

Child Protection Process

CHILD PROTECTION INFORMATION SHEET

What happens in Child Protection?

Step 1: Someone is concerned about the safety or wellbeing of a child and they make a

NOTIFICATION

Step 2: Child Protection Services (through CPAARS) carries out an initial assessment of the Notification

Step 3: If the Notification is assessed as serious and requiring further assessment through contact with the child or family, it is referred to the local Child Protection offices for an

INVESTIGATION

OR

If the assessment is that there is no risk or that the risk is being managed and the child is safe, there will be NO FURTHER ACTION

Step 4 (if an Investigation is necessary): the matter is discussed with the family, the child will be seen, other services and agencies will assist and a decision will be made about whether the RISK IS SUBSTANTIATED OR NOT

Step 5 (if the risk is substantiated) and the child is still at risk: SHORT-TERM PROTECTIVE INTERVENTION AND SUPPORT may be necessary

Step 6: if the child remains at risk or is in need of ongoing care and protection: LONGER-TERM PROTECTIVE INTERVENTION AND SUPPORT may be necessary

What does this mean?

NOTIFICATION: Information from a person who believes, suspects or knows that a child has been or is being abused or neglected or that there is a reasonable likelihood of a child being killed or abused or neglected (s16 (1) of the *Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997*). Notifications can be made to CPAARS by a stressed parent themselves, a family or community member, service provider or professional.

INITIAL ASSESSMENT: Information is gathered from the notifier, other services and any previous records in Child Protection to make a judgement about the immediate safety issues and the need for further face-to-face assessment of the situation.

INVESTIGATION: If the initial assessment of the notification results in the conclusion that a face-to-face assessment needs to take place (this only happens in about 25% of all notifications received), the information is transferred from CPAARS to one of the local Child Protection Services offices.

The investigation is managed by Child Protection Assessment Workers in the local offices and they will meet the family, talk to the child, arrange meetings with other family and community members and services who know more about the situation and can help with identifying the issues and finding solutions.

Legal orders may be necessary to protect the child and he or she may have to live away from home for a short time, medical and other appointments may be essential to get a full picture and to help with future plans. A Voluntary Care Agreement might be made between the parents and Child Protection and a Family Group Conference may also be held.

SUBSTANTIATION of HARM or RISK: This is a decision made within about a month of the start of an investigation. The decision is about whether the child suffered harm, or was at risk at the time of the notification. It does not necessarily mean that the child is still at risk. It just confirms that the notification was appropriate and an investigation was necessary.

SHORT- AND LONGER-TERM INTERVENTION:

This means that the assessment concludes that the child remains at risk and that involvement by Child Protection Services is necessary for a short period (generally through Assessment Orders) or over a longer period under a Care and Protection Order.