



## Child Protection Procedures & Reporting

### Taking action when a child is, or may be suffering harm

Everyone who comes into contact with children and families has a role to play.

#### 1. What is significant harm?

The Children Act 1989 introduced the concept of significant harm as the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in the family life in the best interest of the children. However, even when this threshold has been reached it emphasised that parents or carers should be informed of and, if possible, give consent to this intervention unless it is clear that to do so would increase the risk to the child.

Once it is clear that a child may be, or is, suffering from significant harm, the Local Authority is under a duty to make enquires as to the legitimacy of this concern. Addressed in Item 2.

Defining exactly what significant harm means is difficult, and "Working Together to Safeguard Children" shies away from arriving at a clear definition. However, the following extract from Thomson Reuters Practical Law website provides a summary:

**"Significant harm is one of the limbs to proving that the threshold criteria under section 31(2) of the Children Act 1989 are met, before a court can consider whether to make a care order or supervision order. There is no statutory definition of significant harm. "Harm" is defined as:**

- **Ill treatment.**
- **The impairment of physical or mental health (including that suffered from seeing or hearing another person suffer ill treatment).**
- **The impairment of physical intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development (including that suffered from seeing or hearing another person suffer ill treatment).**

**"Ill treatment" includes sexual abuse, neglect, emotional abuse and psychological abuse. In considering whether harm is significant to a child's health or development, the child's health and development must be compared with that which could reasonably be expected of a similar child. This includes impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another person. (Section 31(9), Children Act 1989.)"** © 2019 Thomson Reuters

**1.1** In making your own judgement about whether or not the concerns which you have about a child and their family meet the criteria for likely or actual suffering of significant harm, the chances of you having the whole picture about this child and the family are remote.

This is why the government has introduced the **Assessment Framework** which provides the way in which all agencies who have involvement with the family can contribute their information and their understanding to the whole picture of whether a child is in need and/or whether a child is in need of protection.

**1.2** In deciding what to do then about the concerns, which you have about a child, you need to be able to answer three questions:

1. What information and understanding can I contribute to a whole picture, which will help identify whether a child is in need and/or in need of protection.
2. Have I recorded this information in a way, which evidences my concerns?
3. How much do the parents or carers know about my concerns? If I have not informed them can I still justify this on the basis that to do so would place the child at increased risk of significant harm?

**Taking these points in turn:**

**1.3 What information and understanding can I contribute to a whole picture, which will help me identify whether a child is in need and/or in need of protection?**

This question is important for two reasons:

Firstly, you may be so concerned about what you see or hear from a child or their parents that you believe the criteria for significant harm has been met and action should be taken. However, it may be that when all aspects of the picture are put together the family is considered to be in need of support rather than compulsory intervention.

Secondly, the piece of information, which you have, may give you cause for some concern but not enough to meet the criteria of significant harm. However, when all aspects of the picture are put together it may become apparent that this child is suffering or is at risk of suffering significant harm and action does need to be taken.

Your responsibility therefore is not to make a judgement about whether or not the threshold of significant harm has been reached; it is to provide the best information possible in order to ensure that this judgement is made on the basis of as a full picture as possible about the family.

**1.4** There are a number of different ways in which your concerns may have arisen:

**1.4.1 A child tells you that they have been hurt in some way**

The possibility of this happening can cause anxiety both because the child's story of abuse is difficult to hear and there is a fear of getting in wrong some way for the child. There are three important points to remember:

- The child has chosen to tell you and is likely to have worked out in their head what they were going to say. Your task then is to let the child tell their story in their own words.
- Carefully record what the child says in its own words. If it has not been possible or appropriate to do that while the child is talking ensure that you do so at the earliest opportunity
- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in telling you and explain that you or someone else within your agency will now need to take action to ensure that the child is safe. Never promise confidentiality and remember that the children almost always tell an adult about what is happening to them because they want it to stop. Reassurance that they can be kept safe is often enough to help a child feel ok about you telling someone else. Tell the child what action you have taken and what will happen next if you know.

### **1.4.2 Injuries observed on a child**

All children receive bumps and bruises in the course of day-to-day activity. Injuries which may give concern, includes the following:

- Bruises on parts of the body which are not normally affected by falling over, bumping into things etc.
- Burns and scalds.
- Other unusual marks/injuries.

Your responsibility in any of these circumstances is to try to ascertain whether or not there is a satisfactory explanation either from the child directly or from the parent/carer if appropriate (see discussions under Question 3 below) remember that your task is to contribute information, not to make a judgement about significant harm. It is therefore important that if you have any doubt whatsoever about the injuries or the explanation given, a referral should be made to Social Services as soon as possible.

### **1.4.3 A Childs Behaviour or Appearance Gives Causes for Concern**

This is potentially the most difficult area in which to decide whether a Childs is or may be suffering significant harm. However, there are some basic points to bear in mind:

- Remember that your concerns are only part of the picture. Passing these concerns on to Social Services may make an important contribution to an assessment about whether this is a child in need and/or in need of protection.
- Your concerns should increase if the way the child presents persists over a period of time, worsens over time or changes radically
- The information which you are able to contribute to an assessment will be much more useful if you have been able to share your concerns with the child's parents or carer as early as possible. (See discussions under 1.6 below)

### **1.4.4 Your involvement with a parent or carer may give rise to concern about their parenting capacity.**

This is likely to be of particular relevance to staff working in services for adults. EG: Adult Mental Services, Drug and Alcohol Advisory Services, etc. Working Together to Safeguard Children and the Assessment Framework emphasise the importance of Adult Services "keeping the child visible when working with parents who are vulnerable, under stress or temporarily incapacitated in some way".

The information which you have about an adults attitude to parenting or capacity to parent adequately in light of their own difficulties may contribute significantly to an assessment of whether their children are in need and/or in need of protection. The family is much more likely to receive services which provide relevant support if all agencies involved with the family communicate with each other and build up a full picture of the needs of both children and the adults.

### **1.4.5 You are concerned that a professional might be involved in abuse.**

If you have concerns then it is important to take action. In such circumstances staff should be expected to report concerns as per their own agencies reporting/ whistle blowing policies. A protocol on Allegations of Abuse against professionals is being developed.

### **1.5 Have I recorded this information in a way, which evidences my concerns?**

Reference has already been made above to the importance of carefully recording the concerns that you have about the child and all their family. This is important for two reasons.

**1.5.1** Firstly, it ensures that the information is accurate and comprehensive. This is particularly relevant in cases of neglect and emotional abuse where the concerns are likely to accumulate over time and where a chronology of significant events can be critical to an assessment of need and risk.

**1.5.2** Secondly, good practice, which now underpinned by European Convention on Human Rights, requires that the reasons for decisions regarding intervention in a person's life are able to be evidenced and justified. This is particularly the case when compulsory intervention is required and all of us are accountable for our decisions, and the actions which we take as a result. This process is given much more clarity by careful recording.

**1.6 How much do the parents or carers know about my concerns? If I have not informed them can I justify this on the basis that to do so would place the child at increased risk.**

**1.7 Contact numbers for help and assistance are;**

Social Services  
County Council  
**03000 41 11 11**

Clerk to Dunton Green Parish Council  
**01732 462966**  
**clerk@duntongreenpc.org.uk**

## **2. Actions to be taken**

If you suspect any child is being abused then you should immediately contact one of the Officers / Organisations listed above to report the incident. The Officer may decide then that it is a matter for the Police or Social Services or you as an individual may choose to do this. If the abuse in any way relates to incidents which have occurred at the facility YOU MUST inform the manager or one of the officers listed above.

HM Government document "**Working Together to Safeguard Children**" **A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children July 2018** is a supporting document for this procedures and reporting guide

**Adopted and Approved at the Meeting of the Parish Council on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> July 2022**

### **Review History**

Adopted and Approved at the Meeting of the Parish Council on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2019

**Reporting Form  
Concerns over Child Safety**

Person Reporting \_\_\_\_\_

Organisation / Dept \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Number \_\_\_\_\_

Time / Date of incident \_\_\_\_\_

Location of incident \_\_\_\_\_

Name of witnesses (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

Outline details (to include name of child if possible) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

(Continue on separate sheet if needed)

Actions Taken \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Sheet No \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Print name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Attention: When Completed this form must be placed in a sealed envelope marked 'strictly confidential' and handed to the Clerk**

**Some Safety Considerations**

- Staffing: Are staff DBS checked ?  
Do staff have experience of working with children?  
Do staff have an illness or condition which may be of concern?  
Do staff have recognised qualifications?  
What training have staff had if not qualified.  
Are there sufficient staff to child ratios?  
Has a responsible officer / adult been nominated?
- Location: Has the location been visited before the children arrive?  
Has a risk assessment been carried out for the location?  
Is the site insured and run by an established organisation?  
Is the site accessible by other members of the public?  
Is there vehicle access to the site?  
Does traffic have access to the site / right of way?  
Is the site fit for purpose?  
Are there hazards which are known about?  
Is the site available for the duration needed?  
What facilities are available at the site?  
Has permission been sought and obtained to use the site?
- Transport: Hire or self-drive?  
Reputable company from County Council approved list?  
Qualified County Council mini bus driver?  
Seat belts and staff on board?  
Facilities needed on board?  
Duration of travel & rest stops?  
Parking available at destination?
- Activity: Is activity aimed at right age group?  
Are appropriate qualified and experienced staff in charge  
Run by group or run by providers?  
Insurance cover by activity provider?  
Health & Safety Policy of activity provider?  
Method of operation?  
Appropriate managers informed?  
Sufficient notice for activity to potential users?
- Children: Do any of the group have special needs?  
Have parental consent forms been obtained?  
Number of children involved?  
Staffing ratios adopted for age group?  
Contact details and medical requirements?  
Comfort breaks?  
Refreshments and feeding arrangements for children?

What clothing are children required to wear or take?

Activity as group, individual, rotation?

Minimum / Maximum numbers needed?

## NOTICE OF ACTIVITY

To be completed by all Dunton Green Parish Council staff or councillors organising their first activity

Activity	Location	Date	Duration	Detail
Officer Responsible	Staffing Required	Risk Assessments	Parental Consents	Medical Questionnaires
		Attach to this form	Attach copies to this form	Attach copies in sealed envelope to this form
Method of Travel	Approved provider	Cost	Contingency	Contact Details
i.e. coach, car, taxi				Mobile. Location of activity. Other staff mobiles
Insurance	Manager	Manager Signature	Signature	BOX 1
All activities must be covered by insurance. A copy of the DGPC policy is available	The Clerk must be informed about all the activities		Sign & date Box 1. This indicates that you have complied with all the above information.	