

# A family's guide to the Child Protection System



This booklet aims to tell you all  
you need to know about how  
the Child Protection System  
works in Surrey

# About Surrey Safeguarding Children Board?



Surrey Safeguarding Children Board brings together all the main organisations that work with children and families in Surrey with the aim of ensuring that we work together effectively to help to keep children safe.



# Contents Page

- **Pg 4** Why enquiries are being made about your child or children, what will happen?
- **Pg 5** How is my child involved?
- **Pg 6** Medical examinations.  
What happens after the enquiry is completed?
- **Pg 7** The Child Protection Conference  
Who will be at the conference?
- **Pg 8** Before the conference.
- **Pg 9** What if I need help to take part in the conference?
- **Pg 10** At the conference.
- **Pg 12** The Child Protection Plan.
- **Pg 13** What to do if you are not happy with the decision made at the conference.
- **Pg 14** Making a complaint.
- **Pg 15** The Complaints Panel.
- **Pg 16** Making a complaint against a professional to complain about an employee of Surrey Children's Service.
- **Pg 17** To complain about a health worker.
- **Pg 18** To complain about a police officer.
- **Pg 19** Any other questions.

# Why enquiries are being made about your child or children



Most families need a bit of extra support at some point in their child's life.

**A concern for your child's welfare has been raised with Surrey Children's Service.** As a result, they have a legal duty to make enquiries to ensure the safety and well-being of your child.

## What will happen?



A social worker and sometimes a police officer will visit and talk to you and your children. They will discuss the concerns with you and talk with you about what support you or your child may need. They will also ask for your consent to talk to other professionals who know your family, like your doctor, health visitor and someone from your child's school. They will also have discussed the concerns with the police.

**It is very unusual for anyone to have to leave home. This would only happen if professionals believed that a child was in immediate danger.** Sometimes the child stays at home and an adult may be asked to live elsewhere during the enquiries. Usually no emergency action is needed and your child can stay at home. You may also be offered extra support.

However, both Police and Children's Service have a legal duty to protect your child by going to court if necessary. An Emergency Protection Order means that they can remove your child from your care for up to 8 days. An Interim Care Order could be for up to 8 weeks. Where a child is in immediate risk of danger, the Police have Protection powers to remove a child.

## **How is my child involved?**



**A child's view of the situation is extremely important.** A social worker will talk to them on their own to understand their wishes and feeling about their situation. They may also talk to their brothers and sisters.

## Medical examinations



**Your child may have a medical examination as part of the enquiry.**

This will be with a qualified Paediatrician if possible. Usually parents are asked to be with their child when they see the doctor unless it is not in the child's best interests.

You also have the right to have an independent medical examination of your child, but you would arrange and pay for this yourself. You can contact the Family Rights Group for advice. See the back page for details.

## What happens after the enquiry is completed?

One of three things can happen after the enquiry

- No further action.



- Support is offered to the family.



- Multi-agency child protection conference.



# The Child Protection Conference



**A Child Protection Conference is a meeting to discuss concerns that have been raised about the care of your child.** The conference will decide whether your child is at continued risk of significant harm and what support and services are needed.

They are planned to last no more than 2 hours but can sometimes take longer.

## Who will be at the conference?

**Parents and children aged 12 years and over will be invited to attend and other family members may also be invited.** Sometimes members of the family may be excluded from the conference if it is considered that it may not be in the best interests of the child. If you have concerns about any family member attending you should speak to the social worker.

There will be a Chairperson, minute taker, social worker, police officer, health and education representatives and anyone else who may be working with you or your family.

## Before the conference



**You will get a letter confirming the date, time and place of the conference.** If you have any problems attending or need child care support please speak to the social worker.

**The social worker will write a report** about the concerns and their assessment, including information about your family and any previous incidents or concerns. Their report will also make recommendations about what will happen. The social worker should meet with you at least two days before the conference to go through their report.

**Your and your child's views are important and you should attend the conference if you can.** You can write down your own views for the conference. If you need help with this please ask the social worker. The social worker will discuss with your child how their views will be presented. There is a separate leaflet for children about Child Protection Conferences to support them to participate.

# What if I need help to take part in the conference?



**You can bring a friend, legal representative, advocate or supporter to the conference.** Their only role in the conference will be to support you. They cannot give their own views or ask questions unless you want them to.

If your first language is not English, the social worker can arrange for an Interpreter to come to the meeting. If you have any speech or hearing difficulties, or any other additional needs, the social worker will make sure you get the support you need to participate in the meeting.

## At the conference



**The conference will have a Chairperson who makes sure that the meeting is run correctly** and that everyone has the opportunity to contribute. The Safeguarding Children Unit of the County Council employs independent people whose job it is to chair Child Protection Conferences.

**On the day of the conference you will be invited to meet with the Chairperson half an hour before the conference.** They will explain to you how the meeting will be run.

**At the beginning of the conference the Chairperson will introduce everyone** and check with the family that the details such as names, addresses and dates of birth are correct.

**The Chairperson reminds everyone that the meeting is confidential and then asks for reports.** You have the right to have your say at the conference and to explain to people what has been happening within your family and how your child is getting on. You can give your views verbally at the conference and/or write them in your report, which you can read out. If a professional is unable to attend then their report may be read out.

**After the information is presented, the Chairperson will ask everyone's opinion about whether your child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm and needs a Child Protection Plan.** They will also identify the main area of concern which may be: neglect, physical abuse, emotional abuse or sexual abuse.

# The Child Protection Plan



**The aim of the Child Protection Plan is to ensure that your child is safe from harm and to promote their health and development.** In most circumstances this will be done by supporting you as a family to care for your child.

**The Child Protection Plan will be discussed at the Child Protection Conference and afterwards at regular Core Group Meetings.** The professionals will work together with you as a family.



**A date for a Review Child Protection Conference will be made within 3 months of the first conference** to review the plan and check what progress is being made. After that, conferences will be held every 6 months while there is a Child Protection Plan in place.

# What to do if you are not happy with the decision made at the conference

## You can make a complaint to the conference

**Chairperson.** You can make this complaint yourself or ask someone to make it on your behalf. A complaint must be lodged within 28 days of the Child Protection Conference, or 14 days after receiving the minutes (written record) of the conference, whichever is the later.



## You can complain about the following:

- Process of the conference.
- The outcome, in terms of what the main concern was at the time a Child Protection Plan was developed for the child.
- A decision that a child has or does not have a Child Protection Plan or ceases to have a Child Protection Plan.

# Making a complaint

To make a complaint after the conference you need to contact:



**The Service Manager**  
**Safeguarding Children Unit**  
Fairmount House  
Bull Hill, Leatherhead  
Surrey KT22 7AH



**Phone: 01372 833300**

If you make a complaint, an independent person will visit you to find out what you are unhappy about and report to the Complaints Panel.

# The Complaints Panel

**The Complaints Panel is made up of people whose agencies are represented on Surrey Safeguarding Children Board. The complaints panel have the power to:**

- Support the original recommendations.
- State that the conference procedures were not followed properly and recommend action.
- Make the Child Protection Conference meet again with a different Chairperson to reconsider its decisions.
- Postpone the decision of the Panel due to insufficient information and set a date for a further hearing.

**If you are still unhappy after this you can ask the complaints panel for another review.**



## **Local Government Ombudsman**

10th Floor  
Millbank Tower  
Millbank  
London SW1P 4QP

**Phone:** 020 7217 4620

**Fax:** 020 7217 4621



**If you are still not satisfied after the decision of the Local Government Ombudsman you can apply to the High Court for a Judicial Review.** You will need the support of a solicitor to do this.

# Making a complaint against a professional

If you feel that any professional worker involved in your case has acted unfairly or unprofessionally, you can make a complaint about him or her. You can do this at any time during the process. This is separate to making a complaint about the conference.

## To complain about an employee of Surrey Children's Service

Contact the Customer Relations Manager



### Customer Relations Manager

Second Floor  
Quadrant Court  
35 Guildford Rd  
Woking  
GU22 7QQ



**Freephone:** 08000 562 132 (not free from mobiles)



**Email:** [childrensservice.complaints@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:childrensservice.complaints@surreycc.gov.uk)

# To complain about a health worker

**Each health trust has a Patient Adviser and Liaison Service which should be your first point of contact.**

If you are having difficulty with this you can contact the Health Care Commission at the following address:



Finsbury Tower  
103-105 Bunhill Road  
London  
EC1Y 8TG



**Phone:** 020 7448 9200

# To complain about a police officer

You can go to any local police station and ask to see the senior officer on duty. You can also contact:



## **Independent Police Complaints Commission**

5th Floor

90 High Holborn

London

WC1V 6BH



## **Police Complaint Call Centre:**

08453 002 002 (press 1 at prompt) (9.00am-5.00pm)

## Any Further Questions

**We hope this leaflet has explained how professionals and families can work together to ensure that children are safe and that their health and development are promoted.**

If you have any other questions, please speak to your social worker.

If you need this information in **LARGE PRINT**, Braille or another language, contact the Surrey Safeguarding Children Board, 01372 833 336.