

<b><u>Title</u></b>	<b>A safe framework for child protection</b>
<b><u>Brief Course Description</u></b>	This is a participatory exercise designed to help participants identify and connect with the procedural, policy, guidance and legislative framework organisations require to maximise safety both for the children and young people they deliver services to and for the staff who deliver those services.
<b><u>Keywords</u></b>	Legislation, Policy
<b><u>Level of expertise</u></b>	Training: <input type="checkbox"/> Beginner, <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Intermediate, <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced Child protection: <input type="checkbox"/> Beginner, <input type="checkbox"/> Intermediate, <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advanced
<b><u>Level of training</u></b>	<p><b>Targets</b> S2-1 Understand and be able to apply relevant legislation and guidance</p> <p><b>Contributes to</b> S1 -13 Know when to seek appropriate supervision S 1 -10 Know your role, responsibilities and statutory powers. Know where to go to know what you can and cannot do, including sharing information. S 1 – 11 Understand the legal framework, as it applies to you S 1 – 12 Be aware of the CPC role and interagency procedures</p> <p><b>What participants need to know already</b> Participants do not need much knowledge but they do need to have explored the anxiety raised by issues of child protection. Would recommend that a ‘beliefs and values’ exercise is undertaken before this one.</p>

<b><u>Overview &amp; Objectives</u></b>	<p>The purpose of this exercise is to help participants connect with the framework that needs to be in place in order to help them carry out their role in child protection. Often practitioners feel policy is something kept in a drawer, rather than a set of working documents which both guide their practice and supply guidelines which help to keep both themselves and their service users safe. It should help to allay some of the anxieties of participants about their responsibilities, since all individual responsibilities should sit within a system of accountabilities. This was one of the issues highlighted by the Climbié Inquiry.</p> <p><b>Learning objectives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To raise awareness of the range of legislation, policy and procedure in child protection work</li> <li>• To explore how a framework of policy, procedure and practice competency helps to keep children and staff safe</li> </ul>
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- To connect practice with policy and guidance

**Learning outcome**

Participants will

- Know about the range of legislation, policy and guidance in child protection work
- Know how the framework of policy, legislation, guidance contributes to keeping children and staff safe
- Understand the 'layers' of the framework and how they help to contain the anxieties raised by child protection work

**How method contributes to achieving the learning outcome**

This is an exploratory and participative exercise which helps participants to connect with policy from an exploration of their personal needs when making difficult decisions about significant intervention in children's lives. It requires that participants explore their experience of their work. The trainer will offer a model for 'containing' some of the anxiety that is generated by this work.

**Before the day**

**Audience**

This exercise has been used as an induction exercise but can equally be used for experienced practitioners. It is based within a social care/social work context but could be adapted for other settings, as long as the trainer is clear about the relevant policy, guidance, legislation for that setting.

**Length of activity**

- 70 minutes

**Group size**

- Minimum 12
- Maximum 30  
(split into smaller groups of around 6)

**Approximate timing (for group of 20)**

- Introduction – 5 minutes
- Part one – what do you need to keep safe? – 25 minutes
- Part two – what does the child need? – 10 minutes
- Plenary to discuss – 15 minutes
- Presentation of framework/handouts – 15 minutes

**Materials**

- It will be useful to have key documents available for participants to refer to
- Flip chart for feedback and instructions

**Preparation**

- See tutor's notes at Annex A
- Split the larger group into small groups of around 6 for parts one and two

## **Background**

### **Original context from which this learning activity is drawn**

This exercise was originally used as an induction exercise in a large voluntary organisation – for both qualified and unqualified staff in social care, education and health fields.

## **On the day**

### **The activity Introduction and instructions**

For many practitioners child protection work raises high levels of anxiety. It is not possible – nor, arguably, desirable – to remove all anxiety from the work. All decisions are taken on the best available information and that information is never complete. For the most part, intervention is carried out on the basis of cumulative concerns, rather than because of a clear incident of abuse. The beginning of a child protection process is often a decision to refer, or to carry out an investigation. This decision usually involves some exploration of a ‘threshold’ in which workers are trying to decide if ‘significant harm’ is being done to a child either through abusive behaviour or because of neglect.

Workers’ anxiety can make them feel isolated and as if that decision is made ‘in isolation’ and rests entirely on their shoulders. Yet, as Lord Laming pointed out in his inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié, workers are generally employed by agencies which have a raft of policies and procedures in place to guide such decision making and organisations should have systems in place that mean that the responsibility and accountability for decisions about intervention are shared by line management structures.

This exercise is intended to help workers understand how their organisation (and, beyond that, legislation) should support their individual practice. The question we are trying to explore is *‘what will help you feel safe when you are trying to make significant decisions about children?’*.

### **Part 1 – 20 minutes**

In small groups participants should be asked to imagine themselves in the following situation:

*You have been working with a child for a period of time. You have gathered information along the way that has led to you*

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*becoming increasingly concerned about his/her welfare. Taken individually, each piece of information could be 'explained' or 'managed' or 'accommodated' into ongoing work. Taken cumulatively, however, you have come to the conclusion that you need take some significant action, the result of which may be a child protection investigation.*

What do you need to know to keep you feeling safe (confident) in making this decision and carrying through the actions required?

It may help to have a visual representation of this – draw a person standing at the threshold of a door which is ajar – with a child on the other side of the door. This doesn't need to be complex – stick men will do. It reminds participants what they are doing in the middle of the exercise if they glance up and see this picture. Encourage participants to use 'I need (to know)' statements since this will help them connect with their own practice.

**Part 2 – 10 minutes**

When they have completed this part of the exercise they should be asked to refocus their attention on the same scenario and imagine that they are the child:

*What do you need now, to keep you feeling safe while as your worker makes this decision and the consequences unfold?*

**Plenary and presentation**

The small groups should be brought together to share the main points of their discussions. (See tutor's notes, Annex A) Either as part, or following this, the trainer should offer the model in handout 2 as a way of understanding how a safe framework is built around the child on whose behalf we are making decisions. If the trainer does the former it might help to draw a series of empty concentric circles (see handout 1) on a flip chart – as the groups give their feedback the trainer can scribe these into the right circle. The circles can be labelled at the end. Handout 2 presents the same information in a different format and with more detail.

**Conclusion** Participants should be encouraged to think about what might be missing from their knowledge about organisational policy and procedure and how they might go back to their work place to identify and continue to connect with such documents. It is also important that they reflect on issues of supervision and team dynamics, as well as their individual knowledge and skill base.

<p><b><u>Reflecting on what has been learned</u></b></p>	<p>Participants should be asked to complete a learning log either after this exercise or at the end of a longer series of exercises in which they are encouraged to reflect on their learning and make specific plans for transferring and using their learning in the workplace.</p>
<p><b>The next training step</b></p>	<p>This exercise has been used before an extended case study (see Jackie's Story – separate resource in the CP Webpace) which is a more practical application of policy and procedure.</p>

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## ANNEX A

### Tutor's notes

This exercise in its original form was used after an exploration of values and beliefs around child protection. Participants had therefore explored the changing social construction of 'childhood' and what is right for children and are engaged with the question of how to make professional decisions about intervention with children when there is so much variation in opinion about what is good/right for them. If you have not conducted this kind of exercise you will need to contextualise this exercise in order to pose those questions.

### The Framework

You are seeking to elicit responses that cover a number of areas. It is useful to conceive of this as a series of concentric circles (see Handout 1 in Annex B) with an increasing focus on the individual worker.

### Social and Legislative Context

*Participants might say:*

- 'I need to know that I am working within the law by passing on, or acting on information.'
- 'I need to know that I am enabled by the law and legal systems.'

We are helped to 'keep safe' in our decision making by, for example:

- Legitimately working within the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*, ratified by the UK government
- Working with the principles of and the duties defined by *The Children(Scotland) Act 1995*, in particular the welfare of the child being paramount
- Working to shared definitions contained in *Protecting Children: A Shared Responsibility*
- Fulfilling the requirements of the *Protecting Children and Young People Framework for Standards*
- Knowing when the law has been broken e.g. *S51, Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act*

### Interagency and 'whole system' contexts

*Participants might say:*

- 'I need to know I can trust other agencies to deal with things appropriately'
- 'I need to know what they can legitimately expect of me, as defined and articulated by my own agency.'

We are helped to 'keep safe' in our work with other agencies through:

- Interagency protocols, particularly *Child Protection Committee Interagency Guidelines*.
- Strategies for fostering good interagency relationships; strategies for dealing with system failures – that is, managers who will address problems.
- Clear role definitions and responsibilities on the part of all.
- Knowing what our own and other agencies should and should not do.

## **Organisational context**

*Participants might say:*

- 'I need to know what my organisation expects me to do'
- 'I need to know what I should not/cannot do and what others should not/cannot do'

We are helped to 'keep safe' in making decisions in our work if we know:

1. What our organisational policies and procedures say about:

- How we should behave towards children (*Codes of Conduct*)
- what we should consider to be *harmful for children (Child Protection Policy)*; and/or risky for children (*Health and Safety Policy*);
- through what process that assessment should be made (*Child Protection Procedure; Equality and Diversity Policy; Learning and Development Strategy; Assessment protocols*);
- how we should respond (*Child Protection Procedure*);
- what we should record and how (*Recording Policy*);
- what help/support we should seek (*Supervision Policy*);
- what information it is possible to share (*Confidentiality Statement*).

2. What our organisation expects in terms of:

- participation and involvement of service users (organisational culture, mission and goal statements);
- standards of practice and developing our knowledge and skills (competency and performance management frameworks; Learning and Development Policy and Strategy);
- evaluating practice, and
- concerns about practice (Supervision Policy; Whistleblowing Policy and procedure)

## **Team Functioning**

*Participants might say:*

- 'I need to know that my team is a safe place to talk about difficult and anxiety provoking work' (*learning culture*)
- 'I need to know I will get support' (*supervision and employee support service*)
- 'I need to know my line manager/supervisor is appropriately trained and approachable' (*supervision policy and training*)



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- 'I need to know the team has the appropriate skills/ the appropriate expertise is available' (*Workforce Development, appraisal and learning needs analysis/ plans*)
- 'I need to know I can trust my colleagues, they have been properly recruited and trained' (*Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003; Learning and Development Plan*)

**Individual Capability**

*Participants might say:*

- 'I need to know I know the right things' (*signs and symptoms, definitions, other practice issues*)
- 'I need to know when I need support/guidance' (*insight into and acceptance of limitations and emotional impact*)
- 'I need to know what I can and cannot do' (*individual assessment of knowledge and skills; qualifications*)
- 'I need to know my role' (*clear and accurate job descriptions*)
- 'I need to know where the right information is'

**From the Child's Perspective**

*Participants might say:*

- 'I need to know that the worker has considered their actions carefully (is properly trained and supervised);'
- 'I need to know that the worker knows me well enough'
- 'I need to know that the worker will continue to consult with and inform me'
- 'I need to know that no false promises will be made'
- 'I need to know that I will be allowed to be a child, as appropriate' (*Framework for Standards, Children (Scotland) Act 1995, Children's Charter*)
- 'I need to know that I can complain if I am not happy with the actions of my worker' (*complaints policy and procedure*)
- 'I need to know that my worker is a safe person' (*Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003*)

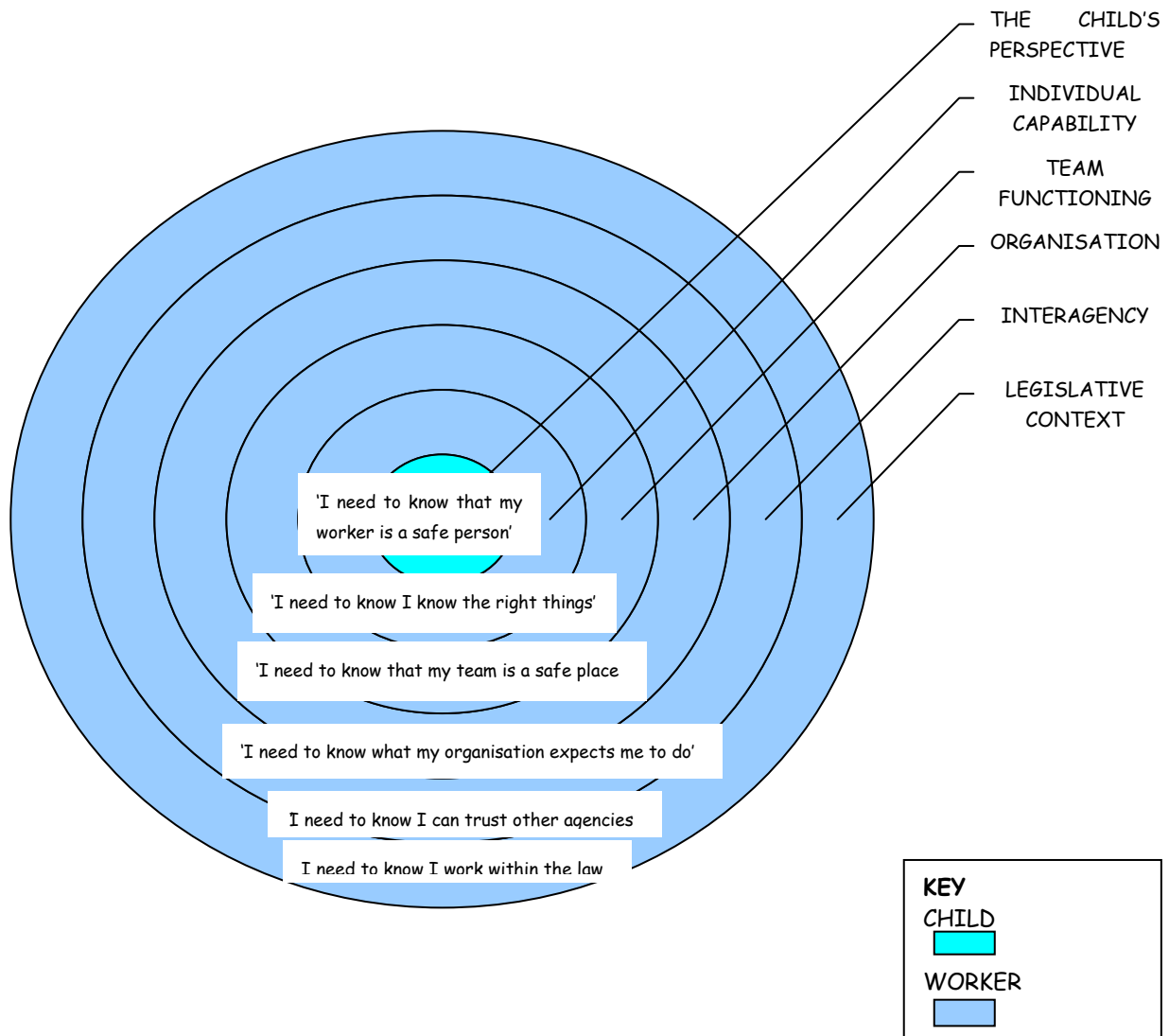
**NB** These are all well summed up in the *Children's Charter*



**ANNEX B**

**HANDOUT 1**

**HOW A SAFE FRAMEWORK BUILDS AROUND THE CHILD**



## **ANNEX C**

### **HANDOUT 2**

#### **A SAFE FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD PROTECTION**

##### **Legislation and Policy**

For workers to feel safe about making difficult decisions in complex situations, they need to know that they work within the relevant legislation and that their organisational Child Protection Policy is contextualised appropriately.

To feel confident they should know how the legislation is/can be applied.

The Framework for Standards has an adequate legislation section at Annex C for those wishing to chart a pathway for expanding their knowledge. All Scottish legislation and policy guidance is accessible on the world wide web.

##### **Procedures and Systems**

For workers to feel safe about what actions they take, they need clear step-by-step guidance. Again, procedures should be written with compliance with legislation and guidance in mind. They should define the appropriate actions and identify the appropriate roles and agencies in carrying out actions. They should also give clear instructions on recording and information sharing.

Agencies very rarely act alone in child protection situations. Interagency systems and procedures should be understood and regularly revisited.

##### **Accountability, Evaluation and Inspection**

Workers are helped to feel safe if they work for organisations that are clear about lines of accountability and the methods by which they will establish whether or not a good enough job is being done. Open methods of audit and processes for improvement should be the norm. Along with other parts of the framework, this makes it more likely that issues of poor or dangerous practice will be picked up. For the most part, these issues can be dealt with through supervision and performance management. Encouraging openness and the measurement of practice will underpin a commitment to respond appropriately to whistleblowing.

##### **Prevention**

Workers will be helped to feel safe if efforts are made to prevent as much harm to children as possible. This has a number of dimensions – health and safety practices will reduce the probability of accidents; codes of conduct will define boundaries; rigorous recruitment and selection will screen out as many unsuitable candidates as possible.

There are more subtle aspects to the prevention of risk also. Most work with children is carried out in a context of groupings of staff, whether or not they are self consciously

defined as a team. Shared dialogue about good practice, mental models, reflection on the effectiveness or appropriateness of interventions will create a culture in which openness and transparency are the norm. Under these conditions, there is less likelihood of harm being done to children either maliciously or through ignorance. Poor practice is likely to be identified early.

### **Respecting and Listening to Children**

Children should be properly informed (usually more than once, using different formats) about the responsibilities of adults to protect them from harm. Information should be freely available and children should be engaged in conversation about the meaning of safety and protection. They should see that there are codes of conduct for both adults and children, staff and service users. They should understand their right to complain and be helped to do so.

### **Staff Support and Development**

As well as a commitment to supervision and team practice as vehicles for the development of practice, opportunities to enhance knowledge about child abuse and protection should be made available to all those working alongside children. A culture in which everyone is presumed to be continuing to learn will foster a shared sense of responsibility and continual exploration of ways to improve. Under these conditions also, it is likely that staff will seek appropriate support and guidance for difficult work, since acknowledging its impact and complexity will be the norm.