

Family Futures Policies and Procedures Manual for all Staff and Foster Carers



SECTION 4: VAA & IFA INTEGRATED SAFEGUARDING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES



A Not for Profit Voluntary Adoption Agency & Independent Fostering Agency for the 21st Century

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Family Futures Safeguarding Children Policy Framework

This policy relates to the services at Family Futures that:

- Provide assessment and treatment to traumatised children and their families;
- Assess adopters as part of the Family Futures i-Adopt programme, and;

- Assess, monitor and support foster carers and their foster children as part of the We-Foster programme.

In accordance with Fostering Regulations and Guidance please see the specific policies referred to in this document when there are safeguarding concerns which relate to children in the care of Family Futures Foster Carers.

Introduction

The aim of this policy is to ensure that the agency's service users are safeguarded from all forms of abuse, neglect and/or exploitation, whether deliberate or inadvertent, in accordance with written policies and procedures. This policy and procedure relates to children who are Family Futures service users and to those children with whom Family Futures staff come into contact.

Everyone at Family Futures has a duty to ensure that the safeguarding of children is given priority and that they therefore understand the Integrated Safeguarding Policy and that they know what to do when they are concerned about a child.

Safeguarding of children depends upon the effective joint working with any local authority/police who are making child protection enquiries in respect of the child(ren). It is essential therefore that Family Futures staff see this as a shared responsibility and liaise and co-operate with any local authority/police force that is making such enquiries so that an assessment can be made of the child's needs and circumstances and so that they can be adequately safeguarded.

The actions that Family Futures staff need to take if they are worried about a child are set out in the Integrated Safeguarding Procedures below.

Related Procedures

This Integrated Safeguarding Policy and Procedures document needs to be read in conjunction with Family Futures':

- Adults at Risk Policy and Procedures (Section 5 of Agency Manual)
- Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) Policy and Procedures (Section 6 of Agency Manual)
- Risk Management Policy and Procedures (Section 7 of Agency Manual)
- Positive Interventions and Restraint Policy and Procedures (Section 9 of Agency Manual)
- OFSTED Notification Policy and Procedures (Section 10 of Agency Manual)
- Managing Allegations Against and Concerns about Foster Carers
- Policy & Procedures and Family Futures' Behaviour Management Policy & Procedures.
- Safer Care Policy for Foster Carers

This integrated process is based on the premise that all these elements are interrelated and need to be considered together in deciding on the correct course of action to take. There is also a flowchart that provides a summary of the procedures for each of these areas and shows how they interrelate to ensure that all appropriate steps are taken. The flowchart, whilst a helpful tool, should not be used in isolation and must be used in conjunction with the relevant Policies and Procedures.

Legal and Guidance Framework:

The legal and guidance framework that underpins the Family Futures Integrated Safeguarding Policy and Procedures are as follows:

- The Children Act 1989
- The Protection of Children Act 1999
- The Sexual Offences Act 2003
- The Children Act 2004
- The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- The Children and Families Act 2014
- Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.
- The Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 (as amended)
- Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards: 2011

And most significantly;

- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 (see details below]
- The London Child Protection Procedures 2017 (published by the London Safeguarding Children Board; see below for details)

Supplementary Guidance

- OFSTED's National Minimum Standards relating to Adoption (July 2014)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (July 2015). (This document is useful as a reference when considering how schools are managing safeguarding issues.)

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018

Key Principles

- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility:
- For services to be effective each professional and organisation should play their full part;

- A child-centred approach: for services to be effective they should be based on a clear understanding of the lived experience of the child and their needs and views.

Working Together 2018 sets out the framework for agencies to work together to protect children from abuse or harm and/or to promote their wellbeing. It stresses that no single professional can have a full picture of a child's needs and circumstances and, if children and families are to receive the right help at the right time, everyone who comes into contact with them has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action.

In addition it emphasises that every professional should, in particular, be alert to the potential need for early help for a child who:

- Is disabled and has specific additional needs;
- Has special educational needs;
- Is a young carer;
- Is showing signs of engaging in anti-social or criminal behaviour;
- Is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as substance misuse, adult mental health problems and domestic violence;
- Has returned home to their family from care; and/or
- Is showing early signs of abuse and/or neglect.

London Child Protection Procedures

The London Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) London Child Protection Procedures 5th Edition 2017 can be found here: <https://www.londoncp.co.uk/index.html>.

The London Child Protection Procedures are underpinned by Working Together to Safeguard Children. The London Child Protection Procedures set out in detail (in Part A) the expectations of key agencies in working together to safeguard children. Part B includes practice guidance on specific forms of abuse.

New staff are familiarised with the London Child Protection Procedures as part of their induction programme and all staff are updated as part of the annual safeguarding update training.

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PROCEDURE

Creating the right environment for safeguarding children:

Duties of the Management Team

It is the responsibility of the Management Team of Family Futures to:

- Implement the Family Futures Integrated Safeguarding Policy and Procedures
- Ensure that procedures are kept up to date

- Ensure regular meetings take place with the Safeguarding Consultant, Finola Culbert, to review the Policy and Procedures as well as individual cases or any other concerns
- Carry out an annual formal review of Family Futures Integrated Safeguarding Policy and Procedures
- Ensure the development and implementation of safe recruitment of staff practices that comply with the Protection of Children Act 1999 and the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006. As part of this process Family Futures will ensure that all qualifications and enhanced DBS checks are up to date and references are checked as well as other checks are made as appropriate
- Ensure all staff have regular supervision, consultation and appraisals so that practice is monitored and reviewed
- Ensure that all staff receive regular training to enable them to apply the policy and procedures to safeguard children.
 - New members of staff will be inducted into the Family Futures Integrated Safeguarding Policy and Procedures
 - Current members of staff who have already been trained will participate in the once yearly top-up session with the Family Futures Safeguarding Consultant, Finola Culbert.
- Ensure that all staff are supported in this area of work and, as part of induction and supervision, that their training needs are identified and reviewed in relation to safeguarding.
 - This may mean additional supplementary or specialist safeguarding training in addition to the induction programme or the annual top up session
 - The Management Team are also aware that as the Assessment, Therapy and Permanency staff may on occasion provide out of hours telephone, text and email support to families they need to have updated telephone details of the relevant directors to contact for support and advice should a safeguarding issue occur out of office hours.
- The Registered Manager & CEO is also a Director and is the Family Futures designated lead for safeguarding. The Registered Manager & CEO may delegate responsibility to either another Director or a member of the Permanency Team and the Therapy Team to carry out any task in pursuance of implementing the procedures. However, the clinical directors will remain accountable and ultimately responsible for the Agency's work in respect of safeguarding children. This principle applies throughout this document.

Duties of Family Futures staff

It is the responsibility of the whole staff team that they follow the Family Futures Integrated Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.

If any member of staff (including administrative staff) becomes concerned that a child may be at current risk of harm or that their wellbeing is compromised by the care s/he is receiving they should raise their concerns with one of the Service directors for the Assessment, Therapy and Permanency Services. The relevant director will then consider the concerns within the context of the policy and procedures and advise accordingly.

Where appropriate the relevant director will refer the concerns (and relevant background and history) to the relevant local authority or will support the staff member to do so. The LA will then determine what next steps to take both in the immediate and longer term and should keep Family Futures apprised on and involved in these steps as appropriate. The role of Family Futures staff is to ensure that safeguarding concerns are referred to the appropriate agency but not to conduct the investigation themselves.

Concerns related to past abuse/neglect

Responses to allegations by a parent/carer or child/young person that they have been abused in the past must be given the same priority as current abuse and will follow the same procedures as contemporary incidents. There is some likelihood that any alleged perpetrator may still present a risk to children and action will therefore need to be taken to protect any children in contact with him/her. Where an adult (as distinct from an adult at risk) does not wish to disclose details of their alleged abuser and does not wish for a safeguarding referral to be made, their wishes need to be respected. However, where there is a possibility that children may be being harmed now, the relevant director will need to consider the best next steps, in consultation where necessary with the Family Futures Safeguarding Consultant, Finola Culbert.

Considering a referral

The discussion with the Assessment, Therapy or Permanency Service director should focus on the following:

- Whether there is a need to make a referral to the relevant local authority either because the child is in need of services or because there is a likelihood of previous or present of significant harm
- Whether there is a need to seek the views and/or inform other professionals who also have an involvement or interest in the child(ren) and his/her family
- Designate who will take any necessary action and within what timescale
- Review the implications of the safeguarding concerns for the continuation of work with Family Futures
- If there is any concern about how to proceed, the Assessment, Therapy & Permanency Service directors may deal with the matter directly or contact the Family Futures Safeguarding Consultant, Finola Culbert, for advice. This conversation will be detailed in the Integrated Safeguarding Log and the case file (please see below).

Making a safeguarding referral

All safeguarding concerns must be notified to the relevant local authority (where the child lives) by telephone within 24 hours of the concern arising and followed up in writing in two working days. Serious concerns where immediate action to safeguard the child may be necessary should be immediately referred to the police and/or to the local authority.

It is usual good practice to copy the referral to any other local authority involved, e.g. a placing authority. If there is an allocated social worker for the child he/she should be copied into the referral or otherwise informed directly of it. As advised by the Service director, it may be appropriate to make the referral directly to the Referral and Assessment Team at the appropriate local authority, or to the local authority's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). Please note that different local authorities name their teams who are responsible for safeguarding differently and any doubts over whom to refer to should be discussed with the Service director dealing with the issue.

Where possible and appropriate Family Futures staff should seek to discuss their concerns with the parents/carers and inform them of the intention to make a referral to the local authority. Prior to their engagement at Family Futures all families are informed that this can sometimes happen. However the overriding consideration is for the safety of the child or any other child/ren in the family and so there should be no undue delay in making an appropriate referral. There may be some exceptions to informing parents or carers of the decision to make a child safeguarding referral, such as if it is considered likely that discussion would place the child at further risk of significant harm, risk interference with the police investigation or place the staff member at personal risk. In this case staff members should discuss their concerns with a Service director.

If the referral is deemed to be urgent in that the child may need to be removed immediately and if this situation arises out of normal working hours then the duty team (where the child lives) should be contacted.

Strategy Meetings and Child Protection Conferences

Following receipt of a referral the local authority will make a decision as to whether to hold a Strategy Meeting. This is a statutory meeting led by children's social care but involving relevant partners, to share information and plan a child protection investigation, should this be necessary. Family Futures may attend the local authority's Strategy Meeting and, if so, Family Futures' role at this meeting is to ensure that the referral information is fully understood and to share any actions they may be taking that may impact on the investigation.

When a safeguarding referral has been made due to concerns about a Family Futures Foster carer, the Procedure for 'Managing Allegations and Standards of Care Concerns about Foster Carers' will be followed.

In some cases, a Child Protection Conference is agreed (usually to be held within 15 days of the Strategy Meeting). Family Futures staff, if invited to attend, should provide reports and information to this process, as requested by the local authority.

Family Futures may hold its own 'safeguarding review meeting' in more serious cases within 48 hours to discuss the case with all the relevant team members and an Assessment, Therapy or Permanency Service director. The outcomes from these meetings will be

recorded and placed on both the case file and detailed in the Integrated Safeguarding Log (see below).

Recording of safeguarding concerns and actions

- All safeguarding discussions, concerns, and outcomes must be recorded in the Integrated Safeguarding Log and in the case file
- A careful and full record (verbatim where possible) should be made of what the child or parent/carer or any other informant has said regarding the safeguarding concerns. Any signs or symptoms of significant harm or injury observed should also be fully recorded as described above
- When a decision is made in consultation with the Assessment, Therapy & Permanency service directors that a safeguarding referral will not be made, evidence of this decision along with the reasons informing the decision needs to be recorded in the case file and Integrated Safeguarding Log
- Where a referral is agreed, an [Integrated Safeguarding Referral Form](#), CAF form, or the local authority's safeguarding form will be completed and must, where possible (as some forms are completed online), be signed by the member of the team and the Assessment, Therapy or Permanency Service director involved, and placed on the case file
- The Integrated Safeguarding Log must be updated during every step of the safeguarding process and this must also be copied verbatim into the case file. This process is usually completed by the relevant administrator for the case or the Lead Coordinator in the case of initial enquiries
- The progress of the referral will be tracked by the case Keyworker and/or relevant administrator
- Every three months the Lead Coordinator will meet with an Assessment, Therapy & Permanency Service director to audit outstanding safeguarding issues and ensure appropriate action has been taken
- Any action taken or discussion within Family Futures and/or with outside agencies in respect of safeguarding concerns should be recorded on the child's file within two working days
- Any significant development in the case should be recorded on the Integrated Safeguarding log and in the case file. These should be discussed with an Assessment, Therapy or Permanency Service director and this discussion recorded in the Integrated Safeguarding Log and in the case file.

Notifications to OFSTED

OFSTED should be informed within 24 hours of all serious safeguarding referrals made to the Local Authority. Please see OFSTED Notification Policy for more details.

All serious referrals (serious injury, death of a child, serious self-harm, repeated absconding or going missing or suicide) must be notified to OFSTED using the relevant Notification Form. A decision will be made regarding whether an OFSTED notification is necessary following a discussion with the Assessment, Therapy or Permanency Service director. This notification would be in addition to any referral to the local authority. Full details of the nature of the concern and relevant information regarding the child's circumstances and background should be shared when making any referral.

Discussion with the child

If a safeguarding concern arises from contact with a child, the degree of discussion with the child will depend on the child's age and understanding. The Staff member or Foster Carer must listen carefully to what the child/young person tells them. Reassure the child/young person that they have done the right thing in telling them what they are worried about or what has happened to them and tell them they are not to blame. If it is considered safe to do so and if the child has age appropriate understanding, the child should be informed of the intention to make a referral to the local authority.

Although it may be necessary to ask some questions of the child or carers to decide whether suspicion of abuse or neglect has been justified, it is not the task of Family Futures to conduct a formal safeguarding assessment or investigation. Once the threshold of suspicion of abuse or neglect has been met there should be no further reason for continuing to question the child. If the child wants to talk about what happened, the member of the Family Futures team or foster carer should listen and make a note but should not encourage further disclosure. Care should be taken not to compromise any subsequent safeguarding enquiries or police investigation. Staff should avoid asking leading questions.

As soon as possible, the staff member/foster carer should:

- Take care to record what the child has said using the child's own words.
- Record the date, time and setting and any names mentioned, to whom the information was given, and other people present.
- Sign and date the session note or telephone log if applicable.

Children subject to a child protection plan

Family Futures staff will maintain their safeguarding responsibilities in relation to those children referred to Family Futures who are subject to a child protection plan.

If there are significant new developments the team member or the Service director will inform the local authority immediately and follow the referral procedures as outlined above unless it is possible to update an existing referral already underway.

International Safeguarding

Where Family Futures becomes aware of safeguarding concerns relating to a child who is not normally resident in the UK the above Policies and Procedures will apply, but any referral will need to be made to the authority responsible for child protection in the area in which the child normally lives. When the child has been placed by a UK authority within the last three

years but the child does not normally live in the UK, the placing authority should be copied into any safeguarding correspondence.

It is not possible to compile a full list of overseas authorities responsible for safeguarding, and for this reason whenever a family becomes involved in Family Futures and their normal place of residence is overseas, the arrangements for safeguarding in their home country need to be researched by the administrator responsible for the case and details of this authority should be recorded on the family's front sheet. This is to avoid any undue delays in making a referral should concerns come to light. If it is unclear to whom the referral should be made, or for any general advice on international safeguarding, it may be necessary to contact Children and Families Across Borders in the first instance. The phone number for Children and Families Across Borders is 020 7735 8941 and their website is <http://cfab.org.uk/>

Information for service users

This Integrated Safeguarding Policy and Procedures document is available online at <https://www.familyfutures.co.uk/about/policies/>.

Assessment and Treatment packs include the telephone numbers of the family's local safeguarding contact details including the out-of-hours duty team.

Details of how to complain about Family Futures, including accessing Family Futures' Independent Person (Roger Weissman) and how to contact OFSTED are included in the Assessment and Treatment packs given to service users as well as in the Permanency information packs. The Children's Guide to Family Futures includes details of the Children's Commissioner and OFSTED as well as information about Family Futures' Independent Person.

Escalation Policy

The Escalation Policy is in place in order to take further action if the local authority fails to respond to a safeguarding referral appropriately and within a 'reasonable' timescale. The Escalation Policy is as follows:

- Discuss with the equivalent of Service director at the relevant local authority what action they have taken in relation to the safeguarding or LADO referral. The following may then be necessary:
 - To have a discussion with the local authority's Quality Assurance Unit
 - To re-send the original safeguarding referral form annotating and highlighting the concerns that have not been addressed satisfactorily and requesting a response to the referral regarding action to be taken by the Local Authority. This should be sent to the relevant manager within the local authority or the director of social services within this authority
 - Sending a letter/email to the chair of the local safeguarding board outlining the concerns regarding the unsatisfactory response from the local authority

- Making an OFSTED notification if advised by an Assessment, Therapy or Permanency Service director.

Jay Vaughan

Updated May 2020

Appendix: Step-by-step guide for Integrated Safeguarding Concerns

Step-by-step guide for Integrated Safeguarding Concerns

Staff member becomes aware of concerns about a child or young person



Staff member discusses with an Assessment, Treatment or Permanency Service director

