



## Chapter 1: Assessing need and providing help

### Contents

**Early help**

**Identifying children and families who would benefit from early help**

**Effective assessment of the need for early help**

**Provision of effective early help services**

**Accessing help and services**

**Referral**



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



**Assessment of young carers**

**Assessment of children in secure youth establishments**

**Contextual safeguarding**

**Purpose of assessment**

**Local protocols for assessment**

**The principles and parameters of a good assessment**

**Focusing on the needs and views of the child**

**Developing a clear analysis**

**Focusing on outcomes**

**Timeliness**

**Processes for managing individual cases**



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



**Flow chart 3: Action taken for an assessment of a child under the Children Act 1989**

**Flow chart 4: Action following a strategy discussion**

**Flow chart 5: What happens after the child protection conference, including the review?**

**Flow chart 6: Children returning home from care to their families**

## Early help

1. Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life, from the foundation years through to the teenage years. Early help can also prevent further problems arising; for example, if it is provided as part of a support plan where a child has returned home to their family from care, or in families where there are emerging parental mental health issues or drug and alcohol misuse.
2. Effective early help relies upon local organisations and agencies working together to:



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



3. Local authorities, under section 10 of the Children Act 2004<sup>[5]</sup>, have a responsibility to promote inter-agency co-operation to improve the welfare of all children.

[5] Section 10 of the Children Act 2004 requires each local authority to make arrangements to promote co- operation between the authority, each of the authority's relevant partners and such other persons or bodies working with children in the local authority's area as the authority considers appropriate.

## Identifying children and families who would benefit from early help

4. Local organisations and agencies should have in place effective ways to identify emerging problems and potential unmet needs of individual children and families. Local authorities should work with organisations and agencies to develop joined-up early help services based on a clear understanding of local needs. This requires all practitioners, including those in universal services and those providing services to adults with children, to understand their role in identifying emerging problems and to share information with other practitioners to support early identification and assessment.
5. Multi-agency training will be important in supporting this collective understanding of local need. Practitioners working in both universal services and specialist services have a responsibility to identify the symptoms and triggers of abuse and neglect, to



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



6. Practitioners should, in particular, be alert to the potential need for early help for a child who:
  - Is disabled and has specific additional needs[6];
  - Has special educational needs (whether or not they have a statutory Education, Health and Care Plan);
  - Is a young carer;
  - Is showing signs of being drawn into anti-social or criminal behaviour, including gang involvement and association with organised crime groups;
  - Is frequently missing/goes missing from care or from home[7];
  - Is at risk of modern slavery, trafficking or exploitation;
  - Is at risk of being radicalised or exploited;
  - Is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as drug and alcohol misuse, adult mental health issues and domestic abuse;
  - Is misusing drugs or alcohol themselves;
  - Has returned home to their family from care[8];
  - Is a privately fostered child[9];



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

## A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



them or a relative in their own home. A child is not privately fostered if the person caring for and accommodating them has done so for less than 28 days and does not intend to do so for longer.

## Effective assessment of the need for early help

7. Children and families may need support from a wide range of local organisations and agencies. Where a child and family would benefit from co-ordinated support from more than one organisation or agency (e.g. education, health, housing, police) there should be an inter-agency assessment. These early help assessments should be evidence-based, be clear about the action to be taken and services to be provided and identify what help the child and family require to prevent needs escalating to a point where intervention would be needed through a statutory assessment under the Children Act 1989.
8. A lead practitioner should undertake the assessment, provide help to the child and family, act as an advocate on their behalf and co-ordinate the delivery of support services. A GP, family support worker, school nurse, teacher, health visitor and/or special educational needs co-ordinator could undertake the lead practitioner role. Decisions about who should be the lead practitioner should be taken on a case-by-case basis and should be informed by the child and their family.
9. For an early help assessment to be effective:



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



- Practitioners should be able to discuss concerns they may have about a child and family with a social worker in the local authority. Local authority children's social care should set out the process for how this will happen.

10. In cases where consent is not given for an early help assessment, practitioners should consider how the needs of the child might be met. If at any time it is considered that the child may be a child in need, as defined in the Children Act 1989, or that the child has suffered significant harm or is likely to do so, a referral should be made **immediately** to local authority children's social care. This referral can be made by any practitioner.

## Provision of effective early help services

11. The provision of early help services should form part of a continuum of support to respond to the different levels of need of individual children and families.
12. Local areas should have a comprehensive range of effective, evidence-based services in place to address assessed needs early. The early help on offer should draw upon any local assessment of need, including the JSNA and the latest evidence of the effectiveness of early help programmes. In addition to high quality support in universal services, specific local early help services will typically include family and parenting programmes, assistance with health issues, including mental health, responses to emerging thematic concerns in extra-familial contexts, and help for emerging problems relating to domestic abuse, drug or alcohol misuse by an





## Accessing help and services

13. Where a child's need is relatively low level, individual services and universal services may be able to take swift action. Where there are more complex needs, help may be provided under **Section 17 of the Children Act 1989** (children in need). Where there are child protection concerns (reasonable cause to suspect a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm) local authority social care services must make enquiries and decide if any action must be taken under **Section 47 of the Children Act 1989**.
14. It is important that there are clear criteria amongst all organisations and agencies working with children and families for taking action and providing help across this full continuum to ensure that services are commissioned effectively and that the right help is given to the child at the right time[10].
15. In making their local arrangements, the safeguarding partners should agree with their relevant agencies the levels for the different types of assessment and services to be commissioned and delivered. This should include services for children who have suffered or are likely to suffer abuse and neglect whether from within the family or from external threats. This should also include services for disabled children and be aligned with the short breaks services statement[11].

16.





# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



- The criteria, including the level of need, for when a case should be referred to local authority children's social care for assessment and for statutory services under:
  - Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 (children in need);
  - Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 (reasonable cause to suspect a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm);
  - Section 31 of the Children Act 1989 (care and supervision orders);
  - Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 (duty to accommodate a child).
- Clear procedures and processes for cases relating to:
  - The abuse, neglect and exploitation of children;
  - Children managed within the youth secure estate;
  - Disabled children.

[10] Guidance on specific safeguarding concerns can be found in [Appendix B](#).

[11] Required under the [Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011](#).

## Referral

17.



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



18. Local authority children's social care has the responsibility for clarifying the process for referrals. This includes specific arrangements for referrals in areas where there are secure youth establishments.
19. Within local authorities, children's social care should act as the principal point of contact for safeguarding concerns relating to children. As well as protocols for practitioners working with children and families, contact details should be signposted clearly so that children, parents and other family members are aware of who they can contact if they wish to make a referral, require advice and/or support.
20. When practitioners refer a child, they should include any information they have on the child's developmental needs, the capacity of the child's parents or carers to meet those needs and any external factors that may be undermining their capacity to parent. This information may be included in any assessment, including an early help assessment, which may have been carried out prior to a referral into local authority children's social care. Where an early help assessment has already been undertaken, it should be used to support a referral to local authority children's social care; however, this is not a prerequisite for making a referral.
21. If practitioners have concerns that a child may be a potential victim of modern slavery or human trafficking then a referral should be made to the National Referral Mechanism[12], as soon as possible.
- 22.



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



[12] [National Referral Mechanism](#).

## Information sharing

23. Effective sharing of information between practitioners (see [Information sharing advice for safeguarding practitioners](#)) and local organisations and agencies is essential for early identification of need, assessment and service provision to keep children safe. Serious case reviews (SCRs[13]) have highlighted that missed opportunities to record, understand the significance of and share information in a timely manner can have severe consequences for the safety and welfare of children.
24. Practitioners should be proactive in sharing information as early as possible to help identify, assess and respond to risks or concerns about the safety and welfare of children, whether this is when problems are first emerging, or where a child is already known to local authority children's social care (e.g. they are being supported as a child in need or have a child protection plan). Practitioners should be alert to sharing important information about any adults with whom that child has contact, which may impact the child's safety or welfare.
25. Information sharing is also essential for the identification of patterns of behaviour when a child has gone missing, when multiple children appear associated to the same context or locations of risk, or in relation to children in the secure estate where there may be multiple local authorities involved in a child's care. It will be for local



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



be the paramount concern. To ensure effective safeguarding arrangements:

- All organisations and agencies should have arrangements in place that set out clearly the processes and the principles for sharing information. The arrangement should cover how information will be shared within their own organisation/agency; and with others who may be involved in a child's life;
- All practitioners should not assume that someone else will pass on information that they think may be critical to keeping a child safe. If a practitioner has concerns about a child's welfare and considers that they may be a child in need or that the child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm, then they should share the information with local authority children's social care and/or the police. All practitioners should be particularly alert to the importance of sharing information when a child moves from one local authority into another, due to the risk that knowledge pertinent to keeping a child safe could be lost;
- All practitioners should aim to gain consent to share information, but should be mindful of situations where to do so would place a child at increased risk of harm. Information may be shared without consent if a practitioner has reason to believe that there is good reason to do so, and that the sharing of information will enhance the safeguarding of a child in a timely manner. When decisions are made to share or withhold information, practitioners should record who has been given the information and why.



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



Data Protection Act 2018 and the GDPR which allow them to store and share information for safeguarding purposes, including information which is sensitive and personal, and should be treated as 'special category personal data';

- Where practitioners need to share special category personal data, they should be aware that the Data Protection Act 2018 contains 'safeguarding of children and individuals at risk' as a processing condition that allows practitioners to share information. This includes allowing practitioners to share information without consent, if it is not possible to gain consent, it cannot be reasonably expected that a practitioner gains consent, or if to gain consent would place a child at risk.

[13] [Pathways to harm, pathways to protection: a triennial analysis of serious case reviews, 2011 to 2014](#)

## Myth-busting guide to information sharing

Sharing information enables practitioners and agencies to identify and provide appropriate services that safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Below are common myths that may hinder effective information sharing.

**Data protection legislation is a barrier to sharing information**



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



## Consent is always needed to share personal information

No – you do not necessarily need consent to share personal information. Wherever possible, you should seek consent and be open and honest with the individual from the outset as to why, what, how and with whom, their information will be shared. You should seek consent where an individual may not expect their information to be passed on. When you gain consent to share information, it must be explicit, and freely given. There may be some circumstances where it is not appropriate to seek consent, because the individual cannot give consent, or it is not reasonable to obtain consent, or because to gain consent would put a child's or young person's safety at risk.

## Personal information collected by one organisation/agency cannot be disclosed to another

No – this is not the case, unless the information is to be used for a purpose incompatible with the purpose for which it was originally collected. In the case of children in need, or children at risk of significant harm, it is difficult to foresee circumstances where information law would be a barrier to sharing personal information with other practitioners<sup>[14]</sup>.

## The common law duty of confidence and the Human Rights Act 1998 prevent the sharing of personal information



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



## Sharing

No – IT systems, such as the Child Protection Information Sharing project (CP-IS), can be useful for information sharing. IT systems are most valuable when practitioners use the shared data to make more informed decisions about how to support and safeguard a child.

[14] Practitioners looking to share information should consider which processing condition in the Data Protection Act 2018 is most appropriate for use in the particular circumstances of the case. This may be the safeguarding processing condition or another relevant provision.

## Statutory requirements for children in need

- Under the Children Act 1989, local authorities are required to provide services for children in need for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting their welfare;
- Local authorities undertake assessments of the needs of individual children and must give due regard to a child's age and understanding when determining what, if any, services to provide. Every assessment must be informed by the views of the child as well as the family, and a child's wishes and feelings must be sought regarding the provision of services to be delivered. Where possible, children should be seen alone;



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



- Some children in need may require accommodation because there is no one who has parental responsibility for them, because they are lost or abandoned, or because the person who has been caring for them is prevented from providing them with suitable accommodation or care. Under section 20 of the Children Act 1989, the local authority has a duty to accommodate such children in need in their area;
- When assessing children in need and providing services, specialist assessments may be required and, where possible, should be co-ordinated so that the child and family experience a coherent process and a single plan of action;
- Under section 47 of the Children Act 1989, where a local authority has reasonable cause to suspect that a child (who lives or is found in their area) is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, it has a duty to make such enquiries as it considers necessary to decide whether to take any action to safeguard or promote the child's welfare. Such enquiries, supported by other organisations and agencies, as appropriate, should be initiated where there are concerns about all forms of abuse, neglect. This includes **Female Genital Mutilation** and other **Honour-Based Violence**, and extra-familial threats including radicalisation and sexual or criminal exploitation;





# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



## carers

28. When undertaking an assessment of a disabled child, the local authority must also consider whether it is necessary to provide support under section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act (CSDPA) 1970<sup>[15]</sup>. Where a local authority is satisfied that the identified services and assistance can be provided under section 2 of the CSDPA, and it is necessary in order to meet a disabled child's needs, it must arrange to provide that support. Where a local authority is assessing the needs of a disabled child, a carer of that child may also require the local authority to undertake an assessment of their ability to provide, or to continue to provide, care for the child, under section 1 of the Carers (Recognition and Services) Act 1995. The local authority must take account of the results of any such assessment when deciding whether to provide services to the disabled child.
29. If a local authority considers that a parent carer of a disabled child (see [Appendix A: Glossary](#)) may have support needs, it must carry out an assessment under [Section 17ZD](#) of the Children Act 1989. The local authority must also carry out such an assessment if a parent carer requests one. Such an assessment must consider whether it is appropriate for the parent carer to provide, or continue to provide, care for the disabled child, in light of the parent carer's needs and wishes.

[15] [Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act \(CSDPA\) 1970](#).

## Assessment of young carers



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



Carers' (Needs Assessment) Regulations 2015<sup>[16]</sup> require local authorities to look at the needs of the whole family when carrying out a young carer's needs assessment. Young carers' assessments can be combined with assessments of adults in the household, with the agreement of the young carer and adults concerned.

[16] [The Young Carers' \(Need Assessment\) Regulations 2015](#).

## Assessment of children in secure youth establishments

31. Any assessment of children in secure youth establishments should take account of their specific needs. In all cases, the local authority in which a secure youth establishment is located is responsible for the safety and welfare of the children in that establishment. The host local authority should work with the governor, director, manager or principal of the secure youth establishment and the child's home local authority, their relevant Youth Offending Team and, where appropriate, the Youth Custody Service<sup>[17]</sup> to ensure that the child has a single, comprehensive support plan.
32. Where a child becomes looked-after, as a result of being remanded to youth detention accommodation (YDA), the local authority must visit the child and assess the child's needs before taking a decision. This information must be used to prepare a Detention Placement Plan (DPP), which must set out how the YDA and other





## Contextual safeguarding

33. As well as threats to the welfare of children from within their families, children may be vulnerable to abuse or exploitation from outside their families. These extra-familial threats might arise at school and other educational establishments, from within peer groups, or more widely from within the wider community and/or online. These threats can take a variety of different forms and children can be vulnerable to multiple threats, including: exploitation by criminal gangs and organised crime groups such as county lines; trafficking, online abuse; sexual exploitation and the influences of extremism leading to radicalisation. Extremist groups make use of the internet to radicalise and recruit and to promote extremist materials. Any potential harmful effects to individuals identified as vulnerable to extremist ideologies or being drawn into terrorism should also be considered[19].
  
34. Assessments of children in such cases should consider whether wider environmental factors are present in a child's life and are a threat to their safety and/or welfare. Children who may be alleged perpetrators should also be assessed to understand the impact of contextual issues on their safety and welfare. Interventions should focus on addressing these wider environmental factors, which are likely to be a threat to the safety and welfare of a number of different children who may or may not be known to local authority children's social care. Assessments of children in such cases should consider the individual needs and vulnerabilities of



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



terrorism, and, where appropriate, arrange for support to be provided<sup>[20]</sup>. When assessing Channel referrals, local authorities and their partners should consider how best to align these with assessments undertaken under the Children Act 1989.

36. The Children Act 1989 promotes the view that all children and their parents should be considered as individuals and that family structures, culture, religion, ethnic origins and other characteristics should be respected. Local authorities should ensure they support and promote fundamental British values, of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs.
37. The Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 contains a duty on specified authorities in England, Wales and Scotland to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.

[19] [Under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015](#).

[20] [Channel guidance](#)

## Purpose of assessment

38. Whatever legislation the child is assessed under, the purpose of the assessment is always:
  - To gather important information about a child and family;



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



and welfare and where necessary to make them safe.

## Local protocols for assessment

39. Local authorities, with their partners, should develop and publish local protocols for assessment. A local protocol should set out clear arrangements for how cases will be managed once a child is referred into local authority children's social care and be consistent with the requirements of this statutory guidance. The detail of each protocol will be led by the local authority in discussion and agreement with the safeguarding partners and relevant agencies where appropriate.
40. The local authority is publicly accountable for this protocol and all organisations and agencies have a responsibility to understand their local protocol.
41. The local protocol should reflect where assessments for some children will require particular care. This is especially so for young carers, children with special educational needs (including to inform and be informed by Education, Health and Care Plans), unborn children where there are concerns, children in hospital, children with specific communication needs, asylum seeking children, children considered at risk of gang activity and association with organised crime groups, children at risk of female genital mutilation, children who are in the youth justice system, and children returning home.



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



43. The local protocol for assessment should set out the process for challenge by children and families by publishing the complaints procedures[21].

[21] Including as specified under [Section 26\(3\) of the Children Act 1989](#) and the [Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure \(England\) Regulations 2006](#).

## The principles and parameters of a good assessment

44. Assessment should be a dynamic process, which analyses and responds to the changing nature and level of need and/or risk faced by the child from within and outside their family. It is important that the impact of what is happening to a child is clearly identified and that information is gathered, recorded and checked systematically, and discussed with the child and their parents/carers where appropriate.
45. Any provision identified as being necessary through the assessment process should, if the local authority decides to provide such services, be provided without delay. A good assessment will monitor and record the impact of any services delivered to the child and family and review the help being delivered. Whilst services may be delivered to a parent or carer, the assessment should be focused on the needs of the child and on the impact any services are having on the child[22].



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



47. The local authority should act decisively to protect the child from abuse and neglect including initiating care proceedings where existing interventions are insufficient[24]. Where an assessment in these circumstances identifies concerns but care proceedings are not initiated, the assessment should provide a valuable platform for ongoing engagement with the child and their family.
48. Where a child becomes looked-after, the assessment will be the baseline for work with the family. Any needs that have been identified should be addressed before decisions are made about the child's return home. Assessment by a social worker is required before a looked after child under a care order returns home[25]. This will provide evidence of whether the necessary improvements have been made to ensure the child's safety when they return home. Following an assessment, appropriate support should be provided for children returning home, including where that return home is unplanned, to ensure that children continue to be adequately safeguarded.
49. In order to carry out good assessments, social workers should have the relevant knowledge and skills set out in the Knowledge and Skills Statements for child and family social work[26].
50. Social workers should have time to complete assessments and have access to high quality practice supervision. Principal social workers should support social workers, the local authority and partners to develop their assessment practice and decision



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



- Are focused on action and outcomes for children;
- Are holistic in approach, addressing the child's needs within their family and any risks the child faces from within the wider community;
- Ensure equality of opportunity;
- Involve children, ensuring that their voice is heard and provide appropriate support to enable this where the child has specific communication needs;
- Involve families;
- Identify risks to the safety and welfare of children;
- Build on strengths as well as identifying difficulties;
- Are integrated in approach;
- Are multi-agency and multi-disciplinary;
- Are a continuing process, not an event;
- Lead to action, including the provision of services;
- Review services provided on an ongoing basis;
- Are transparent and open to challenge.





# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



to suffer significant harm;

- The capacity of parents or carers (resident and non-resident) and any other adults living in the household to respond to those needs [27], [28];
- The impact and influence of wider family and any other adults living in the household as well as community and environmental circumstances.

[22] An assessment of the support needs of parent carers, or non-parent carers, of disabled children may be required.

[23] [Recognised, valued and supported: Next steps for the Carers Strategy \(2010\)](#).

[24] Further information about processes relating to care and court proceedings (including pre-proceedings) can be found in the statutory guidance document for local authorities, [Court Orders and Pre- Proceedings](#) (DfE, 2014).

[25] [Under the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review \(England\) Regulations 2010](#).

[26] [Knowledge and skills statements for child and family social work](#).

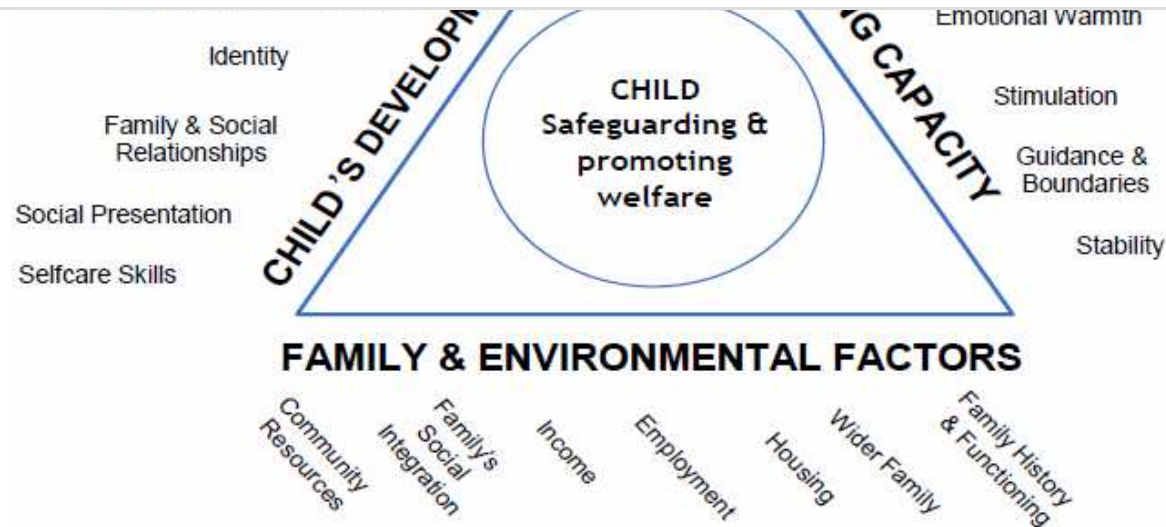
[27] An assessment of the support needs of parent carers of disabled children may be required.

[28] See Chapter 2 paragraph 30 on adults with parental responsibility for disabled children.



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



## Focusing on the needs and views of the child

53. Every assessment should reflect the unique characteristics of the child within their family and community context. Each child whose referral has been accepted by children's social care should have their individual needs assessed, including an analysis of the parental capacity to meet those needs whether they arise from issues within the family or the wider community. Frequently, more than one child from the



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



55. Every assessment, including young carer, parent carer and non-parent carer assessments, should draw together relevant information gathered from the child and their family and from relevant practitioners including teachers and school staff, early years workers, health practitioners, the police and adult social care. Where a child has been looked-after and has returned home, information from previous assessments and case records should also be reviewed.

[29] A child with links to a foreign country may be a foreign national child, a child with dual nationality or a British child of foreign parents/national origin.

[30] Further guidance can be found in [Working with foreign authorities: child protection and care orders](#) (2014).

## Developing a clear analysis

56. The social worker should analyse all the information gathered from the assessment, including from a young carer's, parent carer's or non-parent carer's assessment, to decide the nature and level of the child's needs and the level of risk, if any, they may be facing. The social worker should receive insight and challenge to their emerging hypothesis from their practice supervisors and other relevant practitioners who should challenge the social worker's assumptions as part of this process. An informed decision should be taken on the nature of any action required and which services should be provided. Social workers, their managers and other practitioners should be mindful of the requirement to understand the level of need and risk in, or faced by, a family from the child's perspective and plan accordingly, understanding



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



decisions with the best interests of the child in mind, informed by the evidence available and underpinned by knowledge of child development.

58. Critical reflection through supervision should strengthen the analysis in each assessment.
59. A desire to think the best of adults and to hope they can overcome their difficulties should not subvert the need to protect children from chaotic, abusive and neglectful homes. Social workers and practice supervisors should always reflect the latest research on the impact of abuse and neglect and relevant findings from serious case and practice reviews when analysing the level of need and risk faced by the child. This should be reflected in the case recording.
60. Assessment is a dynamic and continuous process that should build upon the history of every individual case, responding to the impact of any previous services and analysing what further action might be needed. Social workers should build on this with help from other practitioners from the moment that a need is identified. A high quality assessment is one in which evidence is built and revised throughout the process and takes account of family history and the child's experience of cumulative abuse.
61. A social worker may arrive at a judgment early in the case but this may need to be revised as the case progresses and further information comes to light. It is a characteristic of skilled practice that social workers revisit their assumptions in the



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



analysed and evaluated in terms of the improved outcomes and welfare of the child.

## Focusing on outcomes

63. Every assessment should be focused on outcomes, deciding which services and support to provide to deliver improved welfare for the child.
64. Where the outcome of the assessment is continued local authority children's social care involvement, the social worker should agree a plan of action with other practitioners and discuss this with the child and their family. The plan should set out what services are to be delivered, and what actions are to be undertaken, by whom and for what purpose.
65. Many services provided will be for parents or carers (and may include services identified in a parent carer's or non-parent carer's needs assessment)[31]. The plan should reflect this and set clear measurable outcomes for the child and expectations for the parents, with measurable, reviewable actions for them.
66. The plan should be reviewed regularly to analyse whether sufficient progress has been made to meet the child's needs and the level of risk faced by the child. This will be important for neglect cases where parents and carers can make small improvements. The test should be whether any improvements in adult behaviour are sufficient and sustained. Social workers should consider the need for further action



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



impact of their decisions on the child and their family. The social worker should review the plan for the child. They should ask whether the help given is leading to a significant positive change for the child and whether the pace of that change is appropriate for the child.

Practitioners working with children should always have access to colleagues to talk through their concerns and judgments affecting the welfare of the child. Assessment should remain an ongoing process, with the impact of services informing future decisions about action.

68. Known transition points for the child should be planned for in advance. This includes where children are likely to transition between child and adult services.

[31] Section 17ZD of the Children Act 1989 and section 1 of the [Carers \(Recognition and Services\) Act 1995](#).

## Timeliness

69. The timeliness of an assessment is a critical element of the quality of that assessment and the outcomes for the child. The speed with which an assessment is carried out after a child's case has been referred into local authority children's social care should be determined by the needs of the individual child and the nature and level of any risk of harm they face. This will require judgments to be made by the



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



referrer, when known, the nature of the concerns and how and why they have arisen.

71. Within **one working day** of a referral being received, a local authority social worker should acknowledge receipt to the referrer and **make a decision** about next steps and the type of response required. This will include determining whether:
- The child requires immediate protection and urgent action is required;
  - The child is in need and should be assessed under section 17 of the Children Act 1989;
  - There is reasonable cause to suspect that the child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, and whether enquires must be made and the child assessed under section 47 of the Children Act 1989;
  - Any services are required by the child and family and what type of services;
  - Further specialist assessments are required to help the local authority to decide what further action to take;
  - To see the child as soon as possible if the decision is taken that the referral requires further assessment.
72. Where requested to do so by local authority children's social care, practitioners from other parts of the local authority such as housing and those in health organisations have a duty to co-operate under section 27 of the Children Act 1989 by assisting the local authority in carrying out its children's social care functions.



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

## A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



social worker, or the police or the NSP, [32] if removal is required, as soon as possible after the referral has been made to local authority children's social care (**Sections 44 and 46 of the Children Act 1989**).

75. The maximum timeframe for the assessment to conclude, such that it is possible to reach a decision on next steps, should be no longer than 45 working days from the point of referral. If, in discussion with a child and their family and other practitioners, an assessment exceeds 45 working days, the social worker should record the reasons for exceeding the time limit.
76. Whatever the timescale for assessment, where particular needs are identified at any stage of the assessment, social workers should not wait until the assessment reaches a conclusion before commissioning services to support the child and their family. In some cases, the needs of the child will mean that a quick assessment will be required.
77. It is the responsibility of the social worker to make clear to children and families how the assessment will be carried out and when they can expect a decision on next steps. Local authorities should determine their local assessment processes through a local protocol.

[32] [National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children](#).

## Processes for managing individual cases





# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



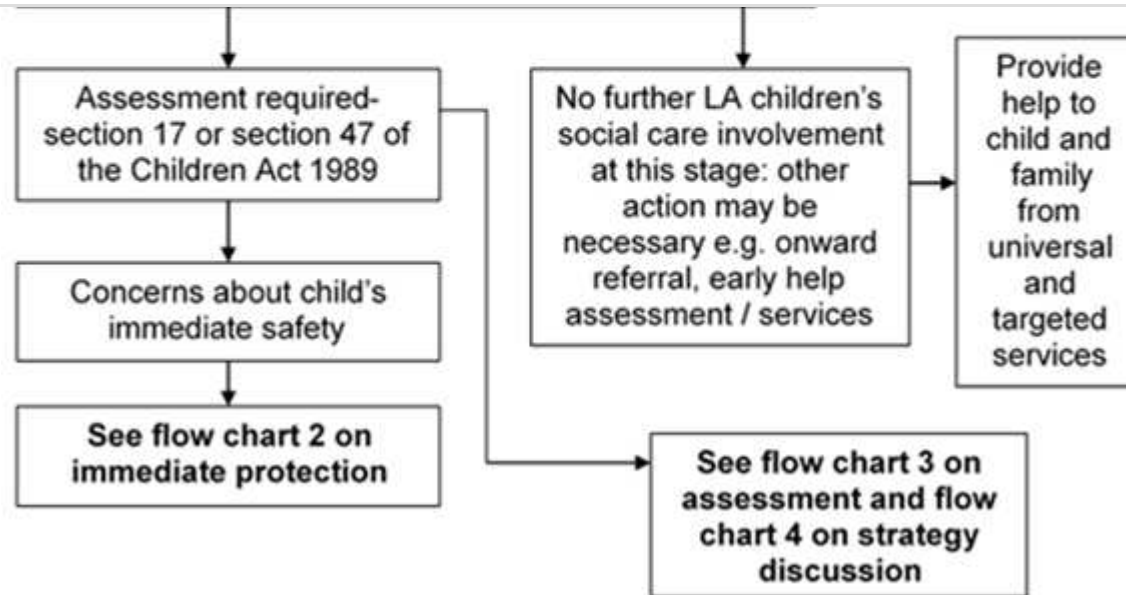
- The process for determining next steps for a child who has been assessed as being 'in need';
- The processes for children where there is reasonable cause to suspect that the child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm (this includes immediate protection for children at serious risk of harm).

## Flow chart 1: Action taken when a child is referred to local authority children's social care services



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



## Immediate Protection

Where there is a risk to the life of a child or a likelihood of serious immediate harm, local authority social workers, the police or NSPCC should use their statutory child protection powers to **act immediately to secure the safety of the child**.

If it is necessary to remove a child from their home, a local authority must, wherever possible and unless a child's safety is otherwise at immediate risk, apply for an **Emergency Protection Order (EPO)**. Police powers to remove a child in an



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



When considering whether emergency action is necessary, an agency should always consider the needs of other children in the same household or in the household of an alleged perpetrator.

The **local authority** in whose area a child is found in circumstances that require emergency action (the first authority) is responsible for taking emergency action.

If the child is looked-after by, or the subject of a child protection plan in another authority, the first authority must consult the authority responsible for the child. Only when the second local authority explicitly accepts responsibility (to be followed up in writing) is the first authority relieved of its responsibility to take emergency action.

## Multi-agency working

Planned emergency action will normally take place following an immediate strategy discussion. Social workers, the police or NSPCC should:

- Initiate a strategy discussion to discuss planned emergency action. Where a single agency has to act immediately, a strategy discussion should take place as soon as possible after action has been taken;
- See the child (this should be done by a practitioner from the agency taking the emergency action) to decide how best to protect them and whether to seek an EPO;



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children

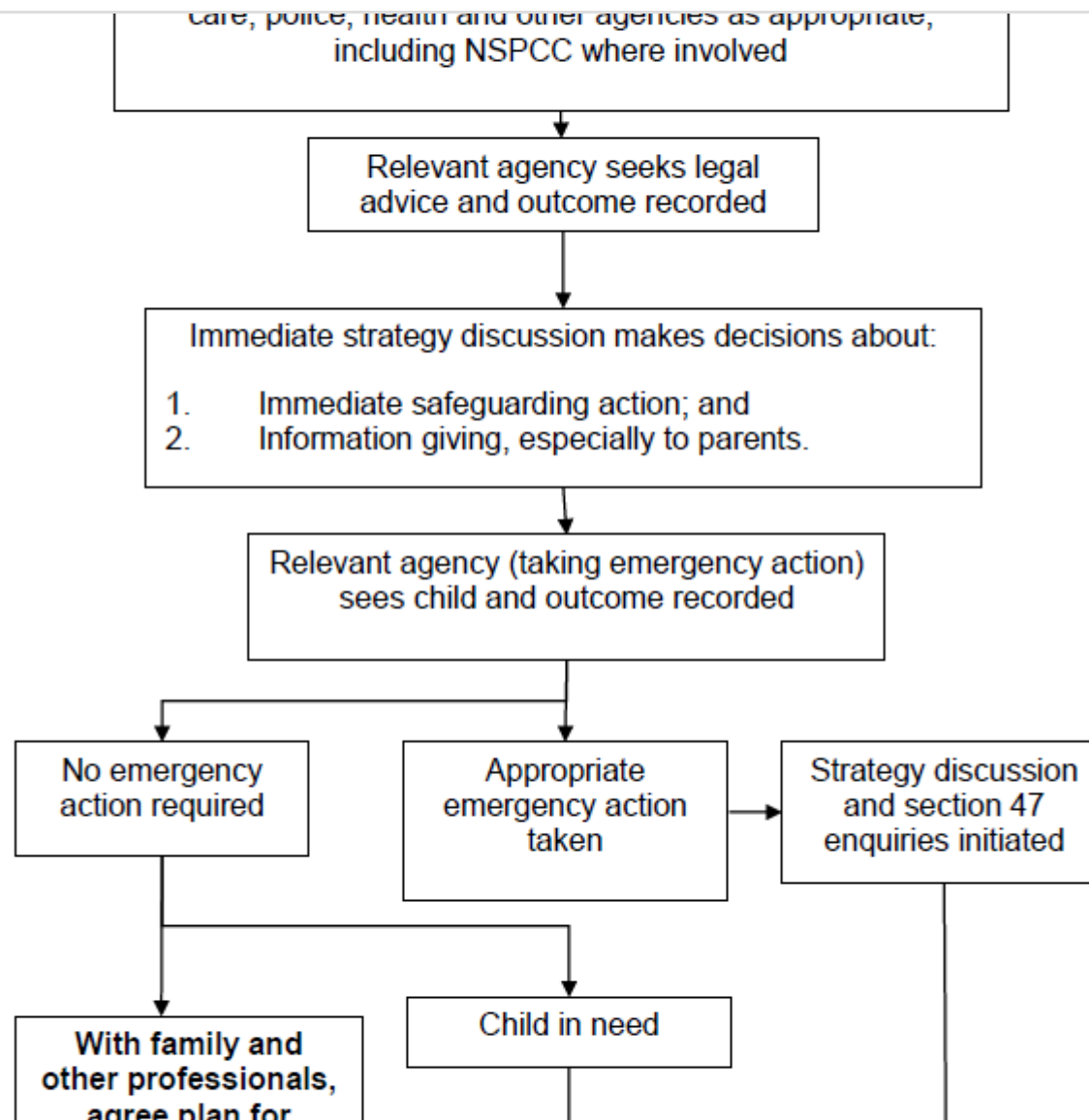


## Flow chart 2: Immediate protection



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



## Assessment of a child under the Children Act 1989

Following acceptance of a referral by the local authority children's social care, a social worker should lead a multi-agency assessment under section 17 of the Children Act 1989. Local authorities have a duty to ascertain the child's wishes and feelings and take account of them when planning the provision of services. Assessments should be carried out in a timely manner reflecting the needs of the individual child, as set out in this chapter.

Where the local authority children's social care decides to provide services, a multi-agency child in need plan should be developed which sets out which organisations and agencies will provide which services to the child and family. The plan should set clear measurable outcomes for the child and expectations for the parents. The plan should reflect the positive aspects of the family situation as well as the weaknesses.

Where a child in need has moved permanently to another local authority area, the original authority should ensure that all relevant information (including the child in need plan) is shared with the receiving local authority as soon as possible. The receiving local authority should consider whether support services are still required and discuss with the child and family what might be needed, based on a timely re-assessment of the child's needs, as set out in this chapter. Support should continue to be provided by



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



Child and adult services.

Where information gathered during an assessment (which may be very brief) results in the social worker suspecting that the child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, the local authority should hold a strategy discussion to enable it to decide, with other agencies, whether it must initiate enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989.

**Purpose:**

Assessments should determine whether the child is in need, the nature of any services required and whether any specialist assessments should be undertaken to assist the local authority in its decision-making.



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



- See the child within a timescale that is appropriate to the nature of the concerns expressed at referral, according to an agreed plan;
- Conduct interviews with the child and family members, separately and together as appropriate. Initial discussions with the child should be conducted in a way that minimises distress to them and maximises the likelihood that they will provide accurate and complete information, avoiding leading or suggestive questions;
- Record the assessment findings and decisions and next steps following the assessment;
- Inform, in writing, all the relevant agencies and the family of their decisions and, if the child is a child in need, of the plan for providing support;
- Inform the referrer of what action has been or will be taken.





# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



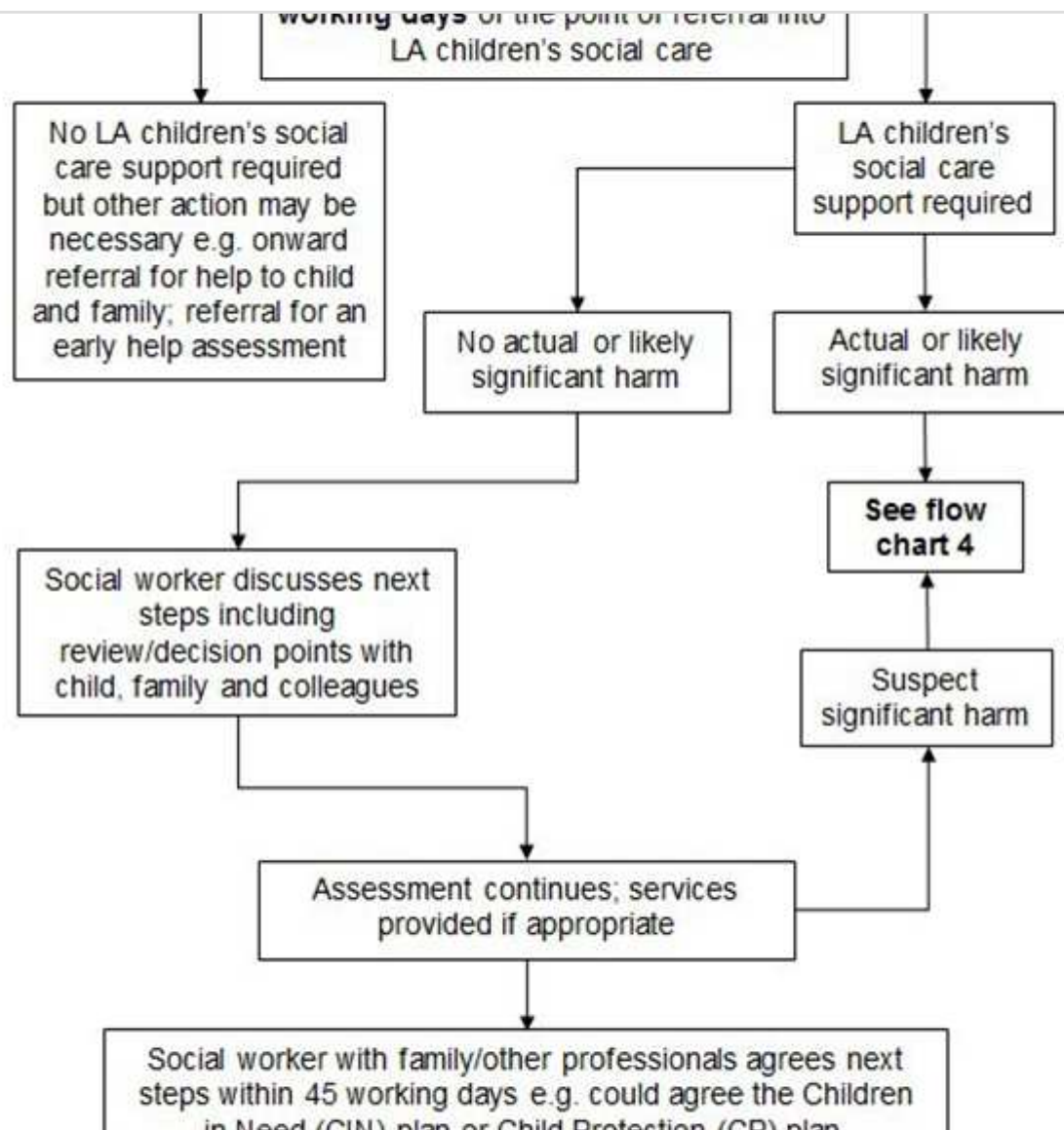
<p><b>All involved practitioners should:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Be involved in the assessment and provide further information about the child and family;</li><li>● Agree further action including what services would help the child and family and inform local authority children's social care if any immediate action is required;</li><li>● Seek advice and guidance as required and in line with local practice guidance.</li></ul>
--	--

Flow chart 3: Action taken for an assessment of a child under the Children Act 1989



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



## Strategy discussion

Whenever there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm there should be a strategy discussion involving local authority children's social care (including the residential or fostering service, if the child is looked-after), the police, health and other bodies such as the referring agency. This might take the form of a multi-agency meeting or phone calls and more than one discussion may be necessary. A strategy discussion can take place following a referral or at any other time, including during the assessment process and when new information is received on an already open case.

**Purpose:**

Local authority children's social care should convene a strategy discussion to determine the child's welfare and plan rapid future action if there is reasonable cause to suspect the child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm.



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The practitioner or agency which made the referral;</li> <li>• The child's school or nursery;</li> <li>• Any health or care services the child or family members are receiving.</li> </ul> <p>All attendees should be sufficiently senior to make decisions on behalf of their organisation and agencies.</p>
<p><b>Strategy discussion tasks:</b></p>	<p>A local authority social worker, health practitioners and a police representative should, as a minimum, be involved in the strategy discussion. Other relevant practitioners will depend on the nature of the individual case but may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The practitioner or agency which made the referral;</li> <li>• The child's school or nursery;</li> <li>• Any health or care services the child or family members are receiving.</li> </ul> <p>All attendees should be sufficiently senior to make decisions on behalf of their organisation and agencies.</p> <p>The discussion should be used to:</p>



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



where there are grounds to initiate an enquiry under section 47 of the Children Act 1989, decisions should be made as to:

- What further information is needed if an assessment is already underway and how it will be obtained and recorded;
- What immediate and short term action is required to support the child, and who will do what by when;
- Whether legal action is required.

The timescale for the assessment to reach a decision on next steps should be based upon the needs of the individual child, consistent with the local protocol and no longer than **45 working days** from the point of referral into local authority children's social care.

The principles and parameters for the assessment of children in need at chapter 1 paragraph 40 should be followed for assessments undertaken under section 47 of the Children Act 1989.



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



	<p>and family (on the basis that information is not shared if this may jeopardise a police investigation or place the child at risk of significant harm);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Agrees what further action is required, and who will do what by when, where an EPO is in place or the child is the subject of police powers of protection;</li><li>• Records agreed decisions in accordance with local recording procedures;</li><li>• Follows up actions to make sure what was agreed gets done.</li></ul>
--	---



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide and co-ordinate any specific information from relevant practitioners regarding family health, maternity health, school health mental health, domestic abuse and violence and substance misuse to assist strategy and decision making;</li> <li>• Secure additional expert advice and support from named and/or designated professionals for more complex cases following preliminary strategy discussions;</li> <li>• Undertake appropriate examinations or observations, and further investigations or tests, to determine how the child's health or development may be impaired.</li> </ul>
<p><b>The police should:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss the basis for any criminal investigation and any relevant processes that other organisations and agencies might need to know about, including the timing and methods of evidence gathering;</li> <li>• Lead the criminal investigation (local authority children's social care have the lead for the section 47 enquires and assessment of the child's welfare) where joint enquiries take place.</li> </ul>



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

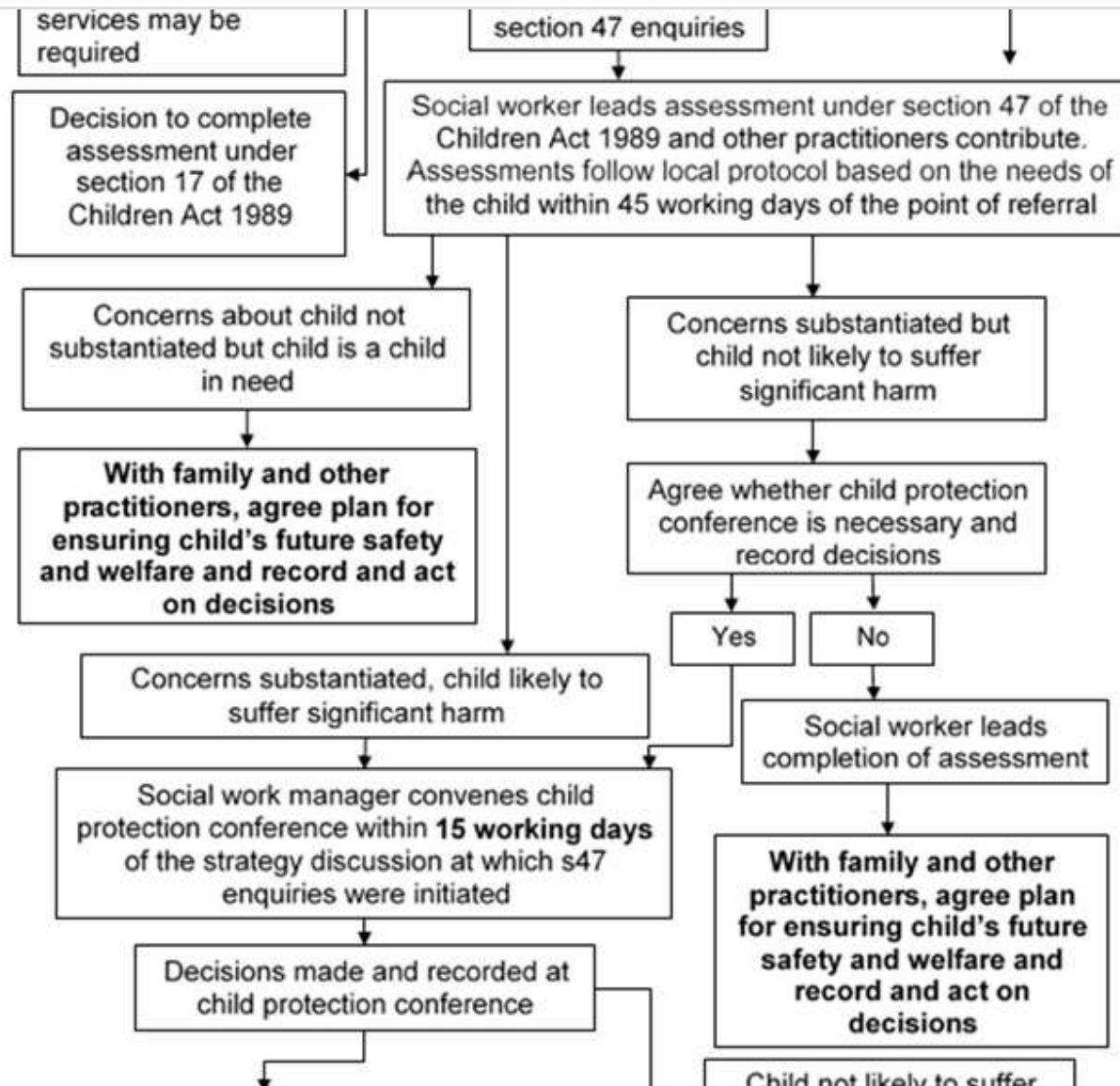
A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children





# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



## Initiating section 47 enquiries

A section 47 enquiry is carried out by undertaking or continuing with an assessment in accordance with the guidance set out in this chapter and following the principles and parameters of a good assessment.

Local authority social workers should lead assessments under [Section 47](#) of the Children Act 1989. The police, health practitioners, teachers and school staff and other relevant practitioners should help the local authority in undertaking its enquiries.

<b>Purpose</b>	A section 47 enquiry is initiated to decide whether and what type of action is required to safeguard and promote the welfare of a child who is suspected of or likely to be suffering significant harm.
<b>Social workers should:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lead the assessment in accordance with this guidance;</li><li>• Carry out enquiries in a way that minimises distress for the child and family;</li><li>• See the child who is the subject of concern to ascertain their wishes and feelings; assess their understanding of their situation; assess their relationships and circumstances more broadly;</li></ul>



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



interventions are likely to be most effective with other relevant practitioners;

- Determine the child's needs and the level of risk of harm faced by the child to inform what help should be provided and act to provide that help;
- Follow the guidance set out in 'Achieving Best Evidence in Criminal Proceedings: Guidance on interviewing victims and witnesses, and guidance on using special measures', where a decision has been made to undertake a joint interview of the child as part of any criminal investigation[33].

[33] [Ministry of Justice Achieving Best Evidence in Criminal Proceedings: Guidance on interviewing victims and witnesses, and guidance on using special measures \(2011\)](#).



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Make available to other practitioners any evidence gathered to inform discussions about the child's welfare;</li><li>• Follow the guidance set out in 'Achieving Best Evidence in Criminal Proceedings: Guidance' on interviewing victims and witnesses, and guidance on using special measures, where a decision has been made to undertake a joint interview of the child as part of the criminal investigations.</li></ul>
<b>Health practitioners should:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide any of a range of specialist assessments. For example, paediatric or forensic medical assessments, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists and/or child psychologists may be involved in specific assessments relating to the child's developmental progress. The lead health practitioner (probably a consultant paediatrician, or possibly the child's GP) may need to request and co-ordinate these assessments;</li><li>• Ensure appropriate treatment and follow up health concerns, such as administration of missing vaccines.</li></ul>



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



- Seek advice and guidance as required and in line with local practice guidance.

## Outcome of section 47 enquiries

Local authority social workers are responsible for deciding what action to take and how to proceed following section 47 enquiries.

If local authority children's social care decides not to proceed with a child protection conference then other practitioners involved with the child and family have the right to request that local authority children's social care convene a conference if they have serious concerns that a child's welfare may not be adequately safeguarded. As a last resort, the safeguarding partners should have in place a quick and straightforward means of resolving differences of opinion.

**Where concerns of significant harm are not substantiated:**



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Consider whether the child’s health and development should be re- assessed regularly against specific objectives and decide who has responsibility for doing this.</li> </ul>
<p><b>All involved practitioners should:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Participate in further discussions as necessary;</li> <li>● Contribute to the development of any plan as appropriate;</li> <li>● Provide services as specified in the plan for the child;</li> <li>● Review the impact of services delivered as agreed in the plan;</li> <li>● Seek advice and guidance as required and in line with local practice guidance.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Where concerns of significant harm are substantiated and the child is judged to be suffering or likely to suffer significant harm:</b></p>	



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



place within 15 working days of a strategy discussion, or the strategy discussion at which section 47 enquiries were initiated if more than one has been held;

- Consider whether any practitioners with specialist knowledge should be invited to participate;
- Ensure that the child and their parents understand the purpose of the conference and who will attend;
- Help prepare the child if they are attending or making representations through a third party to the conference. Give information about advocacy agencies and explain that the family may bring an advocate, friend or supporter.



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



	<p>conference chair, whether the report can and should be shared with the parents and if so when;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Attend the conference and take part in decision making when invited;</li><li>• Seek advice and guidance as required and in line with local practice guidance.</li></ul>
--	---

## Initial child protection conferences

Following section 47 enquiries, an initial child protection conference brings together family members (and the child where appropriate), with the supporters, advocates and practitioners most involved with the child and family, to make decisions about the child's future safety, health and development. If concerns relate to an unborn child, consideration should be given as to whether to hold a child protection conference prior to the child's birth.





# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Appointing a lead statutory body (either local authority children’s social care or NSPCC) and a lead social worker, who should be a qualified, experienced social worker and an employee of the lead statutory body;</li> <li>● Identifying membership of the core group of practitioners and family members who will develop and implement the child protection plan;</li> <li>● Establishing timescales for meetings of the core group, production of a child protection plan and for child protection review meetings;</li> <li>● Agreeing an outline child protection plan, with clear actions and timescales, including a clear sense of how much improvement is needed, by when, so that success can be judged clearly.</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Conference Chair:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Is accountable to the Director of Children’s Services. Where possible the same person should chair subsequent child protection reviews;</li> <li>● Should be a practitioner, independent of operational and/or line management responsibilities for the case;</li> <li>● Should meet the child and parents in advance to ensure they understand the purpose and the process.</li> </ul>



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Analyse the information to enable informed decisions about what action is necessary to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child who is the subject of the conference;</li><li>● Share the conference information with the child and family beforehand (where appropriate);</li><li>● Prepare a report for the conference on the child and family which sets out and analyses what is known about the child and family and the local authority's recommendation;</li><li>● Record conference decisions and recommendations and ensure action follows.</li></ul>
<b>All involved practitioners should:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Work together to safeguard the child from harm in the future, taking timely, effective action according to the plan agreed</li></ul>
<b>Safeguarding partners should:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Monitor the effectiveness of these arrangements.</li></ul>



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



<p><b>Purpose:</b></p>	<p>The aim of the child protection plan is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure the child is safe from harm and prevent them from suffering further harm;</li> <li>• Promote the child’s health and development;</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Local authority children’s social care should:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Designate a social worker to be the lead practitioner as they carry statutory responsibility for the child’s welfare;</li> <li>• Consider the evidence and decide what legal action to take if any, where a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm;</li> <li>• Define the local protocol for timeliness of circulating plans after the child protection conference.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Social</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be the lead practitioner for inter-agency work with the child and</li> </ul>



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



- Ensure the child protection plan is aligned and integrated with any associated offender risk management plan;
- Undertake direct work with the child and family in accordance with the child protection plan, taking into account the child's wishes and feelings and the views of the parents in so far as they are consistent with the child's welfare;
- Complete the child's and family's in-depth assessment, securing contributions from core group members and others as necessary;
- Explain the plan to the child in a manner which is in accordance with their age and understanding and agree the plan with the child;
- Consider the need to inform the relevant Embassy if the child has links to a foreign country;
- Co-ordinate reviews of progress against the planned outcomes set out in the plan, updating as required. The first review should be held within three months of the initial conference and further reviews at intervals of no more than six months for as long as the child remains subject of a child protection plan;
- Record decisions and actions agreed at core group meetings as well as the written views of those who were not able to



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



**group  
should:**

- Meet within 10 working days from the initial child protection conference if the child is the subject of a child protection plan;
- Further develop the outline child protection plan, based on assessment findings, and set out what needs to change, by how much, and by when in order for the child to be safe and have their needs met;
- Decide what steps need to be taken, and by whom, to complete the in- depth assessment to inform decisions about the child's safety and welfare;
- Implement the child protection plan and take joint responsibility for carrying out the agreed tasks, monitoring progress and outcomes, and refining the plan as needed.



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



procedures should be the same as those for an initial child protection conference.

**Purpose:**

To review whether the child is continuing to suffer or is likely to suffer significant harm, and review developmental progress against child protection plan outcomes.

To consider whether the child protection plan should continue or should be changed.



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Provide information to enable informed decisions about what action is necessary to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child who is the subject of the child protection plan, and about the effectiveness and impact of action taken so far;</li><li>● Share the conference information with the child and family beforehand, where appropriate;</li><li>● Record conference outcomes;</li><li>● Decide whether to initiate family court proceedings (all the children in the household should be considered, even if concerns are only expressed about one child) if the child is considered to be suffering significant harm.</li></ul>
<b>All involved practitioners should:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Attend, when invited, and provide details of their involvement with the child and family;</li><li>● Produce reports for the child protection review. This information will provide an overview of work undertaken by family members and practitioners, and evaluate the impact on the child's welfare against the planned outcomes set out in the child protection plan.</li></ul>



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

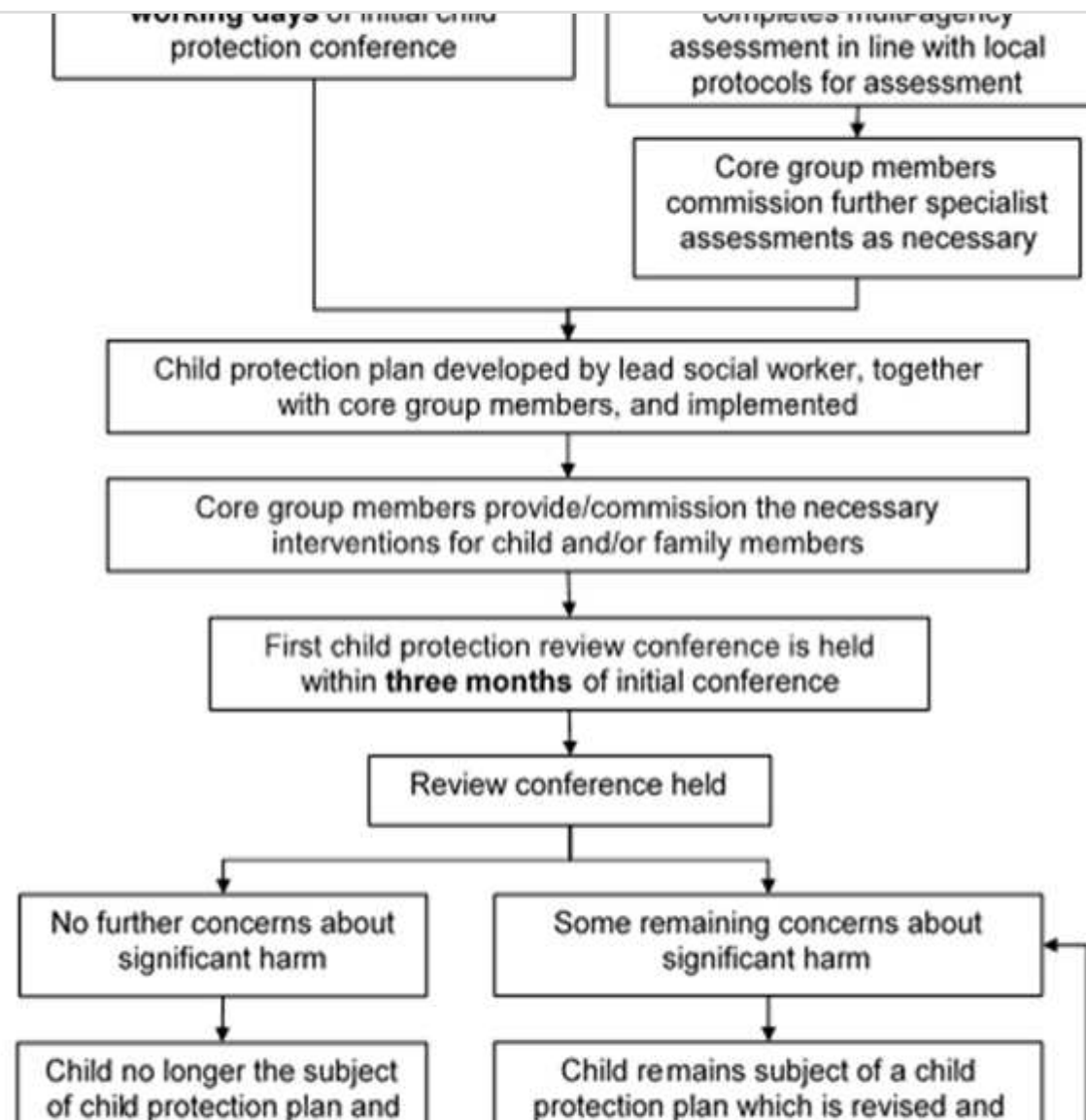
A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children





# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



## Discontinuing the Child Protection Plan

A child should no longer be the subject of a child protection plan if:

- It is judged that the child is no longer continuing to or is likely to suffer significant harm and therefore no longer requires safeguarding by means of a child protection plan;
- The child and family have moved permanently to another local authority area. In such cases, the receiving local authority should convene a child protection conference within 15 working days of being notified of the move. Only after this event may the original local authority discontinue its child protection plan;
- The child has reached 18 years of age (to end the child protection plan, the local authority should have a review around the child's birthday and this should be planned in advance), has died or has permanently left the United Kingdom.



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



assessment of the child's needs.

## Children returning home

Where the decision to return a child to the care of their family is planned, the local authority should undertake an assessment while the child is looked-after – as part of the care planning process (under regulation 39 of the Care Planning Regulations 2010). (See [The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations, Volume 2: care planning, placement and case review](#))

This assessment should consider what services and support the child (and their family) might need. The outcome of this assessment should be included in the child's care plan. The decision to cease to look after a child will, in most cases, require approval under regulation 39 of the Care Planning Regulations 2010.

Where a child who is accommodated under section 20 returns home in an unplanned way, for example, the decision is not made as part of the care planning process but the parent removes the child or the child decides to leave, the local authority must consider whether there are any immediate concerns about the safety and wellbeing of the child. If there are concerns about a child's safety the local authority should take



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



support required. Action to be taken following reunification.

- Practitioners should make the timeline and decision making process for providing ongoing services and support clear to the child and family;
- When reviewing outcomes, children should, wherever possible, be seen alone. Practitioners have a duty to ascertain their wishes and feelings regarding the provision of services being delivered;
- The impact of services and support should be monitored and recorded, and where a child is remanded to local authority or youth detention accommodation, consideration must be given to what on-going support and accommodation the child may need after their period of remand<sup>[34]</sup>. This should be included in either their care plan or, if remanded to youth detention accommodation, detention placement plan.

[34] [The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: Care, planning, placement and case review](#) paragraph 8.20.

## Flow chart 6: Children returning home from care to their families



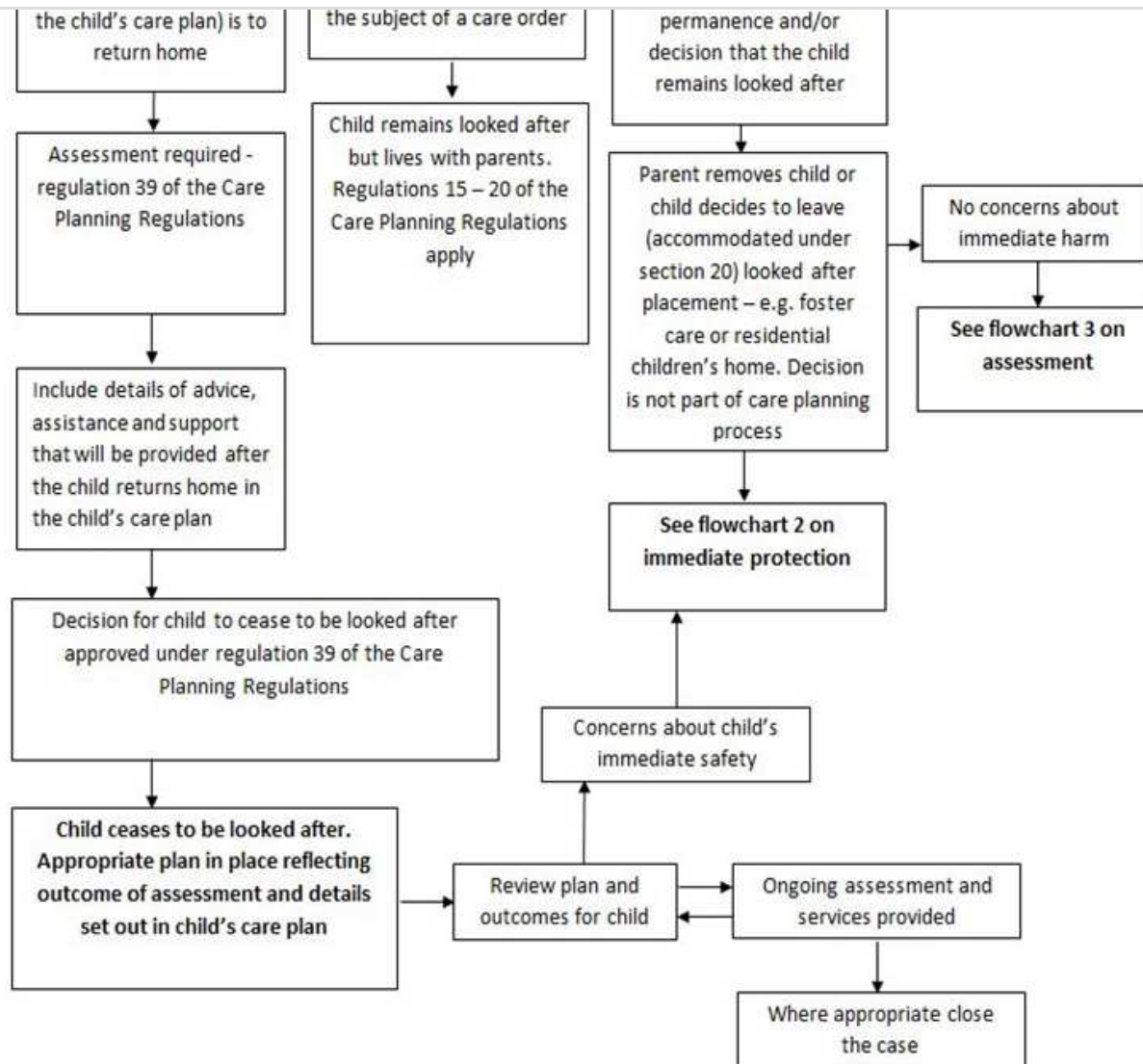
# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children



# Working together to safeguard children: July 2018

A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children

