

Child Protection Guide for Parents and Carers



Lead Child Protection Practitioner:

Telephone Number:

Email address:

Family Help Lead Practitioner:

Telephone Number:

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Introduction

Our vision for children and young people in York is to:

- **Stay home:** more children remaining at home or in their naturally connected network and community
- **Come home:** more children returning to their family or network where it is safe to do so or at the very least returning to York when this is in line with their wishes
- **Safe and Connected:** children are safe and connected to their network, community and supported to learn

What is Child Protection?

Children's Services are legally required to carry out enquiries when there are concerns that a child may have been harmed or be at risk of harm.

If your family has been referred to Children's Services because of child protection concerns, this leaflet will explain all the processes that are taking place. Please reach out to your Family Help Lead Practitioner if you have any questions or concerns.

What is a Family Help Lead Practitioner?

All referrals that need assessment are allocated to a practitioner in a Family Help Team – this could be a Family Help Lead Practitioner or a Family Help Lead Practitioner - Social Worker. Once allocated, the Family Help Lead Practitioner will be your dedicated worker and main point of contact. Once allocated, they will contact you and arrange a visit. If a child protection concern is identified by the Family Help Team, the Multi-Agency Child Protection Team will be informed.

What is the Multi-Agency Child Protection Team?

The Multi-Agency Child Protection Team is made up of child protection specialists from the police, health, education and Children's Services. The Multi-Agency Child Protection Team will allocate a Lead Child Protection Practitioner – a child protection expert – to your family who is responsible for managing the child protection concerns.

The Lead Child Protection Practitioner will work together with the Family Help Lead Practitioner to investigate and address any worries about the child.

What is a Child Protection Enquiry (Section 47)?

When professionals are concerned about the welfare and safety of a child, the Multi-Agency Child Protection Team will hold a meeting called a strategy discussion to discuss the concerns. It is attended by professionals known to your family who will share information to decide if there is a child protection concern. Family do not attend this meeting. However, unless a decision has been made that sharing information after the strategy discussion would place a child at greater risk of harm, any information that has been shared by professionals during a strategy discussion will be shared with appropriate family members.

If professionals agree that there is child protection concern, they initiate a child protection enquiry, also known as a Section 47 enquiry. Child protection enquiries take up to 15 days and will include:

- Working with your children's Family Help Lead Practitioner to understand your family's life.
- Speaking to your child(ren) on their own to understand what has happened and more about their life.
- Speaking to you to understand what has happened, better understand you and talk through ideas you have to make the situation safe.
- Speaking to members of your family or friends who you identify as support, to see what they can do to help.
- Sharing ideas to make the situation safer.
- Asking for information about your family from other agencies.

At the end of the Child Protection Enquiry, if your child(ren) are deemed to be at risk of significant harm or suffering significant harm, a date will be set for a child protection conference.

If they are not deemed to be at risk of harm, the Family Help Lead Practitioner will continue their work with your family and determine

whether you need further support. You will be informed of the outcome and the reasons for this, with your views recorded.

What is a Child Protection Conference?

The aim of a Child Protection Conference is for all attendees to discuss any worries they have and then decide what support to put in place to promote the wellbeing and safety of the child.

The first meeting is known as an Initial Child Protection Conference. At this meeting, a decision is made about whether to place a child on a child protection plan. If they are placed on a plan, a Review Child Protection Conference will be scheduled within three months of the first conference. Any further reviews take place at least every six months until the child protection plan ends. The same approach is taken for Review Child Protection Conferences.

No decisions about where a child lives or who a child lives with are made at a Child Protection Conference. Child Protection Conferences are about creating plans with the aim of ensuring that a child can safely remain at home with their family. Only a court can decide to remove a child from their parent's care. Wherever possible, professionals work with families to keep children safe while they remain at home. They will clearly explain what needs to change and how we will support you to make those changes.

Do I need to attend?

Parents or those with parental responsibility are strongly encouraged to attend the conference to share their views. Speak to your Family Help Lead Practitioner if you have any worries about attending.

If you want to attend the conference but find it difficult because of the time or day it will be held, you can ask your Family Help Lead Practitioner about rearranging the meeting or getting help with childcare.

Sometimes it is not preferable or possible for both parents to attend the same conference. In these cases, separate meetings will be held to ensure both parents can still share their views.

Who else attends the conference?

- The child or their representative: children are encouraged to attend their own conferences if possible and appropriate. An advocate may also attend on a child's behalf. All children who are having an Initial Child Protection Conference are entitled to an advocate via the Speak Up service (<https://www.speakupyork.co.uk/>).
- Other people who are important in the child's life may also attend, for example stepparents or grandparents.
- Parents are encouraged to bring along a supportive friend, family member or an advocate.
- The Family Help Lead Practitioner who carried out the assessment before the conference will attend. This worker will continue to support the family if the children are made subject to a child protection plan. Their manager or supervisor may also attend.
- Police are expected to attend all Initial Child Protection Conferences and share their views, even if there has been no police involvement with the family to date.
- Any other relevant professionals who work with the family may also attend, this includes representatives from school or nursery, health visitors, school nurses, other health professionals such as paediatricians or other specialists, mental health workers, midwives, probation workers, youth justice workers, housing services, domestic abuse services or alcohol and substance misuse services.
- A minute-taker from the council's business support team will also be present. They will take notes throughout the meeting which are shown live on the screen.

As well as attending the conference, all professionals are expected to write a report, and these should be shared with parents at least 3 working days before the conference. The only report that isn't shared is the police report, as this may contain confidential information about other parties.

What happens in a conference?

The Lead Child Protection Practitioner from the Multi-Agency Child Protection Team chairs the meeting. Child Protection Conferences in York have a set structure to ensure that all attendees have a chance to share their views. This includes the following:

- Attendance: the Lead Child Protection Practitioner asks everybody to introduce themselves.
- Family and network details: the Lead Child Protection Practitioner asks parents to identify who is important in their child's life. Parents are asked to identify friends or family members who support them. Parents are asked if there are any professionals who they already work with who are particularly important to the family.
- What has got us to this point: the social worker (and sometimes the police) details the first incident that brought the family to Children's Services, the worst event that brought involvement from Children's Services, and the most recent event that has led to the current child protection conference.
- What is working well: parents and professionals are invited to identify strengths and safety that already exist for the child.
- What are we worried about: professionals discuss their worries for the child based on past or potential harm. They also look at aspects of family life which may make it harder for parents to keep the child safe in the future. Parents are also invited to talk about any of their own worries.
- Danger Statement and Safety Goal: the social worker shares their danger statement and safety goal with the conference. The danger statement should be a clear explanation of specific worries about a child's safety. The safety goal is a statement that describes the conditions within a family's life that will convince professionals that the child is safe enough for a case to be closed.

- Scaling question: this is a clearly defined question where 10 is the best, most safe outcome and 0 is the worst, most worrying situation. All professionals are expected to give a scale, and parents are also invited to scale if they want to.
- Conference decision: all professionals are asked whether it is assessed at risk of significant harm a child needs to be placed on a child protection plan. The Lead Child Protection Practitioner can make a decision on if the child is at risk of significant harm.
- The child's and parent's views of the conference and child protection plan should be noted.
- Development of the plan: if the child is made subject to a child protection plan, an outline of the plan should be developed within the child protection conference.
- Arrangements for future meetings: dates, times and locations for the first core group and review conference will be set.

If you are not happy with the outcome of the conference you can talk to the chair, your child's social worker or make a complaint to haveyoursay@york.gov.uk.

What happens if my child is made subject to a Child Protection Plan?

If your child is made subject to a Child Protection Plan, you will continue to work with your Family Help Lead Practitioner to achieve the aims set out in the plan to ensure your child's safety. The Family Help Lead Practitioner is expected to visit your child every 10 working days.

A Core Group is formed, made up of family members and key professionals that work closely with you or your child. This group is responsible for ensuring the actions in the Child Protection Plan are achieved. The first Core Group must take place within 10 working days of the Initial Child Protection Conference, and then at least every six weeks.

The Parent Advocacy Service

The City of York Council has a team of independent parent advocates who have experience of navigating the child protection process or engaging with Children's Services.

If you would like to have a telephone conversation with one of our advocates before you attend your conference, please talk to your child's Family Help Lead Practitioner or contact the Volunteer Service directly: volunteer@york.gov.uk / 07542510430 / 07901813436.

Our advocates can also offer 1-1 support for parents throughout the child protection process. If you feel like this is something you may benefit from, please ask your child's Family Help Lead Practitioner to make a referral, or contact the Volunteer Service directly.

Please note that we may not always have an advocate available, but we will endeavour to offer support to anyone who needs it.

What our parent advocates want you to know

Our parent advocates are experts by experience who know exactly what you are going through. Here are some things that they would like you to know before going into a child protection conference:

- Your feelings about this conference are valid, and every parent going through the process probably feels the same as you do. You are likely to feel under attack, and it is scary. The process can be overwhelming, and you may feel isolated. We have been through the same thing and come out the other side. We know how you feel, and you are not alone.
- Try not to take the things that professionals say too personally. It is not a personal attack on you as a parent; it is an assessment of the situation. It will be emotional but try to stay calm and listen to what professionals are saying. The aim of the conference is to help your family and to address the problems you are facing.
- Professionals aren't there just to tell you that you are doing a bad job as a parent. They want to understand the situation better so that you can get the right help.

- Things will be said that will upset you. It's okay to ask for a break if you feel like you need a minute to collect your thoughts.
- Don't be scared to use your voice and speak up during the conference. Answer questions as honestly and fully as possible so that professionals can understand what life is like for your family.
- Ask questions if you don't understand something or if you need more clarification.
- You may hear triggering words like "abuse" or "neglect". Professionals have to categorise the harm they believe is taking place but try not to take this personally. You are within your rights to challenge this or ask for more explanation.
- It is understandable that you may be angry but try not to go into the room already feeling defensive.
- Take time to read through professional reports before the conference. They are the basis of everything that will be discussed on the day. Prepare anything you would like to say in advance, so you aren't caught off-guard.
- The conferences seem daunting at first, but they are your chance to hear from everyone involved at the same time and give you your chance to vocalise the positive things you've done as well.
- The conferences can be an opportunity to improve relationships with social workers and other professionals working with your family.

"We know how you feel, and you are not alone."

York's Parent Advocates

Providing feedback

The young person, parents, carers and all professionals involved have an open door to the Family Help Lead Practitioner and their Manager if

they wish to discuss their views, wishes and feelings about any part of this process. There is an open door approach.

If you are still not satisfied with the response, all have access to the City of York Council Corporate Complaints Service, Customer &

Business Support Services, West Offices, Station Rise, York, YO1 6GA or 01904 554145 or

haveyoursay@york.gov.uk

Family Group Decision Making

While we are supporting your family, you will be offered a Friends and Family meeting to explore how they can support you. This will involve people who matter and people who are important to you.

“I felt listened to and we had a plan supported by our family and friends.”

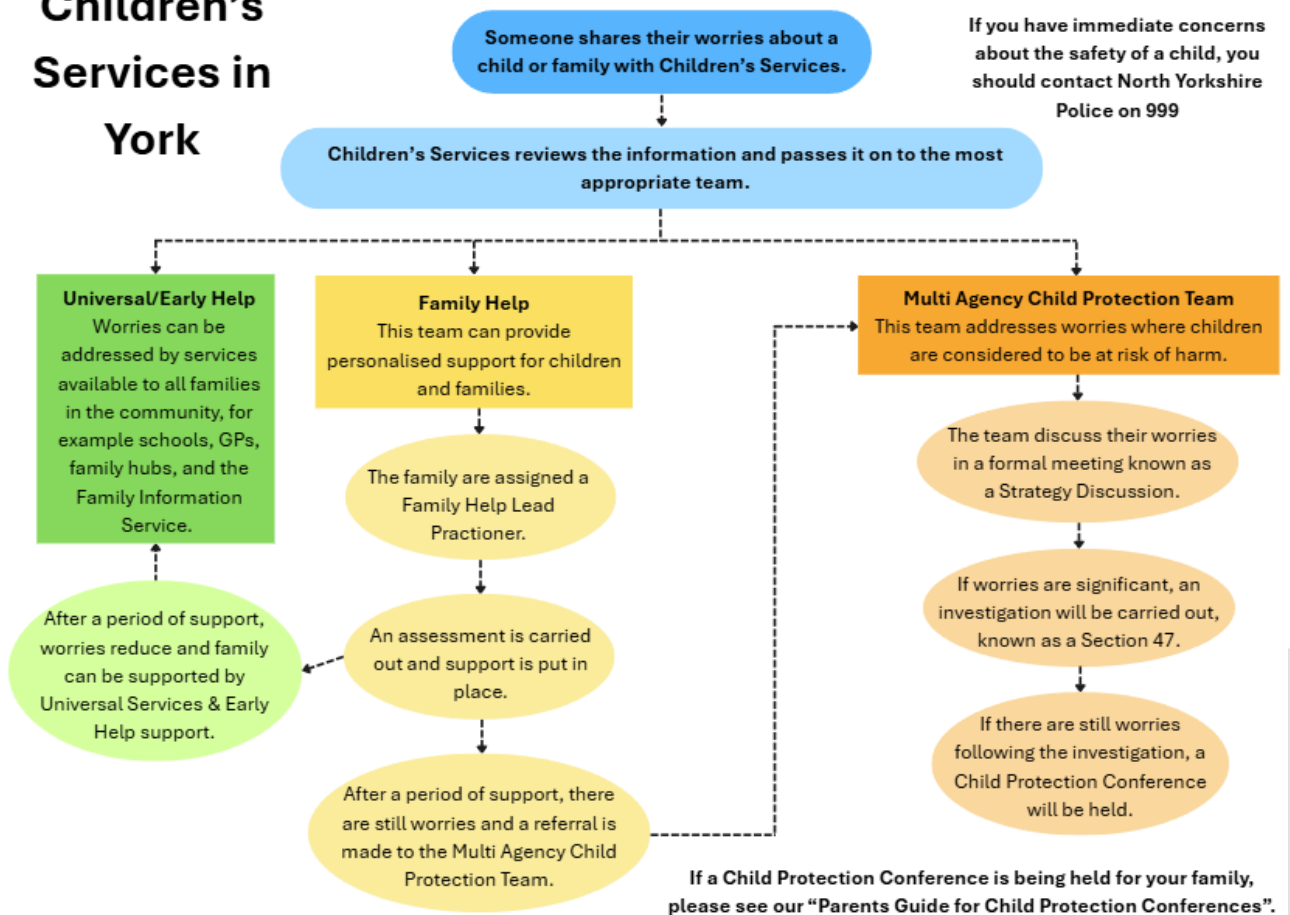
Parent

Child Protection Medical

If your child has been physically harmed or neglected, they may need to be examined by a Paediatrician, this is called a Child Protection Medical. A Child Protection Medical Assessment helps us understand your child's health and any injuries or concerns, to inform what support or protection might be needed. It's not about blaming anyone—it's about gathering clear information to keep your child safe and ensure they get the right care. This may involve your child having an x-ray, or alternative scan. Additionally, images may be taken of any marks or injuries. The assessment includes obtaining any relevant investigations, arranging any necessary aftercare, and writing a report with an opinion. A medical requires parental consent for this to be proceed.

Appendix 1 – Flow chart

Children's Services in York



To see the flow chart of Children's Services in York please go to
<https://postimg.cc/N2mppBhb>

Appendix 2

It is an obligation to categorise child protection under one of these definitions:

Child abuse/harm includes:

Physical abuse

deliberating hurting a child e.g. hitting, punching or physical chastisement, causing injuries such as bruises, broken bones, burns or cuts.

Emotional abuse

ongoing emotional cruelty to a child including rejection, constantly threatening or criticising a child so that they feel unloved and worthless. This can also include exposure to domestic abuse in the home.

Sexual abuse

forcing or persuading a child to take part in sexual activities, including inappropriate touching, kissing or sexual intercourse. This can also involve causing a child to look at or be involved in pornographic material.

Exploitation

using a child for gain, either sexual or criminal.

Neglect

failure to meet a child's basic daily needs including food, clothing, medical care, shelter, keeping them safe, education and nurturing.

Guide to key words

Child In Need Plan

If it is decided your child is not at risk of significant harm, but your family would benefit from some support, this is the written support plan.

Child Protection Concern

When someone is worried that a child may be at risk of significant harm, such as neglect, abuse (physical, sexual or emotional), or unsafe living conditions. This concern is shared with professionals so they can decide what action needs to be taken to keep the children safe.

Child Protection Conference

The name of the meeting that takes place following a child protection enquiry when there are concerns about a children's safety.

Child Protection Enquiry

The process following a strategy meeting if there is a child protection concern. The enquiry will take up to 15 days.

Child Protection Medical

An examination made by a medical professional where there are concerns of neglect or physical harm.

Child Protection Plan

A written plan of what each of the people at the meeting needs to do in order to keep your child(ren) safe if they are deemed to be at risk of significant harm.

WHERE TO GO FOR SUPPORT

You can also find out about other support and help at City of York Safeguarding Children Partnership Parents and Carers page accessed below and at www.saferchildrenyork.org.uk/advice-parents-carers-1/parents-carers



Family Information Service

A free and impartial information service for all York families, from pregnancy to 19 years (up to 25 years for families who have children with additional needs and disabilities).

They can help with anything and everything around family life and being a young person.

If you're a parent or carer and have a question but don't know where to go, then please get in touch. Information includes:

- Ofsted registered childcare including a brokerage service for families struggling to find childcare to meet their needs.
- Clubs, groups, activities, and things to do for children, young people, and families
- Support services including parenting, emotional help and wellbeing, finance support services and more...

The service operates on an ask anything basis, so no matter what the question, feel free to get in touch and the team will try and help you.

Get in touch by:

Telephone: 01904 554444, Monday to Friday 10.00am to 4.00pm

Text telephone: 07786202241

Email: fis@york.gov.uk

Contact Us Form

<https://www.raiseyork.co.uk/raise-york/get-touch>