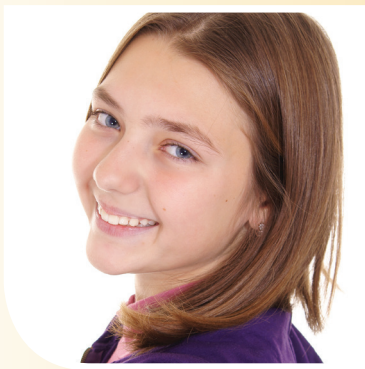


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# Child Protection Enquiry

Information for parents and carers



**This leaflet has been written to answer some of the questions parents and carers have about Child Protection Enquiries.**

If you have difficulty reading, the social worker can arrange for someone to help you understand what the leaflet says.

### **The Child Protection Enquiry**

If you have been given a copy of this leaflet you will have seen a social worker and possibly a police officer because of concerns about your child.

In order to help protect your child, it is important that you are fully involved in any enquiry. You will need to be told exactly what the concerns are so that you are clearly informed and can cooperate with the agencies involved in the enquiry.

If there is anything you do not understand you must ask for it to be explained more fully. Every attempt will be made to make things clear.

The focus of the work of the investigation team will be the safeguarding of your child.

**The welfare of children will always come first.**

### **The various stages of a Child Protection Enquiry**

When concerns about the safety or well-being of a child are reported to the police or the council these must be investigated.

### **Immediate protection from danger**

**Very occasionally information is received, or a child is found to be in such serious danger that it is necessary to remove the child immediately to protect them from harm.**

## **Child Protection Enquiries in relation to immobile (pre-mobile) babies and children**

Some children are particularly vulnerable due to age and mobility. Any injuries to babies who are not yet mobile will lead to concerns being raised by professionals. This is relevant to newborn babies but can equally relate to children when their movement is limited, such as not able to roll, crawl or walk.

### **All professionals have to look very seriously at any bruising to a baby before they can roll, crawl or walk.**

Some examples of where there will be concerns include:

- Bruises that are seen away from bony areas
- Bruises to the face, back, abdomen, arms, buttocks, ears and hands
- Multiple bruises of uniform shape
- Bruises that show the shape of an implement
- Bruising in children who are not independently mobile

### **Process**

A bruise will never be considered by itself, no matter what the age of the child and it will always be assessed taking into account the child's (and parents) medical and social history, developmental stage and the explanation given for the bruise.

When a bruise is noted on babies and children who are not yet mobile a referral to Children's Services may be made so that child protection procedures can begin. Your health visitor and doctor will be informed of any action taken.

In all cases where there are visible injuries, a medical assessment will be considered. The consultant paediatrician (a doctor that specialises in the medical care and treatment of children) will be contacted and an appointment set up for the same day to have the child assessed and medically evaluated.

## **Stage 1**

### **Initial checks**

Checks are made with other professionals to find out more about you and your family. For example, the school, health visitor or doctor may be asked for information. This may seem intrusive, but it is necessary to talk to people who know your child because important decisions about their welfare and safety will need to be made. Your consent may be asked for, in order to start the checks. If you do not give consent, the enquiry may still continue, if it is thought that your child is at risk of harm.

## **Stage 2**

### **Strategy meeting**

Once the social worker and police officer (if one is involved) have completed their initial enquiry they will meet with a manager from Children's Services and other professionals who know your family. The purpose of the meeting is to share information and decide what further action is needed. It is then decided if and how the enquiry will proceed. The meeting will also decide:

- Who will be seen and by whom
- When and how children will be seen
- Whether there is a need to clarify or obtain other information
- Whether a medical diagnosis or examination of the child is necessary

You will be spoken to following the strategy meeting and you may be asked to give your consent for your child to be spoken to.

Only on rare occasions would action be taken, or children seen without the knowledge of their parents or carers. This action would only be taken if it was seen to be in the child's best interest, in which case strict procedures would be followed.

## **Stage 3**

### **Visiting your family**

A social worker and possibly a plain clothes police officer will visit you to introduce themselves and explain the details of the concerns that have been raised.

If information suggests that your child has been sexually or physically harmed you may be asked for permission to have your child seen by a paediatrician. The paediatrician is also experienced in the diagnosis of the cause of injuries and can help to understand the possible causes. Any child over 16 can give consent to an examination. A child younger than 16 can consent if it is felt that he or she understands what this means. You will be asked for consent; if this is refused then legal advice may be sought by Children's Services, to find a way forward.

The social worker or police officer may talk to you about the most suitable way to interview your child. They may ask to see your child on their own. All attempts will be made to make sure that your child is not distressed by these actions.

In some situations a criminal offence against a child may have taken place which could result in court action. If it is felt that a child may have to give evidence against an adult, the child may be asked to be interviewed on video. Your child would need to be willing for this to take place.

## **Stage 4**

### **Decision making**

At the end of the enquiry the social worker or police officer (if involved) and a manager from Children's Services will decide whether there are any remaining child protection concerns. If there are, you will be invited to a Child Protection Conference to discuss these.

You can find more information in our leaflet: '**2 Child Protection Conferences, Information for parents and carers**'





Social worker's name:.....

Contact number:.....

Address:.....

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[www.durham-lscb.org.uk](http://www.durham-lscb.org.uk)

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