

All Wales child Protection procedures

Recognition and Referral

Suspicion about child abuse may take the form of 'concerns' rather than 'known facts'. Child welfare concerns can arise in many different contexts, including when a child is already known to the social services. Concerns can and should be shared with social services through a referral. While concerns will not necessarily trigger an investigation, they help to build up a picture, along with concerns from other sources, which suggests that a child may be suffering harm. Many local authorities have developed protocols establishing arrangements for conducting initial assessments by local services and defining the circumstances and thresholds under which a child should be referred to social services. In cases of alleged or suspected abuse by a professional or individual employee, the action should also be guided by the agency's own procedures on professional abuse and whistle blowing.

Making the referral

Referrals should be made to social services as soon as a problem, suspicion or concern about a child becomes apparent, and certainly **within 24 hours**. Outside office hours, referrals should be made to the social services emergency duty service or the police. Social services and the police must ensure that an appropriate level and deployment of trained staff are available to undertake child protection section 47 enquiries, including out of hours. All telephone referrals or referrals made in person should be confirmed in writing within two working days, preferably using a local standard form where provided. The duty social worker taking the referral should be given as much of the following information as possible by the referrer:

- The nature of the concerns;
- How and why those concerns have arisen;
- The full name, address and date of birth (or age) of the child;
- The names, addresses and dates of birth/ages of family members, along with any other names which they use or are known by;
- The names and relationship of all those with parental responsibility, where known, should be recorded;
- The name, address & date of birth of parent's partner;
- The name, address and date of birth of any other adults living in the household;
- The names of other professionals involved with the family, including the name of the child's school and GP;
- Any information you have on the child's developmental needs and his/her parents or caregivers ability to respond to these needs within the context of the wider family and environment;
- Any information affecting the safety of staff.

Individual employees, professionals and independent contractors, should be aware that they cannot remain anonymous when making a referral. However, members of the public may remain anonymous, if they wish to.

The individual employee or professional making the referral may be asked to do some or all of the following tasks, and should be prepared and willing to do them:

- Contribute to a strategy discussion or strategy meeting;

- Assist in the child protection section 47 enquiries;
- Attend the child protection conference;
- Provide a written report for the child protection conference;
- Contribute to the initial and core assessments.

It is the responsibility of individual employees and professionals to ensure that their child protection concerns are taken seriously and followed through. Each individual employee and professional is accountable for his or her own role in the child protection process, and if an individual employee or professional remains concerned about a child they should re-refer the child and/or bring the matter to the immediate attention of the social services senior manager with responsibility for child protection for the area. In their absence the social services team manager responsible for the child's case must be notified. In all such situations, the individual employee or professionals own line manager and named professional for child protection should be informed.