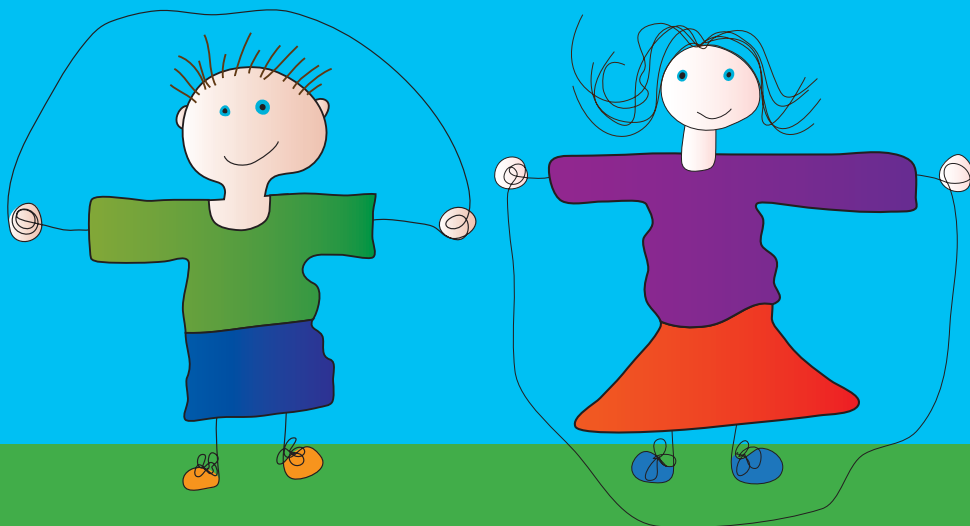


***Bedford Borough  
Safeguarding Children Board  
& Central Bedfordshire  
Safeguarding Children Board***

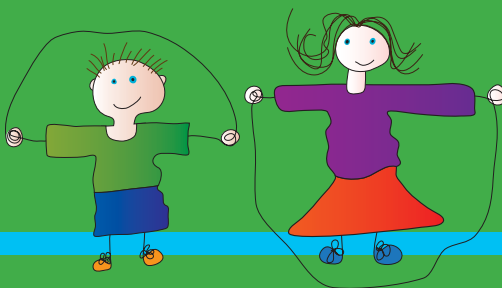
*Working Together to Safeguard Children*



# Safeguarding Children

A guide for professionals working with  
children and young people

*This leaflet devised by Bedford Borough Safeguarding Children Board (BBSCB) & Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (CBSCB) explains the role of the professional in safeguarding children and young people up to the age of 18 in Bedford Borough & Central Bedfordshire. Useful addresses, telephone numbers and weblinks are listed on page 23.*



# Introduction

**In response to requests from various agencies, this leaflet has been produced to help people working with children and young people understand more about:**

- Safeguarding children
- Your role as a professional working with children
- Identifying concerns
- Child abuse and neglect
- Deciding whether to refer
- How to make a referral
- Child Protection (Section 47) enquiries
- Investigations
- Child protection conferences

The language used in this booklet may appear basic to some, however this is intentional so that there are no misunderstandings or delays in action to safeguard children and young people as a result of misinterpretation of the wording within the booklet.



# What is safeguarding?

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children means:

- Protecting children from mistreatment;
- preventing impairment of children's health or development;
- ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and
- undertaking that role so as to enable those children to have optimum life chances and to enter adulthood successfully.

## **What to do if you're worried a child is being abused (2006).**

At all times professionals must follow guidelines and procedures given by the Department of Health, the Department for Education and the Safeguarding Children Boards and the employing agency. Your first priority is to ensure the safety of the children, young people and yourself.

## **Your role as a professional working with children**

All practitioners working with children and families have a responsibility to become familiar with the local procedures for safeguarding children and young people both within their own organisations and those of the Local Safeguarding Children Boards.

It is also important that you are aware of the Government publications, Working Together to Safeguard Children (2010) and What to do if you're worried a child is being abused? (2006), both available on the Safeguarding Children Board's website [www.bedfordshirelscb.org.uk](http://www.bedfordshirelscb.org.uk).

# What is child abuse and neglect?

Every child has the right to be kept safe from all forms of abuse that hurt them either physically or emotionally. Abuse and neglect are forms of mistreatment of a child or young person.

Somebody may abuse or neglect a child or young person by hurting them, or by failing to act to prevent someone or something from hurting them. Children and young people may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child, children or young people.

Concerns may be because of one or more of the following areas:-

## Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in serious impairment of the child's health or development.

Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance misuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent/carer failing to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment);
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger;
- ensure adequate supervision; (including the use of inadequate care-givers); and
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

### **Emotional abuse**

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development.

It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

### **Physical abuse**

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child.

## Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

## Identifying concerns – procedures to be followed by practitioners working with children and their families

Concerns about the welfare of a child or young person may occur:

- in situations where there have been no previous concerns and the child has not previously received any services, other than those universal services accessed by all children;
- where an assessment has taken place by agencies other than Children's Social Care under the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and a plan has been put in place in order to improve the wellbeing of the child;
- where the child is already allocated to a worker in Children's Social Care; and
- where there is no current involvement by Children's Social Care but there have been previous referrals.

# Deciding whether to refer

The criteria set out in the Safeguarding Children Board's Safeguarding Inter-Agency Procedures must be followed when deciding whether or not to refer to children's Social Care. A referral to Children's Social Care should always be made in the following circumstances:

- Any allegation of sexual abuse;
- physical injury caused by assault or neglect which may or may not require medical attention;
- incidents of physical abuse that alone are unlikely to constitute significant harm but taken into consideration with other factors may do so;
- children who suffer from persistent neglect;
- children who live in an environment which is likely to have an adverse impact on their emotional development;
- where parents' own emotional impoverishment affects their ability to meet their child's emotional and/or physical needs regardless of material/financial circumstances and assistance;
- where parents' circumstances are affecting their capacity to meet the child's needs because of domestic abuse, drug and/or alcohol misuse, mental health problems, previous convictions for offences against children;
- a child living in a household with, or having significant contact with, a person at risk of sexual offending;
- a child under 13 who is sexually active;
- an abandoned child;
- bruising to an immobile baby;
- pregnancy where children have been previously removed; and
- suspicion of fabricated or induced illness.

There are other circumstances under which a referral should be considered. Details and specific guidance is available within the Safeguarding Children Board's Safeguarding Inter-Agency Procedures to help professionals to decide whether to refer.

## Significant harm

Under s31(10) of the Children Act, the question of whether harm suffered by a child is significant relates specifically to the child's health and development. Their health or development should be compared with that which could reasonably be expected of a similar child.

There are no absolute criteria on which to rely when judging what constitutes significant harm. Consideration of the severity of ill-treatment may include the degree and the extent of physical harm, the duration and frequency of abuse and neglect, the extent of premeditation, and the presence or degree of threat, coercion, sadism and bizarre or unusual elements.

Sometimes a single traumatic event may constitute significant harm, for example, a violent assault, suffocation or poisoning. More often, significant harm is a compilation of significant events, both acute and long-standing, which interrupt, change or damage the child's physical and psychological development.

Some children live in family and social circumstances where their health and development are neglected. For them, it is the corrosiveness of long-term emotional, physical or sexual abuse that causes impairment to the extent of constituting significant harm. In each case, it is necessary to consider any maltreatment alongside the child's own assessment of his or her safety and welfare, the family's strengths and supports, as well as an assessment of the likelihood and capacity for change and improvements in parenting and the care of children and young people.

To understand and identify significant harm, it is necessary to consider:

- The nature of harm, in terms of mistreatment or failure to provide adequate care;
- the impact on the child's health and development;
- the child's development within the context of their family and wider environment;
- any special needs, such as a medical condition, communication impairment or disability, that may affect the child's development and care within the family;
- the capacity of parents to meet adequately the child's needs; and
- the wider and environmental family context.

## How do I make a referral?

The general public and all the services that work with children and young people must all work together in partnership with parents to keep children and young people safe. If you see a child or young person has been injured or harmed, or if you are concerned or unsure, contact any of the agencies listed at the end of this leaflet.

Your concern may need to be discussed with a senior member of staff within your agency in order to clarify the seriousness and urgency of the situation and then decide the next course of action. The senior member of staff may be:

- A manager
- a designated member of staff with responsibility for safeguarding children, for example: designated nurse/named nurse doctor;
- designated person in an education setting.

If, following this discussion, there are still concerns about the welfare of the child or young person, consideration should be given to consulting the Children Social Care office for advice. This can be done by presenting a 'what if' scenario without necessarily naming the child in question. This discussion should be recorded by both parties in a retrievable form.

If the practitioner with the concerns believes that a child or young person's health or development is being impaired without the provision of services by the Local Authority (i.e. the child or young person is a child in need - see Glossary Section 17), consideration

should be given to making a referral to Children's Social Care. In this circumstance, a Referral form or CAF should be completed (if this has not already been done) and used as a basis for deciding whether a referral is appropriate.

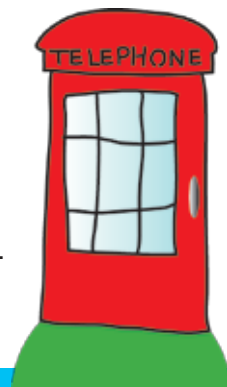
In most situations, concerns should be discussed with the child or young person (as appropriate to their age and understanding) and with their parents, whose agreement should be sought prior to a referral being made. **However, agreement should not be sought if doing so would place the child or young person at risk of significant harm.**

If there are immediate concerns about the safety of a child or young person, a referral should be made by telephone to Children's Social Care. At the end of any discussion or dialogue about a child or young person, the referrer (if a professional from another service or agency) and Children's Social Care must record the decision in their records.

Telephone referrals should be followed up in writing within 48 hours by the referrer.

If concerns are not immediate, but it is believed that a child or young person is a child in need, who may also be in need of protection, a referral should be made in writing. Where a CAF has been completed by the referring agency this will form the basis of the referral. Where necessary, the assessment should be updated in order to ensure that the most recent information is passed to Children's Social Care.

If concerns arise about an open case, within Children's Social Care then a decision should be taken as to whether or not a strategy discussion should be initiated.



# The child protection enquiry (Section 47 enquiry)

When someone makes a referral to Children's Social Care that they are worried about a child or young person, Children's Social Care have a duty under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 to make enquiries and if appropriate, undertake an investigation. This could be carried out by Children's Social Care alone, or with the Police following a Strategy Discussion.

An enquiry means talking to people known to the family (such as health visitor, teachers, GP) about the child and their family and it might be necessary for a social worker and/or a police officer from the Child Abuse Investigation Unit (CAIU) to visit the parents/carers at home. They must:

- Provide identification;
- explain why they are visiting;
- discuss concerns with the parents/carers and ask their views;
- arrange to see the child or young person alone and to talk to them about their wishes and feelings and
- assess any immediate risk to the child or young person.



# The child protection investigation

If initial enquiries confirm concerns that the child or young person is at risk, a more formal investigation will take place. This could include some or all of the following:-

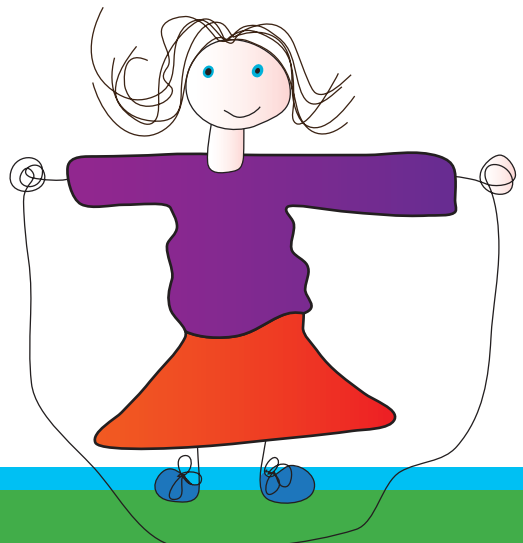
## Information gathering

A social worker will talk to professionals working with the family, such as school, GP or health visitor for example.

## Information sharing

Agencies involved with the family will share certain relevant information with the agencies involved about the family and their circumstances (see the leaflet 'Information Sharing: a guide for practitioners' and [www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/informationsharing](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/informationsharing) for more information)

It is essential that staff do not give false reassurances that information will be kept confidential when information will need to be shared if a child or young person is at risk of harm.



### Parental permission

Permission would be sought from the parent/carer and where appropriate from the child or young person too, for any medical examination or interview to take place. In the majority of cases, the parent/carer would be invited to attend any medical examination with the child or young person, unless in doing so would place the child or young person at risk. Children's Social Care and the Police have a duty to think about the immediate safety of the child or young person. If neither parent gives consent a legal order may be sought giving permission to interview or medically examine the child or young person without parental consent.

### Interviewing a child

A child or young person would usually be interviewed in special areas set aside for talking to children or young people in the Police Station, or alternatively at home or at school with permission. The social workers and police officers who talk to children and young people are skilled in both listening and reducing the anxiety that is sometimes attached to an interview. Where criminal offences are suspected, an interview with a child or young person may be recorded so that they do not have to repeat their experiences in the event that the case reaches Court. If other children or young people in the family are thought to be at risk, they may also be interviewed.



### Medical examination

During some investigations it is necessary for the child or young person to be examined for medical signs of abuse and neglect including sexual abuse and to ascertain medical, health and developmental needs that may have been overlooked. This will only be done where it is thought to be in the child or young person's

best interests. This examination is normally undertaken by a Paediatrician who has been specially trained in child protection. This may mean looking into their growth, weight, physical and emotional needs. In some cases further investigation such as x-ray, blood tests etc. may be needed.

### **Criminal offences**

Where criminal offences are suspected, the Police may arrest and interview people suspected of causing the injury to the child or young person.

### **At the end of the enquiry**

Children's Social Care and Police will, with assistance from the parents/carers if appropriate, decide whether the child or young person is at risk and in need of protection. If this is so, they will consider what support might be required to keep the child or young person safe from harm. It may be felt that a clear plan to protect the child or young person is required. If this is the case, a Child Protection Conference will be arranged.

There are a number of different outcomes to the enquiry. It may be decided that there is no need for any further action; the family may be sign-posted to other agencies who can offer support; a Child in Need plan may be drawn up and assistance given to support the family, or a Child Protection Plan may be established to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child or young person.

Whatever the outcome of the enquiry, the parent/carer will need to be told and will receive a letter confirming any decisions and copies of any assessments.

# The Child Protection Conference

A Child Protection Conference is a meeting to discuss concerns about a child, children, young person or people. Its aims are:

- To consider whether a child or young person has been harmed or is at risk of being harmed, and the nature of the concern about the child or young person;
- to assess the degree of risk to the child or young person's health and well-being and whether the child is in need of protection;
- to decide whether the child or young person should be subject to a Child Protection Plan; and
- to make recommendations about any further action necessary to help protect the child or young person.

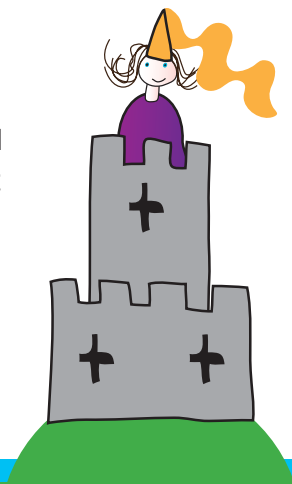
The first Child Protection Conference is called an Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) and further meetings are referred to as Review Child Protection Conferences (RCPC). If you are invited to attend a Child Protection Conference, it is very important that you attend to give a complete picture of what involvement you or your agency have with the family in the form of a report. You may have vital information which will inform any Child Protection Plan that is drawn up. Without your input, it is possible that the child or young person may continue to be at risk, or remain subject to a Child Protection Plan longer than is necessary. If you are unable to attend you will be expected to provide a written report prior to the conference of your involvement with the family. Professionals should be ready to talk at the meeting and this may include giving their views in front of the parents.

# Child Protection Plans

Child Protection Plans set out what changes need to happen to make sure that the child or young person is safe and that their needs are met. It will list the support and help to be given to the family by the different agencies and what the family is expected to do to make the changes happen. The plan should be agreed by the family as well as the agencies.

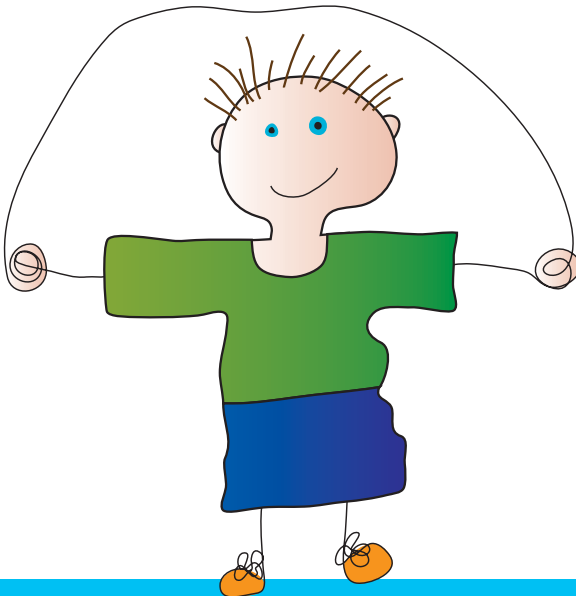
The Child Protection Plan will be reviewed regularly and a core group of professionals will work with the child or young person and family to achieve the outcomes set out in the plan. A review meeting will be held within 3 months of the ICPC and Review CPCs at least every 6 months after that, to look again at whether the child is still in need of protection and whether they should remain subject to a Child Protection Plan. If it is agreed that the risk to the child or young person has been removed, they may receive support services or have a new plan drawn up called a Child In Need Plan.

If there is no progress and it is felt that the child or young person is still at risk, extra help and support may be given or the local authority may have to apply to the courts for an Interim Care Order to keep the child or young person safe which means that where necessary the Local Authority will seek to obtain parental responsibility. This may not be a permanent arrangement and in circumstances where it can be demonstrated that the child or young person is no longer at risk it may be decided by the courts that the children and young people can return to their family.



# How long will it take?

- Initial Assessments can take up to 7 working days from the referral to complete;
- the Child Protection Conference will be held within 15 working days of the last Strategy Meeting;
- Core Assessments will take up to 35 working days following the Initial Assessment; and
- if a child or young person is subject to a Child Protection Plan, that plan will continue until it is considered that the child or young person is no longer in need of protection, or sometimes it is felt that there is no alternative and the local authority may have to apply for parental responsibility through the courts.



# Equalities

Throughout the process of ensuring the safety and welfare of a child or young person, professionals should be aware of differing family patterns and lifestyles, not only due to different racial, ethnic and cultural groups but also issues of age, disability, gender, religion and sexual orientation. There will also be occasions where interpreters should be offered in order to ensure that the family can fully participate in the assessment process. This should be identified at an early stage in the process. Interpreters should not be family members.

The assessment process should maintain a focus on the needs of the individual child or young person. It should always include consideration of the way religious beliefs and cultural traditions in different racial, ethnic and cultural groups influence their values, attitudes and behaviour and the way in which family and community life is structured and organised. Cultural and religious factors should not be regarded as acceptable explanations for child abuse or neglect and are not acceptable grounds for inaction when there are concerns that a child or young person is or may be suffering or likely to suffer harm. Professionals should be aware of, and work with, the strengths and support systems available within families, ethnic groups and communities, which can be built on to help safeguard children and promote their welfare.

All children or young person, whatever their religious or cultural background, must receive the same care and safeguards with regard to abuse and neglect.

*Working Together to Safeguard Children (2010)*



# Glossary

## Care proceedings

There may be circumstances where the Local Authority has no other choice but to apply to the Court for parental responsibility in order to safeguard the child/ren from risk of harm. This is known as Care proceedings.

## Child Protection Enquiry

See 'Section 47 enquiry' for more details

## Child in Need

Section 17 (10) of The Children Act 1989 states that a child shall be taken to be in need if:

- a) they are unlikely to achieve or maintain, or to have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision for them of services by a local authority under this Part
- b) their health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision of such services, or
- c) they are disabled.

## Child in Need Plan

A Plan which is set out to identify support for the family in promoting the welfare of the child or young person from a range of different agencies.

## Child Protection Plan

A Plan which is set out to safeguard and protect the welfare of the child or young person and identify what specifically needs to happen to keep the child or young person safe.

## Common Assessment Framework (CAF)

The CAF is a shared assessment tool for use across all children's services and all local areas in England. It aims to help early identification of need and promote co-ordinated service provision.

## Core Assessment

A Core Assessment is an in-depth look at the family circumstances which helps professionals and the family to decide whether support is necessary and if so what type of support.

## Core Group

A group comprising the parent(s)/carer(s), children or young person as appropriate and a small number of professionals who will work closely together to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child or young person.

## Multi-agency responsibility

All statutory and voluntary professionals working together to ensure the child or young person's safety.

## Recommendations

Work that needs to be done to reduce levels of risk to the child or young person.

## Section 17

The Children Act 1989 states that:

It shall be the general duty of every local authority –

- To safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need; and
- So far as is consistent with that duty, to promote the upbringing of such children or young people by their families, by providing a range and level of services appropriate to those children's or young peoples needs.

### Section 47 enquiry

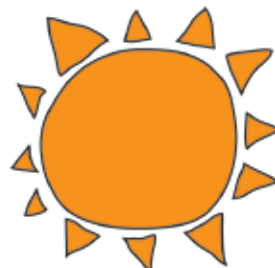
Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 sets out duties for the Local Authority around making enquiries in certain circumstances to decide whether they should take any action to safeguard or promote the welfare of a child or young person. They will consider the information collected within the Core Assessment and discuss what needs to happen to keep the child or young person safe.

### Strategy discussion

If professionals suspect that a child or young person is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, Children's Social Care will hold a Strategy Discussion. This is a discussion between professionals to decide whether or not to start a Child Protection Enquiry and to undertake a Core Assessment. It may take the form of a meeting or be a series of telephone conversations.

### Strategy meeting

Sometimes, when there is a lot of information to discuss, or it is suspected that the mistreatment or neglect of one or more children or young people is complex a meeting may be the most appropriate way to have the discussion between professionals. This is likely to be where the circumstances are very complex and a number of discussions are needed to consider whether and when to initiate Section 47 enquiries.



## For more information

If you would like more information about safeguarding children in Bedfordshire, or if there is anything you do not understand, listed below are some useful telephone numbers and addresses.

Bedford Borough Children's Social Care Intake and Assessment:

Bedford: 01234 223599

Mon-Thurs: 8.45am - 5.20pm Friday: 8.45am - 4.20pm

Central Bedfordshire Children's Social Care Intake and Assessment:

Dunstable: 0300 300 4749/4750

Mon-Thurs: 8.45am - 5.20pm Friday: 8.45 - 4.20pm

Social Care Emergency Duty Team

(Open 5pm – 9am Monday to Thursday, Weekends 4pm on Friday to 9am on Monday): 0300 300 8123

Police Child Abuse Investigation Unit:

Referral Team: 01234 846960

NHS Bedfordshire Designated Office for Safeguarding Children:

Bedford: 01234 292951

National Society for the Prevention of

Cruelty to Children: 0808 800 5000

Further information is available at:

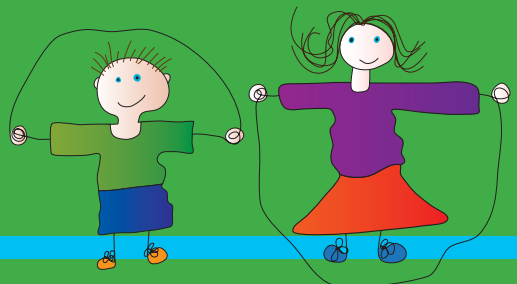
[www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

[www.bedford.gov.uk](http://www.bedford.gov.uk)

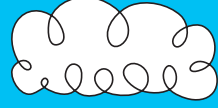
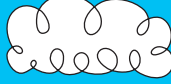
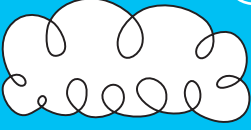
[www.dfe.gov.uk](http://www.dfe.gov.uk)

[www.everychildmatters.gov.uk](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk)

[www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)



## A guide for professionals working with children and young people



### Finding out more

If you would like further copies, a large-print copy or information about us and our services, please telephone or write to us at our address below.



Për Informacion

برای اطلاع

Informacja

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Per Informazione

Za Informacije

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তথ্যের জন্য



0300 300 6676



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[www.bedfordshirelscb.org.uk](http://www.bedfordshirelscb.org.uk)



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