

Complaints

If you have a complaint please contact the Social Worker involved with your child and a complaints leaflet will be made available to you. Complaints should be made in writing within 28 days of the Conference to:

Complaints Manager
Staffordshire County Council
Social Care and Health Directorate
The Walton Building
Martin Street
Stafford
ST16 2LH

www.staffordshire.gov.uk

Remember

- You are the most important person in your child's life.
- Your views and feelings will be heard and respected.
- There is a commitment from all Child Welfare Agencies to help and support you at this difficult time.
- If you are able to work with people who are committed to help you, it is likely that your child will remain safe.

Further helpful information is available from:

- A Solicitor who is a member of the Law Society's Children's Panel.
- Your local Citizens Advice Bureau.
- Family Rights Group (advice line) Tel: 0800 7311 696
- Children's Legal Centre (child law) – Tel: 0845 120 2948

The Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board is a partnership between:

Staffordshire County Council – Children and Lifelong Learning

Adult Social Care

District Councils

The Police

Probation

Youth Offending Services

Health

Connexions

CAFCASS

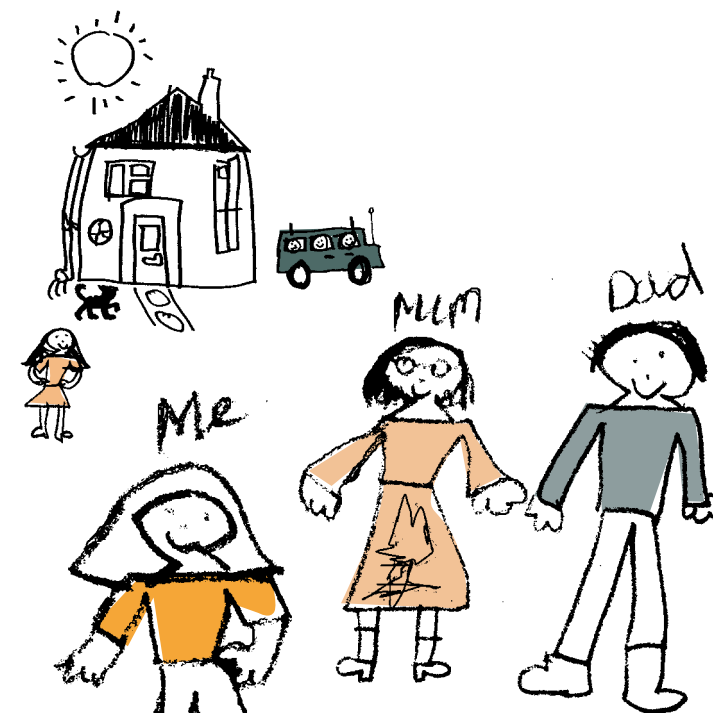
Young Offenders Institutes

The Voluntary Sector

If you would like this document in another language or format, e.g. large text, please contact the Communications Team (Children and Lifelong Learning) on 01785 278666.

Child Protection Investigations

Information for parents and carers



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Why does Children's Social Care need to be involved?

If Children's Social Care is told by someone that your child may be suffering harm or may be at risk of suffering harm, the law says that they must look into the matter to ensure that your child is safe. They may receive referral information from a variety of places, indeed anyone can refer to Children's Social Care if they are worried about a child.

What sort of harm?

Harm in these circumstances means child abuse or child maltreatment. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by harming them or also by not acting to prevent harm. It is often described in one of these ways:-

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Neglect
- Any combination of these

Enquiries will also have to be made if a child is living with someone who has previously been involved in the abuse of another child.

What is likely to happen?

- The social worker and/or police officer involved will tell you about the concerns that have been reported about your child. It may not be possible to tell you who reported these concerns.
- The social worker and/or police officer involved will need to talk to your child and any other children in your household. These interviews may be video recorded. This is to make sure that your child/ren is/are not questioned too many times. The video is then stored in a safe place by the police officer.

- Where it has been suggested that someone has caused harm to your child/ren you are likely to be spoken to by a social worker and a police officer.
- If you are able to talk openly with the people involved about the concerns the best decisions will be made for your child.

What else might happen?

- Sometimes it may be necessary for a doctor to see your child. This will normally be a doctor who has a lot of experience of working with children. If there are other children in the family they may also need to be seen in order to make sure that they are alright.
- You will be asked for your permission before your child is seen by a doctor (although if your child is old enough to understand what is happening they can give permission themselves).

Will my child/ren be taken away from me?

- This is often a very real concern for families. In the vast majority of reported child abuse cases it will be assessed that it is in the child's best interest for them to remain at home with their families. This is often where problems are sorted out most effectively.
- Sometimes agreement is reached for children to stay with their extended family for a short time while enquiries are made.
- If Children's Social Care believes it necessary, they can apply to the Court to protect your child if he/she is in danger of significant harm.
- If the Police believe that your child is in immediate danger they can take your child to a safe place for up to 72 hours. A safe place may include a family member, a family friend, a foster carer or sometimes hospital.

- Children's Social Care have to consider the safety and welfare of your child above all else, but they also have a responsibility to try to enable families to stay together.

After the investigation – what happens next?

Children's Social Care may do one or more of the following:-

- Take no further action.
- Offer you advice and help. This help may also be provided by other professionals or organisations.
- Arrange a meeting to decide what will happen next. (This is called an Initial Child Protection Conference – there is another leaflet that explains about this.)
- If it is absolutely necessary, take legal action in order to protect your child.

What are my rights as a parent?

You have the right to:-

- Be listened to and supported throughout the investigation.
- Be involved in what is happening and told about the decisions that are being made.
- Be told in writing about the outcome of the investigation when it is over.
- Be able to complain if you feel that you were not treated fairly and have your complaint dealt with.