

## Safeguarding Children

### What is Safeguarding?

In legislation and guidance, 'safeguarding' describes the responsibilities of individuals and agencies to both protect and promote the welfare of children. 'Safeguarding Children: the Third Joint Chief Inspectors' Report on Arrangements to Safeguard Children 2008' states:

*"Safeguarding children goes much wider than simply protecting them from neglect and abuse, as 'Every Child Matters' and the 'Staying Safe: Action Plan' emphasise. It is also about keeping them safe from accidents, crime and bullying and actively promoting their welfare in a healthy and safe environment."*

Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 requires councils – in partnership with other agencies as required – to initiate enquiries if they are informed or become aware that a child in their area is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm. When concerns are identified the local council should convene a strategy meeting. This will ensure any actions required to protect children are coordinated between all the agencies involved. Councils also have responsibility for:

- Convening initial and subsequent child protection conferences
- Maintaining a list of all children who are the subject of a multi-agency child protection plan.

Where necessary, councils can start court action to safeguard and protect children.

The Children Act 2004 strengthened and clarified the role of councils and other agencies in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in their area. Section 11 of that act places a duty on partners and organisations to make local arrangements to ensure that their functions are discharged with regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their area.

The section 11 duty complements the duty placed by section 175 of the Education Act 2002 on local education authorities and the governing bodies of both schools and further education institutions, to make arrangements to carry out their functions with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

In 2007, the government published statutory guidance on making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children under section 11. A copy of the guidance can be accessed at:

[http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/\\_files/CB6A73D97A171A201EF5ED4F26B0B55D.pdf](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/_files/CB6A73D97A171A201EF5ED4F26B0B55D.pdf)

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### Who's Responsible for Safeguarding Children?

**Everyone Is!**

## Why is Safeguarding Important?

In accordance with the Children Act (1989 and 2004), although safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility, councils retain the lead role for safeguarding children in their area. It is the responsibility of the council to ensure that all agencies work together to protect children from significant harm by establishing a local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB).

LSCBs have a wide remit and should be concerned with all aspects of children's safety, including bullying and road safety.

One of the most important roles of the LSCB is to ensure that agencies work together effectively to protect children at risk of significant harm. This should be through the development of local child protection procedures and ensuring that all those working with children have the training necessary to use the procedures effectively.

Another key role of the LSCB is the leadership and management of serious case reviews. Serious case reviews should be carried out when a child dies, including by suicide, and abuse or neglect are known or suspected to be a factor in the death. They can also be undertaken where the case raises particular welfare concerns.

Where a case arises, the LSCB should establish a serious case review panel, involving at least the council children's service, health, education and the police. The panel decides whether the case should be the subject of a serious case review, applying criteria set down in 'Working Together'.

This is being reviewed nationally following Baby P: Serious Case review Panels must now have an Independent Chair and the Overview and Executive Summary Reports must be written by an Independent Author. The Secretary of State has stated that he wants to see a move to LSCB's will also having an Independent Chair, all of which will place pressure on the LSCB budget. A revised edition of Working Together is expected in December 2009

A survey and evaluation of serious case reviews was conducted by OFSTED in 2007. They concluded that just under a third of serious case reviews were inadequate because of a lack of rigour in carrying them out. There were also serious delays in producing reviews in nearly all cases, some of which were avoidable.

These factors limit the impact of serious case reviews on sharing the lessons and good practice arising from these cases and on improving practice. It is of critical importance that lead members for children's services ensure the serious case review process in their area is working well and the learning clearly being implemented.

The main characteristics of a good serious case review include:

- open and critical review of agency involvement
- clear analysis of actions
- well-constructed action plans to support lessons

## The Safeguarding Children Role of the Lead Member

Statutory guidance for lead members' states:

"The lead member will have a particular focus on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and should ensure that the authority fulfils its responsibilities to the children in its care, and that all other relevant agencies share responsibility for safeguarding and promoting welfare."

The lead member was not expected to be a member of the local children's safeguarding board but should:

"...hold the director of children's services (DCS) to account for the work of the LSCB in coordinating, and ensuring the effectiveness of, what is done by the board partners to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children."

An important element of this role will be to ensure that, where necessary the LSCB is using serious case reviews to review practice, and that these are conducted in a thorough and timely fashion and involve all the key agencies. The Secretary of State has now indicated that lead members should be a member of the LSCB.

The 2008 joint chief inspectors' report noted that, despite the evidence of improvements, there has been slow progress for some groups of vulnerable children. These include asylum-seeking children held in immigration removal centres, children and young people in custodial settings, looked-after children and care leavers.

The lead member should review the actions taken by the LSCB to safeguard vulnerable groups; in particular through their role as Corporate Parents. The Lead Member should also ensure that the council is taking appropriate action to safeguard and promote the welfare of looked-after children and young people through its role as a corporate parent.

## Key Safeguarding Tasks for the Children's Lead Member and Elected Members

National guidance suggests that to carry out their Safeguarding Children responsibilities as referred to earlier. Lead Members should agree a protocol in respect of the role, making sure this includes details on how they will:

- ensure a particular focus on safeguarding
- hold the department of children's services to account for the work of the LSCB
- receive regular performance information about safeguarding that is simple, concise, and facilitates further probing and management where necessary.
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The Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) suggests that to make sure all councillors understand their responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children the Lead Member may find it useful to produce information or request information be produced on safeguarding or hold events that outline why safeguarding is important. This could be done jointly with the lead member for adults' services. This is in line with the 'Think Family – Think Community' framework. The IDeA have produced a booklet depicting this model of working.

<http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/aio/8953510>

Lead Members should ensure their council's corporate strategy gives a high priority to the council's safeguarding role. They should also make sure they, along with other elected members receive regular management information reports on safeguarding. The Lead Member will need to establish regular meetings with the Director of Children's Services and may also want to arrange regular meetings with the Chair and Business Manager of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. S/he will also need to decide the information required and which information to circulate to other councillors. This is not the only way Elected Members can receive information or determine what information they want to ask for, they can make enquiries themselves or put questions to the Lead Member. The following may help decide the content of management information reports to be requested.

The 'Every Child Matters Outcomes Framework' and the national indicator set (NIS) will provide a framework that enables councils to monitor and drive safeguarding activity. This will need to be complemented by a suite of local performance information.

The council completes a detailed annual return (CPR3), which includes information on child protection activity.

Councils have a statutory duty to ensure that children who have a Child Protection Plan are seen regularly. Lead Members, are recommended to regularly seek information that such statutory visits are happening, and in the required timescales.

Where action is required to safeguard a child, research has demonstrated it is important to keep families involved in the process, so long as this is consistent with the child's safety.

You might want information on the number of parents attending child protection conferences, and whether support was offered to children and families at the end of child protection activity.

Lead members should be informed whenever a serious case review is required and should receive a copy of the final report. It will be important to follow up on the recommendations in the report and monitor that these have been carried out.

Safeguarding concerns all members of the community. Lead members need to ensure that the public knows why it is important to safeguard children and what to do if they have concerns about a child. Over all, the accountability of lead members is critical in safeguarding children.

"The single most important change in the future must be the drawing of a clear line of accountability, from top to bottom, without doubt or ambiguity about who is responsible at every level for the wellbeing of vulnerable children." – Laming Inquiry, January 2003.

On line 'Awareness of Abuse + Neglect' Training is available from the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Everyone is encouraged to enrol on this training which can be undertaken anywhere at any time where there is access to the internet. For further details or to complete an application form please contact: [slscb@stockton.gov.uk](mailto:slscb@stockton.gov.uk) Tel: (01642) 524591 or apply on line at <http://www.stockton.gov.uk/citizenservices/safeg/lscb/train/lscbonline/>

### Abuse and Neglect of Children

If you or any of your constituents think a child is being abused or neglected, or that they may be at risk of harm, [contact](#):

First Contact Team,  
Bath Lane,  
Stockton-on-Tees TS18 2DS.  
Tel: 01642 [527764](#)  
Email; [firstcontact@stockton.gov.uk](mailto:firstcontact@stockton.gov.uk)

Or Emergency Duty Team (Outside of Office Hours)  
Tel: [08702 402994](#) (Free Phone Number)

In an emergency, contact the Police.

*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 of not only an often impoverished childhood, but of disadvantage and social exclusion in adulthood. Abuse and Neglect pose particular problems*

### Public Service Agreement (PSA) To Improve Children and Young People's Safety

To take forward the safeguarding agenda in early 2008, the government published the 'Staying Safe: Action Plan'. This action plan sets out the work which the government will take forward over the next three years to drive improvements in children and young people's safety. This will be central to the new public service agreement (PSA) to improve children and young people's safety.

The 'Staying Safe: Action Plan' covers three main areas:

- universal safeguarding, involving work to keep all children and young people safe and to create safe environments for them
- targeted safeguarding to reduce the risks of harm for vulnerable groups of children and young people
- responsive safeguarding, involving responding effectively when children are harmed.

The action plan sets out new commitments on children's safety, including a new £18 million home safety equipment scheme targeted at vulnerable areas, a child safety education coalition and a new National Safeguarding Unit for the third sector.

A copy of the Staying Safe: Action Plan can be accessed at:

[http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/\\_files/E311A3DE50297A05E31F401F17DC67EB.pdf](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/_files/E311A3DE50297A05E31F401F17DC67EB.pdf)



## Terms and Definitions

*The following terms and definitions may help you understand some of the terminology frequently used in relation to safeguarding children.*

### **Abuse**

Child abuse can take four forms, all of which can cause long term damage to a child: physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect and child sexual abuse. Bullying and domestic violence are also forms of child abuse.

### **Accommodation**

The provision of a placement by the LA under a voluntary agreement with a parent, or a young person aged over 16, when specifically requested by a parent or proposals made by the LA are agreed.

### **Achieving Best Evidence Interview**

An investigation interview with a child who is a witness to a crime. Achieving Best Evidence in Criminal Proceedings: Guidance for Vulnerable or Intimidated Witnesses (“ABE”) was issued jointly by key Government Departments led by the Home Office.

### **Allocated Case**

A case that has been made the responsibility of a named social worker or other key worker until such time as the case is closed, transferred or managed in such other way that the named worker no longer has responsibility for it.

### **Assessment**

The assessment of the developmental needs of a child within their family and wider environmental context to determine, if the child is in need and what services they require. The assessment may be general in nature (e.g.) CAF, Initial or Core or relate to a specific area of developmental need (e.g.) Health, Education.

### **Child**

Any individual under the age of 18 years. Childhood ends at the beginning of the day of the young person's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. People who received services a child may continue to receive services as adults beyond their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday for example, young people leaving care or disabled young people in transition to adulthood.

### **Child Protection Conference**

A formal inter-agency meeting following an enquiry under section 47 of the Children Act which decides whether the child is at continuing risk of significant harm and whether the child should be the subject of a child Protection Plan.

### **Child Protection Plan**

A detailed inter agency plan setting out what work needs to be done to:

- Safeguard the child from further harm;
- Promote the child's health and development; and
- If it is in the best interests of the child, to support the family to promote the welfare of the child

The Child Protection Plan is agreed in outline at the initial child protection conference and developed by the key worker, core professional, the child and family.

### **Child Protection Review Record**

A record of a review of a child's Protection Plan.

### **Child's Plan**

A Plan for children and young people identified as having more complex needs following a core assessment. For children who are no longer the subject of a Child Protection Plan their plan will change to a Child's Plan as they may still be children in need who are in receipt of services.

### **Core Assessment**

An in depth assessment which addresses the central or most important aspects of the need of the child and the capacity of his or her parents or care givers to respond appropriately to these needs within the wider family and community context. It is to be undertaken where circumstances are complex and should be completed within 35 working days.

### **Court Order**

The authorising or enforcement of certain actions in relation to family proceedings, care and supervision and the protection of children by a hearing in court.

### **Criminal Records Bureau (CRB)**

The CRB is an Executive Agency of the Home Office set-up to help organisations make safer recruitment decisions.

### **Cyber Bullying**

Bullying which is carried out through an internet service such as email, chat room, discussion group or instant messaging. It can also include bullying through mobile phone technologies such as short message services (SMS).

### **Emergency Duty Team**

The Emergency Duty Team provides an out of hours service for the Tees area. It offers advice, information and emergency assessment. The team is available Mon-Thurs 5pm -8.30am and from Fri 4.30pm-Mon 8.30am  
Tel: 08702 402994

### **Emergency Protection Order**

An order made by a court requiring that a child is removed to, or remains, in, accommodation where the child is protected from suffering significant harm when there is reasonable cause to believe the child would otherwise do so.

### **First Contact**

First Contact is the access point for Stockton Borough Council's Children Education and Social Care services.

Tel: 01642 527764,

Fax: 01642 527756,

Minicom: 01642 527769

Email: [firstcontact@stockton.gov.uk](mailto:firstcontact@stockton.gov.uk)

### **Independent Safeguarding Authority**

The Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) has been created to help prevent unsuitable people from working with children and vulnerable adults.

They will do this by working in partnership with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB), which will gather relevant information on every person who wants to work or volunteer with vulnerable people

### **Initial Assessment**

An initial assessment of the developmental needs of each child referred to the LA with a request for services to be provided. This should be undertaken within a maximum of seven working days of the initial referral, but could be very brief depending on the child's circumstances.

### **Initial Child Protection Conference Record**

A summary to assist analysis of all the existing information gathered at the time the initial child protection conference is held.

### **Local Safeguarding Children Board**

Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) are a statutory body established in each local authority area to ensure that organisations work together effectively to safeguard children and promote their welfare.

### **Neglect**

Neglect is the persistent lack of appropriate care of children, including love, stimulation, safety, nourishment, warmth, education and medical attention

### **Parental Responsibility**

All the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority which by law a parent of a child has in relation the child and his property. A Care Order confers the responsibility to a LA but it does not remove it from the child's parents.

### **Police Protection Powers (Section 46)**

Powers that permit police constables, who have reasonable cause to believe a child would otherwise suffer significant harm, to remove the child to a suitable accommodation or prevent a child being removed from somewhere where the

child is safe (for example a hospital). This action must be reported to the LA who would normally follow up to a secure the child's wellbeing in the longer term.

### **Private Fostering**

An arrangement made directly by a parent (or person with parental responsibility) for their child to be looked after for more than 27 days by an adult who does not have parental responsibility for the child. LAs will not have made these arrangements.

### **Record of S47 Enquiries**

A record of the outcome of S47 enquiries which have been instigated following a strategy discussion meeting and sets out the further actions to be taken after the S47 enquiries have been completed.

### **Referral**

A request for services to be provided by the LA. The response by included not action, but that itself is a decision and needs to be made promptly and recorded. A case becomes current only after a referral has been made.

### **Review**

A formal process with written records when the plans for the child / young person are reviewed in the light of the most recent assessment or reassessment of their needs.

### **Section 17**

Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 imposes on every LA a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in the area who are in need.

### **Section 20 Accommodation**

Statutory arrangements whereby a LA provides accommodation without a Care Order being made by a court. Where there are people with parental responsibility for a child under the age of 16, they must agree to the LA looking after the child.

### **Section 44 Emergency Protection Order**

An order made by a court requiring that a child is removed to, or remains in accommodation where the child is protected from suffering significant harm when there is reasonable cause to believe the child would otherwise do so.

### **Section 47 Enquiry**

Section 47 of the Children Act requires every LA to make enquiries about children thought to be at risk, enabling them to decide whether they need to take further action to safeguard and promote the child's welfare.

### **Serious Case Review**

Chapter 8 of Working Together to Safeguard Children sets out the purpose and process of serious case reviews (SCRs). SCRs are undertaken when a child dies (including suicide), and abuse or neglect is

known or suspected to be a factor in the death.  
Additionally they can be undertaken where:

- a child sustains a potentially life-threatening injury or serious and permanent impairment of health and development through abuse or neglect; or
- a child has been subjected to particularly serious sexual abuse; or
- a parent has been murdered and a homicide review is being initiated; or
- a child has been killed by a parent with a mental illness; or
- the case gives rise to concerns about inter-agency working to protect children from harm.

### Significant Harm

Harm to a child who meets the criteria for an application to court under section 31 of Children Act 1989. Harm means ill treatment, or impairment of physical or mental health, or physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development.

### Unallocated Case

A case that requires the attention of a named social worker or other staff member but, for the time being, there is no capacity within the organisation to allocate a worker.

### 'Working Together'

Working Together to Safeguard children (2006) is a guidance document produced by the DCSF setting out how all agencies and professionals should work together to safeguard and promote children's welfare and protect them from abuse and neglect.

### Child Protection - The Local Picture:

*From April 2008 to March 2009 273 children were subject to an Initial Child Protection Conference and 557 children to Child Protection Review Conferences = 830 children in total.*

*Of the 273 children subject to an Initial Child Protection Conference only 37 were not made the subject of a form Plan = 13.5%.*

*For each child who is made the subject of a child protection plan subsequent child protection review conferences take place. The first being held within three months of the ICPC and further reviews are held at intervals of not more than six months for as long as the child remains the subject of a child protection plan.*

*The number of children who are subject to a child protection plan has risen significantly over recent months. At 31.03.07 the number was 128, 160 at 31.03.08 and this rose to 212 as of 31.12.09. If this trend continues the numbers on the children subject to a plan will be the highest they have been since Stockton became a Unitary Authority.*

### E- Safety

Digital and interactive technology including computers, mobile phones and online gaming has many benefits for the educational and personal development of children and young people. However it is widely recognised that there are also a number of risks involved if children and young people do not take adequate measures to safeguard themselves. We need to be proactive in educating and supporting them and their parents / carers about how to use digital and interactive technology safely.

Stockton LSCB through a multi agency Task Group is establishing a strategic plan to safeguard children and young people.

To support the emerging strategy, training is being made available to all staff in the children's workforce (paid and unpaid).

**Safeguarding Children on the Net (E-Safety)** 25th June 1.00 – 4.30 pm and 14<sup>th</sup> October 2009 9.00 – 12.30

**Cyber Bullying** 20 October 2009 1.00 – 4.30

Details of both courses and other safeguarding training are available from the Children's Workforce Development Unit. Tel: 01642 527698 E-mail: [Childrens.WorkforceDevelopment@stockton.gov.uk](mailto:Childrens.WorkforceDevelopment@stockton.gov.uk)

**News  
& Items of Interest**

### Safeguarding Stock Take

An audit of all cases where children are subject to a child protection plan took place during January and March as part of the authorities safeguarding stock take. This has helped reaffirm the good work that is taking place and has highlighted areas where improvements could be considered.

An exercise has also taken place to review the Social Care compliance of the Climbie recommendations from Lord Lammings Review in 2003. The Local Safeguarding Children Board also asked its partner agencies to undertake a similar exercise to reaffirm their current compliance.

A working group of LSCB partner agencies is also being established to develop a safe recruitment and employment protocol to further develop the good working practices that are individually being operated within the partner agencies.

### Runaways

From April 2009, we are required to collect local information about children and young people who go missing from home or care overnight. If you have any data you can contribute to help us understand the nature of running away in Stockton, please let us know. Information can be sent in to the LSCB at [sjscb@stockton.gov.uk](mailto:sjscb@stockton.gov.uk)

We will then share the information with the Runaways / Missing from Home Group who are looking at how we can improve the services offered to these young people and more importantly how we can prevent them running away or wanting to.

### Questions From The Floor

Questions & Answers – We all have them but sometimes don't want to ask them.

We recently held two Safeguarding Children Awareness sessions for Elected Members (Local Authority Councillors) of which 34 of the 56 attended. The following are a few of the questions they asked.

"What is a corporate parent, does it mean that it is the local authority as a whole, not just its social services department that has responsibility for children"?

When a child becomes 'looked after', the tasks of their parent become the responsibility of everyone working for the council and elected members of the council.

This is known as 'corporate parenting' and it is the collective responsibility of the council to provide the best possible care and protection for children who are 'looked after'. As corporate parents, they should act in the way they would if the child were their own.

"Are there time guide lines to keep to for child protection cases and are there checks done on case workloads"?

There are time guide lines that must be kept to in accordance with legislation and managers must provide regular supervision to staff and quality assure the work they do.

In the next Safeguarding Children Briefing we will include a section on time periods for work to be undertaken and the statutory requirements for children to be visited.

"Why aren't Councillors (Elected Members) CRB checked when they are afforded privileged access to children"?

Although there isn't a statutory requirement for this to take place Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council are currently reviewing this issue. A report is being discussed at the Members Advisory Panel (MAP), to consider whether all Councillors should be subject to CRB checks. This would bring it in line with the same safe recruitment measures they take for their staff.

In addition a new vetting and barring scheme (VBS) is to be introduced later this year under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 which will introduce some statutory requirements.

*If you have any articles, questions, information, good news notices relating to safeguarding children and young people you would like including in our next Safeguarding Children Briefing please send them to the SLSCB Business Unit at the address on the front page. Help us to celebrate the good work that's happening in Stockton, how we are working to do things better and the impact we are making*

Regards

**Pauline Beall,**  
SLSCB Business Manager