

How do we decide if your child needs a Child Protection Plan?

Information for Parents/Carers

(see also leaflet entitled ‘What is an Initial Child Protection Conference?’)

“Working together to improve life chances and aspirations for each child and young person in Sunderland”

Sunderland Local Safeguarding Children Board

Information for Parents/Carers

This is to help you get ready for going to an Initial Child Protection Conference or Child Protection Review Conference. The person who will manage the meeting is called an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO). The information in the rest of this paper will be talked about at the meeting to help decide if your child needs a Child Protection Plan. **Please talk to your Social Worker about this information and ask them to answer any questions you might have.**

Thresholds and Recognition

Thresholds are used to help decide if your child is being seriously harmed or might be seriously harmed. Child protection means work that is done to make children safe if they are being seriously harmed or if they might be seriously harmed.

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children means:

- Protecting children from being badly treated
- Stopping children from not being healthy or from not growing up properly
- Making sure children are growing up well and safely so that they can have the best chances in life

Initial Child Protection Conference

This meeting is where professionals such as your Child's Social Worker, teacher, health visitor etc will decide if your child is suffering or might suffer serious harm and if your child might need a Child Protection Plan.

Why would your child need a Child Protection Plan?

People at the meeting will talk about **continuing risk** of significant harm? This means, is your child still likely to be seriously harmed? By law (Under Section 31 of the Children Act 1989 as changed by the Adoption and Children Act 2002) harm means being badly treated, or stopping a child developing or being healthy. This can be through things such as smacking, being nasty and cruel, not feeding or not keeping medical appointments for your child, sexual abuse, or witnessing fighting and arguing in the house etc. Your Social Worker should have already talked to you about what they think is happening to your child. **Please ask your Social Worker to tell you again now if you are not sure.**

The people working with your family, like a Social Worker, Teacher, Health Visitor etc will talk about what is happening in your family and decide if your child needs a Child Protection Plan. You will be given lots of opportunities to say what you think and ask the other people at the meeting questions but you can't decide if your child should have a Child Protection Plan. If they decide that your child does need a Child Protection Plan your child will become the subject of a Child Protection Plan. (See leaflet Child Protection Plans – Information for Parents and Carers for more information about Child Protection Plans)

Child Protection Review Conference

This meeting is the one you will attend to decide if your child still needs a Child Protection Plan.

Does your child still need a Child Protection Plan?

Every Child Protection Conference Review will think about if your child is still a risk of serious harm.

Things the meeting will talk about are:

- Has the Child Protection Plan worked
- Is the risk of harm to your child lower
- Has more assessment work taken away the need for a Child Protection Plan
- Has something changed in your family so there is no need for a Child Protection Plan
- Could your child's needs be met by a Child in Need Plan instead

Categories

Abuse and neglect

Abuse and neglect are forms of badly treating a child. Somebody can abuse or neglect a child by causing harm, or because they didn't stop harm happening to a child. Children can be harmed in a family, at school, nursery, youth clubs etc by people they know. They can also be harmed by strangers but this doesn't happen very often. Children can be abused by adults and by other children.

The following definitions are taken directly from Working Together to Safeguard Children (A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children) 2006. These terms can sound very upsetting but you should ask your child's Social Worker to explain how the categories below are used to help decide how your child is suffering serious harm.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm can also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, an illness in a child.

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying, causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape, buggery or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual online images, watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- Protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers)
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

Does your child need to be the subject of a Child Protection Plan

Professionals will be asked to give their views on whether your child should be or remain the subject of a Child Protection Plan, and under what category of abuse.

If you do not understand the reason for your child being the subject of a Child Protection Plan, please ask your child's Social Worker or any other Core Group member to explain this to you.

If you have any comments about this leaflet please contact:

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