



RASASH
Rape and Sexual Abuse Service Highland

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

CHILD PROTECTION AND ABUSE

Revealing abuse can be very frightening for those involved. This is particularly so if the social work department or police are involved. The young person and/or her/his parent/carer may feel out of control; there may be fears that the abuse will escalate; and complex feelings about the possible loss of a loved (even if abusive) member of the family. Occasionally, those involved feel betrayed because they see their right to confidentiality being breached.

Similarly, it can be distressing for workers and they may need support.

The policy aims to take all of this into account.

TRAINING AND PARTNER ORGANISATIONS:

RASASH will endeavour to take up any training opportunities provided by the local social work department or another department within the local authority whenever these arise.

RASASH will at all times endeavour to develop and maintain a good relationship with the local police and social work department to ensure the smooth conduct of any child protection procedures. This may involve meetings with the senior social work officer responsible for Child Protection, or an officer from the police Public Protection Unit.

CHILD PROTECTION

RATIONALE

RASASH is committed to protecting children/young people. As an organisation, we embrace the principles of the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 and the Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003. This means that every child/young person has the right to protection from all forms of abuse, neglect or exploitation; the right to have her/his best interests taken into account in any matter affecting her/him; and the right to express an opinion and to have that opinion taken into account in any matter or procedure affecting her/him.

For the purpose of this policy, children/young people are defined as individuals who are under 16 years of age or under 18 years for individuals who are living in the care system. We recognise our duty to take action and should we have concerns that a child/young person may be at risk then we will report this concern to the Social Work Department.

Child protection has two concerns: the appropriate treatment of children/young people within the service and reporting suspicion of abuse, neglect or exploitation whether disclosed by a child/young person or their relative, carer or friend.

BASIC PRINCIPLES

- The welfare of children/young people is paramount;

- All children whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, racial origin, language of religious belief have the right to protection from abuse;
- All allegations and suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately. They must not be ignored;
- If somebody believes that a child may be suffering, or at risk of suffering significant harm, they should always refer the concern to social services or the police.

AIMS OF POLICY

This policy aims to ensure that all workers and volunteers:

- Understand their personal responsibility for protecting children with whom they come in contact or about whom they have information;
- Are clear about roles in child protection;
- Understand good practice in recruiting workers and volunteers;
- Know the limits of confidentiality for child protection;
- Are able to take appropriate action if there are suggestions that a child is being abused;
- Care for those for whom reports are being made to statutory organisations;
- Take steps to minimise misunderstandings.

DUTY OF CARE

RASASH abhors all activities which damage a child/young person. We recognise our duty to take action should we have concerns that a

child/young person may be at risk of suffering serious harm, then we will report this concern to the Social Work Department, if a child/young person's life is at imminent risk, contact the police on 999.

We will ensure that all workers and volunteers within RASASH are checked by Disclosure Scotland for previous relevant convictions and to ensure that they are not disqualified from working with children. All new staff and volunteers will be checked through the Protection for Vulnerable Groups (PVG) scheme before they have RASASH related contact with children/young people.

To ensure that all workers and volunteers within RASASH are fully aware of their role, we will:

- Include child protection issues and practice as a key component of our induction;
- Provide all workers with training on child protection, reporting and the Children's Hearing system;
- Ensure that all workers and volunteers have access to our policy;
- Regularly, and at least annually, remind all staff of the requirements for child protection;
- The RASASH Manager will ensure the child protection policy is reviewed and updated in accordance with legislation.

ROLES

RASASH has appointed the RASASH Manager as child protection officer. In the event of her being unavailable the worker should notify the next

named emergency staff member.

The responsibility of the child protection officer is:

- To know and to follow the child protection policy;
- To ensure that all staff and volunteers are subject to Disclosure Scotland procedures before they are appointed;
- To be alert for concerns about the welfare of children/young people;
- To take decisions as to the safety of the child/young person involved;
- To make no decisions as to whether or not abuse or neglect is taking place – that is the responsibility of the social work department and/or police;
- To act on concerns and make reports if necessary to the social work department or if there is immediate danger/threat to life, to the police;
- To ensure that careful records are kept in line with the RASASH Data Protection policy;
- To support workers and volunteers who have reported concerns;
- To make decisions about informing parents/carers of any referral;
- To consider how best the person who has made the allegation should be supported and ensure that the plan to do so is followed through;
- To develop good working relationships with the social work department and police.

In coming to a decision about action the **child protection officer** will take the following into account:

- The best interests of the child/young person;
- The nature and context of the alleged abuse;
- The safety of the child/young person concerned;
- The safety of the adult/child/young person who has made the disclosure;
- The effect upon the child/young person of taking or not taking action;
- The relationship between the child/young person and the abuser.

The responsibility of all workers and volunteers is:

- To know and to follow the RASASH child protection policy;
- To be alert for concerns about the welfare of children/young people;
- To report such concerns to the child protection officer;
- To listen fully and to ask open questions when there is an allegation or concern about child welfare, but to avoid interrogation;
- To act on concerns and make reports if necessary to social work or if there is immediate danger / threat to life contact the police;
- To make no decision as to whether or not abuse or neglect is taking place – that is the responsibility of the Social Services and /or police;
- To ensure that careful records are kept in line with the RASASH Data protection policy;
- To support coworkers who have reported concerns;
- In conjunction with the child protection officer, to plan to support the person or child making the allegation in a manner appropriate to the situation;
- Report any suspicion of misconduct within the organisation about child protection.

In coming to a decision about action **the worker** will take the following into account:

- The best interests of the child/young person;
- The nature and context of the alleged abuse;
- The safety of the child/young person concerned;
- The safety of the woman/child/young person who has made the disclosure;
- The effect upon the child/young person of taking or not taking action;
- The relationship between the child/young person and the abuser.

RASASH will provide a contact for the responsible staff member as an emergency contact during service hours when there is no lead staff member in the office at that time; this contact will be able to offer support and direction should workers be unclear of appropriate action following or during a child protection call e.g. making a decision regarding the appropriateness of informing parents of a child protection referral. In the event of her being unavailable, the worker should contact the next available named emergency contact.

RECRUITMENT

All volunteers and workers will be subject to Disclosure Scotland procedures prior to appointment. RASASH will ensure that all support staff and volunteers are carefully selected, trained, supervised and supported.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Abuse thrives in secret. For this reason RASASH limits levels of confidentiality. Our policy is that all that is said by survivors needing support remains totally confidential within the organisation, with the exception of concern about child welfare and protection of adults at risk or where action has been taken to commit suicide. No worker or volunteer may agree to personal confidentiality (that is a promise to keep information to herself). This leaves the worker/volunteer unprotected and may allow an abusive situation with a child/young person to continue unchecked. Furthermore, if an individual believes she/he has personal confidentiality she/he may feel betrayed if this is broken. Be alert for statements like: "I want to tell you something very important but only if you promise to keep it secret." It must be made clear that all matters are confidential within the organisation unless a child or young person is at risk. It is then the choice of the survivor requiring support if she/he continues.

DEALING WITH AND REPORTING ALLEGATIONS

Allegations may come in a variety of forms; an adult may allude to or make direct allegation concerning a child/young person at risk; a child/young person may make a direct allegation; a number of comments made by an individual requiring support may raise concerns.

Procedures following allegation or cause for concern:

- Follow the child protection protocol;

- Be calm. Reassure the child or adult;
- Outline confidentiality and its limitations;
- Let the child or adult know you understand what they have said and that you will act upon it;
- Explain to the child or adult that the organisation's concerns will be reported to social work, or if a child/young person's life is at risk, to the police;
- Talk through the possible outcomes of reporting. Take care to explain that it is not possible to say for definite what exactly will happen, only from experience, what is likely to happen;
- In conversation with the person involved be very careful that there is no interrogation. It is not your responsibility to come to a decision about the truth of the allegation or concern;
- Complete the RASASH child protection forms, keeping an exact record as possible made immediately after the conversation.
Completed child protection forms should be stored in a locked cabinet and senior staff notified. Please note that workers should adhere to the RASASH data protection policy (holding, storage and disposal of relevant data).

CARING FOR THOSE WHO HAVE MADE ALLEGATIONS CONCERNING CHILD WELFARE

It is courageous both to disclose abuse and to let someone know of concerns about another adult. It is good practice therefore to:

- Be calm. Reassure the child or adult;
- Do not make promises you cannot keep, for example telling the child

or adult that you won't tell anyone else, or saying everything will be all right ;

- Discuss with the child or adult who needs to be told about the situation;
- Take what the child or adult says seriously;
- Ask questions only to clarify understanding of what the child or adult has said;
- Keep the child or adult informed of what is happening;
- Let the child or adult know you understand what they have said and that you will act upon it.

MINIMISING MISUNDERSTANDING

- Workers and volunteers should be aware of the potential for misunderstanding when touching a child. It may be appropriate at some point to offer comfort by touching; be aware of any signal that the child does not welcome your touch and ask permission first.
- Unless in emergency, do not take children/young people in the car.
- Report any concerns that you may have about other workers.

Reviewed October 2021

(Due for review October 2022)



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ADULT PROTECTION POLICY

Aims of policy

The aim of this policy is to ensure the safety of adults at risk by outlining clear procedures and ensuring that all staff members and volunteers are clear about their responsibilities. All staff and volunteers must ensure that they:

- Understand their personal responsibility for protecting adults at risk with whom they come in contact or about whom they have information;
- Are clear as to the roles in relation to protection of adults at risk;
- Know the limits of confidentiality as far as the protection of adults at risk is concerned;
- Are able to take appropriate action if there are suggestions that an adult at risk is being abused;
- Care for those for whom reports are being made to statutory organisations; and
- Take steps to minimise misunderstandings.

Responsibilities

All members of staff have a responsibility to be aware of this policy and to report any suspicions that they might have concerning adult abuse to the RASASH Manager who has the duty to report to statutory authorities

Definitions

An adult at risk is a person aged 16 years or over who may be unable to take care of themselves or protect themselves from harm or from being exploited.

This may include a person who:

- Is elderly and frail
- Has a mental illness including dementia
- Has a physical or sensory disability
- Has a learning disability
- Has a severe physical illness
- Is a substance misuser
- Have severe communication difficulties

Rights of Adults at Risk

All adults who may be an adult at risk have the right:

- To be made aware of this policy
- To have alleged incidents recognised and taken seriously

- To receive fair and respectful treatment throughout
- To be involved in any process as appropriate
- To receive information about the outcome

Principle

The overarching principle underpinning intervention is that any intervention in an individual's affairs **should provide benefit to the individual** and should be the least restrictive option of those available.

There is further guidance which a local authority must consider prior to making an intervention which seeks to uphold the rights and autonomy of adults at risk. **Please see the RASASH Manager for further detail.**

Recruitment

All volunteers and workers will be subject to Disclosure Scotland procedures and / or PVG scheme compliance prior to acceptance of appointment. **RASASH** will ensure all staff / volunteers whose roles include working with adults at risk are carefully selected, trained and supervised.

RASASH Duty of Care

RASASH recognises our duty of care to take action should we have concerns that an adult may be at risk. We will report this concern to the Social Work Department where the adult resides or if the adult at risk is in

immediate danger to contact the police. To ensure that all workers and volunteers within RASASH are fully aware of their role we will:

- Provide all workers with training on the protection of adults at risk and reporting of concerns;
- Ensure that all workers and volunteers have access to RASASH policy and protocol;
- Include practice around protection of adults at risk is a key component within the RASASH induction and training;
- Regularly, and at least annually, remind all of the requirements for protection of adults at risk;
- Ensure all workers and volunteers are aware that they have a responsibility to work with partner agencies to protect adults at risk.

Roles

All workers will receive training on working with the protection of adults at risk – on identifying where concerns may arise, explaining our policy and practice, on reporting and the possible outcomes of this. If an adult protection issue arises and the survivor provides the required information, workers should record this on the Adult Protection Pro-Forma and lock this in a secure place within the office or pass it immediately to the RASASH Manager. **Workers should notify the RASASH Manager** that this pro-forma has been completed and awaits action. The RASASH Manager will proceed with reporting on the next working day. If there is immediate threat danger / threat to life for the adult at risk then workers should report this immediately to the Police on 999.

The role of support workers in relation to protection of adults at risk is:

- To know and to follow the RASASH policy relating to the Adult Protection;
- To be aware of the definition of adults at risk as outlined in legislation;
- To be alert for concerns regarding the welfare of adults at risk;
- To listen fully and to ask open questions when there is an allegation or concern, but to avoid interrogation;
- To complete the Adult Protection Pro-Forma and notify the RASASH Manager should action/reporting of be necessary to social work, or if there is immediate danger/threat to life, to contact the police;
- To ensure that careful records are kept in line with the RASASH **data protection policy**;
- To support co-workers who have reported concerns;
- To consider how best to support the person who has made the allegation and ensure that the plan to do so is followed through;
- Report any suspicion of misconduct within the RASASH service relating to adults at risk by contacting the RASASH Manager.

Note: it is not the responsibility of the support worker to decide whether abuse has taken place or not, this is the responsibility of the social work department or the police

In coming to a decision about action, the RASASH Manager will take the relevant legislation, as detailed, into consideration alongside:

- The best interests of the adult at risk;

- The nature and context of the alleged abuse;
- The safety of the person concerned;
- The safety of the person who has made the disclosure;
- The effect upon the adult at risk or others who may likewise be at risk, of taking or not taking action;
- The relationship between the adult at risk and the abuser.

Confidentiality

Abuse thrives in secret. For this reason RASASH limits levels of confidentiality. Our policy is that all that is said by survivors needing support remains totally confidential within the organisation, with the exceptions of concern about child welfare, adults at risk, or where action has been taken to commit suicide. No worker or volunteer may agree to personal confidentiality (that is – promise to keep information to them). This leaves the worker/volunteer unprotected and may allow an abusive situation to continue unchecked. Furthermore, if a survivor believes they have personal confidentiality they may feel betrayed if this is broken. Be alert for statements like: “I want to tell you something very important but only if you promise to keep it secret.” It must be made clear that all matters are confidential within the organisation unless a child / young person or adult is at risk. It is then the choice of the survivor requiring support if they wish to continue with the support / call.

Dealing with and Reporting Allegations

Allegations may come in a variety of forms; an adult may allude to or make

a direct allegation or a number of comments made by a survivor requiring support may raise concerns.

Guidance following an allegation or cause for concern:

- Be clear about why you know or strongly suspect that the Adult Protection policy should apply;
- Follow the RASASH protocol relating to Protection of Adults at risk;
- Be calm and reassuring;
- Outline confidentiality and its limitations;
- In conversation with the person involved be very careful that there is no interrogation. It is not your responsibility to come to a decision about the truth of the allegation or concern;
- Let the survivor know you understand what they have said and that you will act upon it;
- Explain to the survivor that you will pass this information on to the RASASH Manager who can report the concerns to social work, or if a person's life is at risk to the police. The RASASH Manager will report this on the next working day. It will be the decision of the social work department as to what action can be taken. If the person reporting would like confirmation of this step being completed please take safe / secure contact details to enable the contactable worker to do so in line with the RASASH **data protection policy**;
- Talk through what the possible outcomes of reporting using the guidance in the Protection of Adults protocol. Take care to explain that we cannot say for definite exactly what will happen, only what is likely to happen;
- Complete the RASASH **adult protection proforma**, keeping an as

exact record as possible made immediately after the conversation.

Completed adult protection form should be stored in a locked cabinet and senior staff notified. Please note that workers should adhere to the **RASASH data protection policy** (holding / storage and disposal of relevant data).

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