

Child Protection Enquiries

- Information for Parents

What is child protection?

Dorset Children's Services has a duty to make sure all children and young people in Dorset are safe from harm. If we believe a child or young person is at risk, then we must take steps to understand these risks and work with families and other professionals to keep children safe. This is child protection.

Why is there a child protection enquiry for my child?

We start a child protection enquiry (sometimes called a Section 47 enquiry) when one of our social workers, another professional or a member of the public tells us they are worried a child or young person is not safe or is at risk of harm.

We have a legal duty to investigate all safeguarding concerns or allegations to make sure the child is safe. We always aim to be open and honest but sometimes it may not be possible to tell you where the concerns have come from, for example if this could put your child at risk of further harm or if the concern has been raised by a member of the public.

The Child Protection enquiry will help us to understand your child and your family's circumstances. When the enquiry is finished, we will decide if we think your child is at risk of harm and a Child Protection Plan is needed to keep your child safe and support your family.

What happens in a Child Protection enquiry and who is involved?

The social worker will speak to you as the parent or carer of your child and will also speak to your child directly on their own. We always aim to gain your (the parent's) permission to speak with your child, but sometimes if we are worried about their welfare and safety, we will need to speak to your child without your agreement.

The social worker will also gather information and talk with the professionals who know your child and your family, for example your child's school, yours and child's GP and health visitor. **We must complete the Child Protection enquiry within 15 working days.**

What support is there for me?

We understand that being part of a child protection enquiry might be worrying and make you feel uncertain about what may happen. A Quality Assurance Reviewing Officer (QARO), who is not part of the enquiry will:

- Call you, introduce themselves and answer your questions.
- Offer you support and explain what will happen.
- Answer any questions you may have about the enquiry.
- Explain your rights and what could happen next.
- Ensure you and your child are fully involved.
- With your consent, feedback your views to your allocated social worker.
- Help you to raise any concerns and explain how you can complain if you are not happy.
- Make sure that the Child Protection enquiry is done properly and fair to everyone.
- A duty QARO can be contacted any time from Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm on 01305 225940.

What will happen after the Child Protection enquiry?

When the enquiry is completed, the social worker will share their findings with their manager and together they will decide what should happen next. They will decide one of the following:

- If the enquiry finds that your child is not at continued risk of harm Dorset Children's Services will take no further action.
- If the enquiry finds that your children and family need help and extra support, Dorset Children's Services will offer this to you.
- If the enquiry finds that your child is not safe or is at risk of harm, Dorset Children's Services will arrange a formal meeting called an initial child protection conference.

What if I am not happy with Dorset's Child Protection work?

If you are not happy with something that Dorset Children's Services have done, you may wish to speak to your social worker or QARO. It is part of the QARO's role to voice any concerns you have. If this does not help, or you wish to make a formal complaint straight away, please:

Call: 01305 225076, or

Write to: The Complaints Officer at our Freepost or email address below:

Complaints
Freepost RRYH-AGJZ-TRGG
Dorset Council
County Hall
Colliton Park
DORCHESTER
DT1 1XJ

Email: complaints@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Online: You can use our online form by putting the following in your internet browser:
Complain to Dorset Council - Dorset Council