

## Child and Adult Protection and Safeguarding policy

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## 1. Policy statement

- 1.1 National Deaf Children's Society, including its international arm Deaf Child Worldwide, believe that children and adults should never experience abuse of any kind and have Zero Tolerance to all forms of abuse of children and adults at risk.
- 1.2 All children and adults at risks have a right to equal protection from all types of harm, exploitation or abuse regardless of for example, age, disability, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, language or social background.
- 1.3 We are committed to safeguarding children and adults at risk as an integral part of our Mission and Values. We will *promote* the welfare of children and adults at risk; work to *prevent* abuse occurring, seek to *protect* those who are risk of abuse or neglect; and *respond* as effectively as we are able to those who have been abused. We will take steps to identify those children and/or adults at risk.
- 1.4 Legal frameworks and procedures for dealing with safeguarding concerns vary from country to country, but we expect to see these fundamental principles applied wherever we are working.
- 1.5 Deaf and disabled children and adults may be particularly vulnerable to abuse, especially where they are more dependent on others due to the extent of their disability or have difficulty communicating. It is especially important to make sure all steps are taken to protect them from harm and to keep a watchful eye for signs of abuse, exploitation or neglect.
- 1.6 Safeguarding and responding to child/adult protection concerns is the responsibility of all staff, volunteers and representatives whether salaried or voluntary, whatever their role or status.
- 1.7 Promoting the welfare of children and adults at risk by working in partnership with them, their parents, carers and other agencies within the countries we operate is essential.

## 2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all staff, including senior managers and the board of trustees, paid staff, volunteers and sessional workers, agency staff, students or anyone working on behalf of the National Deaf Children's Society or its international arm Deaf Child Worldwide. The term 'staff' is used for simplicity throughout this document to refer to all of the above.

### 3. Definitions

3.1 **Safeguarding** can be defined as:

- Protecting children and adults at risk from harm, exploitation and maltreatment
- Preventing harm which could result in the impairment of children's or adults' health or development
- Promoting the welfare of children and adults at risk and enabling them to achieve the best outcomes<sup>1</sup>.

3.2 **Child/adult protection:** refers to the actions taken to protect children and/or adults who are at immediate risk of harm.

3.3 **Abuse:** Child/adult abuse, sometimes also referred to as 'maltreatment', is defined as all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect, radicalisation, misuse of power, coercion or control over another person, commercial or other exploitation resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's/adult's health, development or dignity<sup>2</sup>. Abuse is harm which is so severe or persistent that it's deemed "significant" and is likely to have a lasting effect on the health or development of the child or adult. This policy applies to all forms of harm, including harm which may be caused intentionally or unintentionally, and which may not reach the threshold of significant harm. Further definitions of harm/abuse can be found in the Procedures and Guidance documents.

3.4 **Child:** Although we recognise that the legal definitions of a child varies in different countries, for the purpose of this policy children are defined as all those less than 18 years of age in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>3</sup>. The guidance document sets out where there are legal definitions to consider within countries.

3.5 **Adults at Risk/vulnerable adults:** An adult at risk for the purpose of this policy, is anybody 18 or over and "who may be in need of care services by reason of mental health issues, disability, age or illness and who is unable to take care of himself or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation"<sup>4</sup>. The definition of an adult at risk varies from country to country. Some of our programmes and partners work with individuals aged 18-25 years. Accordingly, NDCS and DCW will respond to concerns regarding adults at risk that we support or come into contact within accordance to this policy and legislation applicable to the countries we operate in. We have a legal duty to apply safeguarding interventions when we identify an adult at risk.

3.6 **Vulnerable adults:** We also support or come into contact with other adults, who are not deaf themselves or related to a deaf child, through a range of services such as family events, helpline or Advice and Guidance Officers (AGO), local groups and family sign

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from the definition in Department for Education (2018) Working Together to Safeguard Children

<sup>2</sup> World Report on Violence and Health, WHO 1999 and 2002

<sup>3</sup> UNCRC (1989) Guiding Principles. Available at: [https://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Guiding\\_Principles.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Guiding_Principles.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Care and Support Statutory Guidance, (as issued under the Care Act 2014) 2022

language sessions. All adults at some point experience vulnerability, for example through bereavement, relationship breakdown, job loss or due to characteristic factors such as living with disability, dementia and mental ill health. Whilst NDCS does not have a legal responsibility, NDCS and DCW will respond to adults identified as vulnerable, or experiencing a period of vulnerability, and in need of support by signposting them to other services such as their GP, social services or the Samaritans.

- 3.7 **Deaf:** We use the term 'deaf' to refer to **all levels of hearing loss in children and young people**, including a partial, total or temporary loss of hearing. This includes those who may describe themselves as having a 'hearing loss', 'hearing impairment' or as 'deaf' and includes children who have glue ear.

## 4. Principles

### We will seek to keep children safe by:

- 4.1 Valuing them, listening to and respecting them.
- 4.2 Through our work, supporting them to develop an awareness of unacceptable behaviour and what they can do about it.
- 4.3 Appointing a Head of Safeguarding and specific designated safeguarding officers for all areas of the organisation, including DCW.
- 4.4 Appointing a board member as Trustee Safeguarding Lead to have oversight of our safeguarding work.
- 4.5 Adopting safeguarding and child protection practices through robust policies and procedures.
- 4.6 Making sure everyone understands their roles and responsibilities and providing effective management for staff through supervision, support, training and quality assurance measures.
- 4.7 Recruiting staff safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made.
- 4.8 Making sure that we provide a safe physical environment for our children and staff by applying health and safety measures in accordance with the country specific laws and regulatory guidance, and to any higher standards that may be set by us.
- 4.9 Recording and storing information professionally and securely, and sharing information about safeguarding and good practice with children and adults at risk, their families and staff via the most appropriate method to the country we are operating in.
- 4.10 Using our safeguarding procedures to share concerns and relevant information with agencies who need to know and who will manage it and respond appropriately.
- 4.11 Using our procedures to manage any allegation against staff or other service users appropriately, transparently and effectively, and to prevent the employment/ deployment of unsuitable individuals through effective due diligence.

4.12 Making sure that we have effective complaints and whistleblowing measures in place.

## **5. Responsibilities and escalation**

- 5.1 Safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone. This should be made explicit in every job or role description for staff, sessional workers and volunteers and referenced in agreements with partners and contractors.
- 5.2 The policy and procedures will be widely promoted and are mandatory for everyone involved in the National Deaf Children's Society and Deaf Child Worldwide.
- 5.3 Failure to comply with the policy and procedures will be addressed without delay and may lead to disciplinary process, ultimately resulting in dismissal/exclusion from the organisation.
- 5.4 We will make sure each department within the charity has a designated safeguarding officer who can provide advice on any safeguarding concerns and escalate them where appropriate.
- 5.5 We will make sure there is clear internal escalation procedure to the Head of Safeguarding, executive directors and trustees, as well as external escalation to the relevant authorities responsible for safeguarding/child abuse allegations within each country we operate.
- 5.6 Our trustees will maintain an oversight of safeguarding within the organisation to make sure that those benefiting from, or working with the charity are not harmed in any way through contact with it. This includes having a nominated Trustee Safeguarding Lead, providing regular updates and annual safeguarding training for all trustees. The safeguarding responsibilities for trustees and for the Trustee Safeguarding Lead are set out in the trustees' role description.

## **6. Implementation**

- 6.1 This policy is implemented through accompanying detailed procedures, specific to the UK or international context. The procedures contain all necessary forms, flowcharts and contact information. Guidance and training are also provided to help staff carry out their safeguarding and child/adult protection responsibilities.

In the UK

- Safeguarding Procedures and Guidance

Internationally

- DCW: Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures

## **7. Digital Safeguarding**

### **7.1 Introduction**

Social media and digital services have become an important part of everyday life. They are an exciting and engaging way of keeping in touch with friends and family, as well as groups and organisations.

We have increased our digital services so it is essential that our beneficiaries are safeguarded from potential harm and abuse. We implement, regularly review appropriate safeguarding measures, monitoring and moderating systems.

### **7.2 We know that**

Many deaf children, young people, adults and their families use social media and online devices as a default of engagement with others due to various degrees of communication barriers.

There has been a rise in online abuse, inappropriate use of technology, the number of perpetrators of all ages, and the level of inappropriate contact, conduct and content. Online based physical abuse, radicalisation, grooming, exploitation for different purposes, harmful information and websites have increased significantly.

### **7.3 We will ensure that:**

Our online services are designed and managed to the standards recommended by The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command (CEOP), the ICO Children's Code

We provide beneficiaries with information, advice and guidance on how to safely use our digital services.

We signpost to other organisations who may be more expert in guiding young people how to stay safe online.

Our staff are trained to follow and enforce our safeguarding processes. So that our digital services provide safe, high quality environment our beneficiaries trust us to deliver.

Our safeguarding responsibilities are enforced devices (mobile, laptop, desktop etc.) and all digital platforms whether they are private conversations (e.g. WhatsApp) or public conversations (e.g. Facebook).

### **7.4 We will require all our staff to:**

Conduct themselves professionally regardless of the method of communication with a child, adult or family.

Ensure they document online conversations, chats or interventions as they would via other means of offline communication, for instance face-to-face conversations. The same data protection and safeguarding protocols apply, such as seeking parental consent to record.

Follow all relevant safeguarding and data protection guidance when considering the use of digital equipment and securing consent to do so.

Only use the organisation's purchased devices, videos and cameras (including tablets, phones etc.) in order to take photos of beneficiaries. Under no circumstances are photographs or videos to be taken on personal devices. Secure written parental consent, or individual consent (if over 18 years old), before photographs or videos are created. The purpose of the photograph or video must be explicitly on the consent form and can only be used for that purpose. Wherever possible, images and videos should be captured on organisation's devices shared by teams, or which are temporarily loaned to them by the I.T. department for the purpose. Using organisation's devices assigned to staff permanently for their individual use should be avoided. You must discuss with your line manager and follow all requirements, such as risk assessments, secure parental consent, if this cannot be avoided. Written agreement from line managers is also required.

Understand they are not permitted to show any images from their work devices to anybody outside of the organisation.

Leave and securely store any devices not permanently assigned to individual staff that contains images of the people we support at one of the organisation's buildings, they may not be taken off-site.

#### **7.5 Managing digital related concerns:**

If the staff suspect that somebody is, or has been, subjected to harm or abuse through the use of social media or online devices, they must share their concerns with their line manager or Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO).

The DSO will also consider the best course of action, including contacting local police by calling 101 or 999 if there is a risk of immediate harm. Each police force has a dedicated unit for online investigations.

If the concern regards sexual abuse or grooming of a child online, a referral may also be made to the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command (CEOP), which is part of the UK's National Crime Agency (NCA).

Where a DSO cannot find a local police unit a referral to CEOP must be undertaken. CEOP will make arrangements with the relevant police force. CEOP works nationally and internationally to bring online child sex offenders, including those involved in the production, distribution and viewing of child abuse material to the UK courts. Referrals can be made at [www.ceop.police.uk/ceop-reporting/](http://www.ceop.police.uk/ceop-reporting/). The DSO must take advice from the police and/or CEOP regarding delete and take steps to preserve or record evidence of online harm e.g. screenshots, but only if those authorities instruct to do so.

If the threshold for an allegation is not met and the threshold for any safeguarding considerations are not met, our Code of conduct policy, Complaints policy, Data Protection policy and/or disciplinary procedures, amongst others will be considered and whichever takes prevalence and as applied as appropriate.

#### **7.6 Our policies and conduct:**

All policies and procedures are applicable and any breach will be treated the same whether it is online or offline. Inappropriate use of social media and online technology may breach our Safeguarding policy and Safeguarding Allegations against the Workforce



procedure. These two documents are initially considered if the staff member has breached safeguarding, data protection, safe and effective practice or conduct which may have, or did put children or adults at risk.

In certain circumstances breaches may also result in reports to regulatory bodies, relevant Local Authorities and the police.

## **8. Further information and supporting documentation**

- 8.1 A list of safeguarding personnel can be found in Appendix 1.
- 8.2 For further information or queries, including advice on implementing this policy and procedures, please contact your designated safeguarding officer. Names and contact details can be found as an appendix to the relevant procedures and guidance.
- 8.3 This policy is supported by the additional following policies, rules, standards, forms and procedures:
- Guidance for Safer Working Practice
  - Safer Recruitment and Vetting policy
  - Procedures for managing allegations against staff and volunteers
  - E-safety policy
  - Confidentiality and Information Sharing policy
  - Lone Working policy and procedure
- 8.4 Other related policies are:
- Complaints
  - Health and Safety
  - Equality and Diversity
  - Code of conduct
  - Whistleblowing
  - Data Protection
  - Relationship and Sexual Health
- 8.5 A list of relevant UK and international laws and guidance can be found in Appendix 2.

## **9. Revisions**

- 9.1 This policy will be reviewed annually and additionally if a significant change is made to the laws, regulations, systems or processes related to this policy.

## Appendix 1: Safeguarding personnel

The National Deaf Children's Society will have the following specific safeguarding roles:

- Trustee Safeguarding Lead
- Safeguarding Strategic Lead
- Head of Safeguarding
- Designated Safeguarding officers for each team within the Children, Young People and Families department
- A team of Designated Safeguarding Officers assigned to all Directorates and/or Departments, including DCW (one in each area: UK, East Africa and South East Asia)
- Out of Hours Safety coordinators (UK)

Questions and concerns may also be addressed to the Head of Safeguarding's email address: [andrew.richardson@ndcs.org.uk](mailto:andrew.richardson@ndcs.org.uk)

Names and contact details can be found as an appendix to the relevant procedures and guidance.

## Appendix 2: Relevant laws and related guidance

This policy has been drawn up in the basis of UK and relevant international laws and guidance that seeks to protect children and adults (this list is not exhaustive):

### International Legislation

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1991 (Article 19)

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2008

European Convention on Human Rights

### In the UK (not limited to)

#### Legislation

Children's Act 1989 and 2004

Children (Scotland) Act 1995

Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014

The Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (Northern Ireland) Order 2003

The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995

Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014

The Care Act 2014

The Adults Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007

**Associated Legislation (not limited to)**

Data protection Act 2018

Information Sharing Statutory Guidance 2015

Human Rights Act 1998

Sexual Offences Act 2003

Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003

Mental Capacity Act 2005

Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

Children and Young Persons Act 2008

Equality Act 2010

Protection of Freedom Act 2012

Children and Families Act 2014

Community Care Act 2014

Serious Crime Act 2015

Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015

**Government and Statutory Guidance (UK) (not limited to)**

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)

National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland (2014)

Cooperating to Safeguard Children and Young People (Northern Ireland, 2017)

Working Together to Safeguard People (Wales, 2017)

Prevent Strategy (2011)

Care and Support Statutory Guidance (England 2022)

The Adults Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007: Code of Practice 2014

Adult Safeguarding in Northern Ireland: Prevention and Protection in Partnership 2016

**National Professional Standards and Regulatory Bodies (UK)**

Ofsted

Care Inspectorate

CQC

CIW

## Local Agencies (UK)

Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships

Area Child Protection Committees

Safeguarding Board for NI

Local Safeguarding Adult Boards

## **In other countries where we work**

Each country where we work has specific laws with which we will comply.

## **Appendix 3: Coronavirus addendum to accompany our safeguarding policies and procedures**

Social distancing measures introduced by the government during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic means that working with deaf children/adults and their families have had to change the way we operate on a day-to-day basis. NDCS and DCW are more reliant on [remote or distanced contact](#) which may mean being less able to recognise child and adult protection concerns, provide appropriate support and follow policies and procedures.

We have created an addendum to accompany our existing Child and Adult Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, recruitment policy and procedures and our Code of conduct policy. This addendum sets out key areas to strengthen our policies and procedures during the Covid-19 pandemic to ensure children, adults and their families are kept safe during these precedent and challenging times.

**This addendum does not replace the policies and procedures.**

### **Safeguarding principles**

Although day-to-day working arrangements may be different, the key principles of our Children and Adults Protection and Safeguarding Policy and procedures **remains the same**.

- The child's or adult's welfare should come first.
- If anyone has a concern about a child or an adult, they should act immediately following our Child and Adult Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures. This also includes children, adult and/or their families who may be impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, such as domestic abuse, mental health, isolation and anxiety.
- Our safeguarding team remains available to deal with concerns and offer guidance.
- Our Head of Safeguarding also remains available to support or cover our Designated Safeguarding Officers (DSOs), as well ensure their own responsibilities are met. Their contact details remain the same and can be found in our policy and intranet. Should your DSO be on furlough, or if you cannot get in touch with them, please divert to another DSO, or contact the Head of Safeguarding.
- Should a child or adult be in immediate risk to them, as per our policy and procedures, contact the police, social care or NSPCC Helpline. You still must inform your DSO once you have done so.
- Following a temporary suspension, our out of hours facilities are now back in service. However, we have adapted processes for responding to concerns out of hours, including using external moderation companies for our digital offerings. We have completed risk

assessments, due diligence checks for safeguarding in response to any adapted or new services as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Any new or further adaptation of contact or services are subject to additional assessments and considerations.

- We will continue to follow existing statutory safeguarding and child/adult protection guidance, including sharing our concerns with the local authority and/or police. We will review and update our range of policies and procedures regularly throughout the coronavirus pandemic to reflect circumstances as they evolve.
- We will continue to ensure our contact with children and their families adheres to safe and effective practice.
- We will provide guidance and training on recognising and raising concerns whilst working with children and their families remotely.
- We will make sure children and their families have someone to talk to if they're worried about anything, for example, our helpline, The Buzz, contacting their nominated ADOs signposting, and giving them key contact details within our organisation for any projects they may benefit from, such as Pen Pals project.
- We will keep up to date with external and internal context during the pandemic and post pandemic. For example, we know that families experience new challenges during the pandemic, for example, home education, income loss, mental health problems, family conflict, difficulty getting food and experience new, or increased abuse such as domestic abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, and sexual abuse. We adapt to these needs and respond to concerns accordingly.

### **Safe recruitment**

Our [Safe recruitment practices](#) remains crucial and should be followed in accordance to our recruitment policies and procedures at all times. Covid-19 pandemic has impacted our recruitment processes. Contact Deputy Director People and/or HR/Volunteering Business Partners for advice and guidance to ensure our standards are not reduced and remains safe and effective.

Our Recruitment Policy and guidelines underpins our ongoing commitment to ensure that only suitable people will be recruited to work or volunteer with children and adults at risk. To recruit safely during the pandemic, NDCS/DCW will ensure:

- Shortlisting processes haven't changed. Managers are advised to follow our standard procedures and shortlist in a way that they have always done so – by assessing candidates' applications online and shortlisting based on person specification criteria.
- Interviews are now held remotely. There is no change to our standard processes and the interviews still must be conducted face to face, however this is now being done remotely via video interviewing. NDCS will ensure that a person trained in safer recruitment will be on the interview panel. Managers are advised to complete the right to work checks during the interviews, in line with our Guidance for managers – Right to Work checks during the Covid-19 guidance, and to re-check the documents once we are back in the office.
- Vetting and barring checks - Vetting and barring checks for high level checks (ie enhanced and enhanced with barred list) are now done by a third party provider called DDC who is processing the applications and checking candidates documents on behalf of NDCS. Basic checks are processed online by candidates. This is a new procedure and it will remain in use after the pandemic is over as it will enable us to receive the disclosure outcomes promptly and safely.

- Induction and training – Induction and training programmes that were held face to face are now being done remotely. Most of our training offer was provided online before the Covid-19, so there is not much change in how the training and inductions are done.
- Supervision and support – managers are advised to hold regular 1-1s, team meetings and to complete temporary home-worker risk assessment forms and to raise any concerns with HR. We also offer increased health and wellbeing support via online learning.

#### **How we will continue to work with children and families.**

- Across the UK, the government has set out which children are classed as ‘vulnerable’ during the coronavirus pandemic (DfE, 2020b; Department of Education, 2020; Scottish Government, 2020; Welsh Government, 2020b).
- NDCS and DCW recognise that all our children beneficiaries are classed as vulnerable by nature of being deaf, and for some, may have additional disabilities or needs. NDCS and DCW have had to suspend many of its face to face work as a result of government guidance. However, NDCS and DCW have maintained contact with children, adults, their families and external partners wherever possible using safe and appropriate technology, as well as adapted or created projects in order to provide much needed support. For example:
  - Our Helpline remains operational, where individuals can call, text, email, video call or hold a live chat with a member of the team for free.
  - Our main websites remain operational for anybody wanting to seek information, advice and/or guidance.
  - The Buzz website continues to support deaf children and have been further developed in response to the impact of Covid-19.
  - We have adapted services and support so that they are offered remotely and digitally, for example, our roadshow, policy and campaigns and sign language teachings.
  - Created new digital/remote projects to keep deaf children and their families engaged with NDCS and DCW, such as pen pals.
- All of our provisions have undergone careful considerations and risk assessments to ensure they are appropriate, safe, inclusive and meet strict standards. This includes assessing potential new risks that deaf children, young people and their families may be particularly exposed to as the pandemic continues.

#### **Code of Conduct Policy**

- Our Code of Conduct has not changed as a result of the pandemic, the way in which we work and function and as a result of engaging beneficiaries online and in respect of social distancing. Whether staff and volunteers are working from home, or are furloughed, our Code of Conduct remain applicable in all situations relating to work and personal circumstances, as stated in the policy.

#### **Impact of Covid-19 on Safeguarding: Online safety, domestic abuse and mental health**

- Whilst NDCS and DCW has planned for, and stands ready to respond to any safeguarding concerns, as well as those triggered by the impact of Covid-19. It is reasonable to expect levels of abuse to rise across the UK and overseas throughout the pandemic. It is also reasonable to assume deaf children and their families will be increasingly vulnerable throughout the pandemic and during periods of national or local lockdowns. It is

possible to receive increased reporting of all types of abuse and concerns, but in particular, we believe the three main areas of concerns will be:

### **Online safety**

- Online technology is invaluable for enabling children and young people to continue their learning, keep in touch with friends and feel connected with the outside world. But increased use of online technology, as well as changes in online behaviour, can put children and young people at risk of online abuse.
- Our staff and volunteers are increasingly communicating with children and young people online, via video calls, emails, live chat, social media, and blogs using various devices. Staff and volunteers should follow all policies, procedures, risk assessments, guidance and protocol to ensure safe conduct and appropriate use of devices and online technology. All legal requirements, terms and conditions, use of social media and other software/apps, devices uses and appropriate/safe contact must be adhered at all times. For further advice, you should seek advice from your line manager, Head of Safeguarding and the data protection officer.

### **Domestic abuse**

- During this intense period of social distancing where families are spending more time together, we believe there is heightened risk of [domestic abuse](#). You should follow our Child and Adult Protection and Safeguarding Policy and procedures to consider what action you should take about a child and their family experiencing domestic abuse. Remember that people are not expected to stay at home during coronavirus if their home is unsafe.

### **Mental health**

- We recognise that some children, adults and/or their family members' mental health may suffer during the pandemic, and outline in our policies, procedures, risk assessments and guidance what staff and volunteers should do if they have concerns about a person's wellbeing. NDCS and DCW will consider what can be put in place to help children, adults and their families whilst we engage them during the pandemic, as well as consider appropriate and suitable organisations to sign post to. We recognise parents' and carer's mental health will also be affected during the pandemic. Therefore staff and volunteers should consider how this will affect the children and young people you work with and what support they need when engaging them, either through ad hoc contact or through planned work.