

9

Child protection procedures

References

CA: Children Act 1989

ACA: Adoption and Children Act 2002

WT: Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2006 HM Government

FFA: Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families, 2000: The Department of Health, Home Office and Department for Education and Employment

LSCB: Local Safeguarding Children's Board

Vol 1 Guidance: Children Act 1989 Regulations and Guidance, Volume 1 Court Orders <http://www.justice.gov.uk/guidance/careproceedings.htm>

PLO: Public Law Outline <http://www.justice.gov.uk/guidance/careproceedings.htm>

Introduction

When local authority children's services receive information which lead them to suspect that a child may be at risk of harm, they are under a legal duty to look into the child's situation and to take any necessary action to protect and promote his/her welfare. This advice sheet outlines the steps they are likely to take, and the legal rights of parents and other family members in these circumstances. The references for the legal framework and practice guidance are set out in the narrow column on the right.

Since April 2006, "social services" are now known as "children's services". This is how they are referred to throughout this advice sheet.

Why might the local authority make enquiries about my child?

Under s47(1) CA 1989 the local authority is under a legal duty to make enquiries about a child's welfare and protection where:

- a child is in police protection, is under an emergency protection order or is under a curfew imposed under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, or
 - they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child in their area is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm.
- s.47(1)CA

These enquiries are commonly known as child protection enquiries or a child protection investigation and their purpose is to gather information about the child's circumstances to enable the local authority to decide whether they should take any action to safeguard or promote the child's welfare.

'Harm' is defined as "ill-treatment or the impairment of health or development" and includes "seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another". In other words a child may be suffering significant harm if s/he witnesses any violence or conflict at home.

S31(9) CA, as amended by the ACA

Government guidance divides the concept of harm into four categories – physical, emotional, sexual and neglect - and notes that harm may be caused by a parent/carer's actions or their failure to act to prevent harm occurring.

paras 1.29-1.33 WT

Whether or not your child is at risk of harm, the local authority should provide family support services to assist parents/carers whose children have been assessed as "in need".

s.17 CA; Child Protection: Messages from Research, Department of Health 1995.

Your child should not therefore have to be the subject of child protection enquiries for your family to receive support services to assist with difficulties you may be having.

For further information see FRG advice sheet on family support services.

Can the local authority remove my child?

A child protection investigation does not *necessarily* mean that your child will be removed from your care. In fact, the vast majority of children remain with their families throughout and following the child protection process.

However, if at any stage your child is considered to be at risk of **immediate significant harm**, steps can and should be taken by children's services to secure your child's safety. This could include you agreeing with the social worker that your child is removed into accommodation on a temporary basis, or that you will ensure the person against whom the allegation of harm is made will not come into contact with your child. Your child's safety could also be ensured by:

s.20 CA

- children's services asking the police to take your child into police protection for up to 72 hours - guidance discourages this by stating that police powers to remove children to a safe place should not be used in this context unless the

s.46 CA

- child's safety is at immediate risk.
- the local authority applying for an emergency protection order (EPO) provided the grounds can be established.

s.44 CA

NB: such emergency action will only address the immediate risk to the child, and should therefore be followed by an immediate strategy discussion involving the police, children's services and other relevant agencies as described below, and s47 enquiries as appropriate.

For further information see FRG advice sheet on care (and related) proceedings.

How will the local authority go about making child protection enquiries?

When making their enquiries, local authority children's services should follow procedures set out in guidance issued by the Government called Working Together to Safeguard Children. This guidance says that these procedures "*must be followed, unless local circumstances indicate exceptional reasons which justify a variation*". However, local authorities will have also drawn up their own local procedures, which spell out exactly how they carry out enquiries in your area.

p xxv WT

Sometimes a number of local authorities group together to publish joint procedures which are followed in a particular region. This is the case in London where all London authorities follow the London Child Protection Procedures.

Wherever you live, it is a good idea to try to obtain a copy of your local child protection procedures, either from the Local Safeguarding Children Board, the local authority or the library so you can see exactly how things work in your area. Below we have set out the core framework outlined in government guidance with which all local procedures must comply.

Ask your social worker to get you a copy of this.

How will the local authority involve my family in the child protection enquiry process?

Local authority children's services and other professionals, such as health visitors and teachers, must ensure that you play as full a part as possible in any child protection process. They should bear in mind the potential effect that their involvement can have on your family life, and try and maintain a good working

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relationship with you and your family throughout their involvement.

Specific recommendations include that:

- there is a presumption of openness, joint decision-making and a willingness to listen to families and build on their strengths. This is always subject to the principle that the child's best interests come first;
- services and professionals are honest and explicit with children and their families about professional roles, responsibilities, powers and expectations, and about what is and what is not negotiable.
- families may be helped to participate actively in the decision-making process through:
 - ◆ the use of Family Group Conferences (FGCs) (see page 17)
 - ◆ being referred to independent advice and advocacy services, both locally and nationally; and
 - ◆ the sharing of all the information they need to help them understand the child protection process.

Ch 10 WT

For further information contact FRG advice line – details at the end of this advice sheet.

What if they don't understand my culture?

Children's services should pay attention to your racial origin and cultural background, including religious practices and daily customs. This includes providing you with an interpreter if you need this. They should have respect for diversity and sensitivity to race, culture, gender, sexuality and disability.

*paras 10.9-10.13
WT*

Children's services and other professionals must have respect for the way religious beliefs and cultural traditions influence how your family operates and should be aware of the effects of racial harassment and racial discrimination. They need to guard against myths and stereotypes and understand the effects of cultural misunderstandings and misinterpretation when doing their assessment.

Professionals need to try to understand how your family operates and work with your family and other support systems that you may have in your community.

What happens when they make child protection enquiries?

Assuming no emergency action is needed to protect your child, as described above, there are a number of different stages to the local authority's enquiry process. These are set out below. Whether or not a case proceeds to the different stages will depend on the outcome of earlier stages of the enquiry.

Children's services, and other agencies involved with your child, should follow guidance and format currently laid down in the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families when completing assessments of risk or need in respect of your child. The different stages are outlined below:

FFA

1. Initial Assessment

Within 24 hours of receiving information which gives them cause to suspect a child may be suffering significant harm, children's services must decide what action they need to take, if any. They must record this decision in writing.

para 3.9 FFA
para 5.31-36 WT

If the decision is to take no further action, this should be communicated to the person who made the referral, as appropriate.

para 5.35 WT

If there are ongoing concerns and they decide to take action, they will have to do an "initial assessment". This must be carried out **within 7 working days** of receiving the information. If your child is deemed to be at immediate risk of harm, this assessment may be completed in much less time.

The purpose of this initial assessment is to ensure that all children in need have appropriate services identified and provided. They will look at the following questions:

para 5.38 WT

- What are the needs of your child?
- Are you as parents able to meet your child's needs?
- Is your child safe, and are you able to look after your child's health and development?
- Is action needed to protect or promote your child's welfare?
- What external factors influence parenting abilities and the child's development?

They should ***speak to you and your child***, if s/he is old enough, about your family circumstances as part of the initial assessment, and keep you informed throughout. They must help you to play as full a role as possible in decisions about your child. And they should speak to you in your preferred language through an interpreter, if necessary.

Para 5.39-5.40 WT

They will also discuss your child's situation with other professionals involved with your child. Children's services should get your permission (or, where your child is considered of an age to be competent to make decisions, your child's, permission) before speaking to other people, for example, your child's doctor or teacher, unless getting this permission would place your child at risk of "significant harm".

para 5.34 WT

Other professionals working with your child may have completed their own assessment of your child's needs if your child is already receiving a service or services. These kinds of assessments by different professionals should all follow the same format laid down in the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). This is the new guidance that the government now expects all agencies working with children to follow.

para 5.32 WT

A CAF should be completed if your child was in need of services to support them in achieving their potential, as detailed in the five outcomes at the heart of the government's Every Child Matters agenda. More information on this guidance can be found at www.everychildmatters.gov.uk.

The assessment process must always include consideration of the way in which any religious beliefs or cultural traditions you have will influence the way in which your family operates. It may be, however, that what is acceptable in your culture is unacceptable under English law.

Children's services will then discuss with you what will happen next, unless such a discussion will place your child at increased risk of significant harm or will jeopardise further action being taken to protect your child, such as police investigations.

If the initial assessment concludes that your child is not at risk:

Children's services may take no further action. However, they must always consider any needs your family may have for

Para 5.46-5.47 WT

ongoing support, and offer services if necessary. So, if the initial assessment finds that your child is not in need of protection but is “in need” of support services, you will be asked whether you agree to a “core assessment” being carried out.

If you feel you want help in parenting your child, then it is a good idea to agree to this assessment and to tell them what you think your child needs to help you to parent him/her.

It is also a good idea to clarify with the social worker at this point whether there will be any consequences for you as parent/carer if you do not agree to the assessment going ahead or if you later decide not to take up services offered as a result of the core assessment.

2. Core assessment:

The purpose of this assessment will be to:

- ❑ identify your child’s needs,
- ❑ assess your capacity to respond to those needs within the wider family and community context, and
- ❑ determine what services would be appropriate to meet them so as to bring about the best outcome for the child.

When identifying the child’s needs, government guidance divides the assessment process into three main sections:

- ❑ the child’s developmental needs,
- ❑ family and environmental factors and
- ❑ parenting capacity.

It is important to note that the guidance is clear that the assessment should not ignore any positive aspects of parenting and that factors outside of parental control should also be considered, with a view to support for the family from other services such as housing or education, if this is appropriate.

The government guidance requires children’s services to keep you fully involved in the assessment process, providing interpreters and translated information if necessary and keeping you up to date with what is happening. It specifically mentions the need to give you information, both verbally and in writing, about the process of assessment.

Once the assessment is completed, you should be involved in drawing up a plan of action about what services will be required

For further information on how assessments are conducted see FRG advice sheet on family support services.

para 5.60-5.67 WT;

para 3.11 FFA

to ensure your child's well-being, who has responsibility for providing these services and when, and a process for review of the plan. Government guidance also suggests the use of family group conferences (FGCs) for taking forward such plans.

The core assessment should be completed ***within a maximum of 35 working days*** from its commencement – deemed to be either at the point the initial assessment was ended or a decision was taken to begin s47 (child protection) enquiries (see point 4).

3. Strategy discussion

If the initial assessment concludes your child is at risk of harm:

There should be a strategy discussion involving children's services, the police and other agencies to:

- ❑ share information
- ❑ decide if s47 enquiries should be initiated;
- ❑ plan how these enquiries will be conducted; and
- ❑ determine what information about the strategy discussion will be shared with the family unless this will place the child at further risk of harm;
- ❑ agree conduct and timing of enquiries; and
- ❑ agree if any immediate action is necessary to safeguard the child, i.e., provision of services, removal of the child or removal of an alleged abuser.

para 5.54-59 WT

The family will not be invited to participate in this discussion.

There are some circumstances that will always lead to a strategy discussion and s47 enquiries being carried out once the referral has been made. Guidance as to these circumstances should be contained within local procedures but examples of these circumstances would be:

- where a child has been taken into police protection (see page 2);
- serious physical injuries sustained by a non-mobile baby;
- direct allegations by a child of physical or sexual abuse;
- presence in the household of a person who poses a risk to a child.

Automatic criteria for strategy discussions and S47 Enquiries are found in local child protection procedures

Police involvement

Where the referral indicates that a crime may have been

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committed, children's services will refer the information to the local police child abuse investigation team. This is a team of police officers trained in dealing with cases of child abuse who will be responsible for a joint investigation with children's services. The police team is responsible for investigating any allegations with a view to criminal prosecution. Even if the police are not actively involved in making enquiries they may still contribute to the decision making of the other agencies involved.

4. s.47 Child Protection Enquiries

The aim of the local authority's enquiries is to determine whether action is needed to promote and safeguard your child's welfare. The enquiries should be conducted using the structure of the core assessment (see page 7).

paras 5.69-70 WT

Specifically, Government guidance:

- acknowledges that the impact of the enquiry process on the family can be devastating and therefore needs to be handled sensitively;
- requires children's services to be open and honest with you and to share all relevant information with you unless this will place your child at risk. Any information to be withheld should be decided by the strategy meeting (see page 8); and
- requires them to conduct their enquiries in a way which allows for future constructive working relationships with you.

Children's services will want to interview your child and they must seek your consent before speaking to your child. They will normally wish to speak to your child without you being present.

Paras 5.62 – 5.65WT

However, in "**exceptional circumstances**", children's services may speak to your child without your knowledge and/or consent for example in joint police and social services enquiries/investigations where there is

Para 5.65 WT

- a concern that a possible victim may be coerced into silence;
- a strong likelihood that important evidence may be destroyed; or
- the child concerned does not want the parent involved and

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is competent to make this decision.

They will usually want to see your child alone but should be mindful to minimise any distress this may cause.

paras 3.41-45 FFA

What if I don't want children's services to see my child?

If you refuse to allow children's services to see and speak to your child, they may apply to the court for a child assessment order. Children services must show the court that they have reasonable cause to suspect that your child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, and that they need to see your child to establish whether they are at risk. In these circumstances, the court may direct the parents/caregivers to co-operate with an assessment of the child, the details of which should be specified. The order does not take away the child's own right to refuse to participate in an assessment – e.g. a medical examination – so long as he or she is of sufficient age and understanding.

s43 CA89

para 5.68 WT

Police interviews

Sometimes, the police will also want to interview your child if they are gathering evidence for criminal proceedings. There will normally be a police officer and a social worker present and the interview will be recorded on video tape at a specialist venue. These interviews should be conducted according to guidance produced by the Home Office – Achieving Best Evidence in Criminal Proceedings: Guidance for Vulnerable or Intimidated Witnesses, including Children: Home Office 2002. Whilst you may not be able to be present your consent should be sought, the process explained to you and you may be able to observe.

If the police investigations result in criminal proceedings and your child is a witness, children's services should provide you and your child with support and access to advice and information about this process.

Even if the police do not pursue a criminal investigation because of lack of evidence, children's services may remain concerned about risk in respect of your child.

***For more
information on this
contact FRG
advice service***

If your child is not at risk of harm:

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If, following the enquiries, your child is not considered to be at risk of continuing harm, children's services and other relevant agencies should always consider with the family what support and/or services may still be helpful.

para 5.73 WT

If your child is not at risk of harm but concerns remain:

If the child protection concerns are substantiated but your child is not thought to be at risk of continuing harm, it is possible for the local authority to plan with you how your child can be protected by ongoing monitoring through agencies working with your child (such as school, nursery, health visitor etc.) without the need for a child protection conference. This may involve a meeting of professionals and family members to agree what action will be taken, and by whom, including the provision of therapeutic services.

para 5.75-78 WT

If your child is thought to be at risk of harm:

If the enquiries indicate that your child is suffering or is at risk of suffering "significant harm", children's services should arrange a child protection case conference.

para 5.79 WT

5. The child protection case conference

What is a child protection conference?

A child protection conference is a multi-agency meeting organised by children's services which is attended by the family and all the professionals already involved with your child and sometimes some others as well, for example: GP, health visitor, teacher, police or paediatrician.

para 5.80 WT

The aim of the conference is for everyone present to look at all the relevant information about your child's circumstances and if your child is at risk, come up with plans to protect your child and look after his/her welfare. The conference must be held ***within 15 working days of the strategy discussion.***

para 5.81 WT

The conference should be chaired by someone who is not involved in managing the social worker that has carried out the child protection investigation.

paras 5.87-5.88 WT

Information gathered by children's services should be included in

paras 5.89-5.92 WT

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a written report in advance of the meeting. It is also recommended, as good practice, for other professionals providing information to a conference to provide a written report.

What can the conference decide?

Apart from deciding the date of any future review conference, the conference can only decide one thing: **whether or not your child should be the subject of a child protection plan.**

Para 5.103 WT

This decision will depend on whether, having read all the relevant information, they consider that your child is at continuing risk of significant harm. The test for this will be either that:

- your child has suffered ill-treatment or other impairment of health or development as a result of physical, emotional or sexual abuse or neglect, and that professional judgement is that further ill-treatment or impairment are likely; *or*
- professional judgement substantiated by findings of the enquiries or research evidence is that your child is likely to suffer ill-treatment or the impairment of health or development as a result of physical, emotional or sexual abuse or neglect.

NOTE: When making the decision whether or not to draw up a child protection plan, professionals must look at all the available evidence from existing records and pre-conference enquiries. They must take care to separate out fact, observation, allegation or opinion.

para 5.105 WT

NB Some local authorities may still maintain a form of child protection register to which children's names will be added but this will gradually be phased out during 2008.

Will I be involved in the conference?

There is a clear expectation that parents and wider family members will attend the conference.

*paras 5.84-86 WT
The reason for
exclusions can be
found in LSCB
procedures.*

Also if it is appropriate your child should be invited to attend and bring an advocate. In the event that this is not appropriate or that your child does not wish to attend, the social worker should elicit his/her views in order to report them to the conference.

para 5.84 WT

In exceptional circumstances, such as a high level of conflict or domestic violence between family members or parents, the chair of the conference may decide to exclude someone from attending, but s/he must give you the reason for any exclusion. When this occurs, the excluded person should be helped to communicate their views by other means, for example in writing.

paras 5.86 WT

The chair of the conference should meet with you in advance and ensure that you understand the purpose of the conference and what will happen.

para 5.87 WT

The information gathered by children's services and other professionals should be written in a report and given to you in advance of the case conference.

paras 5.89 5.90 WT

The government guidance says that you should be "*helped fully to participate*" and your involvement should be planned carefully. You should be helped in advance to think about what you want to say to the conference and how best to get your points across on the day, which might include providing your own written report.

For further information see FRG advice sheet on advocacy for families in local authority decision-making.

Children's services should give parents and family members information about local independent advice and advocacy agencies, and you should be allowed to bring a friend, advocate (who may be a solicitor) or supporter to the meeting.

para 5.84 WT

For further information about this contact FRG advice line.

What is a child protection plan?

Once the conference has made the decision to make your child the subject of a child protection plan, the conference participants then make recommendations about what is needed for your child to be protected in future. This will be set out in an outline plan, which will be developed into a full plan after the conference at regular core group meetings.

The outline plan should:

- ❑ identify the risks to your child;
- ❑ establish aims and objectives about how your child will be protected and his/her welfare promoted; and
- ❑ clarify who will have responsibility for which actions and within what timescales.

paras 5.109 WT

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You should therefore have an understanding of what is expected of you and what you can expect of other people.

Every child who is the subject of a child protection plan should have a key worker (social worker) allocated to them. The key worker is responsible for ensuring that:

para 5.116 WT

- ❑ the outline plan is developed into a full inter-agency plan,
- ❑ core group meetings are convened and
- ❑ the plan is implemented.

What is the core group?

The purpose of the core group is to bring together family members and professionals to develop the outline plan into a full child protection plan and then to ensure it is implemented by regularly reviewing it at core group meetings.

para 5.118-21 WT

The first core group meeting must be held ***within 10 working days of the conference.***

paras 5.120 WT

The full child protection plan should include specific, achievable, child-focused objectives, and realistic strategies and specific actions to achieve these objectives.

para 5.125 WT

The key worker, who has lead responsibility for implementing the plan, must *“make every effort to ensure that the children and parents have a clear understanding of the planned outcomes, that they accept it and are willing to work to it”*. The plan should therefore take your views into consideration, unless the professionals consider that this would place your child at continuing risk of harm.

para 5.126 WT

Good practice should recognise that you and your family may find it difficult to agree to a child protection plan in the formal child protection conference. Government guidance stresses the importance of the core group in supporting you, and working with you to plan for your child’s future, if possible coming to a written agreement with you about future work.

para 5.118 -119 WT

FFA 3.11

You and your child should be given ongoing support from the

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allocated social worker who should visit you at home to ensure that your child is making good progress. You need to ensure that the social worker can see your child if necessary.

Services offered as a result of the plan should be those most likely to benefit your child. Community resources may be considered, so if you know of any services within your own community which would benefit you and your child, let children's services know. The social worker might suggest that you attend a family centre in order to obtain support and guidance on parenting. If you think that you would benefit from this support suggest it to children's services if it is not offered.

Some children's services departments may use **family group conferences** as a way of establishing what your family would like in the way of support or what informal support can be organised within your own family networks with a view to reducing the risks identified to your child. You can ask for this to be arranged.

For further information about this – see below on page 17.

You should always receive a written copy of the child protection plan in your first language.

6. The child protection review conference

Children's services must hold a review case conference within 3 months of the initial child protection conference (the date should have been agreed at the initial child protection conference) and then at 6 monthly intervals.

para 5.136 WT

Review meetings must look at the original child protection plan and consider whether the plan needs to be in place or changed.

They must specifically look at whether your child continues to be at risk of harm and still needs a formal child protection plan. If not, s/he should no longer be the subject of a child protection plan

You will be invited to the review conferences and will be given the opportunity to say what has changed in your family situation and

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if and why you think your child is no longer at risk.

paras 5.136 -139 WT

Guidance specifically says that the ceasing of a child protection plan should never lead to automatic withdrawal of help. Your key worker or social worker should therefore discuss with you what services you might want or need in the future.

para 5.142 WT

Can I appeal against the decision of a child protection conference?

If you are unhappy about the decision to make your child the subject of a child protection plan, there is normally no basis for a court appeal. However, in exceptional cases, you may be able to challenge a decision if you can establish grounds for judicial review (usually on grounds of unreasonableness) but note:

- in the case of R-v- East Sussex County Council ex parte R, Sir Stephen Brown who refused an application for judicial review said that “*recourse to judicial review of decisions which do not involve removal [of the child] from the parents should be rare and only adopted in exceptional circumstances*”; and
- in the case of R-v- Hampshire County Council ex parte H, the Court of Appeal held that a decision to register a child’s name where there was no evidence to substantiate the concern about a likelihood of significant harm was void. It held that it was not enough to register children under the category of emotional abuse, merely relying on the fact of a stressful family situation. **However**, it added that recourse to judicial review should be rare in child protection.

*R-v- East Sussex CC
ex parte R [1995] 1
WLR 680*

*R -v- Hampshire
County Council ex
parte H [1999] 2 FLR
359*

What happens if children’s services have continuing concerns after the child protection review conference?

If you have not been able to sort out the issues the local authority have been discussing with you, the local authority may have continuing concerns about your child’s safety and well-being, and may consider applying for a care order to remove your child from your care.

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However in order to do this, they will normally have to show the court (unless there is an emergency) what work they have done to support you and your family to resolve their concerns before going to court. This means they will have to have worked with you to find solutions. This should normally include the following steps being taken:

1. **Letter of intention to issue proceedings:** The local authority should have sent you (the parents and others with parental responsibility – see advice sheet 25) a letter setting out their concerns before they issue care proceedings. The letter should say what you need to do to address those concerns in order to avoid proceedings. They will normally invite you to a meeting to discuss this.

If you have received such a letter you should immediately seek legal advice. You should take the letter with you to a solicitor who will then be able to advise and assist you under a legal advice scheme and negotiate on your behalf with the Local Authority before any proceedings are started. This is separate from Legal Aid (now called “Public Funding”) granted to a parent after proceedings are commenced.

2. **Involve your wider family to address the concerns:** The local authority should have spoken to members of your wider family about the problems to see how they can help to support you or in some cases to care for your child rather than him/her going into care. Increasingly local authorities are offering to set up Family Group Conferences (also called Family Group meetings) to enable the whole family to plan a way forward together – see below.

Family Group Conferences:

If the local authority informs you that they have concerns about your children and you think they may be considering taking legal action, you should also think about whether you may want to have a Family Group Conference (FGC) so that you and your family can be proactive in making safe plans for your child.

An FGC is a decision-making process in which the whole family makes plans and decisions for children who, need a plan that will safeguard and promote their welfare. It offers parents and other family members a chance to get together, to discuss how to sort

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PLO

*Vol 1 Guidance,
Chapter 3*

*For further
information on this
see advice sheet
on Care (and
related)
proceedings or
contact FRG advice
line*

*Further information
about solicitors can
be found at
[www.lawsociety.org
.uk](http://www.lawsociety.org.uk)*

**For further
information see
FRG advice sheet
on ‘What is a
family Group
Conference?’**

out any problems and find safe solutions. Professionals who are involved with the family are only involved in *part* of the meeting.

Government guidance says that FGCs are a useful tool to help families make safe plans for their children. They are now available in many local authorities so it may be a good idea to ask the social worker to refer you for a family group conference.

*Vol 1 Guidance,
Chapter 3*

Can I make a complaint?

If you are unhappy about any aspect of the child protection process, you can make a formal complaint.

Complaints about the management of a child protection conference:

These should be addressed initially to the chair of the conference. If this does not resolve the matter, the complaint should be passed on to the local authority children's services department to be dealt with under their complaints procedure

para 5.110 -113 WT

In considering complaints, the local authority should form an inter-agency panel of senior representatives of local safeguarding children board (LSCB) member agencies. The panel must then consider whether inter-agency procedures and protocols have been observed correctly.

*See your LSCB
procedures*

**For further
information see
FRG advice sheet
on complaints**

para 5.111 WT

Complaints about the work of individual agencies:

These should be addressed to, and dealt with by the agency concerned according to its own complaints procedures.

How can I help my child and my family?

- ❑ It is a good idea to contact a specialist adviser/advocate such as Family Rights Group or a childcare solicitor as soon as child protection enquiries have started. You will probably not end up in court, but you may need legal advice about your situation, or the assistance of an advocate.
- ❑ Whether or not you have a solicitor, it is worth arranging for a friend or advocate to come with you to meetings, for moral support and to help you put your points across. The FRG advice service may be able to refer you to local advocacy services which can help you.

The information contained in this advice sheet is intended for guidance only and whilst every effort is made to ensure it is correct at time of publication it should not be used as a substitute for legal advice. For client specific advice please contact Family Rights Group

- It may be helpful to involve community or religious leaders in your case – they may be able to help you explain about your family’s way of life. You may feel ashamed at what has happened to your family and not wish to share this with anyone in your community, but it may be important to have their support.
- If you do not understand anything, ask for an explanation and for it to be put in writing in your preferred language.

Where can I get further help?

Community Legal Service Direct

Will work out if you qualify for legal aid and if so provides free confidential legal advice:

Tel: 0845 608 1122

www.clsdirect.org.uk

The Law Society of England and Wales

113 Chancery Lane
London WC2A 1PL

Tel: 020 7242 1222

Minicom: 0870 600 1560

Fax: 020 7831 0344

E-mail: info.services@lawsociety.org.uk

www.lawsociety.org.uk

Family Rights Group

The Print House
18 Ashwin Street
London E8 3DL

Advice Line: 0808 801 0366

Tel: 020 7923 2628

Fax: 020 7923 2683

E-mail: advice@frg.org.uk

Website: www.frg.org.uk

Parentline Plus (London)

520 Highgate Studios

53-79 Highgate Road

London NW5 1TL

24 hour helpline: 0808 800 2222

textphone: 0800 783 6783

Office Tel: 020 7284 5536

www.parentlineplus.org.uk

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