

Afterwards...

Children's Social Care investigates each situation as sensitively as possible. However, because of the nature of what they sometimes have to discuss, people can become upset and distressed.

It is hoped that all those involved will understand that they have to be thorough to make sure children are protected. Nevertheless, if you are unhappy about any aspect of the investigation or the way in which you have been treated, you have the right to take action through Warrington Borough Council's Complaints and Representations Procedure.

Details are available from your Social Worker or your nearest Children's Social Care office.

This leaflet has aimed to provide you with general information about what happens when Children's Social Care are contacted about a possible allegation of child abuse.

For further information please contact Service Reception Team on 01925 444239.

CONTACT NUMBERS

Warrington Safeguarding Children Board Policy & Practice Manager	01925 457075
Service Reception Team Poll Tax House, Ryland Street Warrington	01925 444239
Out of Hours Service	01925 444400
Principal Officer (Safeguarding Children)	01925 457013
Children's Safeguarding Unit	01925 457016
Warrington Police Station	01925 652222
Police Public Protection Unit	01244 614878
Designated Nurse - Safeguarding Children	01925 643113
Designated Doctor - Safeguarding Children	01925 405712
Consultant Paediatrician or Senior Registrar	01925 635911
Senior Education Welfare Officer	01925 442928
Senior Probation Officer	01925 650613

**For further information visit our website
www.safeguardingwarringtonchildren.org.uk**

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Warrington Safeguarding Children Board



INVESTIGATING ALLEGATIONS OF CHILD ABUSE

This leaflet aims to provide general information about what happens when Children's Social Care are contacted about a possible allegation of child abuse.

Investigating allegations of child abuse

INTRODUCTION

Coping with accusations of child abuse is a difficult situation for everybody concerned. This leaflet is to help you understand WHY Children's Social Care need to be involved and HOW they go about finding what the problem is and the best way to keep children safe.

It's a fact: children do get abused. 'Abuse' can mean physical attack, sexual abuse, emotional abuse or neglect. No one wants to see these things happen to children.

Warrington Safeguarding Children Board believes children have a right to be protected. When abuse does occur, children need all the help and support they can get to help them cope with what has happened, and to make sure it doesn't happen again.

Sometimes, children themselves will complain about being badly treated or harmed, or perhaps teachers or neighbours will tell Children's Services when they think a child is being abused in some way. Quite often, it is the parents themselves or other relatives who report their concerns or ask for help.

When accusations are made...

Children's Social Care have to check on every referral received regarding possible abuse and have to be satisfied that children are not in danger. This is their statutory responsibility.

If anyone is worried about what might be happening to a child, it is important that they tell Children's Social Care who will listen and consider the information very carefully.

What they do next...

Records are checked as part of the enquiries and other professionals, who may know something - such as teachers, health visitors, doctors and the police are contacted. They are asked whether they have any other information that can help, a written record of what they say is made.

Where appropriate Social Care staff will visit and have discussions with the whole family - particularly the child/children concerned.

An explanation of what has been reported is given to the family; they are asked what they know. The adults and children concerned are spoken to and things are discussed so long as people give the workers a chance. Naturally notes are made about what is said to make sure there is an accurate record.

Social Care staff may visit without appointment, especially in serious situations where there is some urgency. However, all workers carry Identity Cards and these should be examined carefully. If people are not satisfied about the identity of the visitors they should check with the local Children's Social Care Office or the Police.

Social Workers will never insist on a child being undressed, or try to examine a child themselves. If any such examination were thought necessary, parents would be asked to take the child to their own doctor or to a clinic or hospital.

Social Workers have no automatic 'right of entry' into people's homes: but rely on the co-operation of the public. Most people understand how important it is for Children's Services to be thorough in finding out as quickly as possible if children are being harmed.

Sometimes if people threaten Social Workers or block enquiries the Police are asked to help. Children's Social Care cannot walk away and leave children in possible danger.

The Outcome...

They have to be satisfied that children are safe from harm. If the allegations or concerns are unfounded they will say so and will tell the children's parents/carers.

If there are real concerns, the case is considered with other, more senior Social Care staff. A discussion with parents about what action may follow or what changes need to be made to ensure the children are safe in the future takes place.

Children's Social Care never seek to remove children from their families unless they feel a child is in real danger and no other arrangements are possible.

Even when there are real concerns that a child is in danger of abuse Children's Social Care have to explain the circumstances to a Magistrate or to a Court and ask for a Legal Order. This allows the child to be taken to a safe place whilst more information is obtained without the consent of the parents or carers.