

Child Protection/Safeguarding Policy

2021

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| Policy Owner | |
| Owner: | Assistant Director: Risk |
| Author: | Assistant Director: Risk |
| Screening and Proofing | |
| Section 75 screened: | 21.06.21 |
| Human Rights proofed: | 21.06.21 |
| Consultation | |
| | Internal Consultation completed May 2021 |
| Approval | |
| SMT: | 06.07.21 |
| Board: | 20.08.21 |
| Version | |
| Version: | V1 |
| Publication date: | 06.09.21 |
| Implementation date: | 06.09.21 |
| Review date: | 2025 |

| Version No. | Date | Description |
|--------------------|-------------|--------------------|
| V1 | 06.09.21 | Created |
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Alternative Formats

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1. Rationale

The protection of children is a priority for PBNI. All children should be brought up in an environment that promotes their welfare and protects them from significant harm. The introduction of the Safeguarding Board (NI) Act 2011 placed a legal duty on PBNI, and other named agencies, to make arrangements to have due regard when exercising their function, for the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

2. Policy Aim

The aim of this policy is to promote the safeguarding and welfare of children.

3. Objectives

- To ensure PBNI's statutory obligations are met by having clear processes in place to promote the safeguarding and welfare of children
- To ensure in all PBNI's actions concerning children, the child's interests are paramount
- To ensure the timely and effective communication of all appropriate and relevant information is lawfully shared in accordance with data protection legislation so as to keep a child from harm.
- To ensure there is close cooperation between agencies and coordination of services across agencies

4. Programmes and Projects

Child Protection/Safeguarding Procedures are in place.

5. Definitions

5.1 Definition of Child

The Children (NI) Order 1995 defines a 'child' as a person under the age of 18.

5.2 Definition of Abuse

Child abuse occurs when a child is neglected, harmed or not provided with proper care. Abuse can happen in any family, but children may be more at risk if their parents have problems with drugs, alcohol and mental health, or if they live in a home where domestic abuse happens. Abuse can also occur outside of the family environment. Evidence shows that babies and children with disabilities can be more vulnerable to suffering abuse. There are different types of abuse and the child may suffer more than one type of abuse.

5.3 Physical Abuse

The deliberate physical hurting of a child. It might take a variety of different forms, including hitting, biting, pinching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating a child.

5.4 Emotional Abuse

The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child. It is also sometimes called psychological abuse and it can have severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's emotional development.

Emotional abuse may involve deliberately telling a child that they are worthless, or unloved and inadequate. It may include not giving a child opportunities to express their views, unreasonably silencing them, or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. Emotional abuse may involve bullying – including online bullying through social networks, online games or mobile phones – by a child's peers.

5.5 Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse occurs when others use and exploit children sexually for their own gratification or gain or the gratification of others. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape, or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside clothing. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via e-technology).

5.6 Child Sexual Exploitation

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/ or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

Whilst a 16 or 17 year old can consent to sex in a healthy, age appropriate relationship, in situations where there is an imbalance of power between the child and the perpetrator or when the child is coerced or groomed in to having sex (e.g. through being supplied with drugs/alcohol) this constitutes sexual exploitation. 16 and 17 year olds may seem more resilient but often they have specific vulnerabilities, for example, being in care or being homeless. 16 and 17 year olds can suffer significant harm as a result of sexual exploitation and

their right to be protected and supported should not be ignored or de-prioritised.

5.7 Neglect

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

6. Resources

There are no significant additional costs involved.

7. Communications and Training

There will be training in relation to the Child Protection Policy and Procedures delivered to all operational staff in 2021. This training will also ensure staff are able to recognise indicators of potential or actual abuse and how to act in response to such concerns. Ongoing training will be delivered through the team meeting structure with the Area Manager taking the lead. The Assistant Director, Risk will forward communication to all relevant staff advising of the updated policy and procedures.

8. Review

A review of this policy will take place four years after Board approval. In the interim period, any changes will be addressed through the circulation of Practice Notes.

9. Non Compliance

Breach of the Board's Policy and Procedures by employees may merit consideration under the Board's Disciplinary Policy.