

CHILD PROTECTION INFORMATION FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

This information is provided to help you as a parent or carer understand why social workers, the police, health staff or others are working with you and your family to help keep your child safe. It explains the actions which are taken by social workers, the police or others to investigate concerns raised about a child's safety, care and protection as well as providing you with useful contacts.

Why people are concerned about your child?

We are responding to concerns having been raised about your child's safety, care and protection

Why social work, the police, health and others have become involved with you and your family

Social work has a duty to ensure that any concerns regarding the safety or wellbeing of a child are fully considered and that any support required is put in place. Social work and police jointly investigate concerns where it is believed a child may be at risk of significant harm and a crime may have been committed. They work with health staff and others to make sure that your child is safe and protected and ensure you get the help you need to do this.

What is likely to happen during the initial stages of an investigation?

At all times the safety and welfare of your child comes first. Usually police or social work will want to:

- Speak to your child
- Speak to you
- Speak to any other relevant person (for example, other family members, teacher, health visitor or school nurse)
- Make further enquiries if necessary
- Take further action if necessary (for example, arrange a medical examination for your child)

We know that being involved in the child protection system can be a stressful time for families. It is important that:

- Everything that's happening is explained to you
- You and your child/children's views are listened to
- You are advised on the best way you can support your child during this time

Where possible, you will be kept informed about what's going on, and where necessary, helped to support your child.

Getting and giving consent

Usually, social workers, police and a doctor will seek your child's permission before any interview or medical examination is carried out dependent on their age and level of understanding. In most cases your permission is also sought however, on occasions this might not be possible. In these situations the reason your child was interviewed, or any other action taken without your knowledge or consent, will be fully explained to you.

What will happen after the investigation?

A full written assessment of the risks to your child and needs of your child will always be completed. Your views and your child's views will be considered as part of this. This helps people managing the investigation to decide what needs to happen next. This could be:

- No need for any further action
- The offer of family support
- Consideration of the need for a Child's Plan
- Arrangement of a meeting (called a child protection planning meeting) to decide whether further action to protect your child is required. You will get further information about this prior to any meeting and can bring a representative with you
- Arrangements made in partnership with you for your child to live with a family member or friend
- Referral of the concerns about your child to the Children's Reporter and Procurator Fiscal
- Further legal action to protect your child
- Emergency measures in some circumstances to protect children where there are concerns about their immediate safety and no voluntary agreement can be reached

You will be told what decisions have been made by social work and given additional information to help you understand what is happening and what is likely to happen next. If you have any questions during this time you should discuss this with the social worker.

Where families can get help

If you feel you need legal advice on what you and your child's rights are in relation to this investigation you can contact:

- A solicitor (Legal Aid may be available) www.slab.org.uk
- The Scottish Child Law Centre www.sclc.org.uk
- Independent Advocacy in Aberdeenshire - Advocacy North East www.advocacyne.org.uk

Agencies working with families recognise that bringing up children can be demanding and stressful. However, children have a right to grow up where they feel safe, well cared for and protected.

If you would like further help or support on caring for your child, please speak to someone such as:

- Social Worker
- Your child's Named Person
- Education Staff
- Health visitor/Family Nurse/School Nurse
- Early Years Centre/Nursery Staff
- GP