



Child Protection Policy and Procedures 2025 - 2027

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INTRODUCTION & POLICY CONTEXT

1.1 Foreword

In the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2023), the Scottish Government articulated its vision for Scotland's children – ***'that all children and young people have the right to be cared for, protected from harm and abuse and to grow up in a safe environment where their rights are respected, and their needs met'***.

It is also explicit in that everyone has an important part to play in preventing the abuse and neglect of children and young people. This policy aligns with the national and local guidance and provides information on what our staff and volunteers should do if they have concerns about a young person or if they are at risk of harm or abuse.

1.2 Policy & Legal Framework

This policy has been informed by the following policy and legislation:

- National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2023 Update)
- The Edinburgh and Lothians Multi-Agency Child Protection Procedures (2023 Update)
- GIRFEC 'Getting it Right for Every Child' (2023 Refreshed Policy)
- National Guidance - Underage sexual activity: identifying child protection concerns (2010).
- The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- The Equality Act (2010)
- The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2020.

Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)

Child protection should be seen in the wider context of 'Getting It Right for Every Child' (GIRFEC), the national approach to improving the wellbeing of young people.

At the heart of GIRFEC is proactive intervention to create a supportive environment and identify any additional support that may be required for a child or young person as early as possible. GIRFEC places the needs of children and young people first, ensuring they are listened to and understand decisions which affect them, and that they receive co-ordinated help where this is required for their wellbeing, health, and development. It requires that all services for children and young people (including voluntary organisations) - coordinate their systems and practices to improve how they work together to support children and young people and their families.

GIRFEC is enshrined in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2020. Wellbeing under the Act is defined in relation to eight indicators: safe, healthy,

achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included (commonly known by the acronym, SHANARRI).

The Named Person

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 intended to bring in the 'Named Person' scheme into law in Scotland through legislation, which would require each child up to the age of 18 in Scotland to have a 'Named Person'. There was opposition to this scheme being delivered on a mandatory basis and the relevant legislation around the scheme was never fully brought into force. However, the Named Person scheme continues to be delivered as part of Getting it Right for Every Child within existing frameworks.

The 'Named Person' ensures that the right help is available at the right time for the child or young person. In most contexts, the named person for a young person is a teacher or a health visitor (for children not old enough to be on a school roll). For children and young people of school age, but not on a school roll, for example those who are home-educated (e.g. some children and young people from Gypsy/Traveller families), the local authority should identify a suitable named person, such as a local authority officer.

1.3 Age & Child Protection

This Policy applies to children and young people up to the age of 18 (but not including age 18) to align with the UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child), National Child Protection Guidelines, and The Edinburgh and Lothian Multi-Agency Child Protection Procedures. The Junction works with young people aged 12 to 21, therefore this Policy refers to procedures related to **young people aged 12 to 17**.

Some of the young people we work aged 16 and 21 may be classed as Vulnerable Adults. Where appropriate, staff will follow Edinburgh's Adult Support and Protection Multi-Agency Guidelines if they are working with a defined 'adult at risk'. An 'adult at risk' as defined by the Adult Support and Protection Act (2007) is someone aged 16 or over who:

- cannot look after their own well-being, property, rights, or other interests
- is at risk of harm from themselves or someone else; and
- **because they are disabled, or have a mental disorder, illness or physical or mental infirmity** that means they are more vulnerable to being harmed than other adults.

If a young person is aged 16 - 17, The Edinburgh and Lothian Multi-Agency Child Protection Procedures and the Edinburgh's Adult Support and Protection Multi-Agency Guidelines can both apply. In this case, staff and volunteers should follow our child protection procedures unless advised to do otherwise by a Child Protection Officer (at The Junction) or one of the core agencies/ statutory bodies.

ORGANISATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1 Overall Responsibilities

The Junction acknowledges the responsibility of our board, staff, and volunteers to protect young people who access our services. We take seriously our responsibility to promote safe practice and to protect young people from harm and abuse.

The Junction will ensure that staff and volunteers within the organisation will make decisions that are in the 'best interests' of young people. This means that staff and volunteers will respond to any allegations of abuse of young people in line with these procedures. This can include referrals to Police Scotland, NHS Services (or most commonly) Social Work, or a 'Named Person' / School Child Protection Co-ordinator.

Young people who access The Junction services will also be made aware:

- Of their right to be protected from harm
- Of their right to confidentiality and the limits of this
- Of their right to make a complaint against the organisation or a member of staff/volunteer.

Please note, that throughout the document when we use the term 'volunteer' this is inclusive of students on placement at The Junction. In this context, universities and colleges share responsibilities with The Junction to ensure students have awareness of their responsibilities to keep young people safe from harm.

2.2 PVGs

The Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) scheme is a membership scheme for people who work with children and vulnerable adults and is managed by Disclosure Scotland. When an individual applies to join the PVG scheme, Disclosure Scotland carries out criminal record checks and shares the results with individuals and organisations. Once a member, criminal records are monitored for any new vetting information.

The Junction takes steps to ensure all staff and volunteers are members of the PVG scheme, where it is lawful to do so. Specifically:

- All Trustees must be members of the PVGs Scheme and complete an Enhanced Disclosure.
- All staff and volunteers who work directly with children and young people must be members of the PVGs Scheme and complete an Enhanced Disclosure.
- All staff that supervise those that work directly or indirectly with children and young people must be members of the PVGs Scheme and complete an Enhanced Disclosure.

- For posts that hold significant financial responsibility, or administrative responsibility they will complete a Standard or Basic Disclosure, where it is lawful to do so.

Records of PVG numbers must be held centrally at The Junction and stored securely. Updates are provided to Disclosure Scotland and Volunteer Scotland as required.

2.3 Recruiting Staff & Volunteers

Staff

Background checks under the PVG scheme are part of the assessment of suitability when applying for a job at The Junction. Failure to complete this process will result in a job offer or volunteer opportunity being rescinded.

During the recruitment process we will also ensure the following measures are in place to ensure the safety of children and young people:

- For any role, if we make a conditional offer of employment we require for proof of identity, declaration of any unspent convictions, and two references.
- For roles that involve working with children and young people (or supervise those that do), an assessment of competence and experience related to child protection is carried out during the interview through scenario-based questions.
- For roles that involve working with children and young people, staff must be members of the PVGs Scheme and complete an Enhanced Disclosure. No staff member is permitted to work with children or young people until this assessment has been completed.
- For Counselling roles, all candidates must be fully qualified at Diploma level or above and have significant experience of working with young people.

Volunteers

All volunteers that work directly with young people must complete a PVG. This is inclusive of Trainee Counsellors and Board Members who hold significant responsibility within the charity. Applications are processed by Volunteer Scotland on The Junction's behalf.

For student on short-term placements, the duty to complete PVGs can sit with universities and colleges. However, the student's supervisor at The Junction has a duty to ensure this process has been completed. Students on short-term placements should never work with children and young people unaccompanied. This does not apply to Trainees Counsellors, as noted above an Enhanced Disclosure/ PVG must be initiated by The Junction through Volunteer Scotland.

2.4 Complaints, Whistleblowing and Allegations of Abuse

Concerns may arise about people who work with children and young people at The Junction, either in relation to their behaviour at work or in their private life. In these situations, the paramount consideration is the welfare of the child concerned and any other children who may be at risk.

Child Protection Procedures should be followed with the young person, and they must take precedence over disciplinary processes or complaints' procedures.

Complaints

The Junction's complaints process must be widely promoted to young people to foster an environment of openness and communication. The process should be visible to young people in youth spaces and discussed during their initial access appointment.

Where young people wish to make a complaint, they will be supported to do as set out in The Junction's Complaints Procedure. If a complaint relates to staff or volunteer conduct, the complaint should be shared with the staff members' line Manager, Director, or a Child Protection Officer without delay.

An allocated Manager will then arrange separate meetings with the young person (or complainee) and the staff/ volunteer involved. The young person who raised the complaint will be informed of the process. Depending on the nature of the complaint, processes may result in Disciplinary Procedures as outlined in The Junction Staff Handbook.

- Where complaints relate to a manager or Child Protection Officer the Director will lead on the investigation of the complaint, liaising with relevant staff as required; a Board Member will be allocated for an appeals process.
- Where complaints relate to the Director, an allocated Board Member will be identified to investigate the complaint, liaising with relevant Managers and staff as required; an alternative Board Member will be allocated for an appeals process (if required).

Allegations of Abuse

Any allegations regarding abuse will be taken very seriously and we will adhere to the following practice:

- Any allegation of abuse will be shared with the Director and with the Chair of the Board, unless it related to them specifically.
- An investigation manager will be allocated to a case, and disciplinary processes will be followed, if necessary. The disciplinary process is outlined in the Staff Handbook.

- Where there has been an allegation of abuse, the young person will be offered support. The support will be provided by a staff member different from the manager involved in the investigation process.
- Where there has been an allegation of abuse, the staff member or volunteer will also be offered support; no assumptions will be made until the investigation has been concluded.
- The staff member/volunteer against whom the allegation has been made must not have contact with the young person while this process takes place.
- Depending on the nature of the concern, staff can be put on paid leave, and volunteer placements will be paused – until investigations are concluded.
- An allocated Child Protection Officer will coordinate the sharing of information with any relevant agencies in relation to the wellbeing and safety of the young person.
- Board members will be informed of the process and 'decisions regarding 'paid leave' will be made in consultation with the Board and/or Chair of The Board
- Additional HR Advice can be sought from an RBS Mentor as required.

It is important to note that it is not The Junction's role to 'investigate' the child protection concern itself, but instead investigate the conduct of the staff member or volunteer who has allegedly abused a young person and report to the relevant authority.

Specific circumstances:

- Where an allegation contains behaviour of a criminal nature, the allegation will be reported to Police Scotland and The Junction will follow any recommended protocols.
- Where allegations of abuse relate to a Child Protection Officer, the Director will lead on the investigation, the Chair of the Board will be informed, and a Board member will be allocated for an appeals process.
- Where allegations of abuse relate to the Director a member of the Board will lead on the investigation, liaising with Child Protection Officers, and an alternative Board member will be allocated for an appeals process (if required).
- If the Director is absent, a Board Member will be allocated to advise/lead on investigating any allegations of abuse regarding Child Protection Officers. External advice may also be sought from RBS Mentor or specialist agencies.

Whistle Blowing

As a staff member or volunteer if you have any concerns about a staff members' or volunteers conduct. If this concern relates to the wellbeing or abuse of a young person, you must report without delay.

If you raise a concern, The Junction commits to:

- Always take whistleblowing disclosures seriously
- Listen to any concerns that you have raised
- Reassure the whistle-blower that they will not suffer any detriment for raising concerns
- Try and answer any questions the whistleblower has
- Keep the whistleblower informed about the progress of any investigation into their disclosure, where it's lawful to do so
- Provide feedback to the whistleblower after any investigation.

Reporting Allegations to Disclosure Scotland

Employers must inform Disclosure Scotland if a person shows harmful behaviour and they are dismissed as a result; would have been dismissed but left before they could be; permanently moved away from work with children or protected adults. If any of these actions are taken, we must inform Disclosure Scotland within 3 months of making the decision.

The Junction is also duty bound to report harmful behaviour to Disclosure Scotland even if it takes place outside of work, even if we only find out after the staff member or volunteer has left.

2.5 Training & On-going Support

It is essential that staff and volunteers understand the contribution they can make to protect children and young people. We therefore commit to providing Child Protection training opportunities during our on-boarding as well as ongoing training on Child Protection and related issues for staff and volunteers. Specifically:

- All staff and volunteers working with children and young people must complete Child Protection training as part of onboarding, delivered by LAYC or Youth Scotland
- All staff and volunteers must complete Child Protection training every two years, this can include in-house training, briefing or specialist training
- Staff training records are maintained and must be reviewed by a line-manager during annual appraisals
- Managers and Child Protection Officers also have responsibility to direct staff and volunteers to specialist training, annual refresher sessions and to develop in-house training at The Junction
- Staff and volunteers are responsible for maintaining awareness of the policy, procedures, and guidelines.

Opportunities for support and reflection related to Child Protection must also be provided by The Junction. For staff that work directly with children and young people this includes:

- Reflective practice related to child protection and risk must be provided within monthly supervision from a line manager

- Debriefs must be provided following a child protection disclosure/ report or incident with a line manager or Child Protection Officer
- Group supervision should be offered to all staff to support reflective practice
- Qualified Counsellors must also engage in monthly Clinical Supervision.

Volunteers who work directly with children and young people:

- Will be assigned a line manager to reflect and develop practice
- Must work with an experienced member of staff in the building and will have an on-call manager available to them
- Trainee Counsellors must have monthly supervision with a Clinical Supervisor.

Dealing with Ethical & Practice Issues

Ethical or practice issues may arise where there is:

- Uncertainty about risk or harm
- Conflicting responsibilities (e.g. confidentiality vs safeguarding)
- Disagreement between professionals or agencies
- Cultural or religious considerations affecting decision-making
- Concerns about professional conduct or competence
- Situations where a child's views differ from those of adults
- Potential organisational conflicts (e.g. reputational concerns vs safeguarding duties).

No matter the ethical concern, Child Safety must be prioritised. If a child is at risk of harm, action must be taken immediately. If an issue arises the line manager or Child Protection Officer should record and document the issue and raise with the Director. Clearly documenting the issue, advice sought, decisions made, rationale for actions taken.

For staff, child protection debriefs, line management supervision, group supervision or clinical supervision are available to support staff reflection and working through complex cases. For volunteers, line child protection debriefs and check-ins with line managers are also available.

Trainee Counsellors will have a line manager and clinical supervision that supports practice reflection and debriefs. If an issue arises regarding any ethical or performance concerns, their line manager is responsible for discussing these with the trainee, their supervisor, and the training provider.

2.6 Involving Children and Young People

At The Junction, young people must have their views sought and listened to at every stage of a child protection process. Where possible, they should be helped to understand what the concerns are, and how they can contribute. Staff and volunteers should consider any additional support needs, communication barriers, and any trauma experienced.

Using a trauma informed approach, staff should consider the **choices** available to the young person how they can **collaborate** or be involved in the decisions that affect their lives.

2.7 Information Sharing

Sharing relevant information as soon as possible is essential to protecting children and young people from harm.

Where there is a Child Protection concern, relevant information must be shared with one of the core agencies. The person sharing the information must be aware of the lawful basis for doing so (see table below). In all decisions it is necessary to consider whether information sharing is proportionate and lawful.

Staff and volunteers do not need to be certain that a child or young person has been harmed, or is at immediate risk, before sharing information. Where someone has reason to believe that a child may be at risk of harm, they should share relevant information with one of the core agencies to support analysis and decision-making.

In most cases, where proportionate and lawful to do so, The Junction is duty bound to share information with statutory bodies (core agencies) regardless of the child/young person's view. However, it is important to inform the agency of the probable impact of sharing information with others as it may impact the approach taken by one of the core agencies (social work, Police Scotland, NHS Lothian).

Lawful Basis for Sharing Personal Information

In the public interest or public task	Necessary for performance of a task carried out in the public interest, which is laid down by law, or in the exercise of an official authority, for example, a public body's tasks, functions, duties, or powers.
Vital interests	Necessary to protect someone's life or, for example, if a child is deemed to be at risk of significant harm.
Legal obligation	Necessary to comply with a common law or statutory obligation.

2.8 Sharing Information with Parent(s) and Carer(s)

We are committed to providing a confidential service (within the limits of child protection), in line with guidelines provided by bodies such as the BACP, local authorities, and the Scottish Government.

Where possible, information regarding young people's support should not be shared by Junction staff and volunteers with young people's parent(s) and carer(s) without their consent. However, once we have passed information regarding a child protection concern to an external agency, we do not retain control of who the

information may subsequently be shared with. It is important that young people are aware of this.

In addition, issues relating to child protection may require sharing information that supports their safety, this can include sharing information with parent(s) and carer(s) as they can be best placed to support them. If this decision is made/ or is suggested, we should:

- Take time to gather young people's views on this
- Consider their personal circumstances and living arrangements
- Consider the positive and negative impacts of sharing information with parents
- Consider parent(s) and carer(s) response to disclosures that have already been made.

Overall, evidence shows that working with family members is key to long-term beneficial outcomes for the young person. To support this staff will:

- Encourage young people to share information with their parents or carers, where it is safe to do so
- Share information with parent(s) and carer(s) in line with the young person's wishes, and where it is safe to do so
- Share information with parent(s) and carer(s) where this directly supports their safety and wellbeing.

2.9 Equality & Inclusion

We recognise the context and impact of discrimination and prejudice on children and young people. Young people with protected characteristics may be less aware of services that can support them or face additional barriers to access them.

Protected characteristics include: **'age, disability, religion and belief, sex, gender/ trans identity, sexual orientation, marital/civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity, race or ethnicity'**. Young people who are: care experienced, young carers, live in poverty, or are not in education or employment may also experience additional barriers of disadvantage.

The Junction commits to supporting young people with protected characteristics effectively, and listening and responding to young people's feelings, views, and experiences. Staff and volunteers will reflect on practice, take steps to ensure they do not discriminate, and signpost to appropriate services.

2.10 Child Exploitation & Purchasing

The Junction fundamentally opposes all forms of **child exploitation**. We will therefore never knowingly purchase products from companies or websites that use forced child labour or child labour where the 'harm is extreme, and the violation of rights is impossible to prevent' (Save the Children¹).

¹ [Save the Children's Position on Child Labour | Save the Children's Resource Centre](#)

To support this practice the organisation, staff and volunteers will take steps to educate themselves on ethical traders and, when making purchases on behalf of The Junction and consider the ethical implications of purchases. See more information on child exploitation within the section called '**DEFINITIONS & UNDERSTANDING**' (p14).

2.11 Storage and Retention of Records

The storage and retention of record is governed by the Data Protection Act (2018) and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which sets standards for the collection, storage, sharing, transferring, processing and management of various categories of personal data. The Scottish Government has clarified that the primary duty to keep Child Protection records falls to Social Work.

At The Junction, all records relating to Child Protection are held in line with data protection requirements, with the following data retention schedules:

- Young people's records at The Junction are held for **three years after the young person has left the service**/ there is no activity on their file.
- Data related to child protection concerns will be held **six years after the young person has left the service**
- Data related to child protection can be deleted after a child reaches age 25, following a request from a young person
- Where data relates to **child sexual abuse, sexual abuse or sexual assault**, this information can be stored for a minimum of 40 years after they leave the service, unless otherwise stated by the young person.
- Information related to a court case will be held until the case is concluded.

For more information see The Junction's **Data Protection Policy** and **Data Retention Schedule**.

Staff should be aware that any information they record may be the subject of a Subject Access Request (SAR), in other words, young people are able to ask for a copy any information that holds their data.

2.12 Provision of Facilities

We commit to providing private spaces for young people to access one-to-one support. We will also ensure that young people have access to gender-neutral toilets, that are fully enclosed. Our building will be fully accessible, and we will have a minimum of one toilet suitable for wheelchair users.

2.13 Subcontracting Services

The Junction does not subcontract any of its services to support children and young people.

2.14 Review of Policy & Procedures

The Junction has a responsibility to ensure that this policy and procedure is reviewed regularly. A review will be carried out annually by the Child Protection Officers overseen by the Director in accordance with changes in legislation or guidance on the protection of children and young people. A review can also be instigated following any issues or concerns raised about the protection of young people within the organisation.

DEFINITIONS & UNDERSTANDING

3.1 What is Child Protection?

Child Protection refers to the processes involved in consideration, assessment, and planning of required action, together with the actions themselves, where there are concerns that a child may be at risk of 'harm' (National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland, 2021).

'Harm' in the context of child protection refers to the ill-treatment or the impairment of the health or 'development' of the child, including, for example, impairment suffered as a result of seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another child or adult. 'Development' can mean physical, intellectual, emotional, social, or behavioural development. 'Health' can mean physical or mental health. Professional judgement about the significance of 'harm' will consider:

- The child's experience, needs and feelings as far as they are known
- The nature, degree, and extent of physical or emotional harm
- The duration and frequency of abuse and neglect
- The apparent or anticipated impact given the child's age and stage of development
- The presence or degree of threat, coercion, and any other factors that may increase risk to do with the child, family, or wider context.

A single traumatic event may cause significant harm – for example, a violent assault. More often, significant harm results from an accumulation of events, both acute and long-standing, that interrupt, change or damage the child's physical and psychological development.

3.2 What is Abuse?

Abuse or neglect may involve inflicting harm or failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused or neglected in any setting, and online (for example, social media and gaming forums). Children can be exposed to abuse or exploitation in their school, community, or peer group. Those responsible may be previously unknown or familiar, or in positions of trust.

- **Physical Abuse** is causing physical harm to a child or young person. Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, or scalding, drowning, or suffocating. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes, ill health to a child they are looking after. All forms of physical punishment of children are against the law in Scotland, regardless of personal attitudes towards reasonable discipline.
- **Emotional Abuse** is persistent emotional neglect or ill-treatment of a child causing severe and lasting adverse effects on the child's emotional development. 'Persistent' means there is a continuous or intermittent pattern, which has caused, or is likely to cause, significant harm. Emotional abuse is present to some extent in all types of ill-treatment of a child, but it can also occur independently of other forms of abuse.

It may involve:

- Making a child feel that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only because they meet the needs of another person
 - Having unrealistic expectations or imposing demands inappropriate for their age or stage of development
 - Repeated silencing, ridiculing, or intimidation
 - Extreme overprotection, such that a child is harmed by prevention of learning, exploration, and social development; and/or
 - Seeing or hearing the abuse of another.
- **Child Sexual Abuse (CSA)** is an act that involves a child in any activity for the sexual gratification of another person. Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. A child under age 16 cannot consent to sexual activity at all, so it cannot be claimed that the child consented or assented to such activity.

Generally, the position for children aged 16 or 17 will depend on whether there is consent or a reasonable belief of consent. However, some sexual offences, such as sexual abuse of trust (section 42 of the Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2009) apply up to age 18 irrespective of consent.

For those who may be victims of sexual offences aged 16-17 and who are at risk of significant harm, Child Protection Procedures must be followed when there is concern about sexual exploitation or trafficking.

Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts or may involve non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, indecent images, or in watching sexual activities, using sexual language towards a child, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

- **Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)** is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a person under 18 years of age into sexual activity in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual.

Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact. It can also occur online. It is important to remember that victims of child sexual exploitation (CSE) may not recognise the abuse and may regard themselves as being in a consensual sexual relationship.

- **Neglect** is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, which is likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Single instances of neglectful behaviour may cause significant harm. Early signs of neglect indicate the need for support to prevent harm.

Neglect may involve 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)
- Seek consistent access to appropriate medical care or treatment
- Ensure the child receives education
- Respond to a child's essential emotional needs.

RESPONDING TO CONCERNS

4.1 Principles Underpinning the Approach

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) provides the foundation for our processes and decision making. This means:

- Children and young people have the right to be kept safe from harm, violence, abuse, and neglect (Article 19)
- 'Best interests of the child' must be the priority in all decisions and actions that affect children (Article 3)
- Children and young people have the right to express their views and feelings in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously (Article 12).

These procedures also uphold the following principles:

- Young people's views should be considered at all stages of child protection processes
- A trauma informed approach should frame our response to child protection and should consider **safety, choice, collaboration, empowerment, and trust**
- Child protection responses should be consistent, proportionate and focused on individual outcomes.

4.2 Roles and Responsibilities

The Junction's Director has ultimate responsibility for ensuring that Child Protection Policy and Procedures are followed. They will appoint the Child Protection Officer(s) in line with current roles. Child Protection Officer(s) will not necessarily become directly involved in every referral – but they will be kept informed of concerns/referrals and will review any issues with the execution of procedures.

The Child Protection Officer's Responsibilities are to:

- Encourage good practice by promoting the Child Protection Policy and Procedures.
- Ensure new members of staff and volunteers have access to a copy of the procedures.

- Organise staff briefings and training on child protection and/or signpost to appropriate training for all staff, volunteers.
- Ensure any behaviour that is inconsistent with Child Protection Policy and Procedures is challenged.
- Keep informed of developments in the field of child protection and attend relevant training.
- Ensure that disclosures or concerns which relate to a young person's wellbeing or safety are responded to appropriately.
- Audit and quality assure Child Protection processes at regular intervals.
- Ensure records of child protection cases and any action taken, are kept and stored appropriately and in line with GDPR legislation.
- Where required, liaise with statutory agencies/ core agencies, and ensure they have access to all necessary information.
- Seek to uphold the principle that the young person should be informed of any child protection action taken (as far as possible) and take their views into account. This can include supporting staff and volunteers to do so.
- Support staff and volunteers to reflect on practice, and deal with any emotional impact following the disclosure of distressing information. This can include identifying resources to assist with this support.
- Ensure that the following information is recorded:
 - the reason/ rationale for sharing information with core agencies, the reason for any delay, the reason for not sharing information
 - any differences in opinion within the team
 - the young person's views, how the young person was informed of any decision making
 - the outcome of interaction with statutory services/ core agencies
 - any follow-up required/ further engagement with the young person.
- Should the Child Protection Officer have a concern or disclosure arise when working with a young person, they should discuss this with the Director. If the Director is unavailable the concern should be discussed with another Child Protection Officer or relevant colleague and passed to the Director at the earliest opportunity.

Staff and Volunteers' Responsibilities are to:

- Maintain an awareness of The Junction's Child Protection Policy, Procedures and Guidelines.
- Attend any training required by the organisation, to identify any gaps in training/knowledge and communicate this with their line manager.
- Understand what may constitute a child protection concern or broader wellbeing concern.
- Record any concerns on the same day they arose.
- Call **999** for the police or emergency social work/ Social Care Direct **0131 200 2324/ 0800 731 6969 (out of hours service)** without delay - where there is an immediate risk to the life of a child, or the possibility of immediate serious harm (this includes sexual abuse or significant violence in the home, or the young person plans to take their life).
- Discuss their concerns with a Junction Child Protection Officer within **24 hours** of the concern arising (where possible).
- Ensure that young people are informed of any child protection action taken (as far as possible) and take their views into account.
- Complete actions discussed with Child Protection Officer which may include contacting the relevant agency (School Child Protection Co-ordinator or 'named person', Social Care Direct, Police, or NHS contact) and to share information as soon as possible.
- Ensure that factual and up to date records are kept of any developments in a concerning situation.
- Act upon any concerns regarding a staff member or volunteer's conduct or adherence to Child Protection Policy and Procedures.
- Share this information with Child Protection Officers. Staff do not need to follow a line management process to share this information.

Line managers hold some additional responsibilities. **Line Managers' responsibilities are:**

- To be available during agreed hours to discuss Child Protection concerns with front line staff/volunteers.

- To support a staff member/volunteer who is concerned to decide on their next steps in following up on their concerns. This may be separate to their Child Protection Officer role, or as part of this.
- To act upon any concerns regarding a staff member or volunteer's adherence to The Junction's Child Protection Policy and Procedures. Following HR advice and processes outlined in the Staff Handbook.

4.3 How Concerns May Arise

Anyone working with children or families may become aware of a potential Child Protection concern. This may be a one-off event or an accumulation. The following is not an exhaustive list, but includes when:

- A child or young person says something that is concerning e.g.
 - disclosing that they are in a sexual relationship with an adult/much older young person
 - mentioning circumstances at home that may indicate abuse or neglect
 - young person mentions non-recent abuse (referred to as 'Historical Abuse').
- The child's/ young person's presentation changes, either suddenly or over time (e.g., a child appears tired, hungry, or unkempt, or they are more withdrawn).
- A child or young person has visible injuries, which are not explained adequately (e.g., a baby with bruising or broken bones).
- Information is shared by another person, service, or anonymous source (e.g. reports from neighbours that a young child is out alone at night).
- A young person tells an adult that something has happened to them (e.g., a child tells their teacher that they have been hit by an adult).
- A concern is raised about staff or volunteers at The Junction or within another organisation from any party.
- A concern arises outwith the family - such as exploitation, peer-on-peer abuse, or online abuse.

4.4 Responding to a Concern

Concerns may occur due to the presence of indicators of possible abuse this could include changes in behaviour/demeanour/appearance may indicate that something is amiss.

If this occurs, staff or volunteers should speak to the young person in a confidential space, briefly sharing their concern/curiosity about any changes (e.g. 'It's unusual for you to miss appointments...'/ 'You seemed upset in the group this week'/ 'I'm

curious about what happened here [re: a visible injury]') and attempting to establish further detail.

Young people should not be forced to share more than they feel ready to. If staff or volunteers have concerns about a young person's welfare or safety, they should let the young person know that they are concerned; that they will share this with the Child Protection Officer; and they will keep the young person as informed and involved as possible about what happens next; note their concerns and follow the process set out in this policy.

Questioning and testing of evidence is not a matter for staff or volunteers as this is the responsibility of the police, social work or relevant NHS service. Such an approach can prejudice later investigations.

Overall, staff and volunteers should respond by:

1. Reacting calmly – taking time to ground themselves to respond calmly to the young person.
2. Listening with care and compassion and taking what they say seriously.
3. Reassuring the young person that they are not to blame, and they were right to tell someone.
4. Asking questions only to establish the basic facts. Use open-ended non-leading questions e.g. What happened? Where? When? Who?
5. Not assuming that the experience was bad or painful. Be aware of interpreting the young person's words, especially if they have a physical or learning disability which affect their ability to communicate, or English is not their first language
6. Affirming the young person's feelings as expressed – whatever they feel is valid. Avoid projecting your own reactions onto the young person.
7. Using existing methods of processing feelings and reactions to a disclosure/concern.

Staff and volunteers should try to avoid:

1. Panicking
2. Showing shock or distaste

3. Probing for information/forcing the young person to disclose more than they feel ready to
4. Speculating or making assumptions
5. Making negative comments about the person against whom the allegation has been made (or anyone else involved)
6. Contacting the individual against whom the allegation has been made
7. Giving a guarantee of confidentiality
8. Sharing confidential information about other young people who may be involved in the situation.

If the young person draws back from speaking to the staff member, they should be informed of the possibility of making a private and confidential telephone call to **ChildLine** on **0800 1111** or another relevant helpline.

ChildLine's approach is to listen to the young person, discuss options and encourage them to seek help from a trusted adult. The member of staff who is concerned about a young person in these circumstances should inform their line manager.

4.5 Child Protection Referral Process

You become concerned about the wellbeing or safety of a young person

If there is an immediate threat to life or serious risk to safety, then Police or Social Care Direct (0131 200 2324/Out of hours: 0800 731 6969) should be called without hesitation.

2) Explore Concern/Assess Risk

Where possible, explore your concerns further with the young person to assess risk and put safety measures in place.

- When assessing risk use a **Trauma Informed** lens, considering the principles of **safety, choice, collaboration, empowerment, and trust**.
- Let the young person know that they do not need to share more than they feel comfortable.
- Ask open-ended questions and try to establish key facts:
 - What has happened? Who was involved? When did this happen?
Establish a timescale (is the concern historic/ current/ ongoing).
 - Is there a risk of suicide? Do they have a plan to take their life?
- Explore support available to them:
 - Does anyone else know? Are there other agencies involved?
 - Have they spoken to their parent(s)/carer(s)? If not, why not?
 - Could the Junction help by sharing information with someone else or supporting them to do so? i.e. The Police, or Parents
 - Do they need a Safety Plan to manage suicide risk/ self-harm?
- If they have experienced **historic abuse**, discuss if there could be other young people at risk.

Assess risk to immediate safety:

If there is a risk to immediate safety is likely, please follow Step 3. However, if the risk feels manageable (i.e. the young person can safely leave and not be at risk of imminent sexual/physical harm please **go to Step 4**).

3) Immediate Risk to Safety Identified

- If the young person is likely to be at significant risk after leaving the building (such as current/ongoing sexual or physical abuse, they have a suicide plan, or there is any imminent risk to physical safety), **then safety procedures need to be put in place, ideally before they leave the building/ support session.**
- Explain to young person that you will share your concerns with a Child Protection Officer **now**, and they will decide whether this should be shared with statutory services. Once this information is given to the Child Protection Officer, this information may be shared further, or someone may contact them (or their parent(s)/ carer(s) directly – if it is safe to do so).
- If a Child Protection Officer or the Director is not available, then use your own judgement whether to share information with statutory bodies. It is better to be over cautious than under cautious.
- Ask the young person how they would like to be kept informed of the decision (up to date contact details are needed).
- Speak to the young person about a referral to a statutory agency. Explain what information may be shared with statutory bodies and why. Ask them:
 - How do they feel about this?
 - Are there any implications to their safety by sharing this information?
- Discuss any additional support needs including medical conditions or issues relating to equalities and inclusion.
- Recognise their feelings, needs and any concerns they might; and remember to keep a record of this.

Remember: If you feel there is an immediate threat to life or serious risk to safety, then contact Police or Social Care Direct (0131 200 2324/Out of hours: 0800 731 6969) without hesitation.

- **Record a brief note of the concern/ risks and actions taken on Tacklit under 'Activity' → 'Profile Note' → and Flag 'Risk' (These notes can be deleted later when concern no longer current)**
- If a Child Protection Officer or Director has not been involved in the above process, share the risk and all actions taken with them in-person or via phone within 24 hours.
- **Got to Step 5 on Recording Incidents.**

NB: We cannot force young people to stay in a building, but we can ask if they can stay whilst we contact people for further advice. Where possible, we can facilitate discussions between young people and statutory services.

4) Significant Risk to Wellbeing & Safety Identified (but not Immediate)

- Explain to young person that you will share your concerns with a Child Protection Officer **within 24 hours (or next working day)**. They will decide whether this should be shared with statutory services. Explain that once this information is shared with statutory services someone may contact them (or their parent(s)/ carer(s) directly – if it's safe to do so).
- Speak to the young person about a referral to a statutory agency. Explain what information may be shared with statutory bodies and why. Then ask them:
 - How do they feel about this?
 - Are there any implications to their safety by sharing this information?
- Discuss any additional support needs including medical conditions or issues relating to equalities and inclusion.
- Recognise their feelings, needs and any concerns they might have; and remember to keep a record of this.
- Arrange a follow-up appointment with the young person and discuss how they would like to be kept informed of decision (up to date contact details are needed).
- **Record a brief note of the concern/ risks and actions taken on Tacklit under 'Activity' → 'Profile Note' → and Flag 'Risk' (only where a Child Protection Concern has been identified and action must be taken).**
- **Got to Step 5 on Recording Incidents and Step 6 on Following-Up Meetings with Young People.**

5. Record Disclosures & Keep Accurate Notes

- Write up case notes or one-to-one notes and upload to tacklit.
- Mark 'Safeguarding Alert' box on Tacklit.
- Complete Wellbeing Concern Form on Tacklit or on paper and upload to Tacklit. When gathering data, it is important to record:
 - The **nature and degree of the harm or likely harm** to them or others (where possible use their exact words)
 - What happened, who is involved, where and when (if relevant)
 - Record your assessment of risk considering both protective factors and support available to them
 - The young person views on sharing Information and what they would like to happen next
 - Their views on sharing information with parent(s) and their response to any incidents
 - What you said will happen next
 - Any previous concerns or patterns, that you are aware of.
- Inform a Child Protection Officer that the forms have been completed and have been uploaded to Tacklit.

If Child Protection Officers have not already been informed due to immediate significant risk, please **speak in person to Child Protection Officer or Director within 24 hours if risk Wellbeing Concern refers to: suicide risk, sexual abuse/assault, risk of physical abuse.**

NB - See Section 5.1 of the CP Policy for more information on Recording Information. More information.

6) Follow-Up Meetings with Young People

Follow-up meetings are required when immediate risk has been identified or following a report to statutory body. However, they can be useful at any stage of this process. Within follow-up appointment(s) increased focus can be placed on assessing risk and exploring the concern. Assessing risk can be continuous and is not an end point. Key areas of focus can include:

- Providing an update on steps taken following any disclosure
- Taking time to listen further to the young person's experience, needs, feelings and views
- Establishing essential information that was missing in the first disclosure or is volunteered by the young person
- Increased focus on a **Trauma Informed Approach**, considering the principles of: **safety, choice, collaboration, empowerment, and trust**. This can include:
 - Continually establishing the degree of actual or likely harm, including if other children or young people are affected (see GIRFEC)
 - Considering the choices that they have
 - Taking time to work together to identify solutions and what works for them
 - Keeping them informed, and following through on tasks/ decisions made.
- Consider their **strengths, protective factors** and what support is available to them. This can include:
 - Mapping supports available to them
 - Consider relationships with parent(s) & carer(s), the impact of sharing information with them, and the response to the child protection concern raised (if known)
 - Consider relationships/ attendance at school (if relevant)
 - Consider if The Junction could help by sharing information with someone else or supporting them to do so? i.e. The Police, or Parents.
- Carry out a Safety Plan to manage suicide risk/ self-harm.
- Discuss their circumstances and additional needs: their culture, family network or community; impact of their sexual orientation or gender identity; any medical conditions; care experience.
- If they have experienced historic abuse, sexual abuse or assault, return to discussions regarding whether there is another young person at risk. Consider options to work collaboratively with the young person to share information with Police Scotland.

Go to Step 5 on recording incidents and keep Child Protection Officers Informed on any risks or changes in risk.

7) What will happen next?

A Child Protection Officer will make a judgement on actions to be taken. However, they will work closely with staff and volunteers to make this decision and will consider young people views.

A Child Protection Officer will contact staff and volunteers to discuss any further actions needed. Their immediate advice should be recorded on the on the Concern Form on Tacklit. Actions following a disclosure can include:

- A report to a 'named person' (usually a Head Teacher) or a School Child Protection Officer
- A report to Social Work or to a named social work if they have one
- A report to Police Scotland – where a crime has been committed related to abuse of a child
- A conversation with a social worker for anonymous advice or gain advice on referral options
- A report to a GP and/or CAMHS. This is particularly appropriate if issues relate to suicidality or self-harm or other health issue
- A discussion with parent(s) and carer(s) – Where possible, with the young person's permission or when they are best placed to support them
- A referral to specialist support (including homeless services)
- On going support provided by The Junction, with continuous assessment of risk
- Staff may be asked to take part in an *Inter-Agency Referral Discussion
- Or no further action is required.

Further actions taken, added to Wellbeing Concern Form as they arise (and clearly dated). The Child Protection Officer responsible for the case should be informed of any updates.

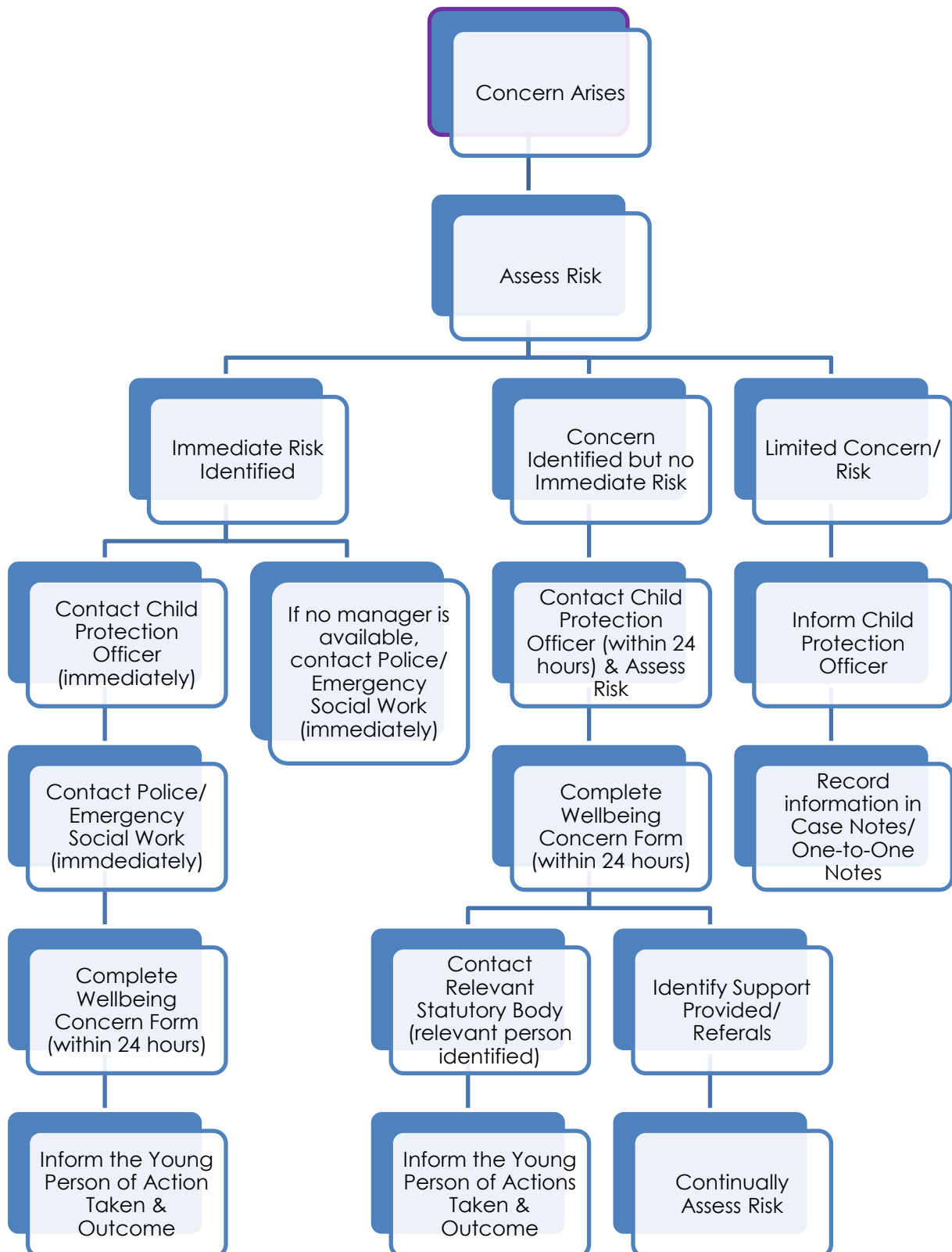
All Wellbeing Concerns will be documented on a spreadsheet accessible to Child Protection Leads and the Director, who will monitor for possible elevations in concerns and store appropriately for required retention periods as per the Retention Policy.

Child Protection Officer(s) will also keep notes outlining the following:

- The reason for sharing information with statutory bodies; reason for delay or for not sharing information with statutory bodies
- Any difference in opinions
- The young person's view and how they were involved
- The outcome of the interaction with statutory services
- Any follow-up required with the young person.

NB: Child Protection Officers, Project Workers, Counsellors, and Volunteers can make reports to Statutory Bodies. This will depend on role, availability and relationship with the young person. *Inter-Agency Referral Discussion (IRD) is the formal process for progressing a child protection concern and involves the sharing of information between Health, Social Work and Police to determine what action, if any, will be taken and by whom.

4.6 Child Protection Referral Flow Chart



4.7 Responding to a Third-Party Concern/Disclosure

A third-party disclosure is any disclosure related to the protection, safety or wellbeing of a child or young person, from an individual outside the organisation OR from an individual who is not directly impacted by the abuse or concern. Some examples of this can include:

- A disclosure from a member of the public
- A disclosure from a young person who is not directly impacted the abuse
- A disclosure from a professional (this can include those working with a young person directly or not)

In these circumstances it is important that, staff and volunteers listen carefully and compassionately, treat the matter seriously and record the information on a Wellbeing Concern Form. The name of the young person who has experienced abuse or is at risk of harm should be gathered, along with their contact details, and the full name and contact details of the person making the disclosure.

Staff and volunteers should record the form of abuse/risk to the young person, who is involved, what happened, where and when (if known). Actual words used should be quoted where possible. Any of the worker's own judgements recorded should be clearly stated as such.

Staff and volunteers should explain that they cannot give a guarantee of confidentiality. Where the contact does not leave their name or contact details, the staff member or volunteer should explain that information will be shared with a Child Protection Officer, but it will be easier to protect the young person if their details can be provided.

As with a direct approach, staff and volunteers should report the concern to a Child Protection Officer who will help decide whether it is appropriate to refer to a School Child Protection Co-ordinator/ 'named person', Social Work, the Police, a health service, or relevant statutory service.

Where there is a disclosure regarding a young person we do not work with, we will consider the nature of the abuse/ risk, the information we hold and whether further information needs to be gathered.

If a disclosure is made about a young person who attends The Junction's services. It is important to consider how best to involve them in decisions that will impact their lives. Sharing information if it is safe to do so, and the decision is in the best interests of the child/ young person.

Confidentiality

Those expressing the concerns may seek a guarantee of confidentiality. No absolute guarantee of confidentiality can be given. The information disclosed may be of such

a nature that the staff member must pass it on to protect a young person. Whilst it may be possible to a certain extent to protect the identity of the person expressing concerns, this will be a matter for School Child Protection Officers/ 'Named Persons', Social Work and Police. If legal proceedings follow, it may be necessary to disclose the identity of that person.

Responding to an Anonymous Allegation

Staff in receipt of anonymous allegations about abuse should record in writing the words used, as far as possible, where the allegation is by telephone, or retain the paper, where it is in writing. Report the matter to the Child Protection Officer.

4.8 Disagreements on the Response

It should be recognised that professional disagreement should not always be viewed negatively, they can improve outcomes for children and young people. However, the safety and wellbeing of individual children / young people must be the paramount consideration in any professional disagreement.

All staff and volunteers should respect the views of others, whatever their level of experience. They should also be mindful of the difficulties that challenging more senior or experienced practitioners can present to others.

All staff and volunteers should take responsibility for their own cases/ the young people they support, and their actions in relation to such case work. These actions should be advised by and supported by a Child Protection Officer.

If a staff member disagrees with the advice provided by a Child Protection Officer, they can take the following actions:

- Ask for further clarity from the Child Protection Officer
- Contact social work (or another organisation) for anonymised advice
- Speak to the Director for recommended next steps.

If a staff member or volunteer has been advised to take 'no action' but they have significant concerns about a young person's safety or wellbeing they can report concerns, as an individual, to a statutory agency. It is vital that young people are protected from harm; it is better to be over cautious than under cautious. Where relevant, disagreements in the approach should also be noted by the Child Protection Officer.

As noted previously, where significant immediate risk has been identified, staff and volunteers should report directly to statutory agencies without delay.

RECORDING INFORMATION

5.1 Records Kept by Staff & Volunteers

Information gathering is an essential part of the Child Protection process, enabling robust risk assessment and planning. Any professional or volunteer who becomes aware of a Child Protection concern must record the basic facts as soon as possible and share this with a Child Protection Officer within 24 hours. This should include:

- the form of abuse/risk to the young person,
- who is involved, what happened
- where and when (if known).

Recording should be concise, factual, and accurate. Everyone should be aware that records may be used as evidence in Court, and the child and/or their family may request access to their records.

If the child or young person (or others) is an immediate threat to life or serious risk to safety, then volunteers or staff members should call **999** and ask for the Police or emergency social work '**Social Care Direct**' **0131 200 2324/ 0800 731 6969 (out of hours service)**. They should be called without hesitation.

If more information is required (and the child/ young person is not at immediate risk) then more than one meeting may be required to gather information, working closely with Child Protection Officers to guide practice. Further relevant information to record can include:

- Basic information about the young person such as name, date of birth, address
- The nature and degree of the actual or likely harm
- The impact or potential impact of the harm on the young person's health and development
- Whether other children/ young people are affected
- The young person's experience, needs, feelings and views
- Any additional needs, medical condition, communication impairment or disability that may affect their health, wellbeing, vulnerability, and care needs
- Past events or concerns
- Frequency or patterns of harm or suspected harm
- The parents or carers capacity to protect and care for the child
- The young person's culture, family network, community
- The parent or carers' response to concern(s), if known
- Strengths or protective factors; and
- Assessment of the likelihood of risk of harm continuing or reoccurring, where there is information that can contribute to this.

It is also important to ensure that the key Principles outlined in this policy are upheld. Core to these principles is that staff will listen to the views of young people and that young people are informed throughout the process. It is therefore vital that staff and volunteers discuss with young people:

- Our duties (before and after any disclosure)
- What will be shared by The Junction, when and with whom
- What they would like to happen next
- What they feel the impact of sharing information will be, and any potential increase in risk.
- Further meetings or communication may also be required to keep young people informed of the process.

5.2 Records Kept by Child Protection Officers

Child Protection Officers at The Junction should review all paperwork/ records written by staff and volunteers regarding concerns. They should advise on next steps and ensure that comprehensive records are kept.

Where there is not an immediate risk, it is the role of Child Protection Officers to identify next steps in the process and make decisions on what and when to share information with statutory bodies (core agencies). Complex cases should be discussed with The Director or (where they are unavailable) they should consult another Child Protection Officer to reflect on practice and identify next steps.

Specifically, Child Protection Officers should ensure that the following information is recorded:

- The reason/ rationale for sharing information with statutory bodies, the reason for any delay, the reason for not sharing information
- Any differences in opinion within the team
- The young person's views, how the young person was informed of any decision making
- The outcome of interaction with statutory services
- Any follow-up required and further engagement with the young person.

Delays in sharing information will **only** occur if there is no immediate risk to the child/ young person, and:

- Conversations are required to ensure young people's views, experiences are listened to and considered
- Not enough information is held/ and more time is needed to gather information
- There is a need to consider 'trauma informed practice' or children and young people's rights
- Information held does not meet the lawful requirement for sharing information or it is not 'proportionate' to share.

Where possible, every effort should be made to gather information without needless delay. Any young person in immediate danger should be reported immediately by calling **999** or social care direct **0131 200 2324/ 0800 731 6969 (out of hours service)**.

APPENDIX

OTHER FORMS OF ABUSE

1.1 Criminal Exploitation - is where an individual or group use an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child under the age of 18 years of age into any criminal activity in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, or for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator. Violence or the threat of violence may feature.

The victim may have been criminally exploited, even if they appear to have agreed to the activity. Child criminal exploitation may happen in person or on-line. It may involve gangs and organised criminal networks, for example using children to store, move or sell drugs or money (known as 'county lines'). Coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons may be involved.

1.2 Child Trafficking - involves the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt, exchange, or transfer of control of a child under the age of 18 years for the purposes of exploitation. Transfer or movement can be within an area, including in towns, cities, and rural areas; it does not have to be across borders. Reasons for trafficking include sexual, criminal, and financial exploitation, forced labour, removal of organs, illegal adoption, and forced or illegal marriage. The National Referral Mechanism process helps identify victims of human trafficking and exploitation.

1.3 Abuse by Organised Networks (or Multiple Abusers)

Several high-profile cases and investigations within residential schools and care homes have highlighted the complexities involved in investigating alleged organised abuse and supporting children. Complex cases in which a number of children/young people are abused by the same perpetrator, or multiple perpetrators, may involve the following:

- Networks based on family or community links.
- Abuse can involve groups of adults within a family or a group of families, friends, neighbours, and/or other social networks who act together to abuse children or young people either on or offline.
- Abduction. Child abduction may involve child trafficking. Children cannot consent to abduction or trafficking.
- Abuse can involve children and young people in an institutional setting (for example, youth organisations, educational establishments, and residential

homes) or looked after children living away from home being abused by one or more perpetrators, including other young people.

- Commercial sexual exploitation.

1.4 Ritual Abuse

Can be defined as organised sexual, physical, psychological abuse, which can be systematic and sustained over a long period of time. It involves the use of rituals, which may or may not be underpinned by a belief system, and often involves more than one abuser. Ritual abuse usually starts in early childhood and uses patterns of learning and development to sustain the abuse and silence the abused. The abusers concerned may be acting in concert or using an institutional framework or position of authority to abuse children. Ritual abuse may occur within a family or community, or within institutions such as residential homes and schools. Ritual abuse can also include unusual or ritualised behaviour by organised groups, sometimes associated with particular belief systems or linked to a belief in spiritual possession.

SPECIFIC SUBJECT GUIDANCE

2.1 Young People and Sexual Activity

The age of consent in Scotland is 16. This is the case whether you are straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender.

It is an offence for someone aged 18 or over to engage in sexual activity with someone aged 16 or 17 if the older person is in a position of trust. If one party is under the age of 16 then the other is breaking the law. If both are aged 13, 14 or 15 and having sex then both young people are breaking the law.

Although most young people do not have sex until after they are 16, many will engage in a range of sexual activity before this age. In many cases, the activity will be consensual; in others it will happen in response to peer pressure or as the result of abuse or exploitation.

When working with sexually active young people under 16, it is our responsibility to assess the young person's capacity to consent and whether they have consented to sexual activity. Where concerns are present, staff decisions should be supported by their line manager or Child Protection Officer to make an assessment and identify next steps.

Government guidance highlights that sexual activity in young people under 16 can be a cause of concern for their wellbeing. However, not every case is a cause for concern. It is therefore important to ensure a proportionate response, and that only appropriate cases are brought to the attention of social work and the police.

More information can be found in The Scottish Government's Guidance, 'Underage sexual activity: identifying child protection concerns. Some scenarios are addressed below:

- **Child under 13 or where the Child was under 13 when the Alleged Abuse Took Place** - Children and young people under the age of 13 cannot legally consent to any sexual activity. In any of the above circumstances involving a child/young person aged 12 or under, child protection procedures must be implemented.
- **Young Person Aged 13 and Under 16** - Where staff are aware that a young person (i.e. aged 13 and under 16) is sexually active or is likely to become sexually active, staff can undertake an assessment of risks and needs using the Risk Assessment Framework (Appendix) to ensure that the appropriate response is provided.

Staff have a duty of care to ensure that the young person's health and emotional needs are addressed and to assess whether the sexual activity is of an abusive or exploitative nature. This might mean passing on information to the service best placed to assess the young person's needs. At the same time, staff must seek to maintain confidentiality and share information only when it is lawful and proportionate to do so.

If there are no child protection concerns, the young person may still have worries or need support in relation to their sexual development and relationships. Young people should therefore be supported to access sexual health services as required, whether these are provided at The Junction or through NHS services.

- **Young People Aged 16 and Under 18**

Over the age of 16, sexual activity is legal. However, the activity may not have been consensual, or the young person might have vulnerabilities and related needs.

The Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2009 states that young people under the age of 18 could be subject to 'sexual abuse of trust' – for example, if the young person has had sexual relations with a teacher or a residential worker who has caring responsibilities for the young person or for other children in the institution in which the young person is being cared for or taught and is over the age of 18.

In cases where young people over 16 and under 18, are involved in prostitution or pornography, the Protection of Children and Prevention of Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2005 states it is an offence for a person to pay for the sexual services (e.g. prostitution) provided by a child under the age of 18, and it is an offence to cause, incite, control, arrange or facilitate the provision by a child under the age of 18 of sexual services, or their involvement in the making of pornography. Information pertaining to this should therefore be shared with statutory services/ core agencies.

- **Sexual Activity where One Person is over 16 and the Other Person over 13 and Under 16**

The law defines a person over 16 as an adult and someone over 13 and under 16 as an older child. Section 4 of the Guidance on the Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2009 details the offences and penalties in such situations.

Where staff are aware of a situation that falls into this category and where they are of the opinion that the relationship is consenting and non-abusive

and therefore requires a proportionate response. For example: a 15-year-old girl is pregnant and her boyfriend is 16; a 15-year-old boy is in a consenting relationship with his 16-year-old boyfriend.

Young People's Rights to Confidentiality & Under-age Sexual Activity

In the context of under-age sexual activity, if there is a concern/ risk of harm as a result of sexual behaviour and/or relationships, this always overrides the professional requirement to keep confidentiality. In these circumstances, staff have a duty to act to make sure that the young person is protected.

Prior to disclosing information, attempts should be made to gain consent to passing on information. However, in individual cases it may not always be appropriate to seek consent where there is justification to share without it – for example, if not disclosing information might result in harm coming to the individual in question or compromise a subsequent police investigation.

2.2 Bullying

In Scotland there is no single legal definition of 'bullying'. 'Respect for All: National approach to anti-bullying' provides the framework for anti-bullying work in Scotland and defines bullying as "both behaviour and impact: the impact is on a person's capacity to feel in control of themselves. Bullying takes place in the context of relationships; it is behaviour that can make people feel hurt, threatened, frightened, and left out. This behaviour happens face-to-face and online." (Respect for All, 2017). Although the actual behaviour may not be repeated, the threat may be sustained over time, typically by actions, looks, messages, confrontations, physical interventions, or the fear of these.

Bullying can occur between children and young people, and between adults and children. Online bullying should not be treated differently from face-to-face bullying. Bullying behaviour may be motivated by prejudice due to perceived or actual differences. Bullying behaviour may also be connected to racism, sexism, homophobia, biphobia or transphobia, or prejudice and discrimination towards disability or faith.

- Bullying is not in itself a Child Protection concern unless adults with responsibility for the young person are failing to keep them safe. When there is a risk of significant harm to a child or young person from bullying then Child Protection procedures should be followed.
- It may be helpful to involve the school if this is where bullying is taking place; however, caution should be used as we cannot control what will be done with this information once passed on. Police may need to become involved in some cases.
- As with all child protection processes it is important to listen to and consider the views of children and young people. Bullying behaviour can take power

away from the individual, so it is vital that children and young people are involved and have some agency in the steps that are taken by The Junction.

See the Scottish Government's Guidance 'Respect for All: National Approach to Anti-Bullying' for more information.

2.3 Experiences of Hate Crime

Hate crime is the term used to describe behaviour which is both criminal and rooted in prejudice. This means that the law has been broken, and the offender's actions have been driven by hatred towards a particular group. Hate crime law in Scotland provides protections for the characteristics: age, disability, race, religion, sexual orientation, transgender identity, variations in sex characteristics. Hate crime can include assault, verbal abuse, harassment, online abuse, and threatening behaviour.

The Junction is a 3rd Party Reporting Centre for Hate Crime. It is not our job to investigate whether a crime has been committed; however, where a young person has intentionally or unintentionally disclosed racist abuse, their options (including anonymous reporting) should be discussed with them, and they should be supported through whichever course of action they choose.

If staff feel that a young person who has experienced a hate crime is at significant risk of harm, Child Protection processes should be followed.

2.4 Internet Use - Risk Factors

As well as being a source of support and information, the internet poses specific risks to young people. Factors to consider include:

- **Grooming:** do you believe the young person (particularly where they are or someone else, they are discussing is under 16 or a vulnerable adult) is being groomed? (i.e. someone is befriending them online with a sexual/abusive agenda in mind).
- **Sharing of sexual images:** sharing or possessing this content is illegal if the person/people featured are under 18. Consider if the young person been involved in sending, receiving, or passing on explicit images of under 18s?
- **Sexual harassment:** has the young person been harassed via websites, messaging apps etc?
- **Cyberbullying:** the same principles should be used if a young person is being bullied online as with bullying in person. Although cyberbullying is not a specific criminal offence, there are criminal laws that can apply in terms of harassment and threatening communications. Staff should take advice if they

feel that the law has been broken or there are concerns about a young person's safety or that a young person may be at risk of significant harm.

- Stalking/monitoring: location from uploaded pictures can be easily obtained using software that can read location data stored within digital photographs.

In any of the above situations, staff should assess whether there is a child protection concern (in which case, the above procedures should be followed). If a crime may have been committed the young person should be supported to decide whether to report it and staff and volunteers should guide the young person through their options for support.

2.5 Domestic Abuse

The Junction may work with young people who are affected by domestic abuse, either in the context of witnessing abuse between parents/carers, experiencing abuse from a partner or perpetrating abuse. Bear in mind that abusive relationships can affect people of any age, gender & sexual orientation. Young people who are experiencing abuse at home or in an intimate relationship may not feel safe or ready to disclose or report this and may not be in a position to leave their family home, or home they share with their partner, or the relationship itself.

Considerations relating to Child Protection:

- Is the young person in danger or at risk of harm as a result of domestic abuse (directly or indirectly)?
- What is the impact of domestic abuse on this young person and what support do they need?
- Are they aware of their options regarding support, and to report to the Police etc?

As with all of these circumstances, if staff are concerned about a young person's safety, Child Protection Procedures should be followed.

The Disclosure Scheme for Domestic Abuse Scotland (DSDAS) gives people the right to ask about the background of their partner. It also allows concerned relatives and friends, the right to ask about someone's partner. They can ask if they have been abusive in the past.

2.6 Parental Alcohol and Substance Use

The Junction works in one-to-one/counselling and other settings with young people affected by parental substance use (whether current or historical). While there are links between problematic alcohol or substance use and an impaired ability to provide a safe, nurturing environment, it should not be automatically assumed that a young person is unsafe or being abused if they have a parent who uses substances

or regularly drinks alcohol. Each case should be assessed and supported based on the specific circumstances of the young person and their family.

Considerations in relation to Child Protection:

- Is the young person at risk of harm or in danger as a result of a parent or carer's alcohol/substance use?
- Does the parent/family have adequate support?
- Does the young person have caring responsibilities for a parent or carer, and if so, do they have adequate support relating to this?
- Is the young person at risk because of access to substances/alcohol?

For more information refer to National Guidelines for Child Protection in Scotland.

2.7 Young people with a Disability

The definition of 'children with a disability' includes children and young people with a comprehensive range of physical, emotional, developmental, learning, communication, and health care needs. Young people with a disability are not only vulnerable to the same types of abuse as their non-disabled peers; they are also more vulnerable to that abuse.

Considerations in relation to Child Protection:

- Does the young person have capacity to consent (e.g. to engaging in a service, to any sexual activity they may be involved in)? N.B Lack of capacity should not be assumed just because the young person has a disability.
- Is the young person at risk of harm or in danger?
- Confidentiality should be offered as standard; however, attention should be paid to whether the young person requires assistance to attend the service and what they would like you to share with them.

2.8 Young People who Display Harmful/ Problematic Sexual Behaviour

Where staff are unclear if a young person's sexual behaviour is inappropriate or abusive, they should discuss this with their line manager or Child Protection Officer, and let the young person know that they are concerned. Professional judgement should be used in conversations with young people about their sexual health and relationships.

Considerations include questions such as:

- Does the young person need to be informed of the law around consent and their responsibilities towards their partners?
- What harm may already have been caused by the young person's behaviour?
- What risks are there of harm to the young person themselves and/or to others?
- Is this behaviour consistent with the young person's age and stage of development?

- Does the young person have a learning need or disability that affects their understanding of 'sexually appropriate' behaviour?

Where abuse of a child or young person is alleged to have occurred by another young person, such behaviour should always be treated seriously, with the necessary support/intervention for both the victim and perpetrator in mind. In all cases where a young person displays problematic sexual behaviour, consideration should be given to whether action needs to be taken under child protection procedures, either to protect the victim or to address concerning behaviour.

In some cases, other practitioners may also be involved, for example criminal justice workers including Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) on some occasions. It is important to work in partnership to address risk and ensure that external organisations share potential risk with The Junction.

All cases need to be considered on an individual basis, and a proportionate and timely risk assessment should be carried out.

2.9 Female Genital Mutilation

The Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation (Scotland) Act 2005 makes it illegal to perform or arrange to have female genital mutilation carried out in Scotland or abroad. The procedure is usually carried out on children aged between four and ten years, as such The Junction is less likely to encounter young people who are at risk of having FGM carried out. However, it is still possible that we may encounter young people who have experienced FGM and may be dealing with trauma as a result. We may also work with young people from families where FGM happens.

Cultural sensitivity should be a consideration if there are concerns about possible FGM and care should be given to identify the most appropriate response. Nevertheless, female genital mutilation should always be seen as a cause of significant harm and child protection procedures should be invoked.

2.10 Honour-based Violence and Forced Marriage

Honour-based violence is a spectrum of criminal conduct with threats and abuse at one end and honour killing at the other. Such violence can occur when perpetrators believe that a relative/community member, who may be a child, has shamed the family and/or the community by breaking their honour code. Punishment may include assault, abduction, confinement, threats, and murder.

A forced marriage is defined as a marriage conducted without the full and free consent of both parties and where duress is a factor. Duress can include physical, psychological, financial, sexual, and emotional pressure. A clear distinction must be made between a forced marriage and an arranged marriage. An arranged marriage is one in which the families of both spouses are primarily responsible for

choosing a marriage partner for their child or relative, but the final decision as to whether or not to accept the arrangement lies with the potential spouses. Both spouses give their full and free consent.

Young people may not feel able to disclose either honour-based violence or forced marriage for fear of repercussions; however, staff should be alert to signs that a young person is unsafe in their family, unhappy in an existing marriage or in the process of being forced into marriage. Child Protection procedures should be followed as usual if staff are concerned that a young person may be in danger. If immediate danger is disclosed or strongly suspected, Police should be contacted.

2.11 Care Experienced Young People

The term 'Care Experienced' refers to anyone who is currently in care or has been for any length of time regardless of their age.

Young people who are 'care experienced' can face specific challenges and have poorer educational and wellbeing outcomes than their peers. They may have a history of trauma (in addition to the effects of having been separated from family members). Looked after and care experienced young people are as diverse as any other group of young people and should be viewed as such.

Confidentiality is offered for looked after young people in the same way as others, although young people in residential units etc. may be accustomed to a higher level of information sharing.

Considerations relating to Child Protection include:

- Does the young person feel safe and happy in their care placement (if currently in one)?
- What support do they have to transition from their care placement?
- Have they disclosed non-recent abuse, and who, if anyone is aware of this? (See section on Non-Recent/ Historical Abuse).

This is not an exhaustive list, and these concerns may not indicate a child protection concern or justify breaking confidentiality. If a concern arises staff should follow the processes outlined in this policy and procedure.

2.12 Young People and Risk-Taking Behaviour

Young people in distress may be more likely to engage in ways of coping that are concerning or harmful. The Junction takes a 'harm reduction approach' to young people's risk-taking behaviour – supporting them to replace harmful coping strategies with healthier ones when they are ready for this and providing emotional support and encouragement. Where a concern arises for a young person as a result of (for example):

- self-harm

- suicide attempts
- alcohol
- drug use
- abusive or concerning sexual relationships
- or violent behaviour

then Child Protection procedures should be followed.

It should also be recognised that at risk-taking behaviour may be connected to experiences of abuse. Where such risk is identified, as with other child protection concerns, it is important that a multi-agency response is mobilised, and a plan is identified to minimise future risk. The key test for triggering these processes should always be the level of risk to the individual young person and whether the risk is being addressed.

2.13 Young People who are Missing

Young people who are 'missing' from their family home, care placement and/or school may have left due to unsafe circumstances or been forced to leave and are at risk of harm while they are missing. Young people in these circumstances will often be in crisis but may not feel able to engage with services due to the likelihood of being 'found' and sent back to an unsafe situation. As The Junction currently provides Open Access services where young people may choose to engage anonymously (as well as Street Outreach), we may encounter young people who are missing and do not wish to give their name/details.

If the young person is over 18, and the staff member believes they have capacity to make decisions, they can choose to leave home. Staff therefore may identify alternative support available to them e.g. housing, benefits.

If we believe a young person under the age of 18 is at risk of harm or in danger because of their missing status, we have a duty to take steps to keep them safe. This means following our child protection processes. In most cases, staff and volunteers will need to be report missing young people to the Police or (if the young person's details can be established) to Social Care Direct.

Staff can also seek to find them alternative housing options liaising with City of Edinburgh Council's Youth Housing Team. The Junction is not a crisis service; therefore, the young person may also need to be signposted to any crisis support available to them.

2.14 Radicalisation

There is no such thing as a 'typical extremist' and those involved in extremism come from a range of backgrounds cultures and experiences. There are many risk factors that can make young people vulnerable to radicalisation, including influential people in their lives with extremist or ultra-conservative views, learning needs and/or

simplistic understanding of religion and politics, disillusionment, poverty, and experience of trauma.

Young people may at times (for example, during drop-in or group work sessions) make concerning statements with a view to provoking a response, displaying bravado or lacking awareness of the implications of their statements: gentle checking in, challenging and reminding the young person of The Junction's Guidelines and Policies should take place, as with any situation where a young person displays problematic/discriminatory views.

If staff are concerned about a young person being at possible risk of radicalisation, this should be discussed with the line manager or Child Protection Officer. If staff are concerned that a young person is in danger, Child Protection procedures should be followed as standard.

2.15 Non-Recent (Historic) Reports of Abuse

The term 'historical abuse' or 'non-recent abuse', refers to reports of neglect, emotional, physical, and sexual abuse which took place before the victim was 18 and disclosures have been made after a significant time lapse. The disclosure is only viewed as 'historical' if the abuse has ended and there no or limited risk that this will occur again. Where there is immediate risk to a child or young person, appropriate procedures should be followed as outlined earlier in this document.

The person reporting may be an adult (aged 18 or over) or could be a young person making reports of abuse in earlier childhood. The reports may relate to a person's experience in the family home, community or while they were a looked after and accommodated child in a residential, kinship or foster care setting, on an experience on-line. The person reporting historical abuse may not be a direct service user but a parent/carer, partner or other family member of a person accessing these services.

People reporting historical abuse may state that the perpetrator is deceased, suggesting that there are no current child protection concerns. However, they may still want to share information with Police Scotland. The lasting impact on young person's wellbeing may also be a concern and as a result, information may need to be shared with statutory bodies/ core agencies.

Recommended Response.

The Junction has a responsibility to act to make sure that a child whose safety or welfare may be at risk is protected from harm. Young people should always be made aware of the circumstances when confidentiality needs to be breached, preferably during the initial stages of contact with our service.

When a report of historical child abuse is received, consideration needs to be given to determining whether there are any children potentially still at risk from the suspected perpetrator(s). Consideration should be given as to whether the person requires support and protection from harm. Their needs must be balanced against the need to protect any child/children who might currently be exposed to risk from the suspected perpetrator(s).

Key Principles

- At all times, it is important for practitioners and other agencies to respond to people making disclosures using trauma informed principles of **choice, safety, collaboration, trustworthiness**, and **empowerment** as much as possible.
- Victims and survivors of abuse have a right to be taken seriously and to have access to help, which is trauma informed, trauma skilled or trauma specialist as needed.
- Victims and survivors of sexual abuse have a right to be protected from further abuse from the perpetrator/s from whom they may still be at risk or from re-traumatisation. Victim/survivor protection and safety must therefore be key to the process of non-recent disclosures of sexual abuse.
- Staff and volunteers who hear disclosures of non-recent abuse should be aware that there not sharing concerns of historical sexual abuse could mean that other children and young people are at risk.

Many practitioners fear that acting will destroy any therapeutic relationship. In these circumstances it is better to make careful, considered and well-timed decisions rather than hasty and mechanistic decisions. The latter can lead to negative consequences, such as: young people disengaging from support; increased risk of harm to the client; or the loss of important safeguarding information.

In all scenarios confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Whilst it may be very frightening to share information, data indicates that many people do not want other children to suffer the same experiences as they did, and they will often consider sharing information to be protective of others.

This guidance cannot cover every nuance or situation, but the likely scenarios and suggested response regarding sharing information with statutory agencies are as follows:

1. ***A young person discloses abuse and is prepared to make a formal statement to the police or other organisation (i.e. to report a crime), and sufficient information regarding the abuse has been shared.***
 - Staff and volunteers should share information with statutory bodies/ core agencies, with the young person's informed consent
 - Staff and volunteers can offer to support the young person to make a statement directly to the police

- The safety and support needs of the client should be discussed
- The young person may need to be briefed about not inadvertently alerting the alleged perpetrator.

2. The child/ young person discloses abuse, does not wish it to be reported to other agencies (police and/ social services); however, the staff member/ volunteers does have sufficient information, AND believes the risk is substantial enough to require reporting to statutory bodies.

- Staff and volunteers explain our duties to report information to statutory bodies/ core agencies and to protect young people
- Staff and volunteers share information with statutory bodies/ core agencies and explain the reason for this decision to the young person
- The young person may need briefed about not inadvertently alerting the alleged perpetrator
- The risk of sharing information and support needs of the young person should be discussed.
- Any perceived risk in sharing information should be shared with statutory services, along with any objections to information being shared.

3. The client discloses abuse, they do not wish it to be reported to other agencies (police and/or social services), and there is not sufficient risk to require reporting at this point.

- Staff and volunteers explain our duties to report information to statutory bodies and to protect children and young people
- Staff and volunteers take time to build the relationship and identify what the young person wants to happen
- If limited information is held and the potential risk is unknown/ low, it may not be proportionate to share in the initial stages of disclosure
- Where there is **significant concern** regarding the child/ young people's welfare (or the welfare of others), information that is held, even limited will be shared with statutory bodies
- Child Protection Officers and staff can seek anonymised advice of social services
- Any perceived risk in sharing information should be shared with statutory services, along with any objections to information being shared.

It is worth noting that it is not the role of staff and volunteers to investigate. Instead, the focus should be on creating a trusted environment where information can be shared.

Where the young person does not want to report or is unable to report. The dilemma is that the young person could experience the staff member or volunteer as behaving in ways that potentially feel like re-victimisation (by taking away control

from them). This may be experienced as re-traumatising and disregarding of the young person. This is a significant risk and should be considered very carefully.

A young person may also decide to report, and then change their mind. Talking about traumatic events takes time, and this can be particularly marked when events have involved sexual abuse in childhood.

Staff and volunteer's concerns about risk should be heightened if:

- the alleged abuse has not been previously reported
- the alleged perpetrator is a family member with ongoing contact with children
- the alleged perpetrator holds a position of trust (paid or voluntary) which is likely to bring them into contact with children and young people
- the young person is aware (though they may not be) that other young people were victimised
- the young person is continuing to be abused by the perpetrator.

Where the child/young person is over 18, similar guidance should be followed. However, additional options may be available to them to report crimes anonymously and directly to Police Scotland. If they are identified as a 'vulnerable adult', then Adult Protection procedures should be followed.

Record Keeping

In cases where non-recent abuse is disclosed, it is wise for staff and volunteers to pay particular care and attention to the quality of their questions around disclosure. It is important to keep questions open-ended, and not to lead the client making a disclosure.

Any records of child abuse will be saved for up to 40 years in a sealed envelope clearly marked as confidential, marked as child protection, with the date, and the clients' names.

2.16 Suicide and Self-Harm

Suicide is an act of deliberate self-harm which results in death. Self-harm refers to self-poisoning or self-injury, irrespective of the apparent purpose of the act.

Self-harm is generally a way of coping with overwhelming emotional distress. We recognise that self-harm is significantly different from suicidal thoughts and require different approaches. Many people self-harm where there is no suicidal intent. However, those who self-harm can be at a higher risk of suicide. Self-harm may combine with other expressions of distress and disturbance. If there are concerns that abuse or neglect are associated with self-harm, child protection processes apply automatically.

Suicidal thoughts in children may be triggered by an event. However, they are usually caused by an accumulation and interaction of vulnerabilities and experiences. Suicidal thoughts and self-harming behaviour are more common among children who have been impacted by neglect, abuse, disrupted attachment, rejection, alienation, traumatic separation, and loss.

A trauma-informed initial response can often significantly reduce risk and feelings of pain, isolation, and despair. Depending on the immediate urgency of the situation and the capacity, mental and physical state of the person, good practice is to:

- take the threat of harm seriously and listen calmly
- recognise expressed feelings, showing warmth and empathy
- raise awareness that the person has some control, options, and possibilities for a way forward, one step at a time
- ensure there is more than one person who can be responsive when emotional support is next urgently needed.

Staff who are trained in ASSIST can also follow the recommended steps. Where a child or young person has stated that they have an immediate plan to take their life staff should contact **999** and/ or share with Social Care Direct immediately **0131 200 2324/ 0800 731 6969**. Where young people have a plan to take their life this must be reported to a Child Protection Officer and statutory service as soon as possible.

With all other cases of suicidal ideation/ thoughts staff should share this with a Child Protection Officer who will work with you to assess risk.

If risk is identified as significant the follow options can be utilised:

- Developing a Suicide Safety Plan working with the child/ young person
- Sharing information with a Named Person/ School
- Sharing parent or carer (ideally with the young person's permission)
- Sharing information with their GP (if not attending school)
- Contacting **CAMHS's Unscheduled Care Team 0131 312 1352**
- Referrals to a specialised agency

2.17 Young People Experiencing or Affected by Mental Health

A significant part of The Junction's work is with young people who are experiencing difficulties relating to their own or someone else's emotional and mental health. While some of our services involve an aspect of assessment, this is an assessment of the young person's general wellbeing, safety, and readiness to engage in our or others' services: it is not our role to diagnose or identify specific conditions.

Young people should be referred/supported to attend Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), their GP, community mental health team or the

appropriate crisis service where there are needs beyond what our services can provide.

The following considerations need to be addressed when considering young people's mental health in the context of Child Protection:

- Do the young person's mental health difficulties prevent them from having capacity to consent (to engage in a service, to medical treatment, to any sexual activity they are involved in)?
- Do you believe the young person is at high risk of suicide or significant self-harm?
- Does a parent or carer's mental health difficulties place the young person at risk of harm?

Should a worker feel that the answer to any of the questions above is 'yes', the recording and reporting procedures described in this policy should be followed.

2.18 Disclosures of Harmful Behaviour from Young People

Serious harmful behaviour in this context means behaving in a violent or dangerous way which causes (or risks causing) serious physical harm to another person; or sexually violent or sexually coercive behaviour, which has resulted in harm (whether physical or not) to another person.

Children and young people that behave in this way may themselves have been abused or neglected. Whether or not they have been maltreated, they are likely to have additional needs relating to their behaviour or the impact of their behaviour.

Types of behaviour can include:

- Disclosures of violent criminal behaviour such as assault, rape or sexual assault in which a child or young person under 18 was the victim
- Violent threats towards another young person, and it has been established that they have a plan to carry out this plan.

Consideration must be given not only to the to the impact of the threat and physical or psychological trauma caused; but also, the level of intent, and potential/ actual harm caused by the behaviour.

If it appears that behaviours observed or reported fall short of risking or causing 'serious harm', child protection processes are not required, and staff and volunteers should consider GIRFEC and early intervention approaches to prevent children entering formal systems.

If it appears that a young person 12-17 is responsible for seriously harmful acts towards another child or young person (or plans to commit them) then Child

Protection procedures should be followed, with information shared with statutory bodies/ core agencies.

2.19 Violent Intrusive Thoughts

Violent intrusive thoughts are recurrent, unwanted thoughts or images that are disturbing and cause significant distress. They can include thoughts about harming oneself or others.

These types of thoughts are often associated with anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). People who experience violent intrusive thoughts may worry that they will act on these impulses, which can lead to further anxiety and distress. However, it is important to remember that such thoughts are common and do not necessarily reflect a person's true desires or intentions.

Where a child/ young person has intrusive thoughts about harming someone including another child or young person, staff and volunteers should consider the following:

- Does the child/ young person have a plan to commit these acts? If so, follow child protection procedures
- Does the observed or reported behaviour fall short of risking or causing 'serious harm'? In which case, child protection processes are not required
- What support is in place to support the child/ young person?
- What support is in place to address any trauma, if required.

PROCESSES

3.1 Recruiting and Supporting Trainee Counsellors

Recruitment of Trainee Counsellors

Given the nature of the Counselling Trainee role and the potential risk to young people the following measures are in place to protect children and young people during the recruitment process:

- Within their application they must be able to demonstrate significant experience of working with children and young people i.e. youth work, social work, teaching or equivalent
- They must be enrolled in second year of a Counselling Diploma (or above); engaging in 150 – 200 hours of learning
- They must have confirmation from their training provider that they are able to work with children and young people
- They must take part in an interview to assess their knowledge and experience (including experience and knowledge of safeguarding/child protection).

We also only recruit from reputable training providers including, but not limited to: SMILE, Edinburgh University and Grounded Learning.

Following recruitment there are additional post-selection requirements that must be adhered to become a Trainee Counsellor at The Junction:

- They must provide written confirmation from the course provider of their 'readiness to practise' and their ability to specifically work with children and young people
- They must provide proof of insurance and their insurance details
- They must provide proof of ID and as noted previously they must have completed a PVG, initiated by The Junction and processed by Volunteer Scotland
- They must complete a Child Protection training course from a reputable provider including Youth Scotland or LAYC
- They must attend a half day induction training at The Junction covering: supporting children and young people, young people and the law, organisational expectations, and an overview of key policies (including our Child Protection Policy)
- They must confirm their clinical supervisor and before receiving clients, the trainee's clinical supervisor must confirm that they are ready to support the first clients allocated to them
- All parties must also sign a four-way agreement between themselves/ the trainee, their clinical supervisor, their training provider, and The Junction.

The four-way agreement noted above must include clarity on shared responsibilities data sharing, breaches of professional conduct, including COSCA and BACP codes of conduct, complaints procedures and support provided to the trainee.

Complaints & Concerns

If a complaint or concern arises, we would follow the processes outlined in the policy below. For Trainee Counsellors specifically this can involve:

- Informing Police Scotland and/ or Disclosure Scotland of the nature of our concern
- Informing the relevant professional association including BACP or COSCA
- Where services are delivered in partnership with schools or with another partners, they will be informed of relevant concerns in line with any delivery/data-sharing agreements.

3.2 Wellbeing Concern Form

To be completed by the person who has the concern. If a member of staff knows or suspects that a child/young person has been, is being or is at risk of being harmed/abused. This Form must be completed within 24 hours.

The Wellbeing Concern Form is now stored on Tacklit. Even if you do not have all the information, fill in as much as possible – this can be added to later. Staff should ensure this information is stored securely.

If you do not have access to the Wellbeing Concern Form, please write down all the information you can, referring to the **RECORDING INFORMATION** section.

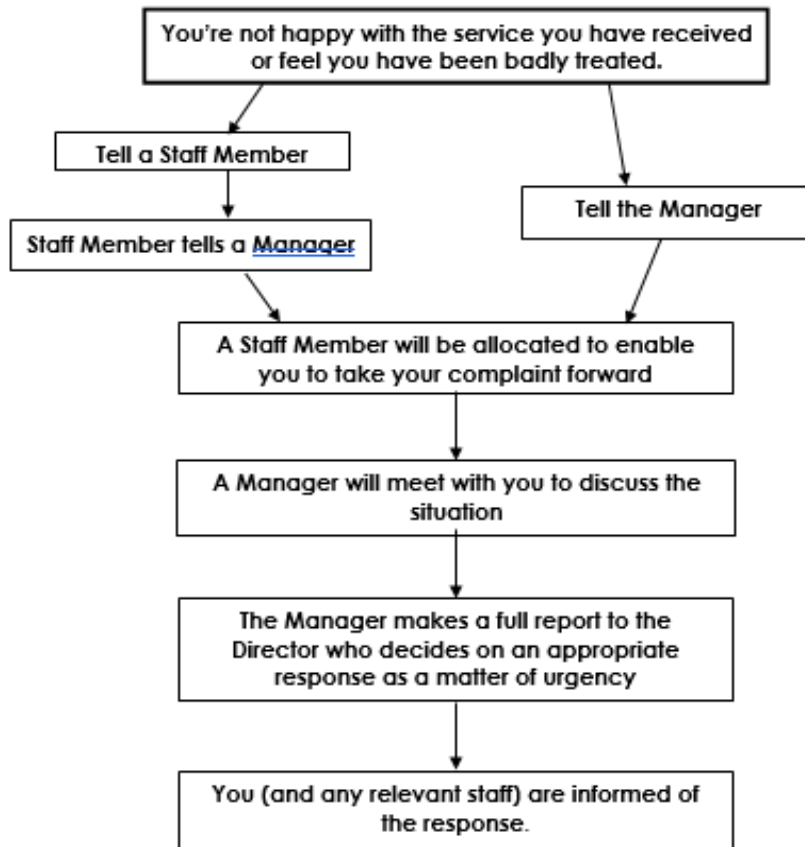
An 'Under-age Sexual Activity Risk Assessment Framework' is also available on The Junction's SharePoint to support staff to assess risk in relation to this specific area.

3.3 Complaints Procedure

The complaints procedure outlined in The Junctions Complaints Policy. The process is explained during young people's induction, and the flow chart is located on walls in our youth space and on toilet doors, see below: -



Complaints Procedure



If you wish to make a complaint, you will be supported to do so by a member of staff. If your complaint involves a staff member, it will be a different staff member that is allocated to support you.

As soon as possible, the complaint or concern will be raised with the Manager, who will then listen to you and the workers involved.

A decision will be made, and you will be informed of the response.

Or you can contact:

Tel: 0131 553 0570 or email info@the-junction.org

3.3 Contacts

USEFUL CONTACTS

Junction Child Protection Leads

Danni Szerszynska (Child Protection Officer/ Project Team Lead) – **07784627698** – Out of Hours/ Personal Mobile

Cara Spence (Director) - **07834321798** – Out of Hours/ Personal Mobile

Emergency Services - 999

Police (non-emergency) - 101

NHS (non-emergency) - 111

Social Care Direct (Edinburgh)

Phone: **0131 200 2324**

Email: socialcaredirect@edinburgh.gov.uk

Website: <https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/get-care-support/ask-social-care-direct-advice-2>

Mon–Thu: 8:30am – 5pm / Fri: 8:30am – 3:55pm

Out of hours emergency social care: **0800 731 6969**

CAMHS Unscheduled Care

Phone: **0131 536 1000** (Edinburgh, East & Midlothian Switchboard)

Phone: **0131 312 1352** – Direct line

7 days a week: 7:30am – 8:30pm

Named Person & Schools Child Protection Officer

If a child is at a council school (primary, secondary, special). The Head Teacher is the Named Person. You can contact them via the school's main office. At independent or grant-aided schools or secure accommodation services, it is the head of the establishment.

Edinburgh school contact details can be found here: [Find a school – The City of Edinburgh Council](#).

Crisis Services for Young People

Samaritans – call 08457 90 90 90 or visit www.samaritans.org

Edinburgh Crisis Centre – (16+) Free phone 0808 801 0414, text on 07974429075 or email crisis@edinburghcrisiscentre.org.uk for an appointment.

Childline – (19 and under) Free phone 0800 1111 – will not appear on phone bill. Or visit www.childline.org.uk for an online chat with a counsellor.