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# A guide to section 47 child protection enquiries

## Information for parents and carers



# Children's Services

If Solihull Children's Services is told by someone that a child may be suffering significant harm or may be at risk of suffering significant harm, the law says that they must look (make enquiries) into the matter. These enquiries refer to section 47 of the Children Act 1989 which gives the Local Authority Children's Services a duty to carry out an investigation or assessment when they are informed that a child, who lives in their area may be being suffering or likely to suffer significant harm.

Anyone can contact Children's Services if they are worried about a child being abused or neglected.

Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by acting to cause harm or not acting to stop harm.

The type of harm is often described in one of the following ways:

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Neglect
- Child Exploitation
- Any combination of these



Enquiries will also have to be made if a child is living with someone who has previously been involved in the abuse of another child.

## Suggestions of harm

Where it has been suggested that someone has caused harm to your child/children, you are likely to be spoken to by a social worker and a police officer. You will be told about the concerns that have been reported about your child. It may not be possible to tell you who reported the concerns.

The social worker and/or police officer will need to talk to your child alone, and to any other children in your household. These interviews may be video recorded. This is to make sure that your child is not questioned too many times.

You will be asked to give permission for the interview to take place, however if you do not give permission and your child is at risk of significant harm this may still happen without your permission. This will be discussed with you at the time.

If you can talk openly with the people involved about the concerns, the best decisions will be made for your child.

Sometimes it may be necessary for a doctor to see your child. This will normally be a doctor who has a lot of experience of working with children.

You will be asked for your permission before your child is seen by a doctor (if your child is old enough to understand what is happening, they can give permission themselves).

Children's Services must consider the safety and welfare of your child above all else, but they also have a responsibility to try to help families to stay together.

Sometimes agreement is reached for children to stay with other family members for a short time while enquiries are made.

**In instances where the risk of harm is particularly great, or the child is in immediate danger:**

- Solihull Children's Social Care, if necessary, can apply to the Court to protect your child;
- The Police can take your child to a safe place for up to 72 hours. A safe place may include a family member, a family friend, a foster carer or sometimes hospital.

## Police involvement

The Police have a responsibility to protect children from harm. The Police will work with other agencies to provide support for those children at risk of harm and will investigate related offences. Police may ultimately take a view, alongside the Crown Prosecution Service, that a case has not met the evidential requirements for Court proceedings in the Criminal Court. However, the Police may still have concerns for the children involved and may continue to work with partner agencies to ensure those children are protected.

If it is deemed not necessary for an application to be made to the Court, or for the Police to take the child to a safe place, but there are still concerns regarding the safety of the child and their welfare, then a meeting will be arranged to decide what happens next. This is called an Initial Child Protection Conference.

If Children's Service's feel the enquiry has not provided any evidence of significant harm, they may offer support through a Child In Need plan or Early Help.

They may also decide there is no need to take any further action.

### As a parent, you have the right to:

- Be listened to
- Be treated with respect
- Be involved in what is happening and told about the decisions that are being made.
- Be told in writing about the outcome of the enquiry when it is over
- Be able to complain if you feel that you were not treated fairly

## Contact information

For independent information you may wish to contact:

**Solihull Citizens Advice** – general advice queries **0808 2787 976** open Monday - Friday 10-14:30

**Family Rights Group**—A free telephone advice line **0808 801 0366** open Monday to Friday between 9.30am and 3pm (excluding Bank Holidays). For Textphone dial **18001** followed by the advice line number. Or you can access their website at <https://frg.org.uk/get-help-and-advice/>

If you have a complaint of compliment about Children's Service's practice during a section 47 enquiry, you can contact SMBC:

**Online:** By downloading a complaints, compliments and comments forms below:

An adult contacting in relation to a young person's case:

[Complaints, compliments and comments form](#)

Children wishing to contact about their case, please use one of the forms below:

[Young person's form](#)

[Child's form](#)

By email at [candacomplaints@solihull.gov.uk](mailto:candacomplaints@solihull.gov.uk)

By phone on 0121 704 8296

Or write to the Children's and Adults Complaints Team, The Council House, Manor Square, Solihull, B91 3QB.

If you wish to complain about the standard of practice of the Police during a section 47 enquiry You can submit a complaint using their [online complaints form](#).