

Sources of help

PSNI
tel: **101**

NSPCC Child Protection Helpline
tel: **0808 800 5000**

Health and Social Care Trusts (Social Services)
telephone numbers for local offices can be
obtained from:

Belfast Trust Gateway Team
tel: **028 9050 7000**

South Eastern Trust Gateway Team
tel: **0300 100 0300**

Southern Trust Gateway Team
Free phone from landline
tel: **0800 783 7745** or **028 3741 5285**

Northern Trust Gateway Team
tel: **0300 1234 333**

Western Trust Gateway Team
(no parishes in Western Trust Area)
tel: **028 7131 4090**

Regional Emergency Social Work Service
tel: **028 9504 9999**



*Produced by
The Interfaith sub group of SBNI.*

Concerned about
a child's welfare...
What you need
to know.

Speak

out

A short guide
for parents and
carers in Faith
based settings

Faith settings play a very important part in children's lives in providing structured activities and positive experiences.

Keeping our children safe is something, which concerns all of us: parents, professionals, those in leadership roles, volunteers and staff.

Each faith setting will have its own procedures to follow when someone is concerned about a child. They may be called something different in each place. Sometimes it may be an individual who is called the Designated Officer or, a panel of people will have a lead role in dealing with your concern. Their job is to receive your concern and to pass it on to the either police or social services who are the experts in dealing with such matters. The faith based lead, does not investigate, but rather ensures that good systems are in place to provide advice, and act as a bridge between faith setting and onward referrals to the police or social services.

The interfaith group of the Safeguarding Board for N.I (which is a body of agencies who work together to safeguard children in Northern Ireland) has developed this leaflet as a guide for all faith based settings. The aim is to help inform parents and leaders about what they should do and what happens when they refer concerns on to the police and social services. The leaflet will complement existing processes and guidance already in place within faith settings.

Types of child abuse

Children can suffer harm in many ways. Co-Operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in N.I 2017 (an overarching policy document to safeguard children in N.I) defines abuse as:

- Physical abuse;
- Sexual abuse;
- Emotional abuse;
- Neglect; and
- Exploitation

Things to Think About

If you are concerned about a child or if a child tells you something, remember

ALWAYS,

- Stay calm and listen
- Reassure the child or young person that it's not their fault
- Let them know their concerns will be taken seriously
- Make a note of what is said but don't seek to investigate further
- Ensure the physical safety of a child

Report concerns immediately to the person in your organisation who is responsible.

- Know **who** to contact in your organisation
- Know **how** you can make contact

Details of those who have lead responsibility for dealing with your concern can usually be found on faith-based websites or on posters and information boards within faith settings.

What happens next?

Not all concerns need to be managed by the police or social services.

Some problems or issues can be resolved by the organisation. For example bullying or namecalling. Not everything will need to be referred on. Sometimes all it takes are small changes to be made, for example an increase in staff, or supervision arrangements to improve a situation. Other things may be more serious and need a conversation with social services and police. The person in your organisation who is responsible for safeguarding will do this.

What happens if I raise a concern with the designated person within a faith setting?

Beside is a broad outline of the steps which maybe taken when you raise a concern about a child's welfare.

STEP ONE:

The designated person will gather from you the information you wish to share and will make a factual note of the details. If this is a matter which needs to be referred on, then he/she will make a written referral to the police/social services outlining the details you have shared.

Alternatively if you wish to refer the matter directly yourself the DLP (Designated liaison Person/Officer) will assist you to do this.

STEP TWO:

Once the matter has been referred on, the police or social service will take on responsibility for what happens next. It is their job to look at all the facts and decide the best course of action. Their actions will be determined by what is in the child's best interest and if a crime has been committed.

REMEMBER

- Doing nothing about a potentially abusive situation involving a child is not an option for any adult.
- As adults we all have a moral and a legal responsibility to act to ensure that a child is safe from all forms of harm.
- Put yourself in the position of a child... Would you want someone to speak up for you?