

It is important that social workers and the police work in partnership with parents and families. All parents have the following rights:

- To be heard
- To be kept informed and involved
- To seek legal advice
- To ask for explanations
- To be supported
- To have appropriate confidentiality
- To have an interpreter (if English is not their first language)
- To have their cultural and religious background taken into account
- To complain

All children have the following rights:

- To be heard and taken seriously
- To have their views and feelings considered
- To be protected
- To be supported
- To ask for explanations
- To complain
- To be kept involved and informed, according to his/her age and understanding
- To appropriate confidentiality

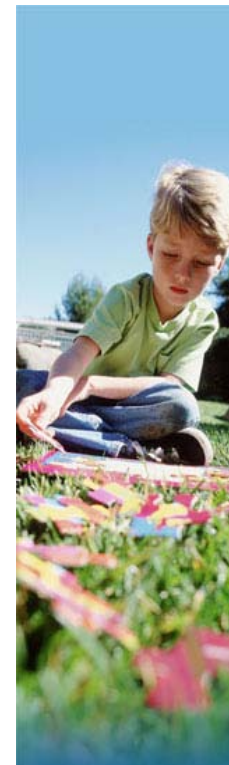
Useful Contacts

Citizens Advice Bureau	0844 826 9709
NSPCC	0808 800 5000
Childline	0800 1111
Children's Social Care	01634 334466

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**Medway  
Safeguarding  
Children  
Board**

**CHILD PROTECTION  
ENQUIRIES  
AND INVESTIGATIONS**

**INFORMATION FOR  
PARENTS**



This leaflet is designed for parents whose children are subject to concerns which are shared between professionals from different local agencies such as Medway Council Children's Care Department, Kent Police and health services.

When information is received that suggests children may be at risk or in need of protection, the Council has a legal duty to make enquiries and assess the child's situation and circumstances. These are called Child Protection enquiries or a Child Protection investigation. Sometimes, professionals call these "section 47" investigations.

This can be a stressful and worrying time but we believe that most parents want what is best for their children and we need to work together with you to sort out any difficulties.

#### What is child abuse or significant harm?

There are four main ways in which children may suffer abuse:

**Physical** – when children are hurt or injured by adults or when adults do not prevent them from being injured.

**Emotional** – when children are constantly shouted at, threatened, ridiculed or taunted, made to feel worthless or denied love and affection. If parents have a difficult and/or abusive relationship, this can impact upon children too.

**Neglect** – when children's basic needs such as food, clothing, warmth and medical care are not met or when young children are left on their own.

**Sexual** – when children are used to meet adult's sexual needs, including showing them pornographic material such as DVDs or magazines.

#### Child Protection Enquiries and Investigations

When concerns about a child have been reported to Children's Care, these will be discussed with the Police and a decision is made on whether Children's Care will make enquiries or whether the Police need to be involved too – for example if a crime has been committed. A meeting involving all of the relevant professionals called a "Strategy Meeting" will be held.

We will want to find out more about the concerns that were reported. To find out whether or not there are serious concerns we will need to make an assessment that will include what parents think of the concerns. The assessment will include any other problems that families may have, such as with their housing, money difficulties, substance misuse and any issues relating to their children or their parenting.



#### What happens next

If, after the assessment, it is decided that a child is not at risk or suffering significant harm, no further action will be taken under child protection procedures. However, a social worker may arrange for the family to get some help and support. The social worker will arrange a planning meeting to discuss this support. However, if there are problems which cannot be resolved in this way, a Child Protection Conference may be called and this meeting will decide whether or not your child needs a protection plan and what help and support you all need. Please see the leaflet titled "Child Protection Conferences – Information for Parents" on the MSCB website.

As part of the process, social workers will want to speak to your child/children on their own and will normally ask your permission. However, there may be some circumstances when they do not seek your permission, but inform you that that is what they will do. If the child is old enough, they can give their own consent. There may also be some circumstances when they will want to arrange a medical for your child/children. Again, they will usually seek your permission (or the child's consent), but there may be some circumstances when they can go ahead without parent's permission. Parents are usually able to attend the medical and speak to the doctor themselves. The purpose of the medical is to find out if any treatment is needed for the child and, if there is an injury, what caused it.

If a child has made an allegation of sexual or physical assault a joint investigation may be carried out by the Police and a Social Worker and they may decide that they want to do an interview which is recorded. Parents' permission must be given for this and parents will usually be able to accompany their child or be able to watch the interview on a video link.

Enquiries that relate to alleged child abuse must be undertaken as soon as possible and if there are delays, social workers will explain and give you the reasons for this.

Professionals will always try to work with parents and carers at every stage of a child protection enquiry but if parents refuse to cooperate and Children's Care feel that the child is still at risk, they can apply to the Magistrates Court for a Court Order. If such an order is requested parents will be advised to seek legal advice.

Children cannot be removed from the care of their parents without parents' consent unless social workers are granted a Court Order or if Police decide that they are in immediate danger.