

Safeguarding and Protecting Children Procedure

Designated Safeguarding Responsibilities

The Service Director has overall responsibility for all safeguarding issues within PACT and refers directly to the CEO. This designated role is referred to as the Designated Safeguarding Officer. The Designated Safeguarding Officer along with the Head of HR will ensure that all PACT staff and volunteers who work directly with families are recruited using the principles of safer recruitment. S/he will support managers to ensure that managers take responsibility to ensure their staff members are well supported and they understand their safeguarding responsibilities. However, consultation with the Designated Safeguarding Officer over issues is available to any colleague.

Partnership arrangements

The Designated Safeguarding Officer will oversee the development of effective working relationships with partner agencies encompassing both strategic elements of the contract as well as helping to facilitate operational effectiveness. These constructive relationships will help ensure that information about children can be effectively shared. Shared training, with partners, in safeguarding practices and promoting the welfare of the child will take place.

Safeguarding children partnerships will have published a **threshold document** that includes: the process for the early help assessment and the type and level of early help services to be provided; and the criteria, including the level of need, for when a case should be referred to local authority children's social care for assessment and for statutory services under **section 17** (child in need), **section 47** (risk of significant harm), **section 31** (care orders), **section 20** (duty to accommodate) of the Children Act 1989. As PACT works across several Local Authority areas, please ensure you follow the Safeguarding Partners procedures and refer to the local authority's website for referral pathways.

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Principles as outlined in Working Together 2018, Updated 2020

- The **child's needs are paramount**, and the needs and wishes of each child, should be put first, so that every child receives the support they need before a problem escalates;
- **All professionals who come into contact with children and families** are alert to their needs and any risks of harm that individual abusers, or potential abusers, may pose to children;
- **All professionals share appropriate information in a timely way** and can discuss any concerns about an individual child with colleagues and local authority children's social care;
- **High quality professionals are able to use their expert judgement** to put the child's needs at the heart of the safeguarding system so that the right solution can be found for each individual child;
- **All professionals contribute to whatever actions are needed** to safeguard and promote a child's welfare and **take part in regularly reviewing the outcomes** for the child against specific plans and outcomes;
- **Local areas innovate** and changes are informed by evidence and examination of the data.

Effective safeguarding arrangements in every local area should be underpinned by two key principles:

- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility: for services to be effective each professional and organisation should play their full part; and
- A child-centred approach: for services to be effective they should be based on a clear understanding of the needs of children and the child's wishes and feelings.

Concerns about the safety or welfare of a child

Child abuse is any action by another person – adult or child – that causes or is likely to cause, significant harm to a child.

It can be **physical, sexual or emotional**, but can just as often be about a lack of love, care and attention. We know that neglect, whatever form it takes, can be just as damaging to a child as physical abuse.

An abused child will often experience more than one type of abuse, as well as other difficulties in their lives. It often happens over a period of time, rather than being a one-off event.

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As well as threats to the welfare of children from within their families, children may be vulnerable to abuse or exploitation from outside their families. These extra-familial threats might arise at school and other educational establishments, from within peer groups, or more widely from within the wider community and/or online. These threats can take a variety of different forms and children can be vulnerable to multiple threats, including: exploitation by criminal gangs and organised crime groups such as county lines; trafficking; online abuse; teenage relationship abuse; sexual exploitation and the influences of extremism leading to radicalisation. Extremist groups make use of the internet to radicalise and recruit and to promote extremist materials. Any potential harmful effects to individuals identified as vulnerable to extremist ideologies or being drawn into terrorism should also be considered.

It can sometimes be difficult to recognise the signs of child abuse or neglect, particularly in respect to children placed for adoption, who will in the majority of cases, have already been subject to abuse or neglect (in their birth families) and their development affected accordingly. The signs are not always obvious and the child may not say what is happening to them. However, sometimes there are physical or behavioural indicators, such as:

- **Appearance:** such as frequent unexplained injuries, consistently poor hygiene, matted hair, unexplained gifts, promiscuity or sexual activity at a young age, use sexual language or knowing information you wouldn't expect them to or have physical symptoms such as anal or vaginal soreness, or pregnancy.
- **Behaviour:** such as demanding or aggressive behaviour, frequent lateness or absence from school, avoiding their own family or seeming frightened of a person or reluctant to socialise with them, misusing drugs or alcohol, or being constantly tired
- **Communication:** such as sexual or aggressive language, self-harming, becoming secretive and reluctant to share information or being overly obedient

You are likely to be involved in four main ways:

1. You may have concerns about a child.
2. You may be approached by children's social care and asked to provide information about a child or family or to be involved in an assessment. This may happen regardless of who made the referral to children's social care.

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3. You may be asked to provide help or a specific service to the child or a member of their family as part of an agreed plan and contribute to the reviewing of the child's progress.
4. You may be aware of behaviour by a member of staff or a volunteer that causes you to believe a child/children could be at risk of abuse by that person.

What to do if you have concerns about a child OR that a staff member/volunteer or service user's behaviour could be placing a child/children at risk:

- a. If you are aware that a looked after child is missing from home this needs to be reported to the local authority immediately who will make enquiries and notify others if required, taking account of the possibility of child sexual exploitation (CSE).
- b. If you have a concern about a child's welfare or protection (or behaviour of staff member, volunteer or service user), even if you are not sure it is serious, you should discuss it with your Line Manager or the Designated Safeguarding Officer or Assistant Designated Safeguarding Officer as soon as is practical, without delay and within one working day. Even if no further action is taken it will ensure the information has been shared and logged. This may be helpful in creating a picture/pattern for the future and ensure you do not carry responsibility alone.
- c. In circumstances where it is not possible to contact your Line Manager you should contact the Designated Safeguarding Officer, the Assistant Designated Safeguarding Officer or any other Line Manager to ensure action is taken, it is not sufficient to leave a message for a colleague.
- d. The contact details of the Designated Safeguarding Officer and the Assistant Designated Safeguarding Officer during the day, are available in all public areas. Staff will also have the mobile numbers of their direct line managers. S/he will make the decision about whether the concern needs to be discussed with the family, whether their permission needs to be sought to share their information with another agency or whether the matter is sufficiently serious to make a referral to another agency without the family's consent.

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- e. If it has not been possible to discuss your concerns with any of the managers identified you should contact the Children’s Social Care Duty Team (in the area where the child lives) and share your concerns and ask for guidance.
- f. In the unlikely event of you being unable to contact anyone identified above and there is a **serious** risk of harm posed to the child if no protective action is taken, you must contact the emergency duty social worker in the local authority where the child lives or the emergency services, dialling 999 and advise them of your safeguarding concerns.

g. Recording Concerns

Following discussions you will need to complete the **Cause for Concern** form, detailing as much information as possible, including any discussions you have had with your Line Manager.

You should recall and note what you have seen and heard and the reason that this raised your anxiety. It’s easy to forget the details so write them down while they are fresh in your memory. Include the date and time and sign the form. The form should be completed and emailed to your Line Manager, who must countersign it before you send it to the Designated Safeguarding Officer/Assistant Designated Safeguarding Officer. On receipt the Designated Safeguarding Officer/ Assistant Designated Safeguarding Officer will return the form, completed with action points where necessary. The form should be completed as soon as is practical and within 24 hours from time of the discussion with the Line Manager and / or Designated Safeguarding Officer/Assistant Designated Safeguarding Officer

All recording of events should be in keeping with the record keeping procedures (see Data Management Policy).

If **no further action** is to be taken this decision will be made / supported by the Designated Safeguarding Officer/Assistant Designated Safeguarding Officer and recorded.

h. Processing the Referral / Referring to Statutory Agencies

- i. Referral to another agency with parental consent:
If it is decided that there is a safeguarding issue to address that requires another agency’s involvement you should discuss with the manager who will take what action including who speaks to the

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parent/s to gain their agreement to the referral and who contacts the agency.

- ii. Referral to another agency without the parental consent:
If it is believed that there is a risk of significant harm to the child, a referral **must** be made to the Local Authority Children’s Social Care department. It is always preferable to seek the permission of the parent to make this referral however where it is believed this will put the child at risk of further possible harm or would jeopardise possible criminal evidence the referral should be made without the parents knowledge. The Designated Safeguarding Officer / Assistant Designated Safeguarding Officer or Line Manager will make the decision as to whether a referral needs to be made to Children’s Social Care and who will do this and by when – delay must be avoided. When making the referral the referrer will agree with the recipient in Children’s Social Care what the child and the parents will be told, by whom and when.

If a verbal referral has been made to Children’s Social Care, the person who made the call should confirm the referral in writing within 24 hours. Children’s Social Care should acknowledge your written referral within one working day of receiving it, so if you have not heard anything within 24 hours, contact Children’s Social Care again to confirm the referral has been received.

- iii. If it is agreed that a referral is required to another agency because of serious concern but the delay required in seeking parental permission will place a child at further risk the line manager or Designated Safeguarding Officer/Assistant Designated Safeguarding Officer, taking the decision to act will need to clarify in the case note the basis of acting without parental agreement. Contact with the parents should be made as soon as possible with full explanations as to action taken.

i. Breaching Confidentiality

It will be the Line Manager or Designated Safeguarding Officer/Assistant Designated Safeguarding Officer’s decision whether to breach confidentiality and report on family information without permission. Any breach must be in line with the Confidentiality Policy and details of the decision must be recorded on the case note / Cause for Concern report.

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j. What to do if a disclosure of abuse is made to you

Remember that an allegation of child abuse or neglect may lead to a criminal investigation, so it is vital that the following principles are followed so that a Police investigation is not compromised unintentionally. When a child makes a disclosure of abuse or neglect:

- Do not make promises to keep secrets
- Do listen carefully
- Ask questions ONLY to establish that a safeguarding referral is necessary, do not question further
- Do not ask leading or direct questions
- Do not attempt to investigate the allegations yourself, this is the job of the statutory services not PACT
- Listen to the words being used and watch how the child is presenting
- Reassure him/her that the decision to disclose was the right thing to do
- As soon as possible after the disclosure write up the details while they are fresh in your mind and sign, time and date the record.

k. Follow up after a referral to the local authority

- The PACT referrer is responsible for following up the referral, to ascertain what actions, if any, are being undertaken by the Local Authority (as appropriate).
- The first check is made no later than 1 week after the date of the referral. This follow up may be made by telephone contact or by email, and it is noted on the child and adopter's file, including what actions the LA/Police are planning or have undertaken, or are not taking and noted on the client's file.
- In the event of the failure to respond to the initial follow up, the referrer will inform his/her manager and the DSO/Assistant SDO, and a timescale will be agreed that includes the frequency that the referrer is to try to obtain a response, and a date agreed by which the referrer's manager and DSO/ Assistant DSO will be informed of the outcome of this proactive follow up.
- The timescale will be dependent on the severity of the concerns raised, and will end no later than two weeks from the initial attempt at follow up.
- If the follow up information is not received within the timescale, the manager or DSO/Assistant DSO will contact the LA to ascertain the reasons for the lack of communication and to obtain information related

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to any action plans in the relevant case. This discussion will be followed up in writing.

- If the manager or DSO/Assistant DSO is unsuccessful in obtaining this information, then the Chief Executive will formally contact the Senior Management of the LA concerned. If necessary, the local voluntary safeguarding lead within the Local Safeguarding Children's Board will also be notified of the concerns with communication between the two agencies.
- All relevant details will be recorded in the child's and adopter's or client's files.

I. Different opinions regarding an action Plan (Escalation Procedure)

- There are times when a referral to the LA results in an assessment of there being no need for further action. The PACT referrer will seek to obtain clarifying information as to why this decision has been made. This information will then assist the agency in determining if, from the information it already holds, there is an agreement in this course of no further action. This discussion is usually held between the PACT referrer and the Local Authority social worker.
- In the event of there being disagreement with the decision, with the PACT referrer believing the needs are greater than those assessed by the LA team, the PACT referrer will discuss this with them in order to attempt to obtain a satisfactory agreement together. If this is not possible and the referrer believes that further action is needed, the referrer's manager and the DSO or Assistant DSO must be informed immediately.
- After a full discussion, if the manager/DSO or Assistant DSO disagrees with the decision from the LA, then they will contact the relevant manager and seek a discussion in an attempt to reach a satisfactory conclusion.
- If the issue remains unresolved then the manager/DSO or Assistant DSO will escalate this to the next management level in the Local Authority Children's Services. This must happen within 2 working days.
- If a satisfactory conclusion is not reached, then the Chief Executive will be informed, who will formally raise the concern with the Local Authority Children's Services Senior Management. This enables the decision to be

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discussed at a senior management level as appropriate and action agreed. This must be within 2 working days wherever possible.

- If the senior managers are unable to resolve the issue then consideration must be given to referring the case to the Director or Assistant Director of Children's Services who will make the final decision. These discussions will be followed up with a letter outlining the agreements and action plans. This must be within 2 working days wherever possible.
- All relevant details will be recorded on the child and adopter's (or client's) file.
- Where it is believed that there are wider lessons or practice issues to be learnt then the case is to be referred to the local safeguarding leads within the Safeguarding Partners.
- A Notification of Significant Events form needs to be completed and forwarded to Ofsted.

Notifiable events

In accordance with Schedule 4 (Regulation 19.1 of Voluntary Adoption Agencies and the Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2003) if in relation to the Agency any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 4 takes place, the Registered Provider or the Registered Manager shall without delay notify the person indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of that table.

Any notification made in accordance with the above regulation which is given orally shall be confirmed in writing within 14 days.

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SCHEDULE 4: EVENTS AND NOTIFICATIONS

| | Registration Authority OFSTED | Secretary of State | Placing Agency | Area Authority | Primary Care Trust | Local Health Board |
|---|-------------------------------|--|----------------|----------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Death of child placed for adoption by the agency | Yes | Yes, if the registration authority is the Commission | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Referral to the Secretary of State pursuant to section 2(1)(a) of the Protection of Children Act 1999 of an individual working for the agency | Yes | | | | | |
| Serious illness of, or serious accident sustained by, a child placed for adoption by the agency | Yes | | | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Any serious complaint about a prospective adopter approved by the agency where no child is placed for adoption with that prospective adopter | Yes | | | | | |

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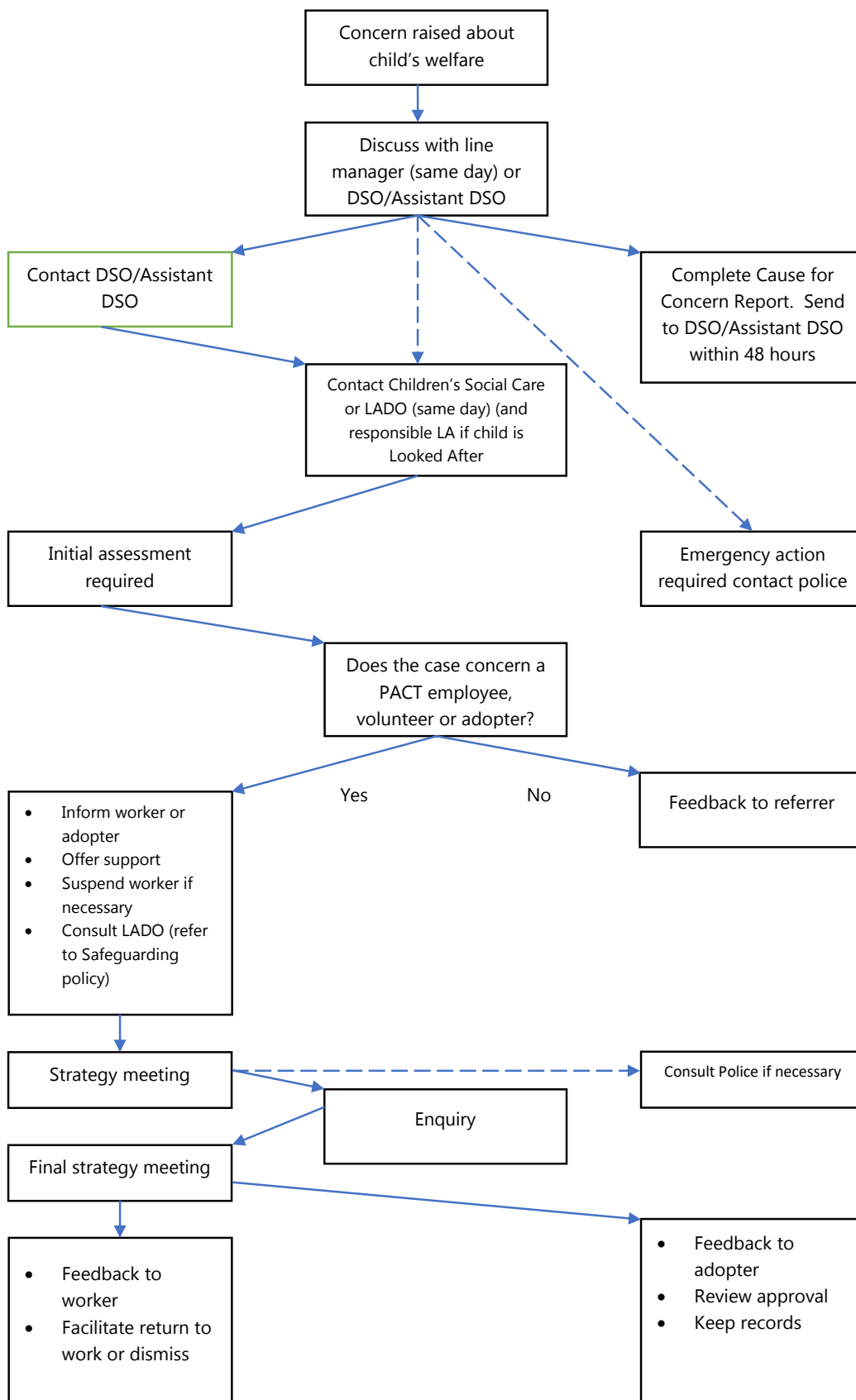
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| Any serious complaint about a prospective adopter approved by the agency where a child is placed for adoption with that prospective adopter by the agency | Yes | | | Yes | | |
| Any serious complaint about a prospective adopter approved by the agency where a child is placed for adoption with that prospective adopter by another agency | Yes | | (Yes) | Yes, if not notified as the placing agency | | |
| Instigation and outcome of any child protection enquiry involving a child placed for adoption by the agency | Yes | | (Yes) | Yes | | |

Associated documents

Safeguarding Policy
Volunteer Policy
Data Protection Policy

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Flowchart



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