

CHILD PROTECTION INVESTIGATIONS A BRIEF GUIDE

WHAT IS A CHILD PROTECTION INVESTIGATION?

If Social Services Department become aware that a child under 18yrs of age may be at risk of Significant Harm, the law says they must investigate. This guidance is in Section 47 of The Children Act 1989.

To investigate means finding out as much as possible about the concerns raised. To do this Social Workers will need to see and talk to:

- Parents
- Children
- Other people involved with the family eg Teacher/Health Visitor/ Doctor/School Nurse

They may need to have the child examined by a doctor, with your consent.

WHAT IS MEANT BY 'SIGNIFICANT HARM'?

This term was introduced in the Children Act 1989. 'Harm' means -'the ill-treatment or the impairment of health or development of a child' - be that physical, sexual, emotional, or by neglect of a child.

WORKING TOGETHER

In 1999 the Government published a document called 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'. This document tells professionals how to work together to protect children from abuse and neglect. Health workers, education workers, police, social services, probation services and other professionals who come into contact with children and families have to use this guidance. If professionals have concerns about a child they have a duty to inform Social Services and parents.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND CHILDREN

It is expected that professionals will work together with families. Social Services and other agencies should be open with families, and joint decisions should be made wherever possible.



WORKING WITH THE POLICE

Social Services and the Police work together to investigate child protection concerns. There will always be a discussion between the teams and a joint plan of action drawn up. This means that there will always be a discussion between Police and Social Services to agree the best way forward, and they may visit you together.

ISSUE OF CONSENT

There are many circumstances where professionals are required to share information about children and families. The law says that consent of the parent would normally be obtained before this can happen.

In a Child Protection Investigation obtaining consent may be dispensed with, if this might place the child at further risk. This may mean that professionals have shared information about you and your family prior to visiting you.

WHAT SOCIAL SERVICES CAN DO

They have a duty to tell parents what their worries are about the child and share information with them.

They must try and help families to stay together as far as possible.

They should only take a child away from home if it is necessary for the child's safety. This may require an application to the Court if parental agreement to safeguard the child cannot be reached.

Social Workers have no rights to enter a family home without permission.

Social Workers cannot have a child medically examined without parental permission.



WHAT ACTION MIGHT SOCIAL SERVICES TAKE FOLLOWING THE INVESTIGATION?

There are a number of things that Social Services might do after completing the first stages of a child protection investigation. You should be told in writing what the outcome of an investigation is. Here are the most common examples:

- Take no further action: Social Services will let you, and other agencies that gave information during the investigation know that the case is closing.
- Further assessment to identify support: although Social Services may have found that your child is not at risk of significant harm, you and the social worker may feel that your family need some help. The assessment is to work out what help you might need and which organisation might be able to give it.
- Further assessment and Child Protection Conference: if Social Services feel that your child is at risk of significant harm, there will be further assessment to help work out what needs to change to make sure that your child is safe. A Child Protection Conference will take place with all of the professionals who know you and your child, and you will also be invited to attend. This meeting decides whether or not your child's name goes on the Child Protection Register.
- Apply to Court for an Order: if it is felt that your child is at risk of harm, and cannot be looked after safely at home, Social Services may apply to Court for a Care Order.

Social Services will still have to complete an assessment to see what needs to change if your child is to be looked after safely at home.

PARENTS AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Parents and children have the right to:

- Have their views heard and taken into account.
- Be involved in and told about decisions.
- Receive support from Social Services.
- Seek advice from a solicitor.
- Complain about decisions or actions and have their complaints heard.



WHERE TO GO FOR ADVICE AND INFORMATION

- A solicitor (see telephone directory)
- Citizens Advice Bureau
01274 725323 (Bradford)
01274 532475 (Shipley)
01535 605454 (Keighley)
- The Law Centre, Bradford - 01274 306617
- The Family Rights Group, London - 02079 232628
- Childline, North West - 0161 8349945
- NSPCC Child Protection Helpline - 0808 800 5000

SOCIAL SERVICES CHILDRENS OFFICES

Child Protection Unit

Directorate of Social Services
Children's Department
PO BOX 992
Bradford
BD1 5WS
Tel: 01274 437500

Keighley and Shipley

Cooke Street
Keighley
BD21 3PB
01535 618123

North Bradford

9 Romanby Shaw
Greengates
Bradford
BD10 OEH
01274435600

South Bradford

297 Rooley Lane
Bradford
BD5 8LY
01274 435901

West Bradford

No 6 House (Children)
Springfield Complex
Squire Lane
Bradford
BD9 6RA
01274 435800

