

Independent Fostering Agency Safeguarding Children Policy

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Introduction

Achieving for Children (AfC) is committed to protecting and actively supporting children and young people so that they are able to live safe, happy and successful lives, in accordance with its duties under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018.

This policy has been developed to help foster carers to understand their responsibilities, what they need to do, and what they can expect of one another to safeguard and protect the welfare of children. The policy also demonstrates a commitment to acting promptly and appropriately whenever a concern is raised about a child at risk of harm. This policy should be read in conjunction with Foster Carers Handbook - section 'Safeguarding Everyone in Our Household'

www.fosteringhandbook.com/achievingforchildren

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined in 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018' as:

- protecting children from maltreatment or neglect
- preventing the impairment of children's health and development
- ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care
- taking action to enable all children to achieve the best outcomes

It is important that everyone working with children fully understands their responsibilities and duties as set out in primary legislation and the associated regulations and guidance.

Aims of the policy

This policy aims to:

- raise awareness that safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility
- help those working with children, young people and their families to be aware of the signs and symptoms of neglect and abuse
- raise awareness of practitioners' responsibility to follow local social care procedures
- promote multi-disciplinary and multi-agency-working
- promote a child-centred approach to safeguarding

By setting out our local multi-agency approach to safeguarding and responsibilities on all partners, this policy supports us to meet Standard 4 of the National Minimum Standards for Fostering Services with the objective that 'Children feel safe and are safe', specifically Standard 4.7 that: 'The fostering service works effectively in partnership with other agencies concerned with child protection, eg, the responsible authority, schools, hospitals, general practitioners and does not work in isolation from them'.

Objectives of the policy

This policy aims to ensure:

- foster carers have enough information to help them recognise child abuse and neglect, that they understand the overarching safeguarding children policy and how it impacts on their day-to-day operations
- foster carers understand their responsibilities, what they need to do, and what they can expect of one another, to safeguard and protect the welfare of children
- foster carers understand when and how to report allegations of neglect, abuse or the risk of harm to children and young people

By setting out key information on recognising child abuse and neglect, on all of our responsibilities to safeguard and protect the welfare of children, and on the process of reporting concerns, this policy supports us to deliver the principles and standards of care of our operations as an independent fostering agency (IFA), specifically that:

- the child's welfare, safety and needs are at the centre of their care
- children should have an enjoyable childhood and benefit from excellent parenting and education, enjoying a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents and skills, leading to a successful adult life
- children are entitled to grow up in a loving environment that can meet their developmental needs

Implementing the policy

We will implement this policy by:

- ensuring our foster carers are aware of the safeguarding children policy and receive appropriate training and support, are able to recognise harm and know how to report any concerns in a timely and appropriate way
- ensuring that all foster carers providing services on behalf of Achieving for Children, understand and have formally agreed in writing to abide by the safeguarding children policy and receive appropriate training and support
- monitoring allegations of neglect, abuse or harm to children and young people made against our employees to understand how and why this has happened and ensuring that appropriate systems and processes are in place to prevent this happening in the future
- working with children, young people and their families to help develop, monitor and review our policies, practices, functions and services

This policy is translated into procedures through the online TRIX Children's Services Policy and Procedures Manual. Every Achieving for Children foster carer can access the manual via the following links:

- Kingston and Richmond: www.proceduresonline.com/achievingforchildren
- Windsor and Maidenhead: <http://rbwm.proceduresonline.com>

In Kingston and Richmond, the manual is integrated with the London Child Protection Procedures: www.londoncp.co.uk

In Windsor and Maidenhead, the manual is integrated with the Pan- Berkshire Child Protection Procedures: <http://berks.proceduresonline.com>

Information provided by the Local Safeguarding Children Boards can be accessed at:

- Kingston and Richmond: <http://kingstonandrichmondscb.org.uk>
- Windsor and Maidenhead: www.wamscb.org

Recognising child abuse and neglect

Whilst children and adults at risk may suffer abuse and neglect, the recognition of these may differ. Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 provides guidance as to what constitutes abuse and neglect and the categories of concern. However, this is not to be treated as the definitive list, as abuse and neglect can be multi-faceted and should be considered holistically.

Maltreatment

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by others. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

Impact of maltreatment

The maltreatment of children physically, emotionally, sexually or through neglect can have major long-term effects on all aspects of a child's health, development and wellbeing. The immediate and longer-term impact can include anxiety, depression, substance misuse, eating disorders and self-destructive behaviour, offending and anti-social behaviour.

Categories of concern

There are many ways in which children can be harmed.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child so that it causes severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate.

It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber-bullying), causing children to frequently feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities 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 of a child's clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse, including via the internet or social media. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males; women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Sexual exploitation

Sexual exploitation of children and young people 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. It includes combinations of pull factors: children exchanging sex for attention, accommodation, food, gifts or drugs and push factors: children escaping from situations where their needs are neglected and there is exposure to unsafe individuals. 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.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to: provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment), protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger, ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers), or ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Radicalisation

It is a requirement that all staff, volunteers and students within Achieving for Children comply with and be aware of the Prevent Duty under the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015. The act seeks to ensure that all individuals are alert to the risks of children and young people being drawn into terrorism and radicalism. Further information can be obtained from the [Prevent Duty Guidance for England and Wales](#)

Concerns about a child's behaviour

Concerns about a child may come to the attention of foster carers in a number of ways.

- Through observation of the child where a child's behaviour may indicate that it is likely that they are being abused.
- The child may disclose abuse.
- Information may be given by parents, other people or agencies.
- A child may show some signs of physical injury of which there seems to be no satisfactory explanation.
- Something in the behaviour of one of the workers or a child, or in the way the worker relates to a child, alerts them or makes them feel uncomfortable in some way.
- Observing one child abuse another.

There may be barriers to children telling someone that they are being harmed, neglected or abused. The power of relationships between adults and children should not be underestimated, and nor should the deliberate and skilled way that abusers target their victims. Children may not tell because they:

- are scared because they have been threatened or are being sexually exploited
- believe they will be taken away from home
- believe that social care services are stigmatising
- think it is what happens to all children
- feel embarrassed
- feel guilty
- do not want to get the abuser into trouble

- have communication or learning difficulties
- may not have the vocabulary to explain what has happened to them
- are afraid they won't be believed
- believe they have told, possibly by dropping hints, but have not been believed so that they do not bother trying again

Child abuse thrives on secrecy and needs to be handled in a sensitive, accepting way. In order to achieve this, adults may have to overcome certain barriers also, as:

- sometimes it may be hard to believe what the child is saying
- it may be difficult that the suspicion may be about someone that is known;
- there is a fear of getting it wrong; the fear of what consequences there may be for 'getting it wrong' for the child, for the family and for themselves
- they worry that it may make it worse for the child
- they believe that social care services are stigmatising
- they simply do not want to become involved
- they do not have the necessary information on what to do or who to contact

Dealing with concerns

Many concerns about children and young people arise on a day-to-day basis and, in most cases, these can be dealt with quickly and easily through discussion between foster carers and their supervising social workers or managers. These discussions and actions must be recorded in the relevant children's services recording system and foster carer logs.

Sometimes concerns can be more worrying because it is clear that the child may be affected by what is happening to them. The child may be being harmed in some way. If this is the case employees should:

- collect as much information as possible about the situation - this may be from the child, parent, carer or other professionals and should include the date and time of the incident or disclosure, the parties that were involved, what was said or done and by whom, and any further actions
- report their concerns to their supervising social worker or manager immediately and at the latest within the same working day

If a child or young person is disclosing information:

- listen to what is being said without displaying shock or disbelief, accept what is being said without judgement and take it seriously
- reassure the child, but do not make promises that cannot be kept for example, 'everything will be alright now'. Assure them that they did nothing wrong and that their disclosure will be taken seriously, do not promise confidentiality, explain you have a duty to report your concerns. Acknowledge how difficult it must have been to talk

- let the child or young person explain in their own terms what has happened. Do not speculate or jump to conclusions. Do not investigate or interrogate or decide if they are telling the truth. Communicate in a way that is appropriate to the age of the child and the level of disability or where English is not the preferred language. Explain what you will do next and who you need to talk to
- take some very brief notes and write them up in more detail as soon as you can. Hold on to the original notes, they may be required by court. Record the date, time, place and words used by the child and how the child appeared to you. Be specific and keep it factual
- report their concerns to their supervising social worker or manager immediately and at the latest within the same working day. If you are unable to do this contact the Single Point of Access (in Kingston and Richmond) and the Multi-Agency Safeguarding and Early Help Hub (Windsor and Maidenhead)

Kingston or Richmond

T: 020 8547 5008

(020 8770 5000 for out of hours or weekends)

Windsor and Maidenhead

T: 01628 683150

(01344 786543 for out of hours or weekends)

If a child is in immediate danger you must always telephone 999.

Responding to a concern

The response to any concerns about a child are dealt with in line with the procedures set out in the Referral and Initial Contact sections of TRIX.

Managing individuals who pose a risk of harm to children

The Children Act 2004 recognises that the identification and investigation of child abuse, together with the protection and support of victims and their families, requires multi-agency collaboration.

The multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) provide a national framework for the assessment and management of risks posed by serious and violent offenders.

Information about MAPPA can be found here:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/multi-agency-public-protection-arrangements-mappa-2

In addition, the multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) provides interventions for adult perpetrators of domestic violence and abuse. Information about MARAC can be found here: www.gov.uk/guidance/domestic-violence-and-abuse

Safeguarding particularly vulnerable children

Particularly vulnerable children

There are some groups of children who may be particularly vulnerable because of specific concerns in relation to their safeguarding and because of some specific issues in relation to promoting their welfare.

The list is not a comprehensive list of every vulnerable child, but highlights some specific groups:

- children living away from home
- children who are being bullied
- children whose behaviour indicates a lack of parental control
- children who are experiencing racism
- children experiencing violent extremism
- children experiencing parental domestic violence
- children with families whose whereabouts are unknown
- children who go missing from home or care
- children who go missing from education
- children of families living in temporary accommodation
- migrant children
- unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC)
- children who have special educational needs and disabilities

Procedures for dealing with allegations against foster carers and other adults or professionals

Achieving for Children has clear procedures in place for dealing with complaints and allegations made against any foster carers and other adults. Complaints about the quality of care being provided for a looked after child can be dealt with under two procedures. Where there is a clear allegation that a child has suffered significant harm the local authority designated officer (LADO) procedure will be initiated.

Where concerns do not reach this threshold a 'standards of care' investigation may be initiated - in some cases the LADO process may conclude by recommending a standards of care investigation.

Details of these policies can be found below.

The LADO procedure:

Kingston and Richmond

<https://kingstonandrichmondsafeguardingchildrenpartnership.org.uk/media/upload/fck/file/LADO/LADO%20Leaflet%202017.pdf>

Windsor and Maidenhead

http://berks.proceduresonline.com/windsor_maidenhead/p_alleg_against_staff.html

Investigating standards of care procedure:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1RDSCRNSIUYKozYqp3LSun1dtpPkB4WQm6jZbqLHkba4/edit>

Complaints procedure:

https://drive.google.com/open?id=17_xQ2qqwhOPVashO3eLQzAfQSHYck7Y-

Induction and training

All new foster carers receive an induction that includes the organisation's procedures for safeguarding children.

Foster carers for Achieving for Children in Kingston and Richmond can access a range of training through the Kingston and Richmond LSCB, including Level 1 online safeguarding awareness, Level 2 shared responsibility and Level 3 child protection processes. Foster carers in Windsor and Maidenhead can also access training through the Windsor and Maidenhead LSCB. Other relevant training and workshops particularly for those who have a designated child protection responsibility can be accessed via the Workforce Development team.

Online safety

Digital technology can expose children and young to new dangers and risks. The Local Safeguarding Partnerships in each area take strategic responsibility for improving the way in which children and young people are safeguarded online. The e-safety policies set out the:

- the resources available through partner agencies to raise awareness among children and young people, supporting the development of appropriate strategies to minimise exposure to risk
- procedures to be followed by all partner agencies in using online technologies with children and young people
- in the Kingston and Richmond policy, the procedures to be followed when handling an e-safety incident (see Appendix 1)

Social media

Foster carers should not engage in any form of social media communication (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc) with children or young people using their personal accounts. This includes using personal email accounts or mobile phones.

Where there is a need to communicate with young people using social media, only accounts set up by Achieving for Children should be used.

When communicating using social media, care should be taken to ensure that the material posted or shared is safe and is appropriate. Photographs of children must be consensual and information especially that which could put a child at risk must not be shared.

Appropriate security and permissions must be put in place. Material posted should not discredit the organisation in any way.

Any posts by children or young people which raise safeguarding concerns should follow the e-safety incident procedures set out in Appendices 1 and 2. Where there are immediate concerns, call the police on 999.

The Achieving for Children Social Media Policy sets out in more detail the behaviour that is expected from employees working in Achieving for Children and how to be alert to safeguarding concerns.

Whistle blowing

[The Achieving for Children Whistle Blowing Policy](#) sets out the process which allows employees and foster carers to express their concerns without fear of the consequences. Employees and foster carers have an individual responsibility to make their supervising social worker or manager aware of their concerns and this is especially important where the safety or wellbeing of children is concerned.

Information sharing and data protection

Foster carers will have access to confidential information about children and young people and their families in order to help them perform their roles. They may be privy to highly sensitive and confidential information. In some circumstances, this information may need to be shared with other professionals, such as in a case of suspected neglect or abuse. In these circumstances, information must be passed on immediately.

Confidential information should not be shared with someone who does not have the right to know. Where there is any uncertainty, staff should discuss this with their supervising social worker.

When it is not necessary to disclose a child's identity, all information should be used anonymously. Private information should never be used for personal gain or for the advantage of others, including friends, family, relatives and or other organisations.

Ofsted notifications overview

Achieving for Children's social care services are regulated and inspected by Ofsted. Under Regulation 36 of the Fostering Services Regulations 2011, Achieving for Children's independent fostering agency has a responsibility to notify Ofsted of the following events:

- child's death
- any serious safeguarding concerns in respect of an individual working for a fostering service
- serious illness or accident of a placed child
- outbreak at foster home of any infectious disease which, in the opinion of an attending GP, is sufficiently serious to be so notified
- involvement or suspected involvement of a child in sexual exploitation
- serious incident with police attending foster home
- any serious complaint re foster parent
- instigation and outcome of any protection inquiry

Foster carers must notify the independent fostering agency of:

- allegation of serious crime by child or young person
- child or young person missing from placement

Responsibilities

The Director of Children's Services in both areas is responsible for ensuring that Ofsted is notified, without delay, of a death or serious injury of a child. The online notification form can be found here:

https://ofstedonline.ofsted.gov.uk/outreach/Ofsted_Serious_Notification.ofml

Ofsted

Piccadilly Gate, Store Street
Manchester M1 2WD
T: 0300 123 1231

This policy was reviewed in February 2020 to judge its effectiveness, it may be updated sooner in accordance with changes in legislation.

Date created	19 February 2015
Revised	26 February 2020
Revisions	Updated: References to Working Together 2018, to Local Safeguarding Partnerships, foster carers replacing references to employees. Addition of a referral process flow chart
Signed by:	Matthew Edwards, Associate Director, Provider Services, Achieving for Children
Equality analysis completed (yes/no):	Not applicable

Appendix 1

Where you have an ongoing concern about a child

If the risk is immediate,
call the Emergency
Services

