

What will happen next?

The social worker and police officer will consider all the information they have collected and assess if your child is at risk or not. If your child is not at risk there will be no further action. You may be offered advice and support if your child or your family need any assistance.

If they consider your child is at risk then they will take steps to ensure their safety. This may be:-

- Ensuring you take appropriate action to keep your child safe
- Asking the person who is a risk to your child to leave the family home
- Agreeing with you for your child to stay with family or friends
- Taking legal action to keep your child safe
- Making a referral to the Reporter to the Children's Hearing

Children only need to be taken away from home if they are at risk of harm and cannot be protected within their family. In most cases children remain at home and services are provided to help support families and reduce the level of concern.

If the investigation shows that your child has been harmed, or is at risk of significant harm, a child protection case conference may be held to discuss the concerns and consider if your child's name should be on the child protection register (see separate leaflet).

Further Information

If there is anything you do not understand, or are unsure about, ask the social worker or police officer.

Shetland inter-agency child protection procedures can be found at <http://www.shetland.gov.uk/socialwork-health/services/documents/ChildProtectionProcedures.pdf>

Or ask a social worker if you would like to see a paper copy.

If you feel you need legal advice the Law Society of Scotland can provide a list of solicitors and information on legal aid (tel. 0131 2267411)

What should I do if I have a complaint?

Talk to your child's social worker; they can give you advice and information on what to do, depending on what it is you are unhappy about.

Information for Parents and Carers

Child Protection Investigations

Name of Social Worker

Contact number

Name of Police Officer

Contact number

Shetland Child Protection Committee
Safeguarding Children and Young People in Shetland

Introduction

Child protection investigations are joint investigations undertaken by the police and social work.

An investigation is carried out when a report has been received that a child has been harmed, or is at risk of harm (referral). Information will be gathered to decide whether a child is at risk, if so, action will be taken to ensure their safety.

Referrals

Everyone is responsible for making sure children are safe and well looked after; concerns should be reported to social work or the police. Agencies such as Education or Health have a duty to report these concerns. Examples of harm include:-

- Physical injury (being hit, punched, kicked, bitten, burned or scalded)
- Physical neglect (not seeking appropriate medical help, poor hygiene, not being properly fed or clothed)
- Sexual abuse (inappropriate touching, exposure to sexual behaviour/language, internet abuse)
- Emotional abuse (witnessing domestic violence, being ignored, humiliated or constantly criticised)
- Non-organic failure to thrive (no medical reason for lack of growth, weight gain etc.)

There will also be an investigation if a person considered to be a risk to children becomes part of your household.

What happens during an investigation?

During an investigation your child's welfare is the most important consideration. The police officer and social worker will speak to your child, they will generally seek your permission to do this but at times this may not be possible, the reason for this will be explained to you. Consent to be interviewed will be sought from your child, depending on their age and level of understanding.

The police officer and social worker will speak to you and anyone else who can provide relevant information e.g. family member or teacher.

They may need to talk to any other children in the household or check the home conditions that your child is living in.

You may be asked to consent to your child having a medical examination – if you withhold your consent to either a medical, or your child being spoken to, emergency legal measures may be taken to protect your child.

The police may want to interview anyone suspected of harming a child and any possible witnesses.

Child protection investigations can happen very quickly, at times you may feel confused and feel you are not being given much information. It is important that the social worker and police officer act quickly to ensure your child is safe and protected from the actions of possible offenders.

The social worker and police officer will keep you as informed of events as they are able to and let you know the findings of the investigation.

Medical examinations

During the investigation your child may need a medical examination. This may be a general check up to make sure they are in good health or it may be to confirm if your child has been injured.

Consent to have a medical examination will be sought from your child, depending on their age and level of understanding.

If your child has been injured the examination will help to find out how the injury was caused.

The social worker and police officer may arrange the examination with your GP or the community paediatrician. In most cases it will be necessary to see a paediatrician or other specialist in Aberdeen.

A parent would usually attend the examination with the child unless that was not in the child's best interests.

Information from the medical examination may be used as evidence at a Children's Hearing; or in court.