

Recent events in Scotland have shown how important it is for us all to be vigilant about the welfare of children in our communities.

The recently published, **Safe and Well** and **Children's Charter and Framework for Standards** from the Scottish Executive underline this responsibility for us all.

All Highland schools, including pre-school provision, have child protection policies and procedures in place.

These procedures are part of the Highland Inter-Agency Child Protection Guidelines and are agreed by all the agencies working with children.

Anybody employed and or volunteering within the following agencies –

- Education, Culture and Sport
- Health
- Social Work
- Police
- Voluntary sector
- Private sector

has a responsibility for the protection and welfare of children and must follow child protection guidelines. This means they have a duty to notify the social work services if they have any concerns about the welfare of a child or young person.

When children are involved in extra-curricular activities parents can ensure that organisations have child protection policies and safeguards in place.

All these agencies want to work in an open and honest way with families and will abide by their Codes of Confidentiality. However,

if it is suspected that a child is being abused agencies **must** share information in order to safeguard that child and other children.

Children are considered to be abused and neglected when their basic needs are not being met, this includes –

- Deliberately hurting them
- Not preventing harm
- Not meeting their needs eg food, warmth, clothing, cleanliness.

Children's needs vary according to their age and stage of development, and many things need to be considered when it is thought that a child's well being is being affected.

"If any member of an agency suspects that abuse has happened, or is happening or is likely to happen contact should be made with the social work service or the police."

Highland Child Protection Committee,
Inter-agency Guidelines 2004

What this means for schools is that if there is a child protection concern about a child the Head Teacher has a duty to contact social work services in the first instance and seek further advice/assistance with the matter.

A referral to social work services does not necessarily mean that a child is being abused or neglected, what it does mean is that the head teacher is very concerned about the child's welfare and recognises that some support may be required for the child and family

Depending on circumstances, social work services may instigate a joint investigation with the police.

For further advice or information regarding this you can speak to your head teacher, health visitor or local social work team.

Copies of the inter-agency guidelines are available for reference in schools and libraries, they are also accessible via www.highland.gov.uk

You will also find further information at www.scotland.gov.uk/childprotection

There is an extensive programme of training for teachers and all other school staff in all Highland Schools to ensure that they fully understand their role in protecting children. Head teachers are trained alongside their colleagues in health and social work, police and voluntary organisations.

If you have any concerns about a child in the community you can contact you head teacher, local social work office or health professional for advice and guidance.

"It's everyone's job to make sure I'M ALRIGHT" (Scot.Exec. 2003.)

A Guide for Parents
Child Protection In Schools

Child Protection Policy Guidelines

Inter-agency guidelines for managing suspected and proven child abuse and neglect



Highland Child Protection Committee
Working Together to
Protect Children in the Highlands