



# Child protection enquiries

## A guide for parents and carers



## **Child Protection Enquiries**

You will have been told that child protection enquiries are being made about your child (this is sometimes called a Section 47 child protection investigation). This leaflet explains what this means.

### **What does making 'child protection enquiries' mean?**

It means that a social worker, paediatrician (children's doctor) or sometimes a police officer has to ask questions to gather information to see if your child is safe.

### **Why is this needed?**

Children's Social Care Services (used to be called Social Services) have received information that your child may have been harmed or could be harmed in the future. They have a legal duty to make these enquiries. This is to decide whether or not they need to take any action to keep your child safe. Such harm could be physical, emotional, sexual or neglect.

### **Who will be involved in these enquiries?**

The social worker will involve you and your family and anyone else who can help them to decide whether your child has been harmed or is at risk of harm. They will talk to a range of people which may include teachers, health visitors, your GP or others. The social worker or other professionals will want to talk to you and may want to talk to your child alone. If there are other children in the family they may also need to be seen in order to make sure they are alright.

**The safety of your child is the most important thing. We know that the best way to ensure this is by everyone working together, including with you and your family. In all cases every effort will be made to keep you and your child together and within your family.**

## **Do you need my permission to contact other people?**

The social worker will normally ask for your permission to speak to other people such as teachers or your GP who know your family or to talk to your child alone.

However, if you do not give your permission and your child is at risk of harm, Children's Social Care may still do this without your permission. In some cases if the concerns are about you, Children's Social Care may speak to other people in organisations that know you and your family before they speak to you.

It is important that you are as open and honest as you can be so that everyone can understand what has happened or may happen in the future.

You have the right to be heard, kept informed, ask for explanations, seek legal advice, have an interpreter (if you need support in communicating in English) and have your cultural and religious background taken into account.

## How will my child be involved?

The social worker and the Police may need to talk to your child away from the home. Your child may also need to have a medical examination at the hospital, and if they are old enough to give consent, this will be discussed with them. You will be asked if you agree with these things happening. If you do not give your signed consent for medical investigations, permission may be asked for from the court. Wherever possible we will involve you and your child in the process and ask them for your views.

## What happens after the child protection enquiries?

- If it is believed that your child is not at risk of harm, children's social care may take no further action.
- A more detailed assessment may be needed where there is no risk of harm but it is felt that you would benefit from some help and support.
- If it is felt that your child is at continuing risk of harm, a meeting will be held with people from organisations who know your child and family. This is called a 'Child Protection Conference'. You will normally be invited to this meeting as well as your child where appropriate. Your child's social worker will give you a leaflet to explain what may happen at this meeting and explain in further detail.

- If your child is at immediate risk of harm, police can remove a child from a household in an emergency situation, otherwise only a court can make an order for the removal of a child. You can access free legal advice at this stage.
- The social worker may need to arrange with you for someone to look after your child until the child protection enquiries are finished. If it is appropriate this could be a relative, friend or a foster carer.

### **Remember...**

Whilst child protection enquiries are made, most children remain at home with their family. However, where any individual is suspected of causing harm to your child, they may be asked to leave the home whilst these enquiries are made.

If you don't understand anything in this leaflet or during the enquiries please ask the social worker. It is part of the social workers' job to make sure that you understand what is happening and that you are involved.

### **If you want to make a complaint**

If you are not happy with the way the child enquiries about your child are being done, let your social worker or another person who is involved know. If you are unhappy with one of the professionals or agencies working with you and your child, ask for their complaints leaflet.





## Where can I go for further help and advice?

**The NSPCC** is a national charity campaigning on behalf of children and young people. The NSPCC has helplines that children and adults can ring for advice and support. Children and young people can call ChildLine on **0800 1111**.

Adults can call **0808 800 5000** for help and advice.  
[www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)

**The Family Rights Group (FRG)** provides free confidential advice and support to families whose children are involved with local authority children's services. Families can call its advice service free on **0808 801 0366**.

FRG also has a range of free advice sheets on its website. [www.frg.org.uk](http://www.frg.org.uk)

**Family Action** is a charity providing practical, emotional and financial support to disadvantaged and socially isolated families. [www.family-action.org.uk](http://www.family-action.org.uk)

Parent help line: **0808 802 6666**