

A stylized graphic of a person with their arms raised, rendered in white and light blue against a blue background. The person's head is a white circle, and their arms are two white curved lines extending upwards and outwards. The body is a large white shape that curves around the text.

# The Child Protection Plan

A Guide for Parents

This leaflet explains what happens when it is decided a child needs a Child Protection Plan.



## What is a Child Protection Plan?

A Child Protection Plan is made when children are known or believed to have been abused or injured in some way, or who are thought to be at risk of injury, abuse, neglect or harm.

Details of children who have a Child Protection Plan are kept by the Office of Children & Young People's Services. This information is strictly confidential and is only available to professional people such as health visitors, teachers, doctors, police officers and social workers.

## When is a Child Protection Plan made?

Child Protection Plans are only made at Child Protection Conferences. Parents will be told that professional workers who are concerned about the child are going to have a meeting and they will be invited to attend. The meeting is called a Child Protection Conference and it is at this meeting that the decision is made about whether or not a Child Protection Plan should be made.

(For more information, please ask for the leaflet (*'The Child Protection Conference – A guide for parents'*)).

## What does it mean to have a Child Protection Plan?

The Child Protection Plan is there to help protect the children who have one. The professional workers identified at the conference who have most day-to-day involvement with your family will meet you regularly, for example, a health visitor, teacher and social worker.

The group will talk about the progress that is being made and you will be able to give your point of view.

If your child has a Child Protection Plan it does not mean that they will need one for ever.

Another conference will be held in about three months to consider if a Child Protection Plan is still needed. If the decision is yes, the matter will be considered again in six months. Once it is felt that your child is no longer at risk, a decision will be made at a review Child Protection Conference that a Child Protection Plan is no longer required. Following this decision we would usually continue to work with you and your child for a minimum of 6 months under what is called a Child In Need plan.

## Can children be taken away?

Social Workers cannot take a child away against the wishes of the parent (or parents) simply because the child has a Child Protection Plan. In serious cases, a conference may recommend that the matter is brought before a court.

Children can be removed from their home by order of the court. In an emergency the police or Office of Children and Young People's Services can get a court order to remove the child from home on a short-term basis. However, it is rare for children to be removed.

## Do families have to have a Social Worker?

The Office of Children & Young People's Services will arrange for a social worker known as the 'key worker' to visit you regularly. He or she will also be responsible for keeping in touch with other professional workers who are involved with you.

The social worker will collect information to help everyone involved understand your situation so it is important that you work closely with them. You do not have to see the social worker unless a court order asks you to. However, if there are serious concerns about a child and the parents refuse to allow a social worker to see their child or children, the Office of Children & Young People's Services would have to consider whether to involve a court or the police.

## Can I appeal against a decision to make a Child Protection Plan for my child?

In Cambridgeshire, there is no appeal process. However, if you are not satisfied, you should discuss this with your social worker who will tell you about the complaints procedure and will help you use it.

However, most parents would accept that the social worker must always do what they consider to be best for the child, particularly in situations where a child could possibly come to harm. Social workers want to work with parents to protect the well-being of children and families.

## Legal Help

You are entitled to receive help from a solicitor, whether or not you agree with any action which Office of Children and Young People's Services takes concerning your child.

You can get a list of solicitors in your area specialising in child-care work from your local Citizen's Advice Bureau.

If your income and savings are below a certain level, you may be entitled to legal aid to pay for the work which the solicitor does for you. You should ask about this on your first visit to the solicitor.



## Important contact telephone numbers and addresses

During office hours (8am - 8pm Monday to Friday) you can contact Children's Social Care Services at Cambridgeshire Direct on **0345 045 5203**

If you urgently need help outside these hours you can contact Cambridgeshire Children and Young People's Services on **01733 234724**

You can also speak to the: National Society of the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) on **0800 800500**