The Enquiry
a guide for parents and carers

● You will have been given this leaflet because someone has reported a concern about your child, or a child in your care, to Children’s Social Care (previously known as Social Services) or the Police, and a decision has been made that further enquiries should be made about this concern.

● This booklet is designed to explain how these enquiries are carried out, and to answer some of the questions you may have.

● The Government has published guidance (in 2013) which sets out how Children’s Social Care, the Police, Health Services, Schools and others should respond to concerns that a child or young person may be suffering significant harm. This guidance is called “Working Together to Safeguard Children”.

● “Working Together to Safeguard Children” outlines four types of significant harm to children and these descriptions are used by local agencies.

Physical Abuse
Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning, suffocating, or some other type of deliberate harm to a child. Physical abuse may also be caused when a parent or carer makes up that a child is ill or knowingly makes a child ill.

Neglect
Neglect is when a parent/carer is not able to give a child the basic care or things that is needed to keep a child healthy, and without which could cause a child to become ill or not being able to develop physically or mentally in the usual way. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of a mother’s drug or alcohol use. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer:

● not providing enough food, shelter and clothing

● not protecting a child from something/someone that could hurt or be of danger to them
not providing good enough supervision

not making sure they receive the medical care or treatment which they might need.

Neglect is also when a parent or carer does not pay enough attention to how a child is feeling.

**Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or encouraging a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether the child knows what is happening or not. This may involve:

- touching theirs or someone else’s body (clothed or unclothed) in places which makes the child feel uncomfortable or thinks is wrong;

- having sex or watching someone else having sex;

- looking at, or taking part in making, sexual pictures (using cameras, videos, phones, web cams, etc. - pornography).

It also includes:

- not taking the steps they could to prevent a child from seeing sexual activity by other people

- when a stranger who has begun a friendship with a child, meets that child with the intention of sexually abusing them (also known as “grooming”). These friendships can begin through the use of chat rooms, mobile phones, etc.

- it is not only men who can sexually abuse, women or other children can also commit acts of sexual abuse
Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is when an adult regularly makes a child feel frightened, worthless or unloved and the child is only made to feel wanted when they do things to please the adult. This has the effect of stopping a child from emotionally developing in the normal way. Also:

- always expecting a child to achieve more than they are capable of, either in age or ability
- not giving a child the opportunity to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate
- being over-protective and not allowing a child to play, learn and generally mix with other children
- allowing a child to repeatedly see or hear another person being harmed (for example, domestic violence or bullying)
- bullying a child which causes them to always feel frightened or in danger or exploited
- regularly taking advantage, deceiving or being dishonest with a child are other types of emotional abuse.

REFERRAL

- Anyone who is concerned that your child is, or may be, being harmed may want to talk to Children’s Social Care about it. You may also ask for some assistance from Children’s Social Care if you are worried that your child has been or is at risk of being harmed. This is called a referral.

- If a professional person e.g. Teacher, Health Visitor, Doctor, decides to talk about their concerns for your child to Children’s Social Care, they will normally talk to you about it and ask for your permission to make the referral.

- However, if a professional thinks that your child would be harmed after discussing their concerns with you, they can decide to make the referral without telling you beforehand. However, there has to be a good reason for someone to make a referral without telling you.

- If you decide not to give permission to a referral being made, a professional
can decide that their concern is so serious that they will make the referral without your agreement.

- When Children’s Social Care has received the referral, they will decide what needs to be done to help your child/family. If the referral suggests that your child is in immediate danger, a discussion will take place with the Police about what needs to be done straight away to make sure your child is safe.

- In other cases, Children’s Social Care will normally contact you to discuss the referral and ask for your permission to discuss the concerns with other professionals who know your family e.g. your child’s Health Visitor, Teacher, Doctor, etc. as well as asking for information from the Police.

- If Children’s Social Care think that your child may be at risk of being harmed again after discussing the referral with you, then they can decide to collect information from other professionals without discussing the referral with you first, or asking for your permission.

## ENQUIRY

- If it is thought, following a referral or at any other time, that your child is at risk of being harmed, Children’s Social Care will discuss the concerns with the Police and together they will agree what to do next.

- This will mean starting an Enquiry. A social worker will complete a Children’s Social Care Assessment with your child and family. This will mean talking to you, your child, and other professionals who know your family.

- If the professionals think a crime may have been committed against your child, Children’s Social Care and the Police will work together and will be involved in interviewing yourself, your child and other people about what has happened. The Social Workers and the Police Officers carrying out this work have received special training.

- In other cases, Children’s Social Care and the Police may agree that it is only necessary for either a Social Worker or a Police Officer to carry out the Enquiry.
As part of the enquiry wherever possible we will want to speak to your child alone. Exceptionally, the police or a social worker may need to speak to your child without your knowledge, but in most cases you will be informed.

As part of the Enquiry, it may be recommended that your child is examined by a Doctor. This is so that your child can receive any medical treatment they need and also so that the Doctor can collect and provide evidence in court, if necessary. Again, the Doctor carrying out the medical examination will have received special training.

Your child will be asked to give their permission for the medical examination to take place, and where your child is aged under 16 years, as a parent, you will usually be asked to give your permission.

At the end of the Enquiry, further discussions will take place between Children’s Social Care and the Police, to decide whether there are still any concerns about your child’s safety or wellbeing.

CHILD PROTECTION CONFERENCE

If it is decided that your child still needs protecting after the Enquiry, Children’s Social Care will work with you and your family to make sure that your child is safe until a meeting between professionals who know your family can discuss the matter – this meeting is called a Child Protection Conference.

The Hull Safeguarding Children Board has produced a leaflet which describes what the Child Protection Conference is about in more detail.

If the Enquiry decides that your child is safe from being harmed, the Enquiry will be closed and you will receive a letter telling you this.

However, during the Enquiry, Children’s Social Care and yourself may have found other ways in which your family can be helped and supported.

If you are involved in an Enquiry and feel that you would like advice from someone not working for Children’s Social Care, you may find the following telephone numbers helpful;

Citizen’s Advice Bureau (Hull City Centre)
Telephone (01482) 224608
TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

Your comments help us to improve the quality of our services, so please let us know what you think. Please give your feedback directly to your social worker or another member of the pod or team.

It helps us if you tell us when we do things well. If you are not happy with the service you receive, try to sort it out with the person you are dealing with first. If you wish to make a complaint about your involvement with Children, Young People and Family Services, you should contact the Complaint’s Manager to discuss this further.

Children’s Complaints Manager for Children & Young People and Family Services:

- Telephone: (01482) 61614
- Email: socialservices.complaints@hullcc.gov.uk
- Write to: The Children’s Complaints Manager Hull Children, Young People and Family Services Brunswick House, Strand Close Beverley Road Hull, HU2 9DB
This document can be made available in other formats (large print, audio and Braille as appropriate). Please telephone 01482 300 300.

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