

Multi-Agency Protocol

Initial Screening and Inter-Agency Referral Discussion (IRD)



Guardian/Keeper:	Perth and Kinross Child Protection Committee per the Child Protection Inter-Agency Coordinator
Version Number:	1.1
Approved by CPC:	27 October 2009
Publication Date:	18 July 2011
Effective From:	18 July 2011
Review Date:	31 March 2012
ECHR Compliant:	Yes
Diversity Compliant:	Yes
Data Protection Compliant:	Yes
FOI Compliant:	Yes
Health & Safety Compliant:	Yes

INDEX**Page No**

Policy Background	2
Introduction	3
Initial Screening of Concerns	3
Immediate Actions to be Taken Following Initial Referral Screening	4
Inter-Agency Referral Discussion (IRD) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Procedure• Process• Outcomes• Sharing and Recording• Feedback	6 - 8
Inter-Agency Group Liaison Meeting	8
Review and Evaluation	9
Appendix I – Initial Screening Flowchart	10
Appendix II – IRD Process Flowchart	11
Appendix III – NHS Tayside Protocol for the Examination of Children in Cases of Physical and Sexual Abuse	12
Appendix IV – Legal and Other References (Policy and Legislative Context)	13

POLICY BACKGROUND (See Appendix IV)

All children and young people have the right to be cared for and protected from harm and abuse and to grow up in a safe environment in which their rights are respected and their needs are met. Children and young people should ***get the help they need, when they need it*** and their welfare is always paramount.

Here in Perth and Kinross we support the ethos that ***child protection is everyone's job and everyone's responsibility***. We consider this to be a shared responsibility for all practitioners and managers across the public, private and voluntary sectors.

The Scottish Government has set out a vision that all Scotland's children and young people will be ***successful learners; confident individuals; effective contributors; and responsible citizens***. This depends very much on how well they have been supported to develop their well-being. All services/agencies in contact with children and young people must play their part in making sure that children and young people are ***safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included***.

This multi-agency protocol actively supports this concept and demonstrates our individual and collective approach to ***Getting it Right for Every Child*** across Perth and Kinross and our commitment to other national and local child protection policy developments. (See Appendix IV).

This multi-agency protocol forms part of a dynamic framework of common CPC policies, procedures, protocols and guidelines etc agreed by services/agencies across Perth & Kinross who work with children and young people for whom practitioners have concern. This multi-agency protocol has been jointly developed between Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA), Tayside Police, NHS Tayside and Perth & Kinross Council Education and Children's Services (Children and Families Services).

It aims to ensure an informed and appropriate response for children and young people about whom practitioners, in key services and agencies, have concerns.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this multi-agency protocol is to set out the respective roles, responsibilities, duties and agreed processes involved in the initial screening, assessing, recording, discussing and acting on all ***child care and/or protection concerns*** from all services/agencies.

Through this pro-active, multi-agency approach, services/agencies are committed to supporting the protection of children and young people across Perth & Kinross by:-

- Making an initial screening assessment of the child/young person's needs;
- Sharing all relevant information swiftly and effectively;
- Ensuring multi-agency discussions and decisions are appropriate and effective, and that relevant supports are identified and provided quickly; and
- Ensuring that referrals to SCRA are made only where compulsory measures of supervision may be necessary; in cases of significant need and/or risk or harm.

This multi-agency protocol does not seek to introduce any process or procedure that would prevent or delay the instigation of child protection procedures or where there is a concern that a child may be at risk of ***significant harm***.

This multi-agency protocol also does not seek to limit the power of any service/agency to make referrals to SCRA, where this is considered to be appropriate by them.

All services/agencies committed to this multi-agency protocol agree to the arrangements outlined below. These agreed arrangements shall only be amended and/or changed following consultation with all relevant partners and the Child Protection Committee.

INITIAL SCREENING OF CONCERNS

Following any ***child care and/or protection concerns*** being reported to the Perth and Kinross Council Child Protection Duty Team, they will check on SWIFT to confirm if the child/children and/or family are currently known, or have been previously known to Social Work.

These ***child care and/or protection concerns*** can include:-

- Parent or carer incapable or unable to adequately look after their child or young person;
- Domestic abuse where a child or young person is affected, or lives in the same household as incidents of domestic abuse;

- Child or young person under the influence of alcohol;
- Child or young person left unattended in a household where to do so is leaving them at risk of harm;
- A child or young person who is outwith parental control;
- Drugs search at home address where children/young people are in the household;
- Adult arrested for committing an offence whilst having care of a child or young person;
- Child or young person is the victim of a crime or offence;
- Child or young person living in neglectful circumstances;
- Adult in an unfit state to care for a child or young person; and
- Any other situations where a child or young person may be at risk.

The above should not be considered as an all inclusive and/or exhaustive list of possibilities.

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN FOLLOWING INITIAL SCREENING (See Appendix I)

Following any ***child care and/or protection concerns*** being reported, once initially screened, the following immediate actions are to be taken:-

(i) Child already has an allocated social worker

In Perth and Kinross there are 5 long term teams, geographically based, who provide social work early interventions and support for children and families, where it has been assessed that longer term intervention is required. Other teams where children and families may already have a social worker include; Family Centre, Early Years Team (Social Work), Child Health, Permanency and some children living in Perth and Kinross, who may have a social worker with another Local Authority. Once a Social Worker or Team Leader receives a child care concern report they must make a decision if further action is required;

(ii) Advice provided, no further action

In some cases, at the initial screening stage, there may be no further action required; when appropriate this will be noted by the Child Protection Duty Team on SWIFT. Police retain records of all Police Child Concern Reports;

(iii) Further enquiries/assessment

Following a **child care or protection concern**, further information gathering will be necessary to make a decision as to the best course of action. The Child Protection Duty Team will contact service/agencies and/or other practitioners in order that all relevant information can be gathered for an Initial Assessment. **This will also include Health.**

(iv) Referral to SCRA

A decision can be made by Social Work, Health and Police at this stage that a referral to SCRA is necessary; this is usually in cases where there have been a number of concerns and lack of cooperation from the service user. Additionally, in exceptional circumstances, a referral to SCRA can be made in respect of a single incident where the concern is considered to be significant;

(v) Child Protection Investigation/Assessment

This includes cases where **immediate action is required to protect a child or young person**. An **Inter-Agency Referral Discussion (IRD)** would be held that day (same day where immediate action is identified as necessary) and a decision taken as to what immediate action is required;

A **Child Protection Investigation** is defined as a joint investigation, between Police and Social Work where a child or young person is considered to be in need of care and protection through lack of care and/or a crime or offence has or may have been committed against a child or young person. Further assessment is necessary in order to decide the risks and needs of a child or young person and what action should be taken. There are Risk Assessment formats used by Police, Social Work and Health in order to ascertain the level of risk and need;

An IRD will take place for **every** child or young person where the initial screening process has identified that a Child Protection Investigation is necessary.

In Perth and Kinross an IRD will take place between Police, Social Work and Health in each and every case.

INTER-AGENCY REFERRAL DISCUSSION (IRD) (See Appendix II)

Procedure

An **Inter-Agency Referral Discussion (IRD)** is a discussion between two or more services/agencies, where it has been suspected that a child or young person has suffered, is suffering or maybe at risk of harm or abuse.

In practice an IRD is not a single event, but rather a series of ongoing events and discussions. An IRD will take place between Social Work, Police **and** Health and where appropriate, with School staff in each and every case.

Whenever necessary, practical and possible, these discussions will take place at organised meetings of the relevant practitioners. Where this is not always practical or possible, discussions will take place by phone and the sharing and exchanging of information can be virtual/electronic (phone, e-mail, fax etc).

Process

For each child or young person discussed in the IRD, the participating services/agencies/practitioners will agree upon the following:-

- What **child care or protection concerns** are raised by the information contained within the Child Protection Referral?
- What needs are identified?
- Which service/agency is already involved in providing a support to the child/young person and/or their family?
- What risks factors, protective factors and/or strengths have been identified?
- Is there a need for a joint investigative interview by Police and Social Work?
- Do the circumstances **suggest** there is a need for a Medical Examination? If so, the Police or Social Work **must contact and speak with** the On-Call Paediatrician currently arranged through the Custody Nurse. See Appendix III; and
- Do the circumstances **suggest** there is a need for a Health Assessment? If so, the Police or Social Work **must contact and speak with** the Perth & Kinross CHP Senior Nurse/Advanced Nurse Practitioner or the Lead Paediatric Clinician for Perth & Kinross. If not available, advice can be sought from the

On-Call Paediatrician currently arranged through the Custody Nurse. See Appendix III; and

- What are the timescales, roles, responsibilities and agreed sequence of actions/events?

Outcomes

The IRD must agree on one of the following options for action (See Appendix II)

- No further action following an IRD;
- Direct referral to a single service/agency - in which case the service/agency should be prepared to accept the referral and identify a **Lead Professional**;
- Child Protection Investigation/Assessment to take place. Immediate actions taken when there are concerns that the information provided suggests that a child or young person may be at risk of immediate and/or significant harm or abuse, and emergency procedures may be necessary to remove a child or young person from their home;
- The On-Call Paediatrician will decide if a medical examination is required as per the NHS Tayside Protocol (See Appendix III); and
- Referral to the Children's Reporter where the IRD participants believe that the child or young person has significant needs and where compulsory measures of care may be required. Details of any previous child concern reports shall be included with any referral made to the Reporter at this time or subsequently by any service/agency.

Sharing and Recording

There will be an expectation on the part of those practitioners who participate in an IRD that each service/agency will thoroughly research their own information and recording systems, including all electronic databases and/or paper systems to enable effective decision making to take place.

Those practitioners who take part in an IRD will be responsible for recording all the agreed decisions made and outcomes within their own service/agency systems (e.g. in Social Work, the Senior Social Worker, Child Protection Duty Team will ensure the outcomes are recorded within the profile notes on SWIFT).

IRD participants will also be responsible for sharing relevant information and decisions with staff in their own services/agencies who '*need to know*' and where it is in the best interests of a child or young person to do so.

Wherever possible, all IRD decisions should be made on the basis of agreement and consensus between all participants and will be noted. However, where agreement and consensus cannot be achieved, then the views of the majority will be taken and noted. Any disagreements/dissent which cannot be resolved will be noted and discussed with the participants' respective Line Managers/Supervisors. This does not prevent individuals and or services/agencies to make referrals direct to SCRA where they believe it is in the interests of a child or young person to do so, irrespective of any IRD process.

Where there are any issues/concerns raised during the collation of information from services/agencies relating to concerning behaviour, threats or violence to staff members, this information must be shared across all the services/agencies to allow them to assess the level of risk and to safeguard staff members.

If a service/agency is unable to engage with the child, young person and/or family for any reason, and there is evidence that the family's circumstances are either not improving or indeed deteriorating, they should consider making an immediate referral to the Children's Reporter.

Feedback

Throughout the IRD process, feedback will be provided to the person and/or the service/agency that raised the ***child care and/or protection concern*** in the first place. Those providing feedback will ensure that it is recorded in the relevant case files/notes.

INTER-AGENCY GROUP LIAISON MEETING

Supervisory Operational staff from Social Work, Police and Health, who have responsibilities in their own service/agency for the IRD process will meet regularly with the following remit:-

- To ensure that all necessary and relevant information had been gathered and shared appropriately in each IRD process;
- To ensure that the most appropriate action has been taken in each IRD process;
- To agree, ratify and endorse all decisions made during IRD process;
- To deal appropriately with any issues/concerns raised and identified in respect of any IRD process;
- To ensure that the IRD process, decision makings and outcomes have been recorded correctly within their own service/agency systems;
- To ensure that feedback has been provided and properly recorded; and

- To provide a quality assurance role in auditing standards of practice and service delivery in each IRD process;

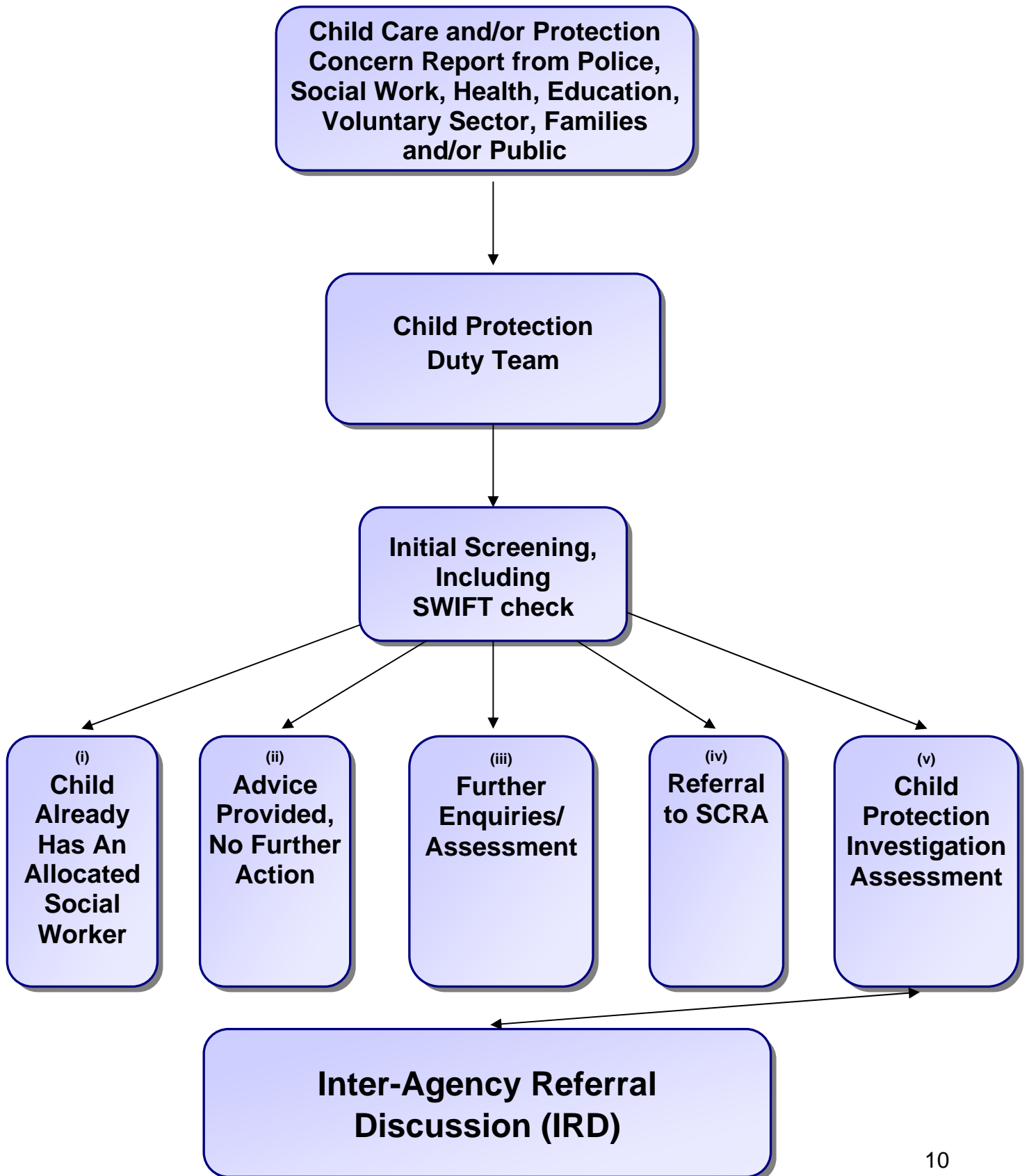
REVIEW AND EVALUATION

This multi-agency protocol will be reviewed by the CPC and the CPC Practice Sub Group annually and the review process will include operational practitioner staff involved in the IRD process and operational managers from Police, Social Work and Health. The review process itself will also evaluate all the single and multi-agency arrangements outlined within this multi-agency protocol.

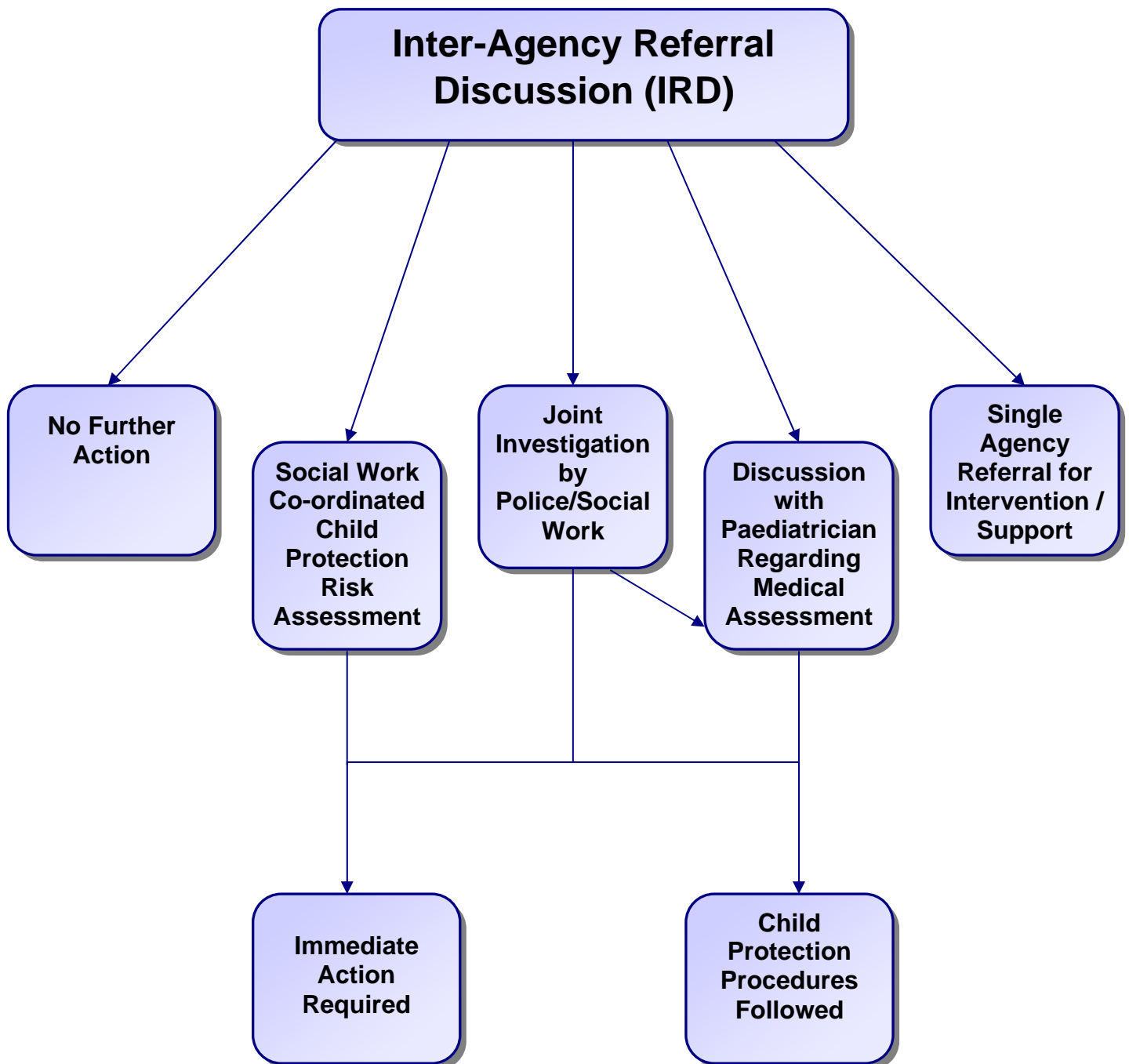
CONCLUSION

These multi-agency working practice arrangements are seen as an opportunity to timeously identify the most appropriate and effective response to concerns about individual children and young people identified by the police, social work, health and others in partnership with SCRA.

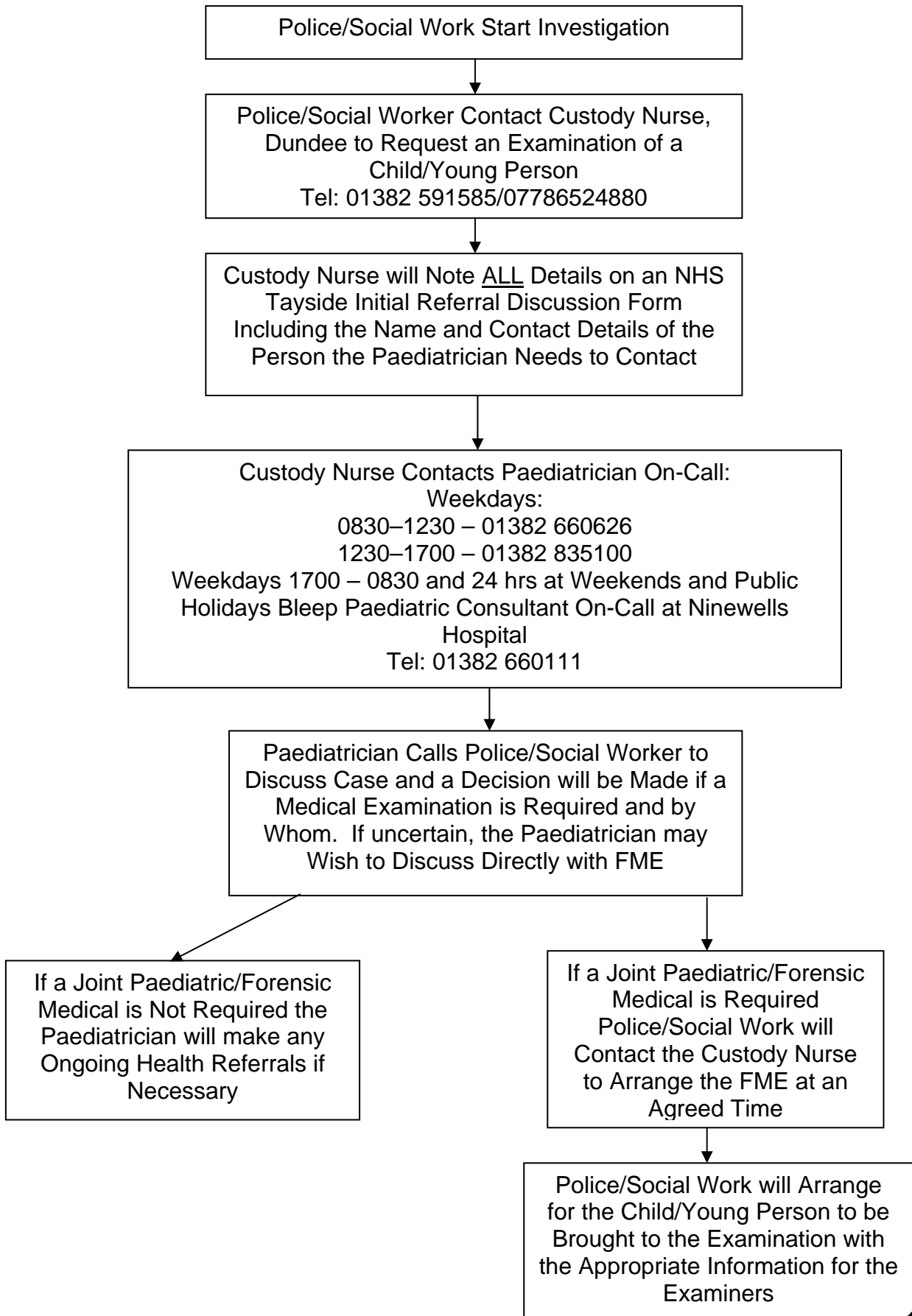
Perth and Kinross Initial Screening in Response to Child Care and/or Protection Concerns



Perth and Kinross Inter-Agency Referral Discussion (IRD)



NHS Tayside Protocol for the Examination of Children in Cases of Physical and Sexual Abuse



Appendix IV

Legal and Other References (Policy and Legislative Context)

All children and young people have the right to be cared for and protected from harm and abuse and to grow up in a safe environment in which their rights are respected and their needs are met. Children and young people should **get the help they need, when they need it** and their welfare is always paramount.

Here in Perth and Kinross we support the ethos that **child protection is everyone's job and everyone's responsibility**. We consider this to be a shared responsibility for all practitioners and managers across the public, private and voluntary sectors.

The Scottish Government has set out a vision that all Scotland's children and young people will be **successful learners; confident individuals; effective contributors; and responsible citizens**. This depends very much on how well they have been supported to develop their well-being. All services/agencies in contact with children and young people must play their part in making sure that young people are **safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included**.

Underpinning this IRD multi-agency protocol there is a strong evidence based national and local policy context.

By way of summary, the following are considered to be the most significant policy developments which Perth and Kinross Council, Tayside Police, NHS Tayside, Scottish Children's Reporter Administration (SCRA) and Perth and Kinross Child Protection Committee fully supports and endorses:-

- Scottish Office Circular SWSG 14/97 Child Protection: Local Liaison Machinery – Child Protection Committees;
- Protecting Children – A Shared Responsibility: Guidance on Inter-Agency Co-operation (Scottish Office 1998);
- Scottish Executive's Audit and Review Report (2002) entitled "*It's everyone's job to make sure I'm alright*";
- Scottish Executive Child Protection Reform Programme 2003 – 2006;
- Scottish Executive (2004) Protecting Children and Young People: The Charter;

- Scottish Executive (2004) Protecting Children and Young People: Framework for Standards;
- Scottish Executive (2005) Protecting Children and Young People: Child Protection Committees;
- HMle Services for Children Unit (2006): Self Evaluation and Quality Indicators Framework: *“How well are children and young people protected and their needs met?”*;
- HMle Services for Children Unit (2009): How good are we now? How well do we protect children and meet their needs? How good can we be? Self Evaluation Using Quality Indicators;
- Getting it Right (For Every Child);
- Perth and Kinross CPC Child Protection Inter-Agency Guidelines;
- Perth and Kinross CPC Information Sharing Protocol for Staff Working with Children and Families in Need or at Risk;
- General Medical Council; Confidentiality; Protecting and Providing Information (April2004);
- Child Protection Companion; It is every Paediatrician’s responsibility to assess a child with suspected intentional harm (April2006);
- National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2010 (Scottish Government).

It is also agreed that the contents of this IRD multi-agency protocol comply with the following legislative framework, albeit this is not an all inclusive and/or exhaustive list:-

- The Age of Legal Capacity (Scotland) Act 1991;
- The Children (Scotland) Act 1995;
- The Human Rights Act 1998;
- The Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968;
- The National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978;
- The Education (Scotland) Act 1980;
- The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004;
- The Race Relations Act 1976;
- The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000;

- The Sex Discrimination Acts 1975 and 1986;
- The Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 and 2005;
- The Equality Act 2006;
- The Data Protection Act 1998;
- The Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002;
- The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974;
- The Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003;
- The Protection of Children and Prevention of Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2005;
- The Management of Offenders etc (Scotland) Act 2005;
- The Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007;
- The Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2009; and
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.