

Guidelines when considering a Child Protection Plan

The Conference should consider the following decision when determining whether a Child Protection Plan should be considered:

Is the child at continuing risk of significant harm? The test should be that either –

- The child can be shown to have suffered ill-treatment or impairment of health or development as a result of physical, emotional, sexual abuse or neglect and professional judgement is that further ill-treatment or impairment are likely; or
- Professional judgment substantiated by the finding of enquires in this individual case or by research evidence, is that the child is likely to suffer ill treatment or impairment of health or development as a result of physical, emotional, sexual abuse or neglect

If the child is at continuing risk of significant harm, then the child requires interagency help and intervention through a child protection plan. It is the role of the Initial Child Protection Conference to formulate the child protection plan.

The aim of the child protection plan is to:

- Ensure the child is safe from harm and prevent them from suffering further harm
- Promote the child's health and development
- Support the family and wider family members to safeguard and promote the welfare of their child, provided it is in the best interests of the child

Categories of Abuse for Child Protection Planning

The Conference will need to establish a cause of harm or likelihood of harm which also needs to be considered for any siblings and/or any other children living in the household. The category for each child should be determined by the nature of concerns.

The following categories should be considered when making a Child Protection Plan:

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.

Emotional Abuse: involves 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 a child 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 a 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.

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.

Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Child sexual exploitation is a form of **child sexual abuse**. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator.

The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

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

Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse.

Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- a. provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- b. protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- c. ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers)
- d. ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Guidelines for ending a Child Protection Plan

A child will no longer be subject to a Child Protection Plan if there is substantive evidence that:

- It is judged that the child is no longer at continuing risk of significant harm (i.e. the risk of harm has been reduced by the Actions taken through the child protection plan; the child and/or family's circumstances have changed; updating assessment of the child and family evidences that a child protection plan is no longer necessary)
- The child and/or family have moved permanently to another LA area and that LA has formally accepted responsibility for future management of the case
- The child has reached 18 years of age, is deceased or has permanently left the United Kingdom.

A child who is no longer subject of a child protection plan may still require additional support and services and the ending of a child protection plan should never lead to the automatic withdrawal of help.