

A Parents/Carers Guide to Child Protection Procedures in Denbighshire

This information sheet is also available in Welsh.

Introduction

If your family has been referred to Education & Children's Services because of child protection concerns, this information sheet will explain what will happen next.

We understand you may be worried, angry or upset, but Education & Children's Services want to work with you to help you keep your child safe from harm.

If you have questions that are not answered in this information sheet or there is anything you don't understand, the Social Worker will be able to help you. We hope that this information leaflet helps you to know more about the Child Protection Conference and what part you can play in it.

Why have I been referred?

Sometimes a health visitor, school, another organisation, or a member of the public may contact us because they are worried that a child is being harmed or neglected. This is called a referral.

We have to make enquiries into concerns raised and make sure your child is safe. We will always tell you who has referred your family, unless the person is a member of the public who has asked not to be named.

What is a Child Protection Enquiry?

Education & Children's Services has a legal duty to make sure that all children in Denbighshire are safe and protected. This means carrying out a child protection enquiry to look into any concerns that a child is being harmed or neglected. When the enquiry is finished, a decision is made about what actions need to be taken next. This may lead to the holding of a Child Protection Conference, which you will be invited to.

Who carries out the Child Protection Enquiry?

The Child Protection enquiry is carried out by a Social Worker, working closely with the Police, where there is concern a crime may have been committed. They will need to get information from other professionals who know you and your family, such as your health visitor, your GP and your child's teacher. We will ask for your permission before we talk to other professionals unless we think that this would place the child at more risk.

A Parents/Carers Guide to Child Protection Procedures in Denbighshire

What happens during the enquiry?

A Social Worker will visit you at home to talk to you about the concerns, and ask you and your family questions.

The Social Worker will also need to see your child, and will ask to speak to them alone if they are old enough. Normally we would ask your permission to do this, but if your child is at serious risk or harm, we may need to speak to them alone without your permission.

A Police Officer is involved in the enquiry and we may ask your permission to interview your child on video, to allow evidence to be gathered for court. You may go with your child to the interview, but you won't be able to sit with them while they are being interviewed.

Sometimes, we may ask you to agree to your child being examined by a doctor so we can find out if your child has any injuries, and how the injuries happened. We will always ask your permission first, but if you don't agree, we may need to take legal advice to ensure your child is well.

During the enquiry, the Social Worker will always keep you informed about how things are progressing and what will happen next.

What happens after the enquiry?

When the Social Worker has gathered all the information, he or she will discuss the findings with their manager and decide what action to take next. The investigation may show that your child is not being harmed or neglected, and Education & Children's Services will take no further action. However, if you feel you need extra support to care for your child, we may be able to provide help.

If the investigation shows that your child may be being harmed or neglected, or is at risk of harm, Education & Children's Services may decide to hold a formal meeting called an Initial Child Protection Conference.

What is an Initial Child Protection Conference?

This is a formal meeting where parents, the Social Worker and other professionals who know the family get together to discuss the concerns and decide what can be done to keep your child safe from harm. If such a meeting is to take place, which you will be invited to and given an information sheet explaining the process in detail.

What if my child isn't safe at home?

The vast majority of children who are referred to Education & Children's Services because of child protection concerns will remain living at home with their parents. If Education & Children's Services are really worried about a child being at risk at home, we may take further action to protect them.

A Parents/Carers Guide to Child Protection Procedures in Denbighshire

If we think it is not safe for your child at home, the Social Worker will talk to you about what options there are to keep safe. This may involve:-

- Someone who is living in your home moving out because it is thought they are a risk to your child.
- A friend or relative moving into your home to help you to look after your child.
- Your child going to stay with family or friends, who have been approved by Education & Children's Services.
- Your child going to live with an approved Foster Carer.

These are all temporary arrangements to make sure your child is safe and protected while we work with you to make sure it is safe for your child to live at home, or we decide that your child cannot return home at this time.

What is a Care and Support Protection Plan?

A Care and Support Protection Plan is a written plan of what needs to be done and who should do it to try and help you look after your child/ren's safely.

What will happen next?

If your child/ren's name has been placed on the Child Protection Register, a small group of people (called a Core Group) will be put together to make sure that the Care and Support Protection Plan is put into action. They will check that everyone is doing what they agreed in the plan and that your child/ren's are safe and properly cared for. If such a meeting is to take place, you will be invited to attend and given an information sheet that explains the process in more detail.

How long will your child/ren's name stay on the Child Protection Register?

After three months there will be another conference (called a Review Conference) which will decide whether your child/ren still need a plan of protection and if they do, whether the plan needs to be changed. Review conferences will then be held at least every 6 months which you will be invited to attend.

If the people at a review decide that your child/ren are no longer at risk of significant harm and will remain safe without any further help from people outside your family, then the Care and Support Protection Plan will end and your child/ren's name will be removed from the Child Protection Register.

A Parents/Carers Guide to Child Protection Procedures in Denbighshire

What happens if your child/ren's name doesn't go on the register?

Sometimes the conference decides that your child/ren are not at risk of significant harm and that their names doesn't need to go onto the Child Protection Register.

If this happens, conference members could still decide that your family need some help and they might agree a Care and Support Plan. This will mean that a smaller group of people will meet regularly with your family to check that you are doing as well as you can and make sure your child/ren are supported until they and your family no longer need it.

Can I appeal against my child/ren's name being on the Child Protection Register?

If you strongly disagree with the decision of a conference you can appeal against that decision. However, such a complaint will not lead to a reversal of the decision to make your child/ren subject of a Care and Support Protection Plan it will only lead to the reconvening of a conference.

If you want to appeal, please get in touch with the Conference Chair within 10 working days of the conference.

What if I want the conference to be held in Welsh or any other language?

If so, please get in touch with the Safeguarding Unit as soon as possible so arrangements can be made. This will make sure that everyone understands how you feel and know what has been happening.

Complaints

If you want to make a suggestion, compliment or complaint about any of the services provided by the Education & Children's Services you can contact the Complaints Officer in any of the following ways:-

Freephone number: 0800 032 1099

Email: ssdcomments@denbighshire.gov.uk

Write to:- The Complaints Officer, Russell House, Churton Road, Rhyl, Denbighshire, LL18 3DP

Web: www.denbighshire.gov.uk/yourvoice

This Information Sheet can be made available in alternative formats; large braille, audit tape or disk.

A Parents/Carers Guide to Child Protection Procedures in Denbighshire