

Glossary

Attachment

Sometimes called “bonding”. A basic motive of an infant to seek closeness to their parent or carer, especially when they experience danger.

Case conference

A case conference is held when there are concerns about a child’s safety. Sometimes it is called a child protection conference.

Its purpose is to bring together all the agencies and/or individuals who have had responsibility for the child. This includes the parents and, depending on their age and level of understanding, may include the child.

The meeting discusses the information that has been obtained about the child and their circumstances, as well as the parents’ or carers’ ability to look after them.

The meeting then considers the information and evidence presented to the conference. Taking into account the child’s present situation and information about his or her family history and the family’s ability to care for the child, it makes a judgement about their present or future safety.

Finally, it decides what future action is needed to protect the child and promote his/her welfare.

Child

There is no single law that defines the age of a child across the UK. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by the UK government in 1991, states that a child “means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier” (Article 1, Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989).

England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland each have their own guidance setting out the duties and responsibilities of organisations to keep children safe, but they agree that a child is anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday.

Child abuse

There are four main categories of child abuse: physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect. All these categories are forms of harm; and each can involve inflicting harm or failing to prevent harm.

Child development

Child development is a way of measuring a child’s progress through different stages as they grow from birth to adolescence. These stages include:

- large movements
- fine movements
- language
- thinking
- social behaviour and play
- attachment.

Child in need

A child in need is a child who is unlikely to have, or have the opportunity to have, a reasonable standard of health and development without any support provided by a public authority.

Child protection

Child protection is part of safeguarding and refers to the action taken to protect specific children who are being abused or who are at risk of abuse.

Child protection meeting

Sometimes the person who was involved in reporting the concern that led to the investigation or an assessment of the situation is asked to attend a meeting to be able to contribute first hand what they saw and did. It is a good idea to ask someone else to go with you.

Child protection plan

In England a child may be subject to a child protection plan (CPP) if they are deemed to be at risk of on-going harm. The equivalent in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland is to put a child on the child protection registers (CPRs). The plan outlines what should happen to protect the child in the future and who will be responsible for doing what. You or your organisation may be involved if there is a role for you.

Designated Safeguarding Person (DSP)

Also referred to as a “named person”, the person within an organisation to whom you can report concerns about a child’s safety and welfare.

Disclosure of abuse

When a child or young person tells you about something abusive that is happening, has happened or may happen to them.

Domestic violence

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. (Home Office, 2012)

Duty of care

A duty of care is a legal obligation to:

- always act in the best interest of individuals and others
- not act or fail to act in a way that results in harm
- act within your competence and not take on anything you do not believe you can safely do.

(Social Care Institute of Excellence)

Emotional abuse

The persistent emotional harm to a child so that it causes a severe and long-lasting impact on a child’s emotional development.

It may involve saying to a child that they are worthless, unloved or inadequate.

It may involve seeing or hearing the abuse of another, including domestic violence and may mean the child is frequently frightened. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Harm

The Children Act 1989 defines “harm” as ill-treatment (including sexual abuse and non-physical forms of ill-treatment) or the impairment of health (physical or mental) or development (physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural) (section 31).

“Significant harm” is not defined in the Act, although it does say that the court should compare the health and development of the child “with that which could reasonably be expected of a similar child” (section 31).

Neglect

Neglect is the continual failure to meet a child's basic physical and emotional needs, such as providing sufficient food, clothing and a safe home.

It means failing to protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger or failing to make sure safe people are looking after the child.

It is likely to result in serious harm to the child's health or physical or emotional development.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child.

Referral

The first stage in the child protection process. A referral is made about a child because some aspect of their life is giving cause for concern. Anyone who has concerns about the safety or welfare of a child can make a referral to statutory services.

Safeguarding

Protecting children from harm, preventing damage to children's health or development, making sure that children grow up safely, and taking action to make sure all children have the best start in life.

Self-harm

Self-harm can involve cutting, burning, bruising, poisoning, scratching, hair-pulling or overdosing.

Children and young people who self-harm are not usually seeking attention or trying to commit suicide, but it can be a way for them to deal with overwhelming or distressing feelings.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or persuading a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening.

The activities may involve physical or non-physical involvement. They may also include involving children in looking at or in the production of, sexual images, or grooming a child (and possibly the adults around the child) in preparation for abuse, including via the internet.

It is not only committed by men; women can also sexually abuse children, as can other children.

Sexual exploitation

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a form of sexual abuse that involves the manipulation of young people under the age of 18 into sexual activity in exchange for things such as money, gifts, accommodation, affection or status. It involves befriending children, gaining their trust, and often feeding them drugs and alcohol, sometimes over a long period of time, before the abuse begins. Although it is true that the victim can be tricked into believing they are in a loving relationship, no child under the age of 18 can ever consent to being abused or exploited (Barnardo's, 2012).