



CHILD PROTECTION LINE
LAUNCH DATE: 12 FEBRUARY 2007

Child Protection Line 0800 022 3222

Research conducted by the Scottish Executive (as part of their three-year Child Protection Reform Programme) suggested that the general public do not know where to go if they have concerns about a child or young person, or what will happen as a result of raising such a concern.

The Scottish Executive aimed at 'sensitising' the community at large to the fact that there can be signals that children or young people are being harmed or at risk of harm which are not immediately obvious, and encouraging everyone to think about the general safety and well-being of children.

In an attempt to improve public understanding and confidence and make it easier for the public to identify how to access child protection services, the Scottish Ministers have agreed to launch a 24 hour national freephone Child Protection line on **Monday 12 February 2007**.

The main purpose of the national 24 hour child protection line is to simplify access to services and limit the confusion amongst the general public about where to go. This new freephone telephone number will provide a single point of contact for those who need information about child protection and **will refer calls directly to the appropriate services** for those with concerns about children or young people, as appropriate.

A website will also be launched to support this service. www.infoscotland.com/childprotection This contains more background information which may provide some reassurance to people who might otherwise hesitate before calling a phone line to speak directly about their concerns. There will also be links to the NESPC website from this site.

The Child Protection Line is targeted at the general public, primarily adults. The service will complement existing services rather than compete with them. For example, some children who phone the service, may be transferred to ChildLine. Other calls may be transferred directly through to statutory agencies. This will include child and family social work teams, Grampian Police, or out of hours social work services.

Any calls transferred will be identified as coming from the Child Protection Line and should be dealt with following normal agency protocols. A contact sheet to record these calls is attached to this as a suggested tool to enable audit and follow up.

Five areas will launch the 'Child Protection line', namely the city of Edinburgh, Midlothian, Glasgow, North East of Scotland Child Protection Committee area and Highland. It is anticipated that the Scottish Borders and East Lothian will join-up in the coming months.

Promotional literature has been developed to help promote the new service and raise general awareness in the local community about child protection issues. This includes:

- Posters and leaflets for circulation to a wide range of organisations and groups.
- A small pack which includes a credit card sized fridge magnet which contains key child protection messages and the freephone number. We are exploring having this available at checkouts through a supermarket/chemist chain.
- Website - as previously stated www.infoscotland.com/childprotection
- Editorial and news slots in local and national press and on local radio.

A media campaign to sensitise the public to child protection issues, make it easy for the public to use the line, and reinforce the message that people can make a difference to the safety of children and young people in their local communities has also been devised.

Demand

A 3-month trial conducted here in 2005 revealed a low demand for the service. There were in total 41 calls to the helpline in the 3 month period of the pilot, and few of these led to child protection investigations. It is therefore anticipated that the provision of this service will not impact greatly upon current demand levels. However, the children whose safety was enhanced by this service highlight the importance of responding promptly to all concerns about the safety and well being of children, regardless of the route of referral.

Commitment and Evaluation

The Scottish Executive has committed 3 year funding to the project with an evaluation after 12-18 months of operation. The evaluation will aim to determine outcomes achieved and whether the line has added value to existing service.

Monitoring with regards to the number of calls transferred to various agencies/organisations will be gathered by "Essentiagroup", the call handling company. However, it is important that contact sheets are completed by agencies receiving calls so that an audit trail is readily available in the North East. It will be necessary to know what actions resulted from all calls transferred to agencies by the "Child Protection Line". The NESPCPC office will be the point of contact for this function initially, as for any queries that staff may have about the Child Protection Line.

How will the Service work?

The Child Protection Line is a gateway or signposting service. Throughout Scotland, people can call the confidential freephone number 0800 022 3222 to speak to a trained operator. Depending on the nature of the call, one of four things will happen.

- **The operator will transfer the caller to the most relevant agency, identifying the call as originating from the Child Protection Line; the time and date of the call should be recorded by the person receiving the call**
- **If unable to contact the agency directly, the operator will leave details of the enquiry with the relevant agency as soon as possible thereafter- the agency should then respond to the call as soon as possible and record this in the same way as if the call had been automatically transferred.**
- **The operator will provide details of who the caller should speak to next.**
- **In certain circumstances the operator will transfer the call straight through to the '999' system.**

The Child Protection Line is **not** designed for use by staff, who should adhere to their own agency's policies/protocols with regard to child protection issues.

The Child Protection Line should **not** change how local services deal with callers raising Child Protection concerns - the only difference will be in the initial recording of these calls.

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