Understanding a Child Protection Enquiry

Information for parents and carers

Why have I received this leaflet?

Someone has shared information with Children's Services because they are worried about your child's safety or wellbeing. We understand this may feel worrying, upsetting or overwhelming. We want to be open with you about why we are involved, what we are worried about, what will happen next and how you and your child will be involved.

What is a Child Protection Enquiry?

A child protection enquiry is the process Children's Services use when there is reason to believe a child may be experiencing, or may be at risk of experiencing, significant harm. You may also hear this described as an enquiry under section 47 of the Children Act 1989.

It helps us understand:

- What life is like for your child
- What we are worried about
- What is working well and helping to keep your child safe
- Your views and your child's views
- What, if anything, needs to change
- What help or support may be needed

Important

A child protection enquiry does not automatically mean your child has been harmed or that they will need a Child Protection Plan.

What happens during the enquiry?

Your social worker will spend time getting to know your child and family and gather information from people who know your child. This may include talking with you and other carers, meeting your child, visiting your home, and speaking with school, health services, the police or other people who know your family where relevant.

We will look at both the worries and the strengths and safety already present in your family.



People who care about your child matter

Grandparents, aunts, uncles, older siblings, family friends and other trusted adults can often be part of helping children stay safe and well supported. Tell your social worker about people who are important to your child and family.

Will I be told what the concerns are?

In most circumstances, yes. It is important that you understand what people are worried about so you can respond, share your perspective and be involved in what happens next. Sometimes information cannot be shared immediately if doing so could place a child or another person at greater risk or affect an investigation. If this happens, we will explain as much as we safely can.

Will you talk to my child?

Usually, yes. Understanding your child's day-to-day experience is an important part of the enquiry. We will think about their age, communication needs and understanding, and help them share their views in a way that works for them.

The questions we will keep coming back to

- **What are we worried about?**
  - What has happened, or could happen that may affect your child's safety?
- **What is working well?**
  - What strengths, relationships, and existing safety are helping your child?
- **What needs to happen?**
  - What needs to change or become stronger?
- **Who can help?**
  - What can family, friends, and professionals do to help?
- **How will we know?**
  - What will be different in your child's everyday life when things are safer?

What happens afterwards?

When the enquiry is complete, your social worker will explain what has been learned, the decision that has been made and what happens next. This may mean no further Children's Services involvement, help and support for your family, further work with your family, or an Initial Child Protection Conference if there are continuing concerns that your child may be at risk of significant harm.



What if I disagree?

It is okay to tell us when you see things differently. You can ask questions, explain your perspective, correct information you believe is inaccurate and ask why a decision has been made. Working together does not mean always agreeing. It means listening respectfully, being honest about differences and keeping your child's safety at the centre.

Who can I talk to?

Questions about a child protection enquiry

The best person you can speak to if you have any questions about the process will be the Social Worker for your child.

Independent advocacy - Coram Voice

An advocate can help a child or young person understand their rights, share their views and be heard. Scan the QR code to find out more about advocacy and how to ask for support.
Freephone: 0808 800 5792
Text or WhatsApp: 07758 670369
Email: help@coramvoice.org.uk

Advocacy

If you are unhappy with Children's Services

You can talk to your social worker or their manager.
You can also contact Children's Social Care Complaints.
Telephone: 0300 123 5038
Email: socialcarecomplaintsmanager@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Complaints

! If a child is in immediate danger

Call 999. For an urgent social care concern outside normal working hours, call 0300 123 5022 (Option 3).



Your key contacts

Social worker: _____

Phone number: _____

Next meeting / review date: _____

If you need this information in another language or format, or need help understanding it, please tell your social worker.

