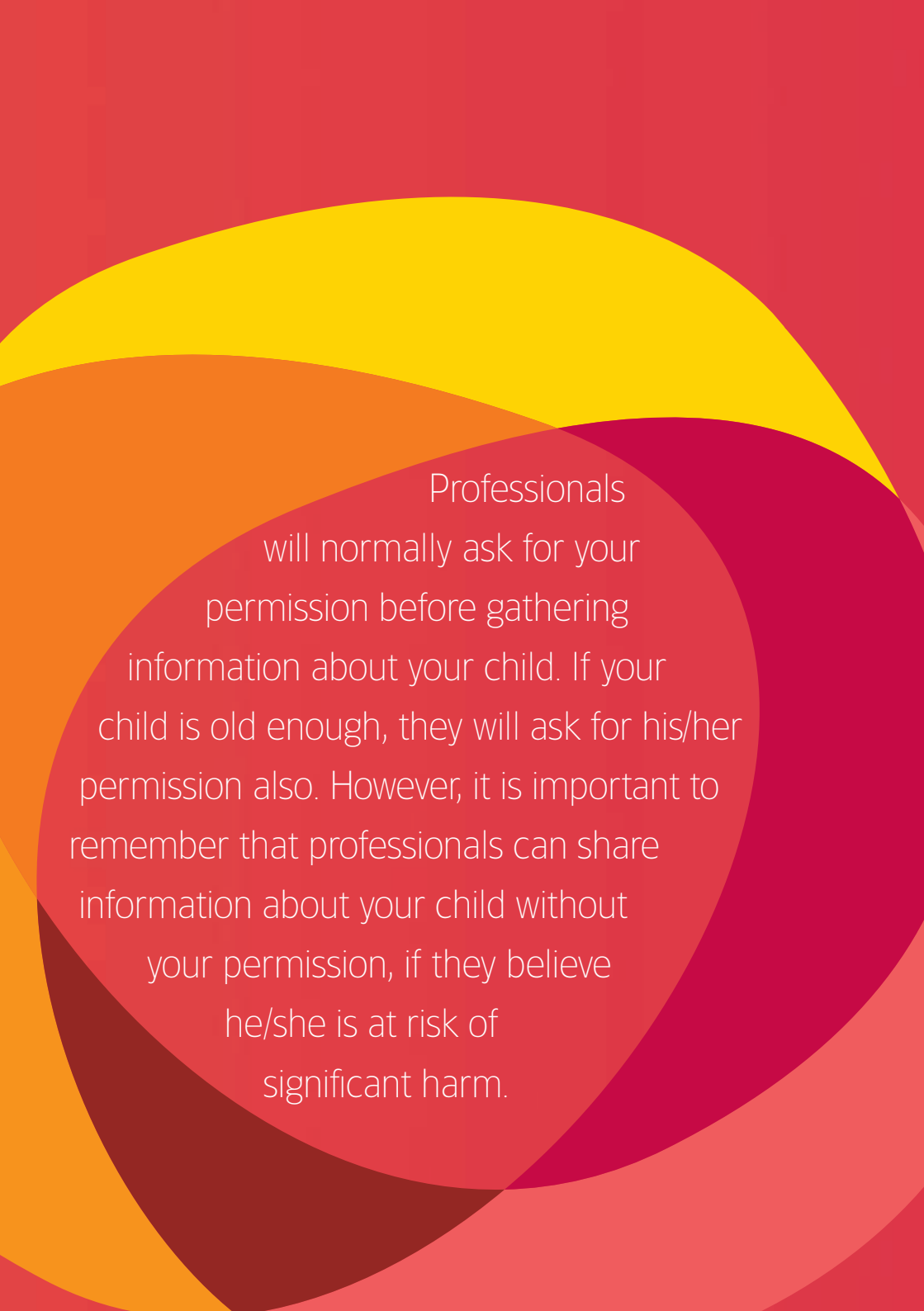




What happens when there are **concerns** about a **child's safety** or welfare?

A guide to the safeguarding process in Lewisham for parents and carers



Professionals will normally ask for your permission before gathering information about your child. If your child is old enough, they will ask for his/her permission also. However, it is important to remember that professionals can share information about your child without your permission, if they believe he/she is at risk of significant harm.



Introduction

The Lewisham Safeguarding Children Board has designed this leaflet to help you to understand the safeguarding process. This is the process that is undertaken when there are concerns about the safety or welfare of a child. The purpose of this process is to identify whether the child is at risk of significant harm and if so, to ensure action is taken in order to protect him or her.

The leaflet explains

- ① how social workers and other professionals will gather information about your child and family and make an assessment about your child's wellbeing (the first part of the safeguarding process)
- ② what will happen if your child is assessed as being at continuing risk of significant harm (the second part of the safeguarding process)

Part One

A: Gathering information about your child and family

A social worker will gather information about your child and family because concerns have been raised by professionals or by members of the public (e.g. a child's parent or a family friend). Information may be gathered about the adults in your family as well as the children.

The social worker may start by trying to talk to you and your family. In the vast majority of cases, he or she will visit you at home (sometimes with a police officer) to:

- make sure you understand the nature of the concerns that have been raised and ask for your views
- speak to your child or children alone (if they are old enough) and assess any immediate risk to their safety
- ask for permission to gather information from the professionals who are working with the child, if permission has not been given already

The social worker will also want to gather information from the professionals who work with you and your family because this helps them to build a picture about your child's needs. You should let the social worker know the names of all the professionals that work with or have worked with your family.

B: Assessing your child's needs

The social worker will use the information that has been gathered to make an assessment about your child's needs. The assessment will be made in line with national guidance (The Framework for Assessment of Children in Need and their Families, Department of Health, 2000).

If the assessment is that your child does not need additional support, no further action will be taken. This sort of assessment may be made where no evidence was found to support the concerns reported to the social worker.

If the assessment is that you or your child would benefit from additional support, you will be encouraged to access the relevant services. For example, you may be encouraged to use parenting support services.

If the assessment is that your child is at continuing risk of significant harm, normally a Child Protection Conference will be held to work out what services and support are needed in order to protect your child. You can find more information about what happens at a Child Protection Conference in Part 2 of this leaflet. If your child's life or immediate safety or welfare is at risk, the social worker and/or police officer may take emergency action to protect your child, e.g. removing a person who is presenting a risk of harm from the family home or moving the child to a safe place.

Part Two

A: Attending a child protection conference

The purpose of a child protection conference is to:

- ② share the information gathered about your child and family
- ② make a decision about whether your child is at continuing risk of significant harm and therefore, in need of protection.
- ② agree an outline child protection plan (if it is decided that your child is in need of protection) setting out the action and support which you and professionals agree may help to ensure that your child is not put at risk of harm in the future.

All of the professionals who work with your family will be invited to the conference. The conference will be chaired by a Child Protection Coordinator whose job it is to make sure that everyone gets a chance to contribute their views.

It is really important that parents and carers give their views at the child protection conference and participate in the discussion as their input is often central to the decisions made. To help you participate in the conference:

- ② the social worker will give you a report on the information he/she has gathered at least one day in advance. This will give you a chance to think about what you might want to say.
- ② you might want to bring someone of your choice to support you. This might be a friend or family member or you might wish to make use of Lewisham's independent advocacy service for parents.

- 🕒 you could spend a few minutes talking with the Child Protection Coordinator before the meeting to make sure he/she knows that you want to express your views.
- 🕒 you should let the social worker know if you think you might have difficulty attending because of childcare or lack of transport, so that he/she can consider what help could be provided.
- 🕒 if you are more confident speaking in a language other than English or if you have any other special needs, you should tell the social worker so an interpreter can be provided or special arrangements can be made.

Very rarely, a decision is made by the Child Protection Coordinator not to invite a parent or carer to a conference. This normally happens where a parent or carer has threatened violence towards someone who will be present at the conference. Parents and carers who are not invited to a conference are still able to put their views to the conference either in writing or by speaking to the Child Protection Coordinator beforehand.

B: Putting the child protection plan into practice

At the end of the conference, a date will be fixed for a Core Group meeting where the outline child protection plan will be developed and agreed between you as a family and the professionals that will be involved in supporting you. The first Core Group meeting should take place within 10 working days of the child protection conference. Progress against the plan will be managed by this Core Group.

Three months after the first child protection conference, a review conference will be held. The aim of the review conference is to consider the progress that has been made in implementing the child protection plan and decide whether the child is still at continuing risk of significant harm. If it is decided that the child is still in need of protection, then the child protection plan will be reviewed and changes may be made if necessary. Further review conferences will be held at least every six months.



The Lewisham
Independent Advocacy
Service for Parents provides trained
and sympathetic volunteers to help
parents and carers whose children are
going through the safeguarding
process. The service is run
by Barnardo's.

Comments, suggestions and complaints

The Lewisham Safeguarding Children Board is committed to ensuring that families going through the safeguarding process have access to information and support and are treated with respect and consideration. However, we know that sometimes our practise may fall short of the standards we set ourselves. If you have any comments or suggestions about how we can improve our practise we would like to hear from you. If you wish to make a complaint about the service you or your child have received we would like to hear from you and try to resolve matters as quickly as possible.

If you would like more information or advice about how to make a comment, suggestion or complaint please contact:

**Complaints and Representations Service,
2nd floor Town Hall Chambers,
Catford SE6 4RU.
020 8314 8660.**

Lewisham Safeguarding Children Board – The Lewisham Safeguarding Children Board is made up senior managers from all of the organisations in Lewisham with a role to play in the safeguarding process, e.g. social services, Lewisham Hospital, the police, etc. The role of the Board is to ensure that the safeguarding process works well in Lewisham.

Samaritans

provide confidential emotional support for people who are experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including those which may lead to suicide

0845 790 90 90

www.samaritans.org.uk

Local organisations that provide support to children, parents and families

Building Bridges (Family Welfare Association)

for parents and carers with mental health difficulties and dependent children living at home

219 Stanstead Road, Forest Hill, SE23 1HV 020 8690 3636

Greenwich and Lewisham Newpin

provides support for parents and carers with at least one child under the age of five

1-4 Bissextile House, Coldbath Street, Lewisham, SE13 7RH 020 8694 0201

Lewisham Action on Mediation Project (LAMP)

aims to help people living in the Borough of Lewisham to resolve disputes, including between young people and their parents

Mezzanine Floor, Old Fire Station, 340 Lewisham High Street, SE13 6LE

020 8690 0760 or 020 8690 1133

MOSAC – Mothers of Sexually Abused Children

provides a helpline, counselling, advocacy and support group for any non-abusive parent or carer of sexually abused children and professionals working with child sexual abuse

West Greenwich Community and Arts Centre, 141 Greenwich High Road, Greenwich, SE10 8JA

0800 980 1958 or 020 8293 9990 www.mosac.org.uk

Parent's Support Group

provides one to one parenting skill courses and a drop in service

70 Blackheath Road, Greenwich, SE10 8DA 020 8469 0205 www.psg.org.uk

Refuge Community Project

provides emotional and practical support, advocacy and advice for Vietnamese, Asian, Somali or Turkish speaking women and children who are survivors and victims of domestic violence

020 8694 2707 email: copteam@refugeuk.clara.co.uk

what is significant harm?

- 🕒 physical abuse, e.g. hitting, shaking, poisoning
- 🕒 emotional abuse, e.g. bullying, harassment, being exposed to adult arguments and violence
- 🕒 sexual abuse, e.g. rape, involving children in the production of pornography, enticing a child to become involved in prostitution
- 🕒 neglect, e.g. failure to meet a child's basic needs like food or clothing, failure to ensure appropriate supervision for a child, allowing dangerous people to have access to a child

Where to go for more information and support

This leaflet is only one source of information available to families going through the safeguarding process in Lewisham. Other sources of information are:

Your child's social worker – he/she will be based in **Lewisham Children's Social Services** and can be contacted on **020 8314 6000**.

The Lewisham Independent Parents Advocacy Service – 020 8691 7290

National organisations that work with children, parents and families, including:

Parentline Plus

offers support to anyone parenting a child

0808 800 2222 www.parentlineplus.org.uk

Women's Aid and Refuge 24hr Helpline

provides information and advice for women experiencing domestic violence

0808 2000 247 www.refuge.org.uk www.womensaid.org.uk

Family Rights Group

provides advice and support for families

whose children are involved with social services

0800 731 1696 www.frg.org.uk

Gingerbread

provides advice for lone parents on contact, divorce,

employment, housing and lone parenthood

0800 018 4318 www.gingerbread.org.uk

NSPCC

provides advice about keeping children safe and well

0808 800 5000 www.nspcc.org.uk

For translation, please provide your details below:

Për përkthim, ju lutemi shkruajini më poshtë detajet tuaja:

Pour la traduction, veuillez fournir les détails ci-dessous:

若需翻译, 请您提供下列详情:

Wixii ku saabsan turjumaad, fadlan hoos ku qor faahfaahintaada:

மொழிபெயர்ப்பிற்காக தயவுசெய்து உங்களைப் பற்றிய விபரங்களைக் கீழே அளியுங்கள்:

Tercüme edilmesi için, lütfen aşağıda detaylarınızı belirtin:

Để dịch thuật, xin hãy cung cấp các chi tiết của bạn phía dưới:

Name:

Emri:

Nom:

姓名:

Magaca:

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İsminiz:

Tên:

Address:

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Adresse:

地址:

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Adresiniz:

Dja chi:

■ Shqip/Albanian

■ Français/French

■ 普通话/Mandarin

■ Soomaali/Somali

■ தமிழ்/Tamil

■ Türkçe/Turkish

■ Tiếng Việt/Vietnamese

■ Other language (please state)

Return to:

Kthejeni tek:

Retourner à:

返回到:

Kusoo dir:

திருப்பி அனுப்புவதற்கான முகவரி:

Şu adrese geri gönderiniz:

Gởi trả về:

For other formats, including Braille, large print, audio tape or computer disc contact:

Amy Buxton

020 8314 7596

amy.buxton@

lewisham.gov.uk

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for all the latest news and information about your Council's services, and the range of job opportunities we currently have on offer.