanding of his or her wishes and feelings. The importance of developing a co-operative working relationship is emphasised, so that parents or care givers feel respected and informed, they believe agency staff are being open and honest with them, and in turn they are confident about providing vital information about their child, themselves and their circumstances. The consent of children, young people and their parents or care givers should be obtained when sharing information unless to do so would place the child at risk of suffering Significant Harm. Decisions should also be made with their agreement, whenever possible, unless to do so would place the child at risk of suffering significant harm. See below and alsoInformation Sharing;
8. Sharing InformationResearch and experience have shown that keeping children safe requires professionals and others to share information about children and about their parents/carers and others who may pose a risk of harm to children. Often, it is only when information from a number of sources has been shared and is then put together that it becomes clear that a child is likely to suffer Significant Harm. NEL SCP therefore endorses the principle of sharing information to protect children. At the same time the legitimate concerns and anxieties of professionals and agencies when dealing with sensitive personal information are recognised.NEL SCP believes that:The best way to resolve any potential difficulties is normally for agencies and professionals to seek the consent of the subject of the information to share it with others;Where consent is not given, or seeking consent would lead to a child being likely to suffer significant harm, sharing information should not normally be a problem where Children's Services are carrying out enquiries under.The law and most professional guidance in these circumstances would normally allow information to be disclosed without consent in order to safeguard the child and/or for the purposes of the prevention or detection of crime;
9. Where Children's Services are seeking information as part of a social work assessment, in order to decide among other things whether a Section 47 Enquiry is needed, the position is less clear. The consent of children, young people and their parents or caregivers should be obtained when sharing information unless to do so would lead to the child being likely to suffer significant harm.
10. Building on strengths as well as identifying difficulties.Identifying both strengths and difficulties within the child, his or her family and the context in which they are living is important, as is considering how these factors have an impact on the child's health and development. Too often it has been found that a deficit model of working with families predominates in practice, and ignores crucial areas of success and effectiveness within the family on which to base interventions.Working with a child or families strengths becomes an important part of a plan to resolve difficulties;
11. Multi and inter-agency in approachFrom birth, there will be a variety of different agencies and programmes in the community involved with children and their development, particularly in relation to their health and education. Multi and inter-agency work to safeguard and promote children's welfare starts as soon as there are concerns about a child's welfare, not just when there are questions about possible harm.NEL SCP recognises that agencies have different roles and responsibilities in terms of child protection. The essence of effective collaboration lies not in blurring these differences but in recognising that each agency and professional has its own contribution to make, complementing the roles of others. The main roles of agencies in relation to child protection are summarised inInformation Sharing;
12. A continuing process not an eventUnderstanding what is happening to a vulnerable child within the context of his or her family and the local community, and taking appropriate action are continuing and interactive processes and not single events. Assessment should continue throughout a period of intervention, and intervention may start at the beginning of an assessment.
13. Providing and reviewing servicesAction and services should be provided according to the identified needs of the child and family in parallel with assessment where necessary. It is not necessary to await completion of the assessment process. Immediate and practical needs should be addressed alongside more complex and longer term ones. The impact of service provision on a child's developmental progress should be reviewed.
14. Informed by evidenceEffective practice with children and families requires sound professional judgements which are underpinned by a rigorous evidence base, and draw on the practitioners knowledge and experience.The NEL SCP aims to be a learning organisation and is committed to the principle of continuous improvement of services. Learning will take place at different levels and in a number of different ways, including:Through the work of Sub-Groups developing practice guidance;Through auditing and monitoring of performance against targets;Through consideration of individual cases by the Inter-Agency Significant Incident Review Group;Through Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (previously Serious Case Reviews);Through dissemination of national research and best practice.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child [Child Rights - World's Children's Prize](https://worldschildrensprize.org/childrights?gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=2063476538&gclid=EAIaIQobChMIyLWrhJuZjwMV45ZQBh2nFBsSEAAYASAAEgLjQPD_BwE)

See Information Sharing

The best way to resolve any potential difficulties is normally for agencies and professionals to seek the consent of the subject of the information to share it with others;

* Where consent is not given, or seeking consent would lead to a child being likely to suffer significant harm, sharing information should not normally be a problem where Children's Services are carrying out enquiries under.The law and most professional guidance in these circumstances would normally allow information to be disclosed without consent in order to safeguard the child and/or for the purposes of the prevention or detection of crime;

Information Sharing (/chapter/information-sharing)

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* Through dissemination of national research and best practice.

## 4. Working in Partnership with Children and Families

The NEL SCP strongly supports the principle of working in partnership with children, parents/carers and other family members. The importance of developing a co-operative working relationship is emphasised, so that parents or caregivers feel respected and informed and that they believe agency staff are being open and honest with them. In turn they are confident about providing vital information about their child, themselves and their circumstances.

Partnership does not mean always agreeing with parents, or always seeking a way forward which is acceptable to them. The focus should remain on the child and what is best for him/her. Decisions should also be made with their agreement, whenever possible, unless to do so would lead to the child suffering significant harm.

Work in partnership with families must be based on the following principles:

* Treat all family members with dignity and respect and offer a caring and courteous service;
* Enable all family members to participate in the assessment process, regardless of race, culture, religion, gender, sexual orientation or ability;
* Ensure family members know the child's safety and welfare has priority;
* Minimise infringement of privacy consistent with protecting the child;
* Be clear about powers and purpose of any intervention;
* Be aware of the impact on the family of professional actions;
* Respect confidentiality and pass on information and/or observations about the family only with permission or to protect the child;
* Listen to and try to understand the concerns, wishes and feelings of the child and family before formulating explanations and plans;
* Learn about the child's religious, cultural, community and familial context;
* Consider strengths, potential and limitations of family members;
* Ensure all family members know their responsibilities and rights with respect to receipt or refusal of services and its consequences;
* Use simple jargon-free language appropriate to age and culture of each individual;
* Be open and honest about concerns and professionals' responsibilities, plans and limitations;
* Allow individuals time to absorb professional concerns and processes;
* Distinguish between personal feelings, values, prejudices and beliefs, and professional roles and responsibilities and seek and use supervision to check achievement of this;
* Always acknowledge errors, failures or oversights and the distress caused to families;
* Give explicit consideration to the potential conflict between family members and the possible need for children or adults to speak without other family members present;
* Children and young people should be consulted and kept informed about what is to happen to them;
* Children's welfare must be safeguarded by prompt, positive and pro-active attention.

## 5. Timescales

Any timescales referred to in the procedures are the minimum standards required by NEL Safeguarding Children Partnership. Where the welfare of the child requires it, shorter time-scales must be achieved.

## 6. Case Recording

The following is intended to ensure the security of children's case records and the integrity of the information that they contain.

Good quality case recording is essential in ensuring:

* Continuity of service to children and families when staff are unavailable or change, or when a service resumes after a period of time;
* Effective risk management practices to safeguard the well-being of children, especially in emergency situations;
* Effective partnerships between staff, children, their families, their carers, other agencies and service providers;
* Clarity of information for everyone involved in the planning and delivery of services, and in the event of investigations, inquiries, or audits;
* Adequate information for staff and managers to ensure the best possible utilisation of available resources;
* As a means by which to ensure accountability and adherence to procedures and statutory responsibilities.

### 6.1 Records Must Be Kept On All Individual Children and Family Members

Records may be in the form of paper files and/or computer records; audio or video recordings may also be kept. Separate case/file records must be made for each child.

All case records must be organised in order to safeguard the contents, protect the confidentiality of the individuals concerned, and make them as easy as possible to use.

Information held in electronic records must accurately reflect the corresponding information recorded within paper files.

Records held on paper may extend to more than one volume. Where more than one volume exists, the dates covered by each volume must be clearly recorded on the front cover.

Where information is held on a paper file, the electronic record must be used to identify the source and location of the paper record.

### 6.2 Forms must be completed in accordance with instructions

Forms must be completed in all fields as indicated by the agencies instructions and signed and dated.

### 6.3 Individuals have a right to be informed about their records

Individuals have a right to be informed about their records, the reasons why they are kept, their rights to confidentiality and how to access their records.

Information should be provided in a form that individuals will understand. An interpreter should be provided if needed.

### 6.4 The practitioner primarily involved should complete the record

The practitioner primarily involved, i.e. the person who directly observes or witnesses the event that is being recorded or who has participated in the meeting/conversation, should complete the record.

Where this is not possible and records are completed or updated by other people, it must be clear from the record which person provided the information being recorded. Preferably the person with first-hand knowledge should read and sign the record as well as stating their post title. There must be clear differentiation between opinion and fact.

Records of decisions must show who has made the decision and the reasons for which it has been made.

### 6.5 All relevant information must be recorded

Every case file or electronic record must be completed with information about the individuals full name, address, date of birth, ethnicity, religion, any reference or identification number, any risk assessment, a transfer/closing summary (where appropriate) and, in the case of paper files, volume number.

### 6.6 Children and families should be involved in the recording process

Children (depending on their age and understanding) and their families must be routinely involved in the process of gathering and recording information about them. They should feel they are part of the recording process.

They should be asked to provide information, express their own views and wishes, and contribute to assessments, reports and to the formulation of plans in respect of services they may receive.

Generally, they must also be asked to give their agreement to the sharing of their information with others, except where there are concerns about Significant Harm. For further guidance about when information can be shared without consent being sought, see Protocol on Sharing Information in Order to Safeguard and Promote the Welfare of Children. Where there is uncertainty about information sharing where there are concerns about Significant Harm, staff should consult with supervisors/managers.

### 6.7 Records must be legible, signed and dated

Those completing computerised records must show their name, post title and the time and date when the recording was completed. The sequence of the recording must also be noted.

Paper records should be typed or handwritten and all records must be signed, dated and the persons post title stated.

Any handwritten records must be legible.

It must be possible to distinguish the name and post title or status of the person completing the record. If there is any doubt of the identity of the writer from a signature, the name should be printed.

### 6.8 Timescales for recording

Records should be completed contemporaneously or as soon as practicable after the event occurs and should be updated as information becomes available or as decisions or actions are taken.

Where records are made or updated late or after the event, the fact must be stated in the record, and the date and time of the entry should be included.

All agencies must adhere to their own agency recording policy and procedures.

6.9 Records must be written in plain English and prejudice must be avoided (/chapter/underlying-policy-principles-and-values#records-must-be-written-in-plain-english-and-prejudice-must-be-avoided)

### 6.9 Records must be written in plain English and prejudice must be avoided

Records must be written concisely, in plain English, avoiding statements that are judgmental or speculative, and focusing instead on facts about the needs, strengths, and objectives of individuals.

Entries to case records should be written in a way which is sensitive to differences of diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds and lifestyles.

Use of technical or professional terms and abbreviations must be kept to a minimum; and if there is likely to be any doubt of their meaning, they must be defined or explained.

### 6.10 Records must be accurate and adequate

Care must be taken to ensure that information contained in records is relevant and accurate and is sufficient to meet legislative responsibilities and the requirements of these procedures.

Every effort must be made to ensure records are factually correct.

Records must distinguish clearly between facts, opinions, assessments, judgments and decisions.

Records must also distinguish between first-hand information and information obtained from third parties.

### 6.11 Managers must oversee and monitor all records

The overall responsibility for ensuring all records are maintained appropriately rests with managers with day-to-day responsibility, delegated to other staff as appropriate.

The manager should routinely audit records to ensure they are up to date and maintained as required and, if not, that deficiencies are rectified as soon as practicable.

All management recommendations, decisions and actions must also be recorded and regularly reviewed.

### 6.12 Records should be kept securely

All records must be kept securely, including electronic records and transfer of information across agencies.

Paper records will be kept in folders with all documents firmly affixed to prevent their loss.

Files in paper form should be stored in a locked cabinet, or a similar manner, usually in an office which only staff/carers have access to. Records should not be left unattended when not in their normal location.

### 6.13 Removal of records

If it is necessary to remove a record from its normal location, a manager should approve this and should stipulate or agree how long it is necessary to remove the record. The manager must also be satisfied that adequate measures are in place to ensure the security of the record(s) whilst they are removed. For example, records must never be left in unattended vehicles.

Care must be taken so that records on laptops, discs, memory sticks or other information storage devices are removed only in accordance with each agencies procedures.

The authorisation for any record to be removed must be recorded and those who may need to see the records should be informed of their removal. The manager must then ensure the record is returned as required/agreed.

### 6.14 Record retention after closure

Files should be retained for the period set out in each agencies own record retention policy.

In all agencies the relevant policies relating to retention and destruction apply and any member of staff responsible for a child's records when services end and the case is closed, is responsible for ensuring that the records to be retained are in good order and that unnecessary items have been removed, for example, compliment slips, duplicate copies etc.