RELIANCE SOCIAL HOUSING
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Policy Control	
Policy Name	Children's Safeguarding Policy
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Children's Safeguarding Policy

CONTENTS:

1. Introduction

1.1 Reliance Housing (Reliance) are committed to protecting the right of children to live in safety and be free from abuse or neglect. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined as:

- Protecting children from maltreatment and neglect.
- Preventing impairment of children's health or development.
- Ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best life chances and outcomes.

1.2 All children, without exception, have the right to protection from abuse and neglect regardless of gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality or beliefs. Safeguarding children and the action we take to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm is everyone's responsibility.

1.3 Reliance staff have a key safeguarding role to play, alongside colleagues in social care, health and the police, in promoting the welfare of children and young people and in protecting them from harm. The purpose of this Policy is to set out Reliance approach to safeguarding children, preventing abuse and responding to concerns or allegations of abuse where these arise.

2. Scope

2.1 This policy applies to all colleagues working within Reliance. This includes those working in both a paid and voluntary capacity, members of the governance community and those working for Reliance as a contractor or sub-contractor. This policy also applies to Tenants/Service Users of Reliance and members of the public who may have concerns regarding a child which fall under the remit of this policy.

2.2 This policy covers the safeguarding of children. For the purposes of this Policy a child is 'anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. The fact that a child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently or is in further education, is a member of the armed forces, is in hospital or in custody in the secure estate, does not change their status or entitlements to services or protection. Certain legislation includes in their reference to duties towards children, young people who are 18, 19 and 20 who have been looked after by the local authority after the age of 16 or who have a learning disability, Children Act 2004 Part1.

2.3 In the context of this Policy, children may be:

- Customers in their own right e.g. supported housing services for 16- and 17-year-olds.
- The children of Tenants/Service Users e.g. children staying with their parent/s at our service for families.
- Children living in general needs accommodation owned by Reliance.
- Visitors to Tenants/Service Users residing in a property.

- Any child that is reported to and/ or seen by a Reliance colleague where a concern is raised.

2.4 All instances of suspected or actual abuse towards children will be managed in accordance with this policy and associated procedure. There is a separate policy and associated procedure which relates to safeguarding adults.

3. Principles

3.1 Reliance recognises that abuse and harm can take place in many forms. A form of maltreatment of a child of a child of any age. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm.

3.2 Children may be abused by a stranger, or someone known to them within their family or family network. Abuse can also take place by someone known to them in an institutional or community setting. Abuse can take place in person, child's phone or via the internet. The internet has revolutionised how we communicate and socialise with people 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. With access at our fingertips, it can be even more challenging to keep children and young people safe online, especially when they have their own computers, smartphones, tablets and games consoles. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

3.3 The categories below set out key categories, however, this is not a definitive list, and our teams will always consider the individual circumstances of cases that arise when deciding if an act or incident may be abuse: All types of abuse can take place in different settings and in different ways not all abuse is face to face and with the increase of digital technology it has created a more accessible platform where distance and time is no longer a barrier.

Physical Abuse	May involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes, illness in a child. This is known as fabricated or induced illness.
Emotional Abuse	the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent effects on the child's emotional development, and may involve: • conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. • imposing age or developmentally inappropriate expectations on children. These may include

	interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. • seeing, hearing or experiencing the ill-treatment of another e.g. where there is domestic violence. • serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger. • exploiting and corrupting children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.
Sexual Abuse	Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (e.g. rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, in the production of, or sharing sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.
Neglect	Is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance misuse, maternal mental ill health or learning difficulties or a cluster of such issues. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent failing to: • provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment) • protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger. • ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers). • ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's

	basic emotional, social and educational needs. These definitions are used when determining significant harm. Children can be affected by combinations abuse and neglect, which may also be related to problems faced by the adults in the household such as domestic violence and abuse.
Domestic Abuse	Children can witness domestic abuse in a variety of ways, and this can have many negative physical and emotional effects. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 states that children are a victim of domestic abuse in their own right if they witness, hear or have an awareness of domestic abuse happening.

All colleagues also need to be aware of other specific sources of harm which may include:	
Exploitation	**Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)** is a type of sexual abuse. Children in exploitative situations and relationships receive something such as gifts, money or affection as a result of performing sexual activities or others performing sexual activities on them. Children or young people may be tricked into believing they're in a loving, consensual relationship. They might be invited to parties and given drugs and alcohol. They may also be groomed and exploited online. Some children and young people are trafficked into or within the UK for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Sexual exploitation can also happen to young people in gangs. **Grooming** is when someone builds an emotional connection with a child to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation or trafficking. Children and young people can be groomed online or face-to-face, by a stranger or by someone they know - for example a family member, friend or professional. Groomers maybe male or female and of any age. **Gang Exploitation** falls into three categories: peer groups, street gangs and organised crime groups. There is a distinction between organised criminal groups and street gangs based on the level of criminality, organisation, planning and control. Children can often feel a strong sense of belonging to a gang and view this as their family and therefore do not often see the exploitation or abuse that exists. Effective information sharing can help agencies to respond in a timely and appropriate way. **County lines** is a term used by the police where children and young people are exploited into moving drugs, often to towns outside of their home county. **Cuckooing** is where a criminal befriends an individual who lives on their own. The criminal then moves in and uses the property to operate unlawful activity
Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)	FGM involves procedures that intentionally alter or injure female genital organs for non-medical reasons. It is illegal3 to practice FGM in the UK or to take girls who are British Nationals or permanent residents of the UK abroad for FGM whether or not it is lawful in another country. In addition, staff have a mandatory duty4 to make a personal report to the police if they hear disclosure that a girl under 18yrs appears to have undergone FGM. UK communities at risk of FGM include Kenyans, Somalis, Sudanese, Sierra Leoneans, Egyptians, Nigerians and Eritreans. Those from non-African communities that are at risk of FGM include Yemeni, Kurdish, Indonesian and Pakistani women.

Human Trafficking	Child trafficking is where 'children and young people tricked, forced or persuaded to leave their homes and are moved or transported and then exploited, forced to work or sold.'5 Children are trafficked for many reasons, including domestic slavery and forced labour, sexual exploitation, forced marriage or to be used in committing criminal offences / involved in gangs.
Honour Based Violence	Violence This is an umbrella term for a collection of practices which are used to control behaviour within families or other social groups to protect perceived cultural and religious beliefs and/or honour. Such violence can occur when perpetrators perceive that a relative has shamed the family and/or community by breaking their honour code. It is important to flag any Honour Based Violence at the first instance, so it is managed properly. Honour Based Abuse is more prevalent within communities from South Asia, the Middle East, and North and East Africa. Reports come from Muslim, Sikh, Hindu, Orthodox Jewish and occasionally traveller communities. It is not determined by gender – both perpetrators and victims can be male or female. However, cultural tradition does not mean Honour Based Abuse is acceptable.
Forced Marriage	A marriage that is conducted without valid consent from one or both parties and duress is a factor.
Radicalisation	Radicalisation is the process by which a person comes to adopt increasingly extreme political, social, or religious ideals. This can, in extreme cases, result in condonation or support of terrorism. Extremism covers vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. Every case is different, but the following are possible indicators that someone might be at risk: • Desire for status, • Victim of or experience of discrimination or racism, • Going through a transitional time of life, • Being influenced or controlled, • Feelings of grievance or injustice, • Experiencing a traumatic event, • A desire for political or moral change, • Struggling with a sense of identity, meaning, and belonging or questioning their place in society.
Self-harm	Self-harm is when a person hurts themselves intentionally. This is often a way of coping with difficult feelings or situations, painful memories or trauma. Self-harm can present in many forms including cutting, pinching, burning, hitting or punching oneself and hair pulling (not an exhaustive list). Excessive use of alcohol and/or drugs and people putting themselves into harmful situations, where they may be subjected to physical or

	sexual abuse, can also be considered as self-harm.
Suicide	Suicide involves a person intentionally ending their own life. Suicidal feelings can range from a person having fleeting or general thoughts of ending their own life, right through thinking of or planning ways to end their own life.

4. Raising Awareness and Training

4.1 Raising awareness is a key part of our approach to preventing abuse and neglect from occurring. Reliance utilise a range of approaches to raise awareness, amongst colleagues, contractors and Tenants/Service Users, with regards to safeguarding issues and action they should take if they have concerns. This includes awareness campaigns such as My Duty, Your Duty, Safeguarding is Everyone's Duty See it Say it, Record and Report" and training and cascading good practice.

4.2 Reliance has a clear and ongoing commitment to the training and development of its employees. All employees receive a generic safeguarding awareness course in adults and children which is completed annually. Additional safeguarding training is provided to employees within Tenant/Service User Services enabling them to:

- Recognise the signs of abuse and behaviours which should give cause for concern.
- Respond to abuse in accordance with this policy and the relevant Safeguarding Childrens Procedure
- Where appropriate, assess the risk of abuse to Tenants/Service Users and ensure measures are in place to minimise this.
- Refer cases of abuse to the local authority Children's Safeguarding Team and relevant Statutory Services in line with Local Authority reporting processes.
- To keep clear, factual and accurate records. Exactly what happened or what you were told, in the person's own words and not interpreting what you saw or were told.

4.3 Training is provided through a mixture of e-Learning and face to face workshops and is based around the competencies required for each role and is reviewed annually. Our Local Authority Safeguarding Boards run Multi-Agency training which is delivered locally and can often be accessed by our frontline employee's on key topics which cover areas of concern or priority.

Multi-Agency Training - Birmingham Safeguarding Children Partnership (lscpbirmingham.org.uk)

4.4 Reliance encourages vigilance from all colleagues with regards to recognising the signs of abuse, particularly in households where domestic abuse, mental health problems or substance misuse are apparent acknowledging these can increase the risks to children.

5. Safe Recruitment and Selection

5.1 Reliance is committed to safe recruitment and employment practice. We have comprehensive recruitment and selection procedures in place. These procedures cover employees, contractors, sub-contractors, and volunteers who come into contact with children and include requirements around relevant qualifications and experience, receiving satisfactory references and Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) checks.

6. Safe Working

6.1 Reliance expects all colleagues to:

- Avoid situations where their actions could be mistakenly interpreted and perhaps lead to allegations of abuse.
- Ensure their actions are sensitive to customer needs.
- Avoid placing themselves in positions that may cause Tenants/Service Users to feel uncomfortable or which could lead to questions and/or false accusations of abuse.

6.2 When entering a formal arrangement with an external contractor, sub-contractor or managed agent to provide services to our Tenants/Service Users, Reliance will ensure that those agents have in place their own policies and procedures for the support and safeguarding of children. These policies and procedures should be in line with legislative requirements and regularly reviewed.

7. Whistleblowing

7.1 Reliance promote an open culture in which colleagues are encouraged to raise concerns relating to the safety of Tenants/Service Users and Children they may come into contact with. We have a robust Whistleblowing Policy in place for colleagues to use if they suspect that a child is being abused by a Reliance colleague, where there is a failure to respond appropriately to allegations of

abuse, or where staff have concerns that a colleague or superior is responsible for the abuse. There are clear lines of reporting for whistleblowing concerns, including routes to use if colleagues feel unable to report directly to their line manager or if they are concerned that appropriate action has not been taken in relation to a concern already raised.

8. Environment

8.1 We ensure that there are robust policies and procedure in place relating to health and safety to ensure that we provide safe physical environments for children and young people. We will ensure that all reasonable precautions are put in place to minimise the particular risks that children might face when living in or visiting our services. We are mindful of the accommodation needs of young people, who may be vulnerable and lack support, ensuring that they are signposted to appropriate advice and support.

8.2 We will deal with applications for housing and/or support from sex offenders in accordance with an agreed procedure which seeks to balance their rights as an individual against the risk they may pose to the community.

9. Partnership Working

9.1 Safeguarding children and young people – the action we take to promote the welfare of children and protect them from harm – is everyone's responsibility. Everyone who interacts with children and families should work together and has a role to play.

9.2 Providing a child will not be put at further risk, where possible Reliance colleagues will discuss concerns with the child's family to gain consent to make referrals.

9.3 We will work actively within a multi-agency framework with agencies such as social services, health professionals, family and the police to prevent, assess and investigate allegations of abuse. Where appropriate we ensure that Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships and the police are given all assistance in pursuing investigations into safeguarding incidents and we actively participate in such investigations where required.

9.4 We will work within an inter-agency framework with agencies such as education welfare or youth offending teams and family to address any anti-social behaviour issues relating to the dependents of Tenants/Service Users. This may include the use of acceptable behaviour contracts (ABCs) or parenting orders.

9.5 Where we are supporting customers who are pregnant, where applicable, we work will work in partnership with appropriate Health or other agencies and

Children's Social Care who may be responsible for working with the mother and family in the planning, assessment and actions required to safeguard the unborn baby Teams will liaise with police regarding Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) for high risk offenders and Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferencing (MARAC) with regards to incidents of domestic abuse. Local agencies, including the police and health services, have a duty under section 11 of the Children Act 2004 to ensure that they consider the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people when carrying out their functions.

10. Confidentiality

10.1 Reliance have robust policies and procedures in place for teams to follow covering issues of confidentiality and data protection.

10.2 Working in partnership with statutory and other relevant agencies is a key element of investigations into suspected abuse. The wishes of the child or family in relation to what information should be shared, and with whom, should be respected where possible. However, where there is a concern that the child may be suffering or is at risk of abuse or neglect, their safety must be the over-riding priority. Information must be shared with statutory authorities where there is any indication of abuse or harm to a child.

11. Recording, Reporting and Performance

11.1 Reliance ensures that there are robust processes in place in relation to the recording and reporting of allegations of, or concerns about, abuse or neglect of children across the business. This includes reporting where there is a belief that an unborn child could be at significant risk of harm once born. Processes also cover reporting where children do not live in Reliance accommodation, but where colleagues come into contact with them whilst carrying out their role e.g. visitors. These processes are set out in the Safeguarding Children Procedure.

11.2 Reliance takes concerns relating to self-harm and suicide seriously and understand the need to ensure that protective and supportive action is taken, and incidents are reported appropriately:

- Where a child or young person has harmed themselves and this has resulted in medical intervention being needed, this will be reported as a safeguarding
  concern.
- Where a child or young person discloses that they have had thoughts of

suicide or made attempts to end their life, this will also be reported as a safeguarding concern.

11.3 We ensure that allegations regarding inappropriate conduct of colleagues, in or outside the workplace, are investigated thoroughly and with urgency, through the Disciplinary and Grievance policies and the policies of the Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership. The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). Cases such as this are also reported to the Reliance Safeguarding Lead the Groups Chief Operating Officer.

11.4 Teams understand and work in line with Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership procedures, ensuring that safeguarding concerns are reported in line with local arrangements. For Care Quality Commission (CQC) registered services, allegations or incidents of abuse or neglect will also be reported to the CQC.

11.5 To ensure that all safeguarding concerns are managed effectively and transparently, Reliance has robust governance and monitoring arrangements in place which provide oversight at all levels of the business. This includes regular reporting to the Executive Team, organisational governance committees and the Board quarterly. Good practice and lessons learned from safeguarding incidents will be shared regularly across the business.

12. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

12.1 Reliance is committed to Equality, Diversity & Inclusion. We strive to be fair in our dealings with all people, communities and organisations, taking into account the diverse nature of their culture and background and actively promoting inclusion. This policy aligns with Reliance Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

13. Legislation and Regulations

13.1 The following acts and guidance documents are relevant in developing safeguarding policy and procedure:

- The Police Act 1997
- The Care Standards Act 2000
- Housing Act 1996
- The Care Act 2014
- The Sexual Offences Act 2003
- The Gangmaster (Licensing) Act 2004
- The Childcare Act 2006

- The Children Act 1989/2004
- The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
- Protection of Freedom Act 2012
- Children And Families Act 2014
- Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003
- Children and Young Persons Act 2008
- Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009
- Protection of Children Act 1999
- Adoption & Children Act 2002
- The Mental Health Act 1983 (amended 2007)
- The Data Protection Act 2018
- The Freedom of information Act 2000
- The Crime & Disorder Act 1998
- Anti-social behaviour Act 2003
- Criminal Justice and Courts Services Act 2000
- Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Anti-social behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014
- Every Child Matters: change for children, Home Office, 2004
- SCIE Guidance for Housing 2014
- The Modern Slavery Act 2015
- NSPCC's Safeguarding toolkit (2016)
- Common Inspection framework: education, skills and early years (CIF)
- Safeguarding: Statutory Requirements and Ofsted Expectations (2016)
- Working together to safeguard children (DfE 2018)
- Statutory Guidance on Children who run away or go missing from home or care (DofE 2014)
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021

14. Related Policies

14.1 The following policies relate to this policy:

- Safeguarding Adults
- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Equality and Diversity
- Data Protection
- Disciplinary
- Whistleblowing
- Lone Working
- Recruitment

15. Useful Contacts and Links Birmingham

- **Email:** CSAdultSocialCare@birmingham.gov.uk
- **Telephone: 0121 303 1888 (**Monday to Thursday: 8:45am to 5:15pm Friday: 8:45am to 4:15pm)
- **Out of Hours team: 0121 675 4806**

If there is no immediate danger you will need to complete a Request for Support form as soon as possible. This form is for professionals who have identified that children or families require either social work assessment or intensive family support.
How do I report a child safeguarding concern or access Early Help support? | I need professional help with... | Birmingham Children's Trust (birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk)
Birmingham Children's Trust - Online Request for Support (olmapps.com)
Home – Birmingham Safeguarding Children Partnership (lscpbirmingham.org.uk) Child protection and safeguarding | Birmingham City Council

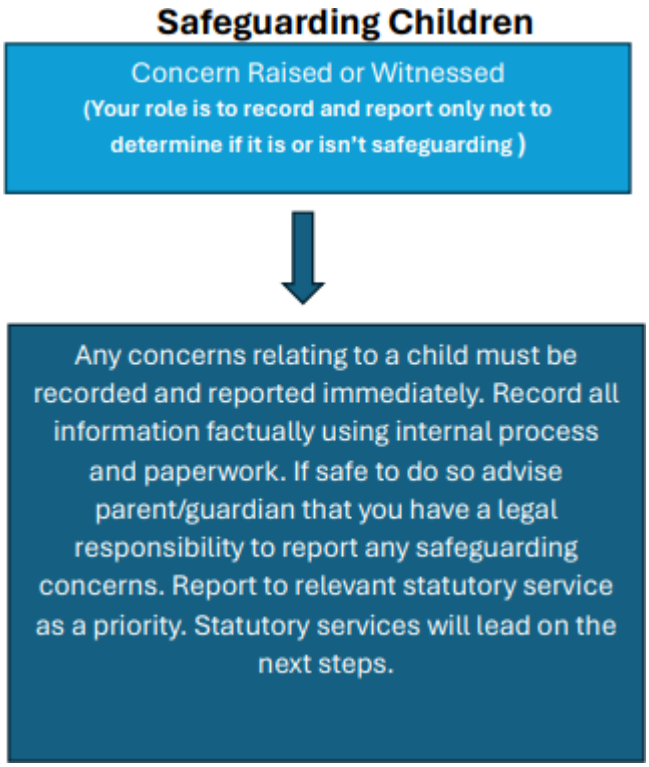
16. Review of Policy

16.1 This policy will subject to annual review by the Community Liaison Department unless changes in legislation require immediate action to be taken. Any changes to the policy will be subject to approval by the Board.

Version No.	Changes	Made by	Date
1	None – original version	n/a	April 2024
1.1	Format only	Company Secretary	July 2026

Safeguarding Children Procedure

This procedure is intended to ensure all Reliance employees know how to record and report all Children Safeguarding Concerns. All employees have a duty to act upon any concerns following the below action. The responsibility is to record and report concerns not to determine if it is or isn't safeguarding.

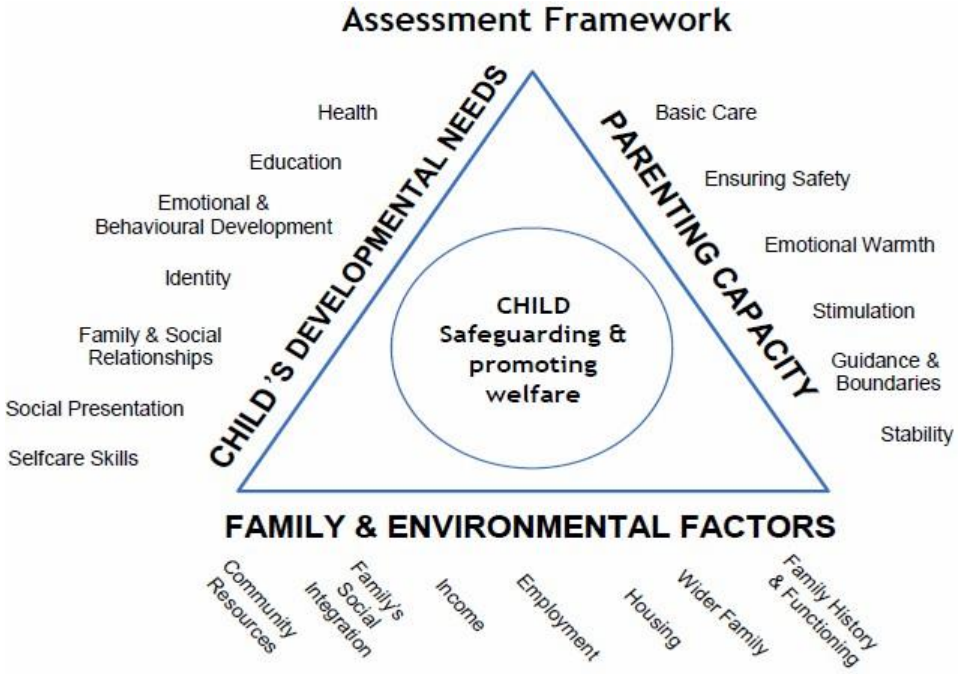


All employees are expected to discuss any concerns with a manager on the same day as a concern being raised or witnessed. They will also be expected to start the internal recording paperwork within 1 working day and keep a log of all communication with internal and external partners. A statutory referral should be made on the same day and all records off this added to the internal record inclusive of emails. Where telephone calls are required when in the office the landline should be used as all calls are
recorded.

Regional Child Protection Procedures for West Midlands Assessment Framework

The assessment stage involves gathering and analysing information under the three domains of the assessment framework. These are the:

- Child's developmental needs
- Parents' or caregivers' capacity to respond appropriately.
- Impact of the wider family and environmental factors on parenting capacity and children.



The aim is to reach a judgement about the nature and level of needs and/or risks that the child may be facing within their family. It is important that:

- Information is gathered and recorded systematically.
- Information is checked and discussed with the child and their parents/carers where appropriate.
- Differences in views about information are recorded.
- The impact of what is happening to the child is clearly identified.

Welcome | West Midlands Safeguarding Children Group (procedures.org.uk)