

NFER Child Protection Protocol - January 2019

Introduction

The NFER Code of Practice states;

NFER's Child Protection Protocol identifies the need for all staff coming into direct contact with children and/or dealing with their data, to be aware of any safeguarding concerns arising from our work and to report them accordingly.

In addition to the online child protection/safeguarding training staff must complete every two years, the following guidance has been produced to further clarify what you should do should you be concerned for a child/young persons safety or should a direct safeguarding disclosure be made, either in person or in writing (as is the case for survey and assessment work).

Dealing with a disclosure

If a direct disclosure has been made (where you are interviewing or conducting a focus group or where a child speaks to you during a test administration session):

- Explain to the child that you will need to share this information with a member of staff at the institution where you are carrying out the research/assessment activity (it is important that you do not promise confidentiality at the beginning of the data gathering exercise as you will breach this promise in the case of a disclosure having to be reported).
- As soon as is possible (and on the same day) write up, sign and date the details of the disclosure (an e-signature is acceptable if your write up is electronic).
- Inform the institution contact as soon as is possible whilst you are in attendance and offer a copy of your written account. Where possible, clarify the circumstances for the child, establish if social services are already involved and if the institution will contact the local duty social worker/allocated case social worker to refer the matter for their consideration. Record this information for NFER records and ask the school contact to confirm in an email to you that they have taken the referral from you and will manage it thereafter.
- Inform your Project Leader and Project Director as soon as is possible and within 24 hours of the disclosure being made and provide them with a copy of your written account*.
- Contact the Designated Child Protection/Safeguarding Officer (Fiona Walker) or Deputy Designated Child Protection/Safeguarding Officer (Matthew Walker) and report the incident, providing a copy of your written account* for their files.

***NB: when sending any electronic information identifying a child, please ensure you password protect any e-documents and send a password to recipients in a separate email.**

Only send named data to those who need to know it i.e. the school/institution contact (send to their email address and not to a school office email) and the NFER Designated Officer.

If a child has said or written something which makes you feel concerned (in a survey or assessment response):

- Note what has been said/written as objectively as possible.
- Speak to your Project Leader and/or Project Director and refer to the Designated Child Protection/Safeguarding Officer (or Deputy) if necessary, who will help you make a decision as to what further action you should take, if any¹.
- Where a decision is made to report the issue, contact the institution directly and inform them of what the child has written or said without immediately identifying the individual child.
 - In the first instance call the institution and ask to speak to their Designated Child Protection/Safeguarding Officer.
 - If they are not available then ask to speak to the most senior person present in the institution.
 - Explain you are calling to report a safeguarding issue and insist you speak with an appropriate senior staff member.
 - When speaking to the school contact, you should provide them with detail of the possible disclosure, without naming the individual child.
 - Only provide the name of the child if the school deems the concern serious enough to follow up.
- If you are unable to speak to a senior member of staff then you must discuss this with one of the NFER Designated Child Protection/Safeguarding Officers and agree a course of action. This is likely to involve an email to the school with details to include;

‘when reviewing the survey responses/assessment papers from your pupils on xx.xx.xx, one of the pupils/children commented ‘xxxxxxx’². We are informing you as we have some concerns that the child could be at risk of harm. Please pass this email to your Designated Child Protection/Safeguarding Officer immediately and ask them to contact XXX at NFER immediately to discuss the matter further’.
- When you are speaking to the school contact, clarify the circumstances for the child, establish if social services are already involved and if the institution will contact the local duty social worker/allocated case social worker to refer the matter for their consideration. Record this information for NFER records and ask the school contact to confirm in an email to you that they have taken the referral from you and will manage it thereafter. If the school do not send clarification, email it to them and ask them to respond as confirmation. Follow up with telephone calls as necessary until we have confirmation in writing.
- It could be that the matter is too serious to wait for an email reply and a referral needs to be made direct to the LA duty social worker – the NFER Designated Child Protection/Safeguarding Officer will help you to make this decision.

¹ The PL, PD or Designated Child Protection/Safeguarding Officer may wish to consult with the LA Designated Officer (LADO), the LA duty social worker or NSPCC before deciding on what action should be taken.

² Where a potential disclosure has been made on an item trial it is important not to identify the question that has been asked, due to the confidentiality of the trial. In this instance you should speak to the NFER Designated Officer and Project PD/PL to ensure the confidentiality of the trial is maintained whilst ensuring the detail of the disclosure is not lost.

- For confidential test data: The school may request to see what the child has written. With a highly confidential test, in the first instance advise on the nature and content, as objectively as possible, without providing the actual child's response. Should the school insist, ask the Designated Child Protection/Safeguarding Officer at the school (and any other staff who are likely to have sight of the response) to sign a statement of confidentiality. Then provide the extract of the written response which initiated the safeguarding concern as a password protected document. Send the password in a separate email to the school. Request that the school limits the exposure of the response to other school staff and that they store and destroy the response after it is no longer required. Depending on contractual requirements, it may be necessary to inform the client of this action.

Any potential safeguarding issue should be reported as soon as it is discovered and a referral to the institution should be made on the same day. The NFER Designated Child Protection/Safeguarding Officer (or their Deputy) can make the referral on your behalf if you would prefer. When sending any electronic information identifying a child or vulnerable adult, please ensure you password protect any e-documents and send a password to recipients in a separate email. Only send named data to those who need to know it i.e. the school/institution contact and the NFER Designated Officer.

Introducing confidentiality to interview and focus group participants

After explaining the purpose of the research and the fact that individuals will not be identified in any of the reports you write, be clear in explaining the only time you would have to share anything an individual says, is if they say something that makes you feel worried about their safety, in which case you would discuss with them further at the end of the interview/group and would let a teacher or member of staff know.

Introducing confidentiality to survey and assessment respondents

You can use or adapt one of the following introductions to your online or paper survey or assessment;

Example introduction to an online or paper survey:

'We are asking for this information so we can find out what issues are most important to young people from different backgrounds. We do not give your name to anyone, unless your response raises concerns about your safety. No one will be named in the reports written about this research.'

Example introduction to an assessment/item trial:

'The results from the NRT will be reported anonymously and will not affect your GCSE grades in any way. Results will only be reported as national data and no individual student or school will be identified. However, if we have a concern about your welfare, we may need to share your answers to the NRT with an appropriate member of staff at your school.'