

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCOPE

- 1.1.1 Contents have been developed from, and are consistent with:
- Relevant law, regulation and statutory and non statutory government guidance (as at 01.08.06)
 - Information and advice supplied by staff in agencies represented on Hertfordshire Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB)
 - Best practice as agreed by the steering group overseeing the manual's development
- 1.1.2 This manual replaces the 2002 Child Protection Procedures and their update dated October 2005.
- 1.1.3 The procedures include the following appendices:
- 1: The statutory framework for child protection work (reproduced from *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2006*)
 - 2: National and local sources of information or advice

1.2 STAFF FOR WHOM RELEVANT

- 1.2.1 Contents have been agreed by the following agencies with responsibilities for children living or present in Hertfordshire:
- Children Schools & Families (CSF) – Children's Social Care & Children's Services (Education)
 - Adult Care Services in their work with parents
 - Hertfordshire Constabulary
 - All health services
 - District Councils
 - Youth offending teams (YOTs) & Probation Service
 - Early years development child care partnerships (EYDCPs)
 - Sure Start & Children's Fund
 - Connexions
 - East of England Ambulance Trust
 - Children & Families Courts Advisory & Support Service (CAFCASS)
- 1.2.2 Professionals are expected to follow these procedures. If exceptionally, professional judgement suggests an alternative response, the departure from procedures must be acknowledged, the relevant manager's authority obtained and reason/s clearly recorded.

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- 1.2.3 When LSCB agencies commission services from private or voluntary organisations, they must (consistent with their s.11 Children Act 2004 obligations to 'safeguard and promote the welfare of children') seek to make compliance a contractual requirement.
- 1.2.4 Whilst compliance cannot be enforced, all reasonable efforts should be made to encourage the following individuals and non-local agencies to conduct operations in a manner consistent with these procedures:
- Elected Members
 - Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI)
 - Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED)
 - Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)
 - Voluntary and community organisations
 - Faith groups

1.3 RELATIONSHIP: POLICY, PROCEDURE, PROTOCOL & GUIDANCE

- 1.3.1 Readers need to be clear about the differences between the concepts of policy, procedure, protocol and guidance.

Policy

- 1.3.2 A policy sets out:
- Shared beliefs
 - Organisational intentions and commitments
- 1.3.3 Agencies may develop supplementary 'internal' policies which represent higher standards of practice than required by this document, or which reflect an agency-specific contribution to child protection.
- 1.3.4 To maintain the advantage of a Hertfordshire-wide approach, any supplementary policies should be consistent with this manual.

Procedure

- 1.3.5 A procedure indicates what must or may be done in specified circumstances. Though professional judgment must be applied to all situations, a procedure defines the limits of professional discretion.
- 1.3.6 The words 'must' and 'should' are deliberately distinguished in these procedures, the former indicating an obligation, the latter an expectation.
- 1.3.7 Any supplementary internal procedures developed by agencies should also refer to, and be consistent with these procedures.

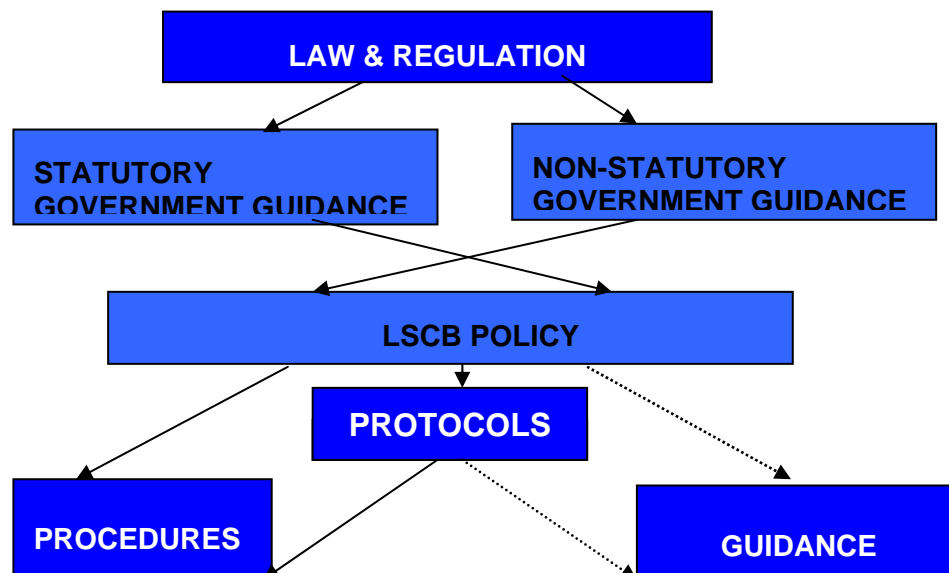
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Guidance

- 1.3.8 Guidance provides contextual information or addresses the question of 'why' specified actions may be required. This manual has included guidance only to the extent that it is required to understand a procedure and/or facilitate day to day practice.
- 1.3.9 References are made throughout the text to further guidance:
- Appended to these procedures
 - On the Hertfordshire LSCB site
www.hertsdirect.org/safeguardingchildren
 - In the 'Good Practice Guide'
 - On specified internet sites

Protocols

- 1.3.10 A protocol is a formal agreement between two or more agencies (which may retain their own agency-specific procedures) to commit staff to an agreed common response to specified issues, events or circumstances e.g. information sharing.
- 1.3.11 So as to minimise the number of documents to which staff need refer, this manual has incorporated and 'proceduralised' as many as possible of those currently in use and made explicit reference to any other 'stand alone' protocols which remain relevant .
- 1.3.12 The inter-relationship of law, policy, procedures, guidance and protocols is represented diagrammatically below.



AGREED POLICY

- 1.3.13 Production of this multi-agency manual reflects a significant consensus about best practice amongst partner agencies that contribute to the:
- Prevention, detection and investigation of abuse or neglect
 - Risk management of offenders
 - Support and treatment of those affected by abuse or neglect
- 1.3.14 The following statements encapsulate those agencies':
- Shared beliefs
 - Organisational intentions
 - Commitments

SHARED BELIEFS

- 1.3.15 The needs of the child are **paramount** and should underpin and resolve any apparent conflict of interest arising in work with:
- Individual adults who are parents
 - Families and children
- 1.3.16 All children deserve the opportunity to achieve their full potential.
- 1.3.17 All children have the right to be safeguarded from harm and exploitation without regard to:
- Race, religion, preferred language or ethnicity
 - Age, gender, health, sexuality or disability
 - Location or placement
 - Criminal behaviour or
 - Political or immigration status
- 1.3.18 Children's welfare can only be safeguarded and promoted and individuals at risk protected when **all** relevant agencies and individuals accept their share of responsibility and co-operate with one another.
- 1.3.19 Statements about or allegations of abuse or neglect made by children must always be taken seriously.
- 1.3.20 The wishes and feelings of children are vital elements in assessing risk and formulating protection plans, and must always be sought and given due consideration according to their level of understanding.
- 1.3.21 During enquiries, the involvement and support of those who have parental responsibility for, or regular care of a child, should be encouraged and facilitated, unless doing so compromises that enquiry or the child's immediate or long term welfare.

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- 1.3.22 Those planning, monitoring or providing training must, in recognition of diversity and to facilitate social inclusion and equality of potential outcome, take all reasonable steps to support parents and children who have experienced racism and other forms of prejudice.

ORGANISATIONAL INTENTIONS

- 1.3.23 It is the intention of all 'partner agencies' to ensure:
- Best use of agencies' resources so as to reduce the frequency and extent to which any child in the relevant areas suffer significant harm as a result of abuse or neglect
 - A prompt and effective 'needs-led' response when it appears that a child may be at risk of abuse or neglect
 - Agency policies and practices reflect the fact that all children in need of safeguarding or protection are 'children in need' and are consequently entitled to family support services
 - Staff are adequately trained, managed and supervised so as to operate efficiently to agreed procedures
 - All services are provided in a manner which does not discriminate in any unlawful or unprofessional way and which at organisational and individual levels respects cultural diversity (race, religion, culture, ethnicity, language, gender, sexual orientation, age, health and any disability of child or family), the right to family life of all individuals involved and confidentiality of information generated
 - Steadily improving effectiveness of inter-agency protection by building into case and service planning, the views and experiences of child and adult service users

COMMITMENTS

- 1.3.24 Partner agencies will:
- Develop and maintain effective quality assurance systems for monitoring the results of inter-agency and inter-authority child protection co-operation
 - Develop formal processes for consultation with, and feedback from service users so as to improve the sensitivity and effectiveness of inter-agency work.
 - Provide for aggrieved service users, effective complaints procedures that are objective, reliable and credible
 - Develop and maintain forums for county-wide inter-agency and inter-authority discussions about the most effective ways of tackling the challenges of safeguarding and promoting welfare and contributing to children's well-being
 - Develop, maintain and promote, using appropriate media, information for service users about child protection policies and procedures

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- Develop and implement child protection policies and systems which facilitate the achievement of equality of opportunity and outcome for individual children.
- Support initiatives which promote awareness of the need to safeguard children
- Provide and promote multi-agency training
- Ensure recruitment processes filter out unsuitable staff
- Enable all relevant staff to recognise factors associated with child abuse / neglect e.g. domestic violence
- Share all relevant child protection information across agencies
- Ensure help and support is provided to children in accordance with assessed need and that assessments are reviewed on receipt of further information or in response to altered circumstances
- Maximise efforts to prevent abuse or neglect through multi-agency public protection arrangements, training and educational programmes as well as individual case management
- Ensure regular audits to confirm the above beliefs and intentions are reflected in the practice of staff in each agency

1.4 UPDATING OF PROCEDURES

1.4.1 Nominated managers in each agency will be responsible for:

- Distribution of the manual / CDs to staff and relevant agencies
- Forwarding revised electronic versions and overseeing distribution of updated hard copies to those on the circulation list
- Seeking and collating proposals for amendments and development of the manual

1.4.2 Any urgent amendments which cannot await the next scheduled edition will, following formal agreement by the LSCB 'policy & procedures sub group', be circulated by e-mail to nominated managers in each participating agency.

1.4.3 This manual is scheduled for regular review at intervals not exceeding two years, i.e. the next edition should be produced in Autumn 2008.

1.5 TERMINOLOGY

1.5.1 A glossary of terms with a technical significance or for which abbreviations are used in the text is provided.

1.5.2 Consistent with *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2006* references are made to a child being subject to a child protection plan, rather than her/his name being on the 'child protection register' (implementation in Hertfordshire is dependent upon CSF's introduction of ICS and a new IT system, and is scheduled for April 2008).

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- 1.5.3 Readers should note that the following terms (most describing relevant specialist roles within the local authority) are used throughout the text:
- **Child** to refer to anyone under 18 years old
 - **Principal Officers** to refer to the officer/s in Children, Schools and Families (CSF) who offer/s off-line advice and/or provides chairing of child protection conferences
 - **Children's Services (Education)** to refer to the function within CSF providing and co-ordinating educational services for children
 - **Children's Social Care** to refer to the function within CSF providing support, protection and care services to children and families
 - **Head of Child Protection** refers to the designated officer responsible for the conference chairs, provision of specialist advice and protection planning
 - **Team manager** to describe the manager responsible in CSF for a team of social workers (and includes her/his assistant team manager when authority is delegated for specific tasks)
 - **Children's Service Manager** refers to the second line manager to whom a CSF team manager reports (sometimes called an operational manager)
 - **Social worker** to describe the CSF practitioner with case responsibility (for children subject to a child protection plan this will usually be a registered social worker)
 - **Supervising social worker** (sometimes called link or family placement worker or fostering officer) to describe the practitioner working with foster carers

1.6 HOW TO USE THE MANUAL

- 1.6.1 The layout of this manual emphasises the shared obligations and expectations of staff, carers and volunteers. Unless otherwise stated, procedures apply to **all** agencies and individuals cited in [1.2.1](#)
- 1.6.2 The manual is essentially a reference document and it is accepted that staff may refer to specific sections rather than read it cover to cover. In consequence a degree of repetition has been allowed.
- 1.6.3 Relevant staff with the required technology are able to access a 'read only' version. To facilitate its use, hypertext links have been used to:
- Link an entry in the contents pages with the relevant text (control + click on the word/s)
 - Enable immediate re-location to a relevant cross reference contained within the text (control + click on [blue](#) section number)
- 1.6.4 Those with no access to a computer will have access to a hard copy and an alphabetical subject index is provided at the back of this document to facilitate identification of required actions.

1.7 PRACTITIONERS' HANDBOOK

1.7.1 A pocket sized digest of this comprehensive manual being produced and circulated at the same time as this document will:

- Summarise those critical parts likely to be required day to day
- Contain only procedures - i.e. no contextual guidance and
- Cross refer to this document so as to allow staff to explore further, any given issue