

## Bradford Shielding Policy for ContactPoint

This policy was agreed at the meeting of the Bradford Safeguarding Children Board on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2008. It is based on the policy used by Leeds Safeguarding Children Board.

i. Who can determine shielding?

Determining whether to hide a child's whereabouts by shielding a child record on ContactPoint will be carried out through current channels at agency/ organisation level. Specific members of staff (in addition to the local ContactPoint team) will be nominated to access the shielding functionality on ContactPoint.

ii. When is it appropriate to shield?

It is vital that 'shielding' (and thereby hiding the whereabouts of a child or young person on ContactPoint) is only applied when there are strong reasons to believe that not doing so would place the child/young person and/or their parent/carer at an increased risk of harm.

Note: by increased risk of harm' we mean that:

An individual(s) is likely to cause significant harm to the child/young person and/or their parent/carer; *and therefore*

The child/young person and/or their parent/carer is, or will be protected, at a location that is not known to the individual(s) in question.

Situations where it would be appropriate to consider shielding would include C&YP:

- In adoptive placements (before the order is granted)
- Subject to Court Orders that prevent the disclosure of information
- Subject to s(8) Prohibited Steps Orders in Private Law proceedings
- Subject to s(34) Contact Orders in Public Law proceedings
- In the Criminal Justice System
- With changed identities
- Who have been living in the context of domestic abuse

iii. What do we mean by significant harm?

The Children Act 1989 introduced the concept of significant harm as the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of children.

There are no absolute criteria on which to rely when judging significant harm. Sometimes, a single traumatic event may constitute significant harm, e.g. violent assault, suffocation or poisoning. More often, significant harm is a compilation of significant events, both acute and long-standing, which interrupt, change or damage the child's physical and psychological development.

iv. What do we mean by police protection?

Police protection is where the police have reasonable cause to believe that an individual is at risk of significant harm and removes the individual to a place of safety.

v. What about other national and local policies for shielding on databases?

On a national level, the ContactPoint National Team is working with other Government departments to ensure that shielding requests are supplied to ContactPoint where records are shielded on national databases because the child/young person and/or their parent/carer would be placed at an 'increased risk of harm' if details revealing their whereabouts are not hidden.

The Children Act 2004 Information Database (England) 2007 requires LAs to determine whether it is appropriate to apply shields to records on ContactPoint. When deciding whether to shield records on ContactPoint, LAs must only consider whether the reasons for 'shielding' are consistent with the ContactPoint guidance. In doing so, they must bear in mind the views of involved practitioners and the child/young person or the parent/carer acting on their behalf.

## **Process**

The Bradford Safeguarding Children Board requires partner agencies to ensure that all practitioners and first line managers are aware of the implementation of ContactPoint in Bradford and of the need to consider whether 'shielding' is appropriate for children and young people with whom they are engaged.

Where an agency is considering making a request to the BRadford ContactPoint team for a child or young person's details to be shielded liaison should take place with other agencies working with that child or young person.

### ANNEX A - ContactPoint Shielding Criteria Flowchart

It is vital that shielding of a child or young person is only applied when there are strong reasons to believe that not doing so would place the child / young person and / or their parent / carer at an increased risk of harm.

#### If this record is not shielded will it:

