Safeguarding Policy

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1. About this Policy

1.1 Heel & Toe Ltd is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people that it provides therapy, information and short breaks to. We aim to provide a safe and nurturing environment. Furthermore, all children and young people are encouraged to develop and reach their full potential with support from our experienced and committed team.

1.2 This policy aims to ensure that all staff are aware of their responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. It also aims to encourage a culture of listening and talking so that the views and opinions of children and young people are encouraged, explored and listened to. Furthermore, to ensure that action is taken to enable children and young people to have the best outcomes.

1.3 This policy applies to all staff– including paid, voluntary and agency workers or the self-employed. The policy also applies to the Directors of this company and any consultants that may be engaged.

1.4 This policy does not form part of any contract of employment or other contract to provide services, and we may amend it at any time.

2. Relevant Legislation & Statutory Guidance

2.1 **Children's Act 1989 & 2004:** These are laws that provide the framework for safeguarding and child protection in England. The Children's Act 1989 established the principle that the welfare of the child is paramount and introduced the concept of parental responsibility. The Children's Act 2004 developed and extended the 1989 Act by focusing on ensuring that all people and organisations that work with children, have a responsibility for safeguarding children and promoting their welfare.

2.2 **Section 47 – Children's Act 1989:** This is a law that places a legal duty on Local Authorities to investigate situations where a concern has been expressed about the safety and wellbeing of a child. The applicable child protection investigation is predominantly the responsibility of Social Workers within Children's Services; however, they work closely with the Police, health and other professionals that are connected to the child and/or their family.

2.3 **Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998:** This is a law that protects whistle-blowers from negative treatment or unfair dismissal. It is part of the Employment Rights Act 1996. It makes it unlawful to subject a worker to negative treatment or to dismiss them because they have raised a whistleblowing concern. The law enables workers in the public and private sectors who 'blow the whistle' to complain to an employment tribunal, if they are dismissed or suffer any other form of detriment, for doing so.

2.4 **Human Rights Act 1998:** This is a law that sets out the fundamental rights and freedoms that everyone in the UK is entitled to. It incorporates the rights set out in

the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) into domestic British law. The Act came into force in the UK in October 2000.

2.5 **European Convention of Human Rights:** This is an international convention to protect human rights and political freedoms in Europe.

2.6 **Mental Capacity Act 2005:** This is a law designed to protect and empower people who may lack the mental capacity to make their own decisions about their care and treatment. It applies to people aged 16 and over.

2.7 **The Caldicott Principles:** These are a set of guidelines for using and keeping safe people's health and care data. The principles were first introduced in 1997 and have since been expanded. They are designed to ensure proper treatment of patient-identifying information and protect patient confidentiality.

Eight Caldicott Principles - publishing.service.gov.uk

2.8 **Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023:** This guide considers multi-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. It was published by the Department for Education in December 2023. Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 outlines how all practitioners working with children - including unborn children, should cooperate to protect them from maltreatment, prevent impairment of their health or development, and enable them to have the best outcomes.

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 - publishing.service.gov.uk

3. What is Safeguarding?

3.1 Safeguarding is the action taken to promote the welfare of children or young people and protect them from harm. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility; therefore, everyone who comes into contact with children and families has a role to play.

3.2 Safeguarding children or young people and promotion of their welfare includes:

- protecting children and young people from maltreatment.
- preventing impairment of children's and young people's health or development.
- ensuring that children and young people grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.
- taking action to enable all children and young people to have the best outcomes.

3.3 Child protection is an essential part of the wider work to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. It refers to the activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or who are likely to suffer significant harm. All agencies and individuals should aim to proactively safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people, so that the need to protect children from harm, is reduced.

3.4 While it is not Heel & Toes Ltd's job to establish whether or not abuse is taking place, it is our responsibility and statutory duty to report any safeguarding concerns we have over the welfare of children and young people. This duty extends to the identification of abuse, poor practice by Heel & Toes Ltd's staff or other professionals, as well as allegations brought to Heel & Toes Ltd's attention by a member of the public and/or community. Please refer to ***Appendix A*** for further information regarding the four main types of child abuse.

3.5 The latest addition to Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023) is central to delivering on the strategy set out in Stable Homes, built on love, which outlines Government's commitment to support every child to grow up in a safe, stable and loving home. It has further strengthened the approaches in relation to: Multi agency expectation for all practitioners, working with parents and families, clarifying the roles and responsibilities of safeguarding partners, the role of education and children providers, multi-agency practices and standards, support for disabled children, tackling harm that occurs outside the home

4. Prevention of Harm

4.1 At Heel and Toe we aspire to prevent harm by:

- Establishing and maintaining an ethos where children and young people feel secure, are encouraged to talk, and listened to.
- Ensuring children and young people know that there are adults in the charity whom they can approach if they are worried or in difficulty.
- Ensuring sessions delivered help children develop realistic attitudes to the responsibilities of adult life, particularly, with regard to childcare and parenting skills.

5. Supporting Children & Young People at Risk

5.1 Heel & Toe recognises that it may be one of the only stable, secure and predictable elements in the lives of children and young people at risk. Nevertheless, behaviour presented by such children and young people during sessions may be challenging, defiant or lead to them withdrawing.

5.2 At Heel and Toe we understand that children and young people who are abused, or witness violence, may find it difficult to develop a sense of self-worth and view the world as benevolent and meaningful. They may instead feel helplessness, humiliation and some sense of self-blame.

6. Managing Safeguarding & Child Protection within Heel & Toe Ltd

6.1 Heel & Toe Ltd incorporates a traffic light themed response in relation to safeguarding and child protection; **GREEN** – monitor, **AMBER** – support & **RED** – report.

6.2 **GREEN** – children and young people are monitored as all staff record events and matters arising in their session notes. These are completed after each session for every child and/or young person.

6.3 AMBER – All staff are expected to support the child or young person whilst they are feeling upset and provide the comfort required to help them settle. Implementing support strategies that are designed for each child or young person at the earliest opportunity will offer the child the reassurances they need. All staff are expected to record and report concerns as these arise, making sure that they have provided a detailed account of the unsettled behaviour. All staff are supported to discuss safeguarding concerns and matters arising, as/when necessary with their Line Manager, and/or on a weekly basis in multi-disciplinary team meetings (MDT).

6.4 RED – All staff are expected to support the child or young person whilst they are feeling upset and provide the comfort required to help them settle as mentioned above. We recognise that on occasions the support given does not have the desired outcome and the child or young person remains in an unsettled state. This may become very distressing for them and other children and young people. All staff are expected to record and report concerns as these arise, making sure that they have provided a detailed account of the unsettled behaviour. All staff are expected to report safeguarding concerns, relating to children and young people, immediately via First Contact at Durham County Council on 03000 26 79 79 or email cypsladosecure@durham.gov.uk. First Contact brings together Children's Services staff with partners such as Durham Constabulary and health services.

6.5 In cases where there is immediate risk of harm, all staff are expected to call the Police and or other emergency services.

6.6 Heel & Toe Ltd follows the procedures set out in Durham's Safeguarding Children's Partnership. Please refer to ***Appendix B*** for further information regarding this.

https://durham-scp.org.uk

7. Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

7.1 Heel & Toe Ltd's Therapy Services Manager is the Designated Safeguarding Lead. They have undertaken appropriate training; however, there are contingency arrangements should this individual not be available. Staff will be informed in such circumstances.

7.2 All staff and trustees know the name of the DSL and their role.

7.3 The DSL will:

- refer safeguarding concerns in accordance with the procedures, set out in Durham's Safeguarding Children's Partnership, and applicable timescales.
- ensure that arrangements are made to identify all staff that require training in child protection issues within their respective areas.
- ensure that copies of this policy and associated procedures are available to all staff.
- receive information from staff and others who have concerns, and record them, using appropriate forms and procedures identified.

- ensure that procedures are followed appropriately in consultation with the relevant service or the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).
- determine whether any interim human resources (HR) procedures are required (such as suspension of a staff member subject to the outcome of any investigation for example).
- ensure that individuals are reported appropriately to the Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS).
- ensure that information is recorded and stored appropriately and in accordance with the Caldicott Principles.
- represent Heel & Toe Ltd on formal investigations into allegations of abuse led by any Children's Services Team.
- ensure that staff involved in safeguarding matters (such as an allegation against a colleague for example), are supported as required, and in line with Heel & Toe Ltd's staff wellbeing policies. Such support will also be provided independently of Heel & Toe Ltd if necessary.
- take advice from a safeguarding specialist when managing complex cases.

7.4 Heel & Toe Ltd recognises that when safeguarding concerns relate to a colleague's conduct, this can cause additional stress on the referrer. We will fully support and protect all staff, who in good faith (and without malicious intent), report their concerns about a colleague's practice or the possibility that a child or young person may be being abused.

7.5 Heel & Toe Ltd will also undertake an internal investigation, to determine whether there are any lessons learnt and corrective actions, including HR procedures.

8. Multi-Agency Working to Safeguard Children & Young People

8.1 Heel & Toe Ltd will develop effective links with relevant agencies, and co-operate as required with their enquiries regarding safeguarding matters - including attendance at Initial Child Protection Conferences, Core Group Meetings, Looked-After Child Reviews and the completion of applicable reports.

9. Confidentiality

9.1 Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned in the safeguarding of children and young people. Therefore, such information should be handled and disseminated on a need-to-know basis only. Line Managers and the DSL will guide staff regarding who needs to know such information about the case.

9.2 Where a staff member is approached by their Line Manager regarding an allegation, issues of confidentiality should be clarified early in the discussion. The staff member should be informed that their Line Manager will, at the very least, have to disclose the conversation to the DSL. Furthermore, and depending on the severity of the

allegation, that information may be disclosed to the relevant Children's Services Team and/or the Police.

9.3 There may be occasions where a child or young person expresses a wish for concerns not to be pursued. Decisions about whether to respect the child's or young person's wish, must have regard to the level of risk posed to them and/or others, and their capacity to make and understand the impact of such a decision. In some circumstances the child's or young person's wish may be overridden, in favour of their safety and that of others. Where possible this decision will be made collaboratively by the DSL, Children's Services Team and/or the Police.

10. Responding to an Allegation or Disclosure

10.1 If a child or young person makes an allegation relating to a parent or carer, the parent or carer should not be contacted by the staff member, as Children's Services and/or the Police will do this at an appropriate time.

10.2 Abused children and young people are more likely to disclose details of abuse to someone they trust and with whom they feel safe. If a child or young person makes a disclosure to a staff member, the staff member should listen carefully and respond as follows:

- react calmly and look at the child or young person directly.
- take what the child or young person says seriously.
- reassure the child or young person that telling you was the right thing to do and confirm that you believe them.
- accept what the child or young person is saying.
- tell the child or young person that they are not to blame.
- be mindful that the child or young person may have been threatened by whoever harmed them.
- clarify their understanding of what the child or young person has said; however, avoid asking detailed or leading questions.
- not make promises of confidentiality between the child or young person and the staff they are speaking to thus keeping it between the staff and the person reporting. (keeping it a secret)
- be open and honest by explaining to the child or young person, that you will have to share your concerns with the DSL, so that you can help them.
- immediately record all details in writing, and where possible, using the child's or young person's own words – including the date, event and action taken.
- share the allegation with the DSL.

11. Actions Staff Should Avoid

11.1 If a child or young person makes an allegation or disclosure to a staff member, the staff member should not do the following:

- dismiss the allegation or disclosure.
- panic.
- allow their shock and/or distaste to show.

- probe for more information, than is comfortably offered, or pressure the child or young person for a response.
- speculate or make assumptions.
- make negative comments about the alleged abuser.
- make promises of confidentiality or agree to keep secrets.
- suggest any action/s or consequences that may be undertaken in response to the allegation or disclosure.

12. Allegations Relating to a Colleague

12.1 Heel & Toe Ltd understands that a child or young person may make an allegation against a staff member, or that a staff member may have safeguarding concerns about a colleague.

12.2 If such an allegation is made against a colleague; or information is received which suggests that a colleague may be unsuitable to work with children or young people, the staff member receiving such information must immediately inform the Chief Executive Officer.

12.3 The Chief Executive Officer will then discuss the content of the allegation with the LADO at the earliest opportunity, by calling 03000 268 835 or emailing cypsladosecure@durham.gov.uk, prior to taking any further action.

12.4 If the allegation made to a staff member relates to the DSL or Chief Executive Officer, the staff member receiving the information must immediately inform the LADO.

12.5 Staff are reminded that publication of material, which may lead to the identification of a colleague who is the subject of an allegation, is prohibited by law whether verbally or in writing – including content placed on social media sites.

13. Timescales

13.1 Heel & Toe Ltd recognises that it is in everyone's best interest to resolve allegations as quickly as possible, via a fair and thorough investigation. Therefore, such situations will be prioritised to avoid any delay.

13.2 The time taken to investigate and resolve allegations depends on a variety of factors - including the nature, seriousness and complexity; however, the timeframes stipulated should be achieved in all but truly exceptional cases.

13.3 Heel & Toe Ltd will aim to resolve the vast majority of allegations within 1 month, more complex allegations within 3 months and exceptional allegations within 12 months.

14. Whistleblowing

14.1 Heel & Toe Ltd appreciates that it can be very worrying to have safeguarding concerns about relating to a colleague. We also appreciate that such a circumstance can cause additional stress for staff members reporting concerns.

14.2 However, all staff should be aware of their duty to raise safeguarding concerns - including the attitude or actions of colleagues, poor or unsafe practice and/or potential failures in the supported accommodation's safeguarding arrangements.

14.3 There are support mechanisms within the incident reporting procedure, to ensure that staff are confident that safeguarding concerns will be dealt with appropriately – including the aforementioned confidentiality guidelines ('***Section* 9**') and signposting to counselling services.

14.4 If a staff member has safeguarding concerns relating to a colleague, they must immediately inform the Chief Executive Officer. Staff must also remember that the safety of the child or young person concerned is paramount.

14.5 If a staff member has safeguarding concerns relating to the Chief Executive Officer, they must immediately inform the LADO.

14.6 If a staff member has safeguarding concerns relating to a volunteer, agency worker or self-employed individual , they must immediately inform the applicable Social Worker and/or Durham's Safeguarding Children's Partnership.

14.7 Allegations or poor practice relating to a staff member may result in a Section 47 Enquiry (which is externally led by the relevant Children's Services Team), criminal investigation (which is externally led by the Police) and disciplinary or misconduct investigation (which is internally led by Heel & Toe Ltd).

14.8 In the first two instances, Heel & Toe Ltd will not be involved the applicable investigatory processes, unless requested to do so by Children's Services or the Police.

14.9 Furthermore, feedback regarding the outcomes of such investigations will not usually be shared unless there are outstanding staff misconduct issues to address. In such a circumstance, the usual terms and conditions for Heel & Toe Ltd's disciplinary procedure will apply.

14.10 Consideration will be given to suspending the staff member on full pay pending the outcome of such a procedure, and the appropriateness of a staff member returning to work in their previous environment, depending on the outcome of the investigation.

14.11 If the outcome of an investigation is to withdraw permission for the staff member to engage in regulated or controlled activities with vulnerable groups, Heel & Toe Ltd may have to comply with a legal duty to report the staff member to the DBS. This also

applies in instances where the staff member concerned resigns, retires, is made redundant or transfers to an alternative position (which does not involve them engaging in regulated or controlled activities with vulnerable groups).

14.12 There may be circumstances where allegations made by children or young people relate to poor practice (as opposed to abuse). However, such matters should still be brought to the attention of the DSL for guidance and appropriate action will be taken.

14.13 The failure to report a safeguarding concern relating to the conduct of a colleague could be considered as an act of serious or gross misconduct.

15. Support for Staff

15.1 If an allegation is made relating to a colleague, full support will be offered to staff, in line with Heel & Toe Ltd's Whistleblowing Policy. Staff members can contact their Line Manager for more information. A copy of this policy can also be found in their Staff Induction Pack.

15.2 The NSPCC's Whistleblowing Advice Line is available for staff that do not feel able to raise safeguarding concerns regarding internal child protection failures. The telephone number is 0800 028 0285, the email address is help@nspcc.org.uk and assistance is available Monday – Friday from 8am - 8pm.
To support staff that may not be confident or who are unsure about a potential safeguarding matter the NSPCC also provide an Help Line 0808 800 5000 the email address is help@nspcc.org.uk and assistance is available Monday – Friday from 8am - 4pm

16. Safer Recruitment

16.1 Once newly recruited staff members have been identified and successfully interviewed, they cannot undertake their role until pre-employment checks have been completed and verified by the DSL. These include:

- an Application Form – including a full employment history, along with a satisfactory explanation of any gaps in employment, in writing.
- an Interview Form.
- an Enhanced DBS Certificate – which will be renewed every 3 years' thereafter.
- proof of identity - including a recent photograph.
- two written references - including a reference from the newly recruited staff member's most recent employer.
- documentary evidence of any qualifications relevant for the position.
- the signing of a Self-Declaration Form.
- the reading, understanding, acceptance of and compliance with this policy.

16.2 Once the above process is completed, the DSL will contact newly recruited staff members, and their induction will commence prior to them working with children or young people.

16.3 Any individual that refuses to comply with the above process will not be appointed.

16.4 Newly recruited staff members will receive supervision, every 4 weeks, for the first 3 months of induction. Existing staff members will receive ongoing support in the form of any of the following:

-termly clinical supervision held in a private space

-monthly offers of one to one support

- in addition staff are aware that they can approach a supervisor, clinical lead or deputy CEO at any time with safeguarding concerns.

16.5 All staff will be subject to an annual appraisal process too.

17. Use of Volunteers, Agency Workers &/or Self-Employed Individuals

17.1 Heel & Toe Ltd and its staff will ensure that volunteers, agency workers and/or self-employed individuals, working on behalf of the company, are monitored appropriately.

17.2 Any such individuals used by Heel & Toe Ltd, that is likely to come into contact with young people should be willing to comply with the terms of this policy or have their own equivalent Safeguarding Policy.

18. Applicable Learning &/or Development Opportunities for Staff

18.1 Heel & Toe Ltd provides training to its staff regarding their responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. Furthermore, to encourage a culture of listening and talking so that the views and opinions of children and young people are encouraged, explored and listened to. Finally, to take action to enable children and young people to have the best outcomes.

18.2 All Heel & Toe Ltd staff are required to undertake a child protection themed course, as part of their induction, which will reflect upon:

- the nature of abuse.
- the effects of abuse.
- how to recognise abuse.
- how to respond to concerns about abuse.
- what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable sharing of information regarding children and young people.

18.3 Heel & Toe Ltd will also ensure that such training is revisited every three years at a minimum. Additionally, that relevant knowledge is explored during day-to-day discussions, team meetings and supervision.

19. Monitoring & Review

19.1 This policy is reviewed by the trustees annually.

Appendix A (Types of Child Abuse)

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children defines child abuse as:
"*When a child is intentionally harmed by an adult or another child – it can be over a period of time but can also be a one-off action.*
It can be physical, sexual or emotional and it can happen in person or online. It can also be a lack of love, care and attention – this is called neglect."

There are four main types of child abuse:

1. **Physical abuse**

This is when someone hurts a child on purpose and with the intent to cause harm. This can include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, drowning, or suffocating. If it causes them physical harm, such as cuts, bruises, broken bones or other injuries, it is physical abuse.

Anyone can hurt a child - a relative, friend or stranger. It can also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Signs of physical abuse

- Children with frequent injuries
- Children with unexplained or unusual fractures or broken bones
- Children with unexplained bruises or cuts, burns or scalds or bite marks

Children may be more at risk if their parents have problems with drugs, alcohol and mental health or if they live in a home where domestic abuse happens. Babies and disabled children also have a higher risk of suffering physical abuse.

2. **Emotional abuse**

Emotional abuse is when a child's feelings and emotions are manipulated or shamed on purpose. This can take different forms, for example:

- when a child is unfairly blamed for everything.
- told they are stupid, worthless or ugly.
- ignored or never shown any emotion in interactions.

Emotional abuse is the severe and persistent ill treatment of a child. It can have long-lasting and devastating effects on a child's emotional health and development.

Signs of emotional abuse

- The child is excessively withdrawn, fearful, or anxious about doing something wrong
- Parents or carers who withdraw their attention from their child, giving the child the 'cold shoulder'
- Parents or carers blaming their problems on their child

- Parents or carers who humiliate their child, for example, by name-calling or making negative comparisons.

Emotional abuse may be the only form of abuse suffered by a child, or it might be part of a wider pattern of abuse.

3. Sexual abuse & exploitation

Sexual abuse is any sexual activity with a child, or inducing a child to act in sexually inappropriate ways.

Many children and young people do not recognise themselves as victims. A child may not understand what is happening and may not even understand that it is wrong.

The sexual abuse of children is more than just physical sexual contact. It includes:

- sexual touching, masturbation, kissing, rubbing - clothed or unclothed.
- all penetrative sex.
- intentionally engaging in sexual activity in front of a child.
- making, showing, or distributing indecent images of children.
- grooming children for future abuse - in person or online.

Signs of sexual abuse

- displaying knowledge or interest in sexual acts inappropriate to their age
- using sexual language or have sexual knowledge that you wouldn't expect them to have
- asking others to behave sexually or play sexual games
- exhibiting physical sexual health problems, including soreness in the genital and anal areas, sexually transmitted infections or underage pregnancy

Sexual abuse is not only perpetrated by adult males. Women can commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Child sexual exploitation

Child sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse. This is when an individual or group takes advantage of a child (anyone under 18) to coerce, manipulate or deceive them into sexual activity.

This is done:

- in exchange for something the victim needs or wants.
- for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator.

Even if the activity appears consensual, the victim still may have been sexually manipulated.

Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact, and can also occur online or through social media.

Signs of child sexual exploitation

- appearing regularly with unexplained gifts or new possessions
- associating with other young people involved in exploitation
- having older boyfriends or girlfriends
- suffering from sexually transmitted infections or pregnancies
- changes in emotional well-being
- misuse of drugs and alcohol
- going missing for periods of time or regularly coming home late
- regularly missing school or not taking part in education

4. Neglect

Neglect is where a child is not looked after. It is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic and essential needs.

This can include:

- not providing adequate food, water, clothing and shelter.
- leaving a child alone in dangerous situations, or to watch after themselves when they are very young.
- failure to provide medical care.
- failure to meet the child's emotional needs.

Warning signs of neglect

- living in a home that is indisputably dirty or unsafe
- persistent hunger and signs of malnutrition
- lack of hygiene - dirty clothes and hair that may lead to lice or nits
- lack of adequate clothing for the time of year - such as not having a winter coat
- living in dangerous conditions, i.e. around drugs, alcohol or violence
- often acting angry, aggressive or self-harming
- failing to receive basic health care
- parents who fail to seek medical treatment when their children are ill or injured

If a child does not have a safe and stable home, this too is neglect.

5. Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse is a behaviour that is controlling, bullying and threatening and can be violent. It can happen between adults that are related to each other and or living in the same households and will affect the children and young people living with them. Domestic abuse can happen inside and outside of the home. It can occur over the phone, internet and social media. Domestic abuse can happen in a relationship and continue once the relationship had ended. It can happen to any gender.

Domestic abuse will have many features as physical, emotional and may be sexual abuse as described above. It may also be the withholding of money and linked to neglect.

Children and young people that have witnessed Domestic Abuse may show many of the signs linked to the above abuse factors and additionally include:

- Aggression
- Anti-social behaviour
- Seeking more than average levels of approval and attention.
- Excessive aggressive behaviours demonstrated during play with other children and or dolls.

*Appendix B (*Durham's Safeguarding Children's Partnership's Procedures*)*

Report a Concern About a Child

If you have a concern about a child or young person's welfare who lives in County Durham, call First Contact on 03000 267 979. First Contact brings together Children's Services staff with partners such as Durham Constabulary and health services.

Opening Hours

First Contact is open from 8.30am until 5.00pm, Monday to Thursday, and from 8.30am until 4.30pm on a Friday.

What to do in an Emergency

In an emergency situation, call us on the number above - we have a duty officer working outside of opening hours who will take your call.
If you fax or email us outside of our opening hours, please be aware that these enquiries will be dealt with on the next working day.

What Happens When You Call Us?

When you contact us, you will speak to a trained officer. We will work with you to decide the level of response needed. Providing early help to children, young people and their families is our priority. We will start an Early Help Assessment to inform what happens next, which may be:

- giving you appropriate advice and guidance.
- a referral to preventative services, such as One Point, with a 'team around the family' and a named Lead Professional.
- a statutory referral to Assessment & Interventions Teams, due to safeguarding concerns, with a 'team around the family' and a named Lead Professional.

First Contact works to Single Assessment Procedure and Practice Guidance, which can be found on the Durham Safeguarding Children Partnership's website.