



**Northern Ireland
Fire & Rescue Service**

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

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VERSION CONTROL

This document is a dynamic document that may be amended at any time to improve the content. The document is maintained by the Group Commander (Prevention), NIFRS Headquarters.

Amendments are detailed as below:

No	Issued	Amendment	Prepared by	Reason for change
1	10/08/2010	New policy issued	SC Paul Prentice	Detail responsibilities
2	04/09/2017	Revision of policy	GC Geoff Somerville	New procedures
3	22/06/2018	Update on Designated Officers. Update on Access NI Enhanced Check procedures. Appendices 1- 3 added	Julie Rea	New procedures
4	04/11/2019	Revision of policy	Julie Rea	Refreshed procedures
5	18/05/2020	Revision of policy	Julie Rea	Update on Section 6, NIFRS courses
6	23/07/2021	Insertion of data protection compliance statement	Julie Rea	Update regarding compliance with data protection legislation

1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to detail Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service (NIFRS) Child Protection procedures to protect the rights of the child in every aspect of our service delivery.

2 SCOPE

This Policy applies to all personnel working on behalf of NIFRS. For the purpose of this Policy, the term 'personnel' refers to all NIFRS employees, volunteers and anyone who is employed by the organisation or who has a contractual relationship with the organisation.

3 BACKGROUND

A child means a person who has not attained the age of 18.

The role of NIFRS brings our personnel into contact with children on a day-to-day basis through operational duties and the delivery of prevention initiatives.

NIFRS has a duty of care to ensure adequate child safeguarding and welfare arrangements are in place and are effective.

The most common activities that bring personnel into contact with children are:

- operational incidents; and
- prevention initiatives such as youth engagement activities, school talks, visits to fire stations, and home fire safety checks.

4 AIMS

The aims of this Policy are to ensure:

- the welfare of any child is considered paramount by all personnel;
- compliance with relevant legislation;
- roles and responsibilities are clearly defined;
- all personnel make child protection a priority for all activities and know how to report a concern, disclosure or allegation; and
- personnel with responsibilities for receiving a concern, disclosure or allegation are suitably trained and knowledgeable in the co-ordination of the response.

5 LEGISLATION

There are numerous legislative drivers for child protection and safeguarding.

These include, but are not restricted to, the following:

- The Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008;
- The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007 (as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012);
- Northern Ireland Act 1998 (Section 75);
- The Family Homes and Domestic Violence (Northern Ireland) Order 1998;
- Data Protection Act 2018;
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989; and
- The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995.

6 REGULATED ACTIVITY

The publication *Regulated activity in relation to children: scope Factual note by HM Government*, which has been adopted by Department of Health, defines a regulated activity relating to children as:

“Teaching, training or instruction of children, carried out by the same person frequently (once a week or more often), or on 4 or more days in a 30-day period, or overnight.

Note; the day-to-day line manager/supervisor of an individual in regulated activity is also in regulated activity.

Persons who are providing this teaching, training or instruction are deemed to be in a regulated position.”

It is an offence for an organisation to permit anyone on a barred list to work in a regulated activity. Therefore, NIFRS must provide an enhanced level of protection for those involved in a regulated activity. Personnel who are involved in delivering, managing and training for a regulated activity are within a regulated position.

Before undertaking a regulated position, the following must be completed:

- Access NI Enhanced Check; and
- Child Protection Module 2 training.

Currently, the following activities **do** constitute as a regulated activity:

- Prince's Trust Get Started Scheme;
- CUBE Programme;
- Your Choice; and
- NIFRS Fire Cadets.

The following activities **do not** constitute as a regulated activity:

- Prince's Trust Achieve Scheme;
- Prince's Trust Fairbridge Scheme;
- Safety Team talk;
- Single visits to different school classes;
- Children or youth groups visiting fire stations;
- Community safety talks;
- Home Fire Safety Checks; or
- Operational incidents.

For any new initiatives, the Group Commander (Prevention) NIFRS HQ is to be contacted to determine if the new initiative is a regulated activity or not.

7 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

7.1 Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer (Service Delivery)

The roles and responsibilities of the ACFRO (Service Delivery) are to:

- be the Director responsible for safeguarding;
- maintain ongoing compliance with legislative requirements;
- ensure the Child Protection Policy and supporting procedures are effective;
- provide support to ensure local and national best practice is assessed and implemented when necessary;
- provide support to ensure that the safeguarding learning and development framework is suitable and sufficient to meet legal requirements and maintain awareness of child protection issues within NIFRS; and
- ensure confidentiality in line with Data Protection legislation including General Data Protection Regulation.

7.2 Designated Officers

The list of available Designated Officers (DO) is held with the Regional Control Centre (RCC) and is maintained by the Prevention Department, Headquarters.

A DO must ensure that all issues relating to child protection are reported. All actions should be made in a timely and proportionate manner. The DO role is crucial to ensure that information can be acted upon immediately and effectively.

The roles and responsibilities of a DO are to:

- be the initial point of contact for NIFRS personnel regarding child protection issues;
- ensure confidentiality is maintained at all times when informed of any child protection issue;
- maintain their learning and development requirements as detailed in Section 11;
- support and deliver the Safeguarding Awareness Raising Session to NIFRS operational personnel;

- report child protection concerns to the relevant Gateway Team with urgency. If you believe a child is in imminent danger, report immediately to PSNI. The communication must be recorded on an SC66;
- where an allegation of abuse is made against a member of personnel, ensure that consultation is sought from the Gateway Team and/or PSNI while simultaneously adhering to NIFRS Disciplinary Policy & Procedures (see Appendix 2);
- where necessary, ensure appropriate and immediate protective measures are put into place regarding a concern, disclosure or allegation; and
- complete and forward an SC66 via email to ACFRO (Service Delivery) within 72 hours of being informed of an issue.

7.3 Area Group Commanders (Prevention & Protection)

Area GCs Prevention & Protection (P&P) shall be responsible for implementing this Policy within their Area Command. The role and responsibilities of the Area GC (P&P) are to:

- act as the Area Command lead for all safeguarding issues;
- monitor the implementation of the Child Protection Policy;
- ensure all relevant personnel have completed an Access NI Enhanced Check prior to delivering a regulated activity;
- maintain records of personnel working in a regulated activity in their Area Command;
- ensure compliance with the safeguarding learning and development framework; and
- ensure any contractors, agents or other representatives, with whom NIFRS engages with to undertake duties on their behalf, understand and comply with this Policy, as appropriate.

7.4 Group Commander (Prevention) NIFRS Headquarters

The GC (Prevention) NIFRS HQ shall be responsible for co-ordinating and delivering service-wide aspects of child protection and policy related matters. The role and responsibilities of GC (Prevention) NIFRS HQ are to:

- provide advice, support and assistance to maintain effective policy implementation and/or any necessary amendments;
- monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the Policy;
- ensure that there is sufficient access to learning and development resources to implement the safeguarding learning and development framework;
- review the mobilising instruction detailing the list of DOs when necessary; and
- ensure that an annual Safeguarding Forum is delivered for all DOs and Safeguarding Champions.

7.5 Safeguarding Champions

Safeguarding Champions are specific NIFRS personnel who have enhanced skills, knowledge and experience of safeguarding issues. NIFRS shall aim to train at least one Safeguarding Champion per Area Command who will be required to attain Child Protection Module 4 to be able to deliver safeguarding training both internally and externally. This development of the Safeguarding Champions team will be reviewed after the completion of the Area and District review.

The roles and responsibilities of the Safeguarding Champions are to:

- support the Area GC (P&P) in child protection and safeguarding matters;
- act as champions for child protection and safeguarding internally and externally on behalf of NIFRS;
- advise on any matters that may affect the delivery of child protection and safeguarding procedures to the GC (Prevention) NIFRS HQ; and
- support and deliver the Safeguarding Awareness Raising Session, Modules 1 and 2 Child Protection training to NIFRS personnel.

7.6 All Personnel

The role and responsibilities of all personnel are to:

- report to PSNI if a criminal offence has taken place/or may be taking place;
- protect the rights of the child at every opportunity;
- report any concern, disclosure or allegation immediately by following the reporting procedure detailed in Section 8; and
- ensure full compliance with the procedures detailed in the Safeguarding Awareness Raising Session and Child Protection Module 1 and 2 as detailed in Section 11.

7.7 Regional Control Centre

The role and responsibilities of Regional Control Centre (RCC) are to:

- co-ordinate the initial communication between the person who identifies a child protection issue and the DO; and
- implement the mobilising instruction when a child protection issue is reported.

7.8 Gateway Teams

Gateway Teams are a social work service for children and families provided by the local Health and Social Care Trust. The role and responsibilities of Gateway Teams are to:

- be the first point of contact for NIFRS DOs who have been informed of a child protection issue; and
- assess the information provided and advise the NIFRS DO on any further action.

7.9 PSNI

It is the PSNI's role and responsibility to investigate cases where a crime may be suspected. The PSNI must be contacted if a child is believed to be in imminent danger, ie, a situation where a child is at immediate risk of death or serious harm.

If you think a criminal offence has taken place/or may be taking place:

- call the police and report any concerns:
 - ring 101 if non-urgent
 - 999 if urgent
- call Crimestoppers on 0800 111 555
- visit Crimestoppers website www.crimestoppers-uk.org
 - Crimestoppers is an anonymous service.

Police call handlers are trained to ask a series of questions.

8 REPORTING PROCEDURE

If NIFRS personnel have witnessed or have been informed of:

- a concern or disclosure regarding the safety or wellbeing of a child; or
- an allegation against a NIFRS employee or volunteer;

the reporting procedure is:

- 1 **If you believe the child to be in immediate danger, or you believe a crime has been committed, contact PSNI immediately (and then continue from point 2).**
- 2 Contact RCC immediately on 028 9266 2061.
- 3 Inform RCC you have a **Child Protection issue** to report and ask for a DO to contact you urgently.
- 4 Provide your name, role, location and phone number to be contacted on.
- 5 When contacted by the DO, provide a factual account of what the concern, disclosure or allegation is.
- 6 The DO will advise on any further action to be taken.
- 7 Confidentiality is paramount. Details of the concern, disclosure or allegation should only be disclosed to relevant parties identified by the DO.
- 8 DO to ensure an SC66 is completed and forwarded to ACFRO (Service Delivery).

9 ACCESS NI ENHANCED CHECK

It is an offence for an organisation to permit anyone on a barred list to work in a regulated activity. A regulated activity is work that a barred person must not do.

Therefore, NIFRS requires an Access NI Enhanced Check to be completed **prior to working** in a regulated activity. This is where the applicant will work or volunteer in a role providing services to, or having close and regular supervision of children. (See Section 6 for more detail).

An Access NI Enhanced Check discloses an individual's full criminal record giving:

- spent and unspent convictions from the Police National Computer;
- cautions, informed warnings and other non-court disposals from the Police National Computer;
- information held by the Disclosure and Barring Service (for positions in a regulated activity); and
- information held by the PSNI that is relevant to the role applied for.

Some old and minor convictions and non-court disposals on a criminal record may be filtered. Fixed penalty tickets or parking fines will not be included in an Access NI Enhanced Check.

Personal confidentiality shall be maintained throughout and records will be processed in compliance with Data Protection legislation including General Data Protection Regulation.

9.1 Personnel Requiring an Access NI Enhanced Check

An Access NI Enhanced Check is mandatory for:

- all substantive personnel at CC and WC within P&P;
- all substantive SC (P&P) and GC (P&P); and
- any other NIFRS personnel identified by the Area GC (P&P) undertaking a position in a regulated activity.

9.2 Processing an Access NI Enhanced Check

The Area GC (P&P) is accountable to ensure that all relevant personnel within Area Commands have completed an Access NI Enhanced Check.

The District SC (P&P) is responsible for verifying identification and ensuring the completed SC65 is forwarded to the Volunteer Co-ordinator.

The Verifying Officer is responsible for informing the GC (P&P) of the name and role of the Access NI applicant to be verified.

Where the SC (P&P) requires an Access NI Enhanced Check, the documentation will be completed by their line manager.

The Volunteer Co-ordinator will ensure the completed SC65 is forwarded to HR Resourcing.

9.3 Outcome of an Access NI Enhanced Check

The outcome of the check will be communicated to the applicant. The applicant must present the Access NI Certificate, confidentially, to HR Resourcing.

If an issue is identified upon completion of the check, NIFRS will ensure an open, measured and recorded discussion on the subject of any offences or other matters that might be considered relevant for the position concerned, as per The Recruitment of Ex-Offenders and The Security of Disclosures Policy & Procedure.

HR Resourcing must inform the Volunteer Co-ordinator of all completed Access NI Enhanced Checks.

10 SUPERVISION RATIOS

10.1 Non-Regulated Activity

NIFRS personnel will not assume supervision responsibilities for a non-regulated activity. Supervision is the responsibility of parents, guardians, teachers, youth group leaders, etc.

This must be made clear from the outset when the activity is being planned.

If supervision is at an unsafe level, stop the activity, and those responsible are to be requested to provide an adequate level of supervision before the activity can recommence.

10.2 Regulated Activity

For a regulated activity, the minimum supervision ratios are:

- two adults (one of each gender) for up to twenty children/young people; and
- one additional youth leader for every ten extra children or part thereof.

Best practice guidance encourages one adult of each gender; however, if only adults from one gender are available, the event should not be curtailed.

Increased ratios may be required if the risk assessment for the activity deems it necessary to implement a greater level of control for health and safety reasons.

11 SAFEGUARDING LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

The following table sets out the safeguarding learning and development framework for NIFRS to ensure that all operational personnel have the necessary awareness and competencies to ensure compliance with the ethos of this Policy. All learning and development resources reflect best practice and comply with statutory requirements.

LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES	DELIVERED TO	DELIVERED BY	COURSE (CODE)	FREQUENCY
Awareness Raising Session	All NIFRS operational personnel	Safeguarding Champion and/or Designated Officer	Awareness Raising Session (SG001)	Every 3 years
Child Protection Module (CPM) 1	NIFRS Trainees/ Designated Officers	Safeguarding Champion	Child Protection Awareness (CPM1)	During initial training/each year (unless completing Module 2)
Child Protection Module (CPM) 2	Personnel in a regulated position including Designated Officers	Safeguarding Champion	Child Protection Regulated Position (CPM2)	Every 3 years
Child Protection Module (CPM) 3	Designated Officers	Health & Social Care Trust (HSCT)	Child Protection and Designated Officer (CPADO)	Every 3 years
Child Protection Module (CPM) 4	Safeguarding Champions	HSCT/ Volunteer Now	OCN Level 3 Keeping Children Safe: Training the Trainers	Accredited every year by HSCT

12 PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Performance expectations are detailed in the Prevention & Protection Performance Expectations, which is available at:

<G:\Prevention & Protection\PP DMS\Performance Expectations>

The following methods will be used to seek assurance that performance expectations are being met:

- Area and District management meetings;
- Operations Performance Inspectorate audits;
- Prevention & Protection Delivery Group assurance meetings;
- ACFRO (Service Delivery), acting as Principal Officer, accountability meetings; and
- ACFRO (Service Delivery), acting as Principal Officer, point sample audits.

13 CIRCULATION

This Policy is circulated via the DMS Policy Folder at:

<G:\Document Management System\DMS\Policies>

14 POLICY REVIEW

This Policy will be reviewed on a three-year cycle, or sooner if required. Reviews will be co-ordinated by the GC (Prevention), NIFRS HQ.

SUPPORTING AGENCIES

The Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland recommends the following two organisations to support children and young people. Within NIFRS, it is the option of DOs to signpost children and young people onwards to these agencies.

NSPCC

You can call 0808 800 5000 or e-mail help@nspcc.org.uk to report concerns about a child/young person.

Children/young people can contact ChildLine for advice on 0800 1111 or email them by visiting www.childline.org.uk.

Lifeline

If you, or someone you know, is in distress or despair, call Lifeline on 0808 808 8000.

This is a confidential service, where trained counsellors will listen and help immediately on the phone and follow-up with other support if necessary. The helpline is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You can also access the Lifeline website at: www.lifelinehelpline.info.

KEY POINTS FOR DEALING WITH AN ALLEGATION

- The Disciplinary Policy & Procedures for staff and problem solving procedures for volunteers outline how an allegation will be dealt with. The allegation must also be reported to the DO as a child protection issue.
- As there are two parallel procedures, the DO should fully record the incident and pass it on to the ACFRO (Service Delivery). It is recommended that the DO and the person to carry out the disciplinary procedure are different people.
- Protective measures may include suspension of staff/asking volunteers to stop volunteering and leave for a short period of time; moving the individual to alternative duties, etc.
- NIFRS should also consider, and plan for, the possible outcomes following an allegation (ie, substantiated or unsubstantiated), the impact (eg, reputation in the community) and how to manage this.
- If the allegation against the member of staff or volunteer is substantiated (ie, they have harmed or placed a child at risk of harm) and the organisation has permanently removed the worker from regulated activity (or would have done if the worker had not left), they must be **referred to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)** to establish if there are sufficient grounds to be placed on a list barring them from working or volunteering with children.