



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Safeguarding Children and Young People

SERVICE INFORMATION SYSTEM

Title	Safeguarding Children and Young People
Category	Prevention
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Action	By all Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) personnel
Original author	Prevention Team Leader
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Executive summary	This policy is designed to ensure that safeguarding and the promotion of the welfare of children and young people is at the heart of every interaction personnel have with children and young people, equipping them with the knowledge of common signs of abuse and the procedure to follow should personnel have concerns that a child or young person may have been/are being abused.

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Job title	Prevention Team Leader
Date	October 2020
Review due	October 2022

1 POLICY SCOPE AND CONTEXT

Local authorities have a duty under section 11 of the Children Act 2004 to ensure that their functions, and services provided on their behalf, are discharged with regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people.

A child is defined in the Children Acts 1989 and 2004 as “a person who has not reached their 18th birthday, which includes young people, aged 16 and 17, who are living independently. Their status and entitlement to services and protection is not altered by the fact that they are living independently.”

Working with children and young people is governed by legal guidelines, including when action should be taken in order to protect or safeguard a child from any form of harm or abuse. **“Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018”** is the government guidance which sets out, in one place, the legal requirements that health services, social workers, police, schools and other organisations that work with children and young people, must follow – and emphasises that child protection is the responsibility of **all** professionals who work with children.

Within Northamptonshire, there are lots of different organisations providing services that impact on the wellbeing of children, their parents or the whole family. NFRS are one of these.

Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Partnership (NSCP) is a statutory multi-agency partnership lead by three strategic leads as stipulated in Working Together 2018.

The purpose of the partnership is to support and enable local agencies to work together in a system where:

- Excellent practice is the norm
- Partner agencies hold one another to account effectively
- There is early identification of “new” safeguarding issues
- Learning is promoted and embedded
- Information is shared effectively
- The public can feel confident that children are protected from harm

As well as holding the county’s organisations to account, the NSCP runs training programmes and develops policies and procedures for the whole county. The NSCP also reviews all child deaths in the county. This helps to identify any themes or recurrent circumstances that might need to be addressed by public awareness campaigns or improved training.

NFRS are part of the NSCP and are committed to ensuring that all children are protected and kept safe from harm. NFRS will work under the multi-agency guidance and operating procedures produced by the NSCP and the Chief Fire Officer (CFO) will be an active member of the board.

There is additional guidance for managing circumstances where concerns are raised, but where the risk of harm is not immediate or significant.

In these cases, the threshold for a safeguarding referral to statutory services may not be met however the situation may deteriorate and the risks may increase if there is no action taken.

This part of the guidance and associated procedures are referred to as Early Help. NFRS will use the Northamptonshire Thresholds guidance the aim of which is to provide support to potentially vulnerable children and their families as soon as problems start to emerge or when there is a strong likelihood that problems will emerge in the future.

The guidance document identifies four levels of need below:

- Universal Support
- Early Help
- Targeted Support
- Statutory Intervention

Further detail can be found in the Northamptonshire Thresholds Guidance 2018.

1.1 Policy statement

“NFRS aim to safeguard and protect the physical and mental welfare of all children and young people who come into contact with the Service. We will do this by applying the Safeguarding guidance provided by the NSCB and ensuring that child protection and safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility and **all staff** within NFRS are responsible for the application of this policy.”

NFRS is committed to:

- Ensuring staff are aware of signs and symptoms of abuse, neglect and exploitation and know what appropriate action to take if they have concerns about a child or young person.
- Listening to the “Voice of the Child” - respecting the rights, wishes and feelings of young people.
- Taking all reasonable and practicable steps to protect young people from physical, sexual, emotional abuse and neglect.
- Ensuring that safer recruitment practises are in place and that Safeguarding Essentials training is provided via the Moodle platform to ensure that all staff and volunteers who may come into contact with young people are aware of their responsibilities, this policy and its associated procedures.
- Working with partners in Early Help and Prevention services in order to enable access to additional support for families and children where there is no immediate or significant risk but there is a strong likelihood that problems will emerge in the future.
- Offering suitable support across all levels of need for families where there are concerns about fire safety or fire setting behaviours.
- Continually reviewing safeguarding policies and procedures and keeping up to date with emerging risks, developments and training needs through our Safeguarding Action Plan delivered via our internal Safeguarding Management Group.

1.2 Purpose of the policy

NFRS recognises that the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people is everybody’s responsibility.

This policy establishes the roles and responsibilities of staff in relation to the protection of children who they may come into contact with through their work.

It lays out the partnership context in which NFRS works to ensure needs of children, young people and their families are supported appropriately.

1.3 Associated guidance and procedures

The associated guidance and procedures in SOP C4 highlights different types of abuse and how to recognise indicators of abuse and risk of significant harm.

The procedures specifically include:

- How to report concerns so children at risk of abuse can be quickly identified and incidences of abuse can be prevented or readily acted upon.
- How to manage allegations made against NFRS personnel who are paid, unpaid, volunteer, agency, casual and self-employed through referral to the designated officer.
- How to manage circumstances where concerns are raised, but where the risk of harm is not immediate or significant

1.4 Scope

References to 'personnel', 'staff', or 'employees' within this document refer to all employees of NFRS, all volunteers, temporary staff and casual workers, agency workers and contractors that work with or on behalf of NFRS, either in a paid or unpaid capacity.

The Service, by its very nature and activities, will put personnel (whether in a paid or voluntary capacity) into contact with children and young people. This will include:

- Operational incidents including co-responding on behalf of East Midlands Ambulance Service (EMAS)
- Fire station visits by a wide range of community and youth groups
- Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSVs) and/or smoke detector installation
- Fire-setter Intervention Visits
- Youth engagement and diversion activities such as The Princes Trust Team programme, Action Reaction Consequence (ARC), Youth Engagement Scheme (YES) and Emergency Service Cadets (NESC)
- Station open days
- Working with schools, nurseries, colleges and in other community buildings
- Representing NFRS at local community events such as fetes and galas

Given this wide variety of activity, the guidance and procedures outlined in this policy refer to **all** engagements with children and young people, whether planned or otherwise and regardless of duration.

All personnel should ensure that their behaviour complies with the guidance provided in SOP C4.

All personnel must follow the laid out procedures following suspicion, disclosure or allegation of child abuse or neglect.

No personnel should assume that someone else will pass on information which they think may be critical to keeping a child safe. If personnel have concerns about a child's welfare and believe they are suffering or likely to suffer harm, then they should follow this procedure.

2 WORKING WITH PARTNER AGENCIES

Under the NSCP there is a shared vision of how Northamptonshire's children, young people and families are supported by the collective workforce whenever needs are identified.

NFRS are likely to encounter children and families with additional needs across any of the thresholds. Many will fall below the threshold for immediate safeguarding.

In these cases, the NFRS Prevention and Community Protection team will take on the Service's responsibility for supporting the family to access suitable services.

The NFRS Prevention and Community Protection team will also work with partners to ensure that suitable services are offered to families to help address specific fire safety concerns and risks identified by other partner agencies.

2.1 Early Help and Prevention services

Providing effective early help is a key element of the Northamptonshire Childrens Trust.

The broad purpose of this is to enable children and families to access appropriate support as early as possible, so that they can maintain their quality of life, prevent any problems getting worse, and feel stronger, happier and more confident.

The NFRS Prevention and Community Protection team are able to engage with the Partnership Support Team who can provide information, advice or guidance around:

- Identifying an appropriate lead agency
- Early help assessment
- Creating or being part of a team around the family meeting (including finding out what other agencies may be involved with a particular child or family)
- Access to services, interventions and training

2.2 The Northamptonshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

The MASH is the first point of contact for safeguarding referrals from professionals as well as members of the public.

It is managed as a partnership and includes staff from Northamptonshire Childrens Trust, Targeted Prevention and Education Services, Police, National Health Service (NHS), Youth Offending Service, Probation and Crime Reduction Initiative.

NFRS are a MASH partner and have signed an Information Sharing Agreement for the purpose of effective and lawful sharing of information which may be relevant to decision making about a child protection referral. NFRS are represented on the MASH Steering group by a member of the Service Leadership Team

The multi-disciplinary team are co-located for the purpose of sharing information from partner agencies.

This enables them to identify risks to and needs of children at the earliest possible point and respond with the most effective, joined up actions. The aim of the MASH is to make the right decisions for the right families at the right time.

2.3 Joint working and commissioning services

This policy will be drawn to the attention of and made available to all agencies and organisations in joint working situations.

Where partnership working involves a service level agreement for another organisation to provide services on its behalf, the NFRS personnel responsible for the agreement will ensure that the partner organisation has appropriate safeguarding policies in place. This will include child protection policies, recruitment and selection practices and formal complaints procedures.

In addition to this, where NFRS uses external providers for team building and outward bound activities as part of youth programmes, the NFRS Youth Diversion Officer will ensure providers have appropriate risk assessments for activities.

If an NFRS employee becomes aware of abuse or allegations of abuse relating to personnel from a partner organisation, then the NFRS employee should follow the procedures within the SOP C4.

3 **MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE, SPECIFIC ROLES, SELECTION AND TRAINING**

Management structure:

The Safeguarding Management Group is chaired by the CFO and has specific reference for the oversight and management of safeguarding for the whole Service. This group will ensure this policy is adhered to.

Specific roles:

The CFO is the strategic lead for safeguarding in NFRS and will represent the organisation at the Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership and lead the work of the Safeguarding Management Group.

The Area Manager Service Delivery will deputise for the strategic lead for safeguarding in NFRS and will support and review the application of this policy and its associated procedures.

The Prevention and Community Protection department will act as the specialist support hub for safeguarding and Early Help in relation to children and their families.

They will provide advice, guidance and support with decision making during office hours. They will take on casework for families where ongoing involvement from NFRS is required to reduce fire safety risk or to stimulate a co-ordinated approach to Early Help.

The Prevention Team Leader (PTLs) will act as operational safeguarding leads and will represent the organisation at MASH meetings, NSCB sub groups and other partnership meetings.

The Officer of the Day (OOD) will be available for assistance and advice on all matters relating to safeguarding and child protection. Outside of office hours they will need to be informed if NFRS personnel have any concerns regarding a child or young person who is being/has been abused or is at risk. They will refer Threshold decisions to the Duty Gold Officer.

The Duty Gold Officer is the Area Manager or Principal Officer on duty at any given time. Where needed they will make Threshold decisions to assist the OOD to ensure consistency of approach.

Training:

Personnel involved with working with children will receive instruction/training at a level appropriate to their needs and in proportion to the expected levels of access to children and young people.

As a minimum all personnel will complete the online training package for safeguarding.

Operational staff in additional paid or unpaid roles who are working on children and youth programmes and schemes where NFRS have lead responsibility, such as ARC and NESC will receive further training and guidance about working with children and young people.

This will be based on best practise and may be delivered by NCC or NSCP partners or by external training providers. External providers will be those recommended via the National Fire Chiefs Council Children and Young People working group, by the Fire Services Youth Training Association or by the NSCP.

Training is likely to include safe working practises, safeguarding training and E-safety as well as highlighted issues such as Child Sex Exploitation (CSE) and the Prevent Duty.

The Duty Gold Officers and the OODs will receive enhanced training in child protection issues.

Selected roles within the Prevention and Community Protection department such as Team Leaders, Community Safety Officers and the Youth Engagement Officer, will receive enhanced training as their role involves unsupervised access to children, handling case work and/or the development of work practises and processes.

This will be accessed via the NSCP to ensure consistency of approach in Making Children Safer.

3.1 Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check

NFRS will take all reasonable steps to prevent unsuitable people from working with children and young people.

An important element of good practice of child safeguarding begins at the stage of recruitment, selection, posting and transfer of personnel.

If any personnel are expected to have regular unsupervised access to children and young people as part of their role within NFRS, then they will need to pass

an enhanced DBS check prior to starting that role. Enhanced DBS checks should be renewed every 3 years.

Line managers are responsible for ensuring the appropriate DBS check has been carried out and taking references as to the suitability of candidates prior to the candidate taking up the position in NFRS.

4 GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

Term	Definition
Abuse	<p>Abuse is defined as a violation of an individual’s human and civil rights by any other person or persons, and may consist of a single act or repeated acts of physical, emotional, sexual abuse or neglect.</p> <p>Further information about the main types of abuse are documented in the associated procedures and guidance SOP C4.</p>
Adult	<p>While it is appreciated that the age of being an adult can vary dependent on the individual’s needs, people of 18 years and over are generically referred to as ‘adults’ within this policy regardless of their ability/level of need.</p>
Children and young people	<p>A child is defined in the Children Acts 1989 and 2004 as a person who has not reached their 18th birthday, which includes young people, aged 16 and 17 who are living independently.</p> <p>Their status and entitlement to services and protection is not altered by the fact that they are living independently.</p>
Child protection	<p>Child protection is the general term commonly used to describe children who have been identified as suffering or who are at risk of suffering serious harm – children who therefore require protection from harm.</p>
Designated Officer (formerly Local Authority Designated Officer)	<p>The Designated Officer is accountable to the NSCP and operates independently within Children’s Services to help safeguard children.</p> <p>They manage all allegations or concerns raised against any employee or volunteer working with or looking after children.</p>
Early Help	<p>Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child’s life.</p> <p>It is used to describe the support available to families and children in order to prevent escalation into specialist services and children’s social care.</p>
Personnel	<p>References to ‘personnel’, ‘staff’, or ‘employees’ within this document refer to all employees of NFRS, all volunteers, temporary staff and casual workers, agency workers and contractors that work with or on behalf of NFRS, either in a paid or unpaid capacity.</p>

Term	Definition
Responsible adult	A responsible adult is deemed as someone aged 18 or over who has a capacity for moral decisions and therefore accountable and capable of rational thought or action. This does not necessarily have to be NFRS personnel.
Safeguarding	Safeguarding is used to identify the process of identifying children and young people who have suffered or who are likely to suffer significant harm and taking the appropriate action to keep them safe, but also focuses on the preventative measures including agreed recruitment protocols, working practices and reporting procedures.

5 PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING

It is the responsibility of the CFO and the Area Manager Service Delivery within NFRS to make sure that all personnel for whom they are responsible are aware of and understand the importance of this policy and are given suitable training to a level appropriate to their role and contact with children.

They must also make sure that any volunteers, contractors, agents or other representatives whom they engage to undertake duties on their behalf, which may involve contact with children, understand and comply with this policy and any other related documents as appropriate (Children Act 2004).

6 AUDIT AND REVIEW DATE

This policy will be reviewed in line with Service policy A1 – Service Information System Corporate Document Framework.

The application of this policy and its associated procedures will be monitored by the Area Manager Service Delivery through audit and review.

The Safeguarding Management Group will provide oversight and challenge to the Area Manager Service Delivery in regards to safeguarding throughout the service, and all outcomes from serious case reviews will come to the Safeguarding Management Group for dissemination.

7 CLICK TO CONFIRM UNDERSTANDING OF THIS POLICY

All personnel are required to click the button below to go through to RedKite to confirm that you have read and understood this policy:



8 DOCUMENT HISTORY

Impact assessments

An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) was completed on:

Equality Impact Assessment	13 July 2018
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Audit trail

Listed below is a brief audit trail, detailing published versions of this policy:

Document Control			
Version	Date	Author	Status
v1.0	May 2011	Home Safety Project Worker	Published
v2.0	July 2011	Home Safety Project Worker	Published
v3.0	July 2011	Home Safety Project Worker	Published
v6.0	Oct 2018	Prevention Team Leader	Published
v7.0	Oct 2020	Prevention Team Leader	Published
v8.0	Feb 2021	Prevention Team Leader	Published
v9.0	Sept 2021	Prevention Team Leader	Published