



BEDFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

What is a Child Protection Enquiry?

A guide for
parents, carers and families

What is a Child Protection Enquiry?

When someone tells Children's Social Care that they think a child or young person is at risk of harm, we have a legal responsibility to make enquires to ensure that that child or young person is safe.

What is harm?

Harm to a child or young person can include:

Neglect – not providing adequate food, clothing or a clean home for a child

Physical abuse – physical punishment that causes injury

Sexual abuse – involving a child or young person in sexual activities or exploitation

Emotional abuse – not providing warmth and love

All these forms of harm can affect children's and young people's development and stop them from doing well in later life.

What will happen?

During the child protection enquiry Children's Social Care will gather information from people who have contact with the child or young person and their parents/carers and professionals, for example teachers and doctors. We will ask your permission before we talk to other professionals, unless we think that this would place your child or young person at more risk. For more information on this please look at our leaflet call **"Information sharing and consent – for parents and carers"**.

Your child or young person will be allocated a Social Worker who will visit you (sometimes with a Police Officer) to talk about the concerns and get your views. They must:

- explain why they are visiting
- discuss the concerns with you and ask your views
- see and speak to your child or young person (by themselves, if they are old enough)
- assess any immediate risk to your child or young person

After meeting you, it may be that there is no reason for us to contact you again. If so, you will be told as soon as possible.

If the concerns require further investigation, enquiries should be completed within 15 working days. During this time your child or young person will be interviewed and may require a medical examination. The Police Public Protection Team may also carry out their own investigations if they feel a criminal offence has been committed.

Interviewing a child or young person

In all cases your child's or young person's Social Worker will talk to them, usually by themselves. The Social Workers and Police Public Protection Officers who talk to children and young people are trained to listen to children and young people and to reduce any fears or anxieties that they may have.

If someone has committed a crime against your child or young person, for example an assault, a police officer may be involved in the enquiry and we may ask for your permission to interview your child or young person on video. This is to allow the police to get evidence for court. Usually, you may accompany your child or young person to the interview, but you won't be able to sit with them whilst they are being interviewed.



Medical Assessment

Sometimes it is necessary for your child or young person to be assessed by a doctor trained in child protection so we can find out if your child or young person has any injuries, and how these injuries happened. We will always ask for your permission first, but if you don't agree, we may have to take legal advice.

At the end of the enquiry

After all checks have been completed and everyone involved spoken to, Children's Social Care and the Police, with the parents' or carers' involvement, will make a decision about the next step.

The enquiry may show that your child or young person is not being harmed or neglected, and Children's Social Care will take no further action.

If the enquiry shows that your child or young person is being harmed or neglected, or is at risk of harm, Children's Social Care may decide to hold a formal meeting called a Child Protection Conference. This meeting may decide that a Child Protection Plan is necessary and will involve professionals working together to help improve your situation. For more information on what is a Child Protection Plan and Child Protection Conferences please see our leaflet called **"Child Protection Conferences - a guide for parents and carers"**.

It may be felt that your child or young person is not at risk of harm but both the child or young person and family are in need of support. Children's Social Care will seek to identify how best to support your family. This may be through the provision of Early Help or Child in Need services or by asking other agencies to help your family.

During the process described in this leaflet, you as the parent or carer have a right:

- to be heard and treated with respect
- to be kept informed and involved (where this does not place a child or young person at risk)
- to have your racial, religious and cultural background and that of your child or young person considered
- to bring a friend to any meetings for support. Remember that personal information about your family may be shared in discussions, which could include details of any criminal convictions, and anyone who comes with you will hear this information.

What if my child or young person is not safe at home?

The vast majority of children who are referred to Children's Social Care because of child protection concerns will remain at home with their parents/carers. Very rarely, if Children's Social Care is really worried about a child or young person being at risk at home, we may have to take further action to protect them.

If we think it is not safe for your child or young person at home, your child's or young person's Social Worker will talk to you about what options there are to keep them safe.

This may involve:

- someone who is living in your home moving out because it is thought they are a risk to your child or young person
- a friend or relative moving into your home to help you look after your child or young person
- your child or young person going to stay with family or friends, who have been approved by Children's Social Care
- if there is no-one that your child or young person can stay with, your child or young person can go and live with a foster carer.

These are temporary arrangements to make sure your child or young person is protected while Children's Social Care work with you to make sure it is safe for your child or young person to live at home.

What the professionals need from you to ensure the best outcome for your child or young person

Honesty and co-operation.

Complaints

If your child or young person is considered to be at risk and is made the subject of a Child Protection Plan and you think the decision is unfair (or if your child/ren is not made subject to a Child Protection Plan and you think they should have been) you should talk to your child's or young person's Social Worker. They may be able to explain further why the decision was made and answer any questions that are worrying you. If you still disagree you can contact the Conference Chairperson to explain why and an informal meeting can be arranged so that you can discuss it, ask your child's or young person's Social Worker for the Conference Chairperson's contact details.

Where the complaint is in relation to the practice, decision of a specific agency or a professional and their conduct, you will be directed to that agency's complaints procedure. For general complaint contact the Bedford Borough Customer Relations on telephone 01234 228597 or email: be.heard@bedford.gov.uk



Useful Contacts

Bedford Borough Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) – 01234 718700 during these hours (Mon-Thurs: 8.50am - 5.20pm Friday: 8.45am - 4.20pm) or Out of hours Emergency Duty team - 0300 300 8123 (Open 5pm – 9am Monday to Thursday, Weekends 4pm on Friday to 9am on Monday)

Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Board - 01234 276512

Bedfordshire Police Public Protection Team - 01234 846960

Childline - 0800 1111

NSPCC - 0808 800 5000

Family Rights Group - 0800 731 1696

Family Lives - 0808 800 2222

A local solicitor that specialises in Family Law.

Finding out more

If you would like further copies, a large-print copy or information about us and our services, please telephone or write to us at our address below.

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Za Informacije

Per Informazione



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