

## 1. 'It's Everyone's Job...'

Since 2004, the Scottish Government has promoted the principle that child protection is everyone's business. This is seen as a responsibility of all of us and that we can all make a contribution to keeping children safe. It means we all have a responsibility (even at a minimal level) to notice when something doesn't seem right in a child's life, or causes us concern about their care, welfare or safety. When we notice concerns in this way, the least we can do is to share those concerns with services whose job it is to assess the situation and protect the child from risk of harm.

## 2. Why It Matters...

Any one of us, in almost any job, might come into contact with a parent or a child in the course of doing that job. So it's important to know what to do if anything about that contact causes you a concern about a child's welfare. To do that, you need to know what sort of harm can happen to children – it can be physical, emotional, exploitative, sexual harm or what looks like neglect of a child's safety or care. All harm (including self-harm) can be significant for a child and it all matters.

## 7. National Guidance

'All agencies have a responsibility to recognise and actively consider potential risks to a child, irrespective of whether the child is the main focus of their involvement.'

[National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 - Updated 2023](#)

SO, IF YOU SEE IT, OR HEAR IT –  
PLEASE SHARE IT!

## 6. Best start in life

We know that children grow and develop to the best of their ability when they have a stable, secure home with caring, healthy parents. We also know that the earliest years of our development are hugely important in how we progress through life. When we experience adversity or trauma in these early years, or even later in childhood, this can have a big impact on how we progress through life. That is why we work with a model called Getting It Right For Every Child – early help is a key principle of support for better outcomes for children.

[GIRFEC principles and values - Getting it right for every child \(GIRFEC\) - gov.scot](#)  
[www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot)



## 5. Children's Rights

In child protection, we must recognise the rights of parents, sometimes in legal proceedings, so that decisions taken do not unjustifiably undermine parental rights. But children have rights too. Article 19 of the UNCRC states children have the RIGHT TO BE PROTECTED FROM HARM OR BEING BADLY TREATED.

## 3. It is important to know

This briefing aims to raise awareness of how you can help and to reassure you that your role is not to investigate. But you can make a difference to a child's life by understanding what to do. Not all types of harm towards children are deliberate. Some harm happens where parents are struggling and need help. Even unintended harm can have an impact on a child. You are likely to be helping by sharing concerns. Where deliberate or serious harm is happening, children need your help to keep them safe.

## 4. Key message

The minimum level of responsibility we all have in the protection of children is to at least RECOGNISE harm, or the RISK OF HARM, when we see or hear it – then to RESPOND to that concern by sharing it with services whose job it is to assess harm (or risk of harm) to children. It is their role to do something about your concern, so that risk is averted or minimised as far as possible.

