



Child Protection Policy and Procedure

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Look Ahead
CARE, SUPPORT AND HOUSING

Our mission

Working with people to make choices, achieve goals and take control of their lives through high quality care, support and housing.

Our values

Excellence

Aspiration

Partnership

Trust

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**Services we would be proud
for our loved ones to receive**

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Policy

1 Scope

- 1.1 This policy applies to all staff, contractors, volunteers, board members and anyone working on our behalf.
- 1.2 This policy is closely related to and should be read in conjunction with following policies. Including but not limited to:
 - Relevant HR policies
 - Children that go Missing
 - Safeguarding Adults
 - Raising Concerns at Work and Whistleblowing
 - Complaints and Feedback
 - Confidentiality and Data Protection
 - Domestic Abuse.
- 1.3 This policy applies to anyone who is **under 18**, which includes an unborn child. This policy also applies to 16 and 17 year olds in Look Ahead services are subject to this policy and procedure.
- 1.4 Our safeguarding responsibilities for anyone over 18 years old are outlined in our Safeguarding Adults policy and procedure.

2 Policy Background

- 2.1 Look Ahead provides services for vulnerable adults, some of whom will have children. These children may or may not be living with their parent(s) – we provide services for teenage parents and homeless families where we have a responsibility to provide a safe environment for children. We also support customers living in their own homes who may have a child living with them.
- 2.2 Every child has the right to be safe from abuse and fear. We all have a responsibility to prevent, recognise and act on abuse and neglect quickly to keep children safe from harm in the neighbourhoods and communities where we work. In services where children are living we have responsibility to work within local authority procedures.
- 2.3 The purpose of this policy and procedure is to give direction and guidance to Look Ahead staff when dealing with allegations and/or suspicions of child abuse and/or neglect. In addition they aim to provide sufficient information to employees to enable them to be concern and aware of what to do if concerns are raised.

3 Child protection duty

- 3.1 We have a duty to take all reasonable steps to safeguard the welfare of a child by reporting any concerns immediately.
- 3.2 We do not need proof to report something as a child protection concern.
- 3.3 All that is required is that there are reasonable grounds to suspect abuse has taken place and a child has been placed at risk.

4 Child Protection – Types of Abuse

4.1 There are many different types of abuse and not exclusive. Abuse may include but is not limited to:

- **Physical abuse:** Physical abuse is deliberately hurting a child causing injuries such as bruises, broken bones, burns or cuts.
- **Domestic abuse:** Witnessing domestic abuse is child abuse, and teenagers can suffer domestic abuse in their relationships.
- **Sexual abuse:** A child is sexually abused when they are forced or persuaded to take part in sexual activities. This doesn't have to be physical contact, and it can happen online.
- **Female genital mutilation (FGM):** Female genital mutilation (FGM) is the partial or total removal of external female genitalia for non-medical reasons. Please see [Appendix 7](#) for specific guidance about reporting FGM.
- **Neglect:** Neglect is the ongoing failure to meet a child's basic needs. It's dangerous and children can suffer serious and long-term harm.
- **Online abuse:** Online abuse is any type of abuse that happens on the web, whether through social networks, playing online games or using mobile phones.
- **Emotional abuse:** Children who are emotionally abused suffer emotional maltreatment or neglect. It's sometimes called psychological abuse and can cause children serious harm.
- **Child sexual exploitation:** Child sexual exploitation is a type of sexual abuse in which children are sexually exploited for money, power or status.
- **Bullying and cyberbullying:** Bullying can happen anywhere – at school, at home or online. It's usually repeated over a long period of time and can hurt a child both physically and emotionally.
- **Child trafficking:** Child trafficking is a type of abuse where children are recruited, moved or transported and then exploited, forced to work or sold.
- **Grooming:** Children and young people can be groomed online or in the real world; by a stranger or by someone they know - for example a family member, friend or professional.
- **Harmful sexual behaviour:** Children and young people who develop harmful sexual behaviour harm themselves and others.
- **Radicalisation:** Radicalisation is defined the process by which people come to support terrorism and extremism and, in some cases, to then participate in terrorist activity.
- **Gang exploitation:** Children may become part of a gang as it makes them feel part of a family so they might not want to leave. Even if they do, leaving or attempting to leave can be a really scary idea. Children may be exploited by gangs to carry out criminal acts and do things they are not comfortable with.

4.2 Please see [Appendix 1](#) for more information about different types of abuse.

5 The Look Ahead Approach

Person-centred

5.1 We take a person centred approach to child protection in line with our Positive Pathways Support Planning and Risk Management framework. The dignity, safety and well-being of an individual is always our priority. In services with children, the

child's safety and welfare will be an integral part of the support planning and risk management process.

- 5.2 We will support and work with individual customers to develop risk management plans to minimise the risk of a safeguarding incident occurring, recognise abuse and report cases if they do occur.
- 5.3 If the person causing harm is a Look Ahead customer we will provide support so that their needs are addressed.

Working in partnership

- 5.4 Each Local Children's Safeguarding Board will have their own protocols setting out the process they will follow when there is a safeguarding concern. All Look Ahead services will ensure that they understand and work within these local protocols.
- 5.5 We will contribute to effective inter-agency working and effective multi-disciplinary assessments and joint working partnerships in order to provide the most effective means of safeguarding children.

Working with Parents

- 5.6 In most cases the child's parent will be a Look Ahead customer who we are providing a support service to. We have a duty of care to the customer but the needs and safety of a child take precedence. We have a responsibility to identify the symptoms and triggers of abuse and neglect, to share that information and to work together to provide children and young people with the help they need. As far as possible, we will work alongside parents to help them achieve the best outcomes for their children.
- 5.7 If we are concerned that a parent's actions are resulting in abuse or neglect of their child we have a responsibility to share that information with the statutory authority. In most cases, we will inform the parent that we will be doing this and will endeavour to work with them to understand that this is in the child's best interests and could lead to additional support services which will help the parent to care for their child.

Working with children and parents already subject to child protection procedures

- 5.8 In some of our services – in particular our Women's Refuges we will be working with children who are subject to Child Protection procedures in the area where they were previously living.
- 5.9 In these cases we may be required to work with the 'home' local authority or the local authority where the refuge is based. The Contract Manager will ensure they have all relevant information and will be responsible for liaising with the relevant Social Services departments.

6 Roles and responsibilities

Board

- 6.1 Our **Board** is ultimately accountable for how safeguarding is managed at Look Ahead. They in turn delegate operational accountability to Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

SLT

- 6.2 **SLT** is responsible for ensuring that effective safeguarding systems are in place which meet our statutory obligations, minimise risk to customers and manage any reported instances appropriately.
- 6.3 Look Ahead's **Director of Care** is our safeguarding lead and our **Director of Housing and Support** is our children protection lead. Their role is to ensure that staff and customers can recognise safeguarding concerns and know how to report them.
- 6.4 They will also ensure that staff understand their role and responsibilities in relation to this policy and procedures, and that they have access to training that is appropriate to their level of responsibility.

All Staff

- 6.5 We all have a responsibility to report any concerns or suspicions about a child being abused in a timely way.
- 6.6 All our Operations Managers are **Safeguarding Leads** and available to give advice to any member of staff on safeguarding.
- 6.7 **Operations Managers** are responsible for ensuring that safeguarding cases in their patches are managed correctly and that Contract Managers have the right skills and resources to do this. They will provide advice to Contract Managers about when safeguarding criteria are met.
- 6.8 **Contract Managers and Team Leaders** are responsible for ensuring local protocols are in place to manage any safeguarding concerns in line with their Local Authority's requirements and for managing any individual safeguarding cases in line with these protocols.
- 6.9 They are responsible for reporting concerns to the appropriate agencies and for implementing any action plans to address the safeguarding concern. They are also able to carry out an internal Safeguarding investigation and can plan and agree a strategy to protect a customer from abuse during and following an investigation.
- 6.10 They will understand the impact of abuse on adults at risk and will ensure customers are kept informed and supported throughout a Safeguarding process.
- 6.11 **Support Workers and Assistant Support Workers** will have a clear understanding of the different forms of abuse and how to recognise signs/indicators. They will also be clear in their role in identifying and reporting concerns regarding abuse.

7 Taking the right course of action for the situation

7.1 A safeguarding concern may arise from a range of sources and the action we take will depend upon the circumstances. Look Ahead has a three stage approach to safeguarding children.

Stage 1: Prevention and preparedness

7.2 Our aim is to **prevent** child protection concerns through good risk management. This includes:

- HR policies and procedures in place which ensure our staff are fit to work with adults at risk.
- Up to date Risk Management plans in place for all customers.
- We will provide clear information to customers with children about how to provide a safe environment, promote children's welfare, and understand what abuse and neglect is.
- Services will have up to date risk assessments in place to reduce risk of any safeguarding incidents (e.g. visitor's policy, lone working procedure).
- Both customer risk management plans and service risk assessments will be reviewed and updated in light of any incidents and mitigation actions put in place.
- Comprehensive organisational Quality Standards which set out clear expectations on managing Safeguarding concerns, with services assessed annually against these standards and action plans put in place to improve.
- Monitoring adult and child safeguarding concerns and cases, reporting internally and learning from our experiences.

7.3 Where child protection incidents do occur we will ensure that we are **prepared**, that we are able to identify them and deal with them quickly and appropriately. We do this by ensuring:

- Staff and customers can recognise abuse and know how to report it.
- Staff are appropriately trained; know our policies and procedures and their role and responsibility within them.
- Contract Managers understand local authority protocols, including who to contact, how and when.
- Systems are in place for recording and monitoring child protection concerns.
- That improvement actions identified through our internal Quality Management System are addressed.

Stage 2: Identifying safeguarding concerns and responding

7.4 Should child protection concerns arise we will ensure we follow the principles outlined above, in particular ensuring that the child is safe and that they know what is happening.

7.5 Having gathered enough information, we will decide on the appropriate course of action and notify relevant bodies as quickly as possible.

Stage 3: Resolving effectively

7.6 Once a child protection concern has been identified we will follow the local protocols and work constructively with our partners as outlined above to ensure

the concern is addressed. We will also ensure we take any necessary internal action separate to this, including disciplinary action where appropriate or placing a customer in alternative accommodation.

- 7.7 Once the child protection case has been concluded we will evaluate the learning from the incident and review both local protocols and corporate policies and procedures, as appropriate.
- 7.8 We will ensure our services are effectively linked in with local children and families services and will refer customers to parenting skills workshops and other appropriate courses designed to support parents and children.

8 Sharing information

- 8.1 We will share all information necessary to safeguard children at risk of abuse, neglect and exploitation. This may include statutory, voluntary and independent sector organisations, housing authorities, the police and Crown Prosecution Service, as well as organisations which provide advocacy and support. Please see the procedures for more information.

9 Responsibilities towards the person alleged to have caused the harm

- 9.1 There is an overriding principle that no actions during the safeguarding investigation should put the alleged victim more at risk, so decisions may need to be made regarding how, when and where to tell the alleged perpetrator about the allegations.
- 9.2 The following principles should be applied:

Assume innocence until evidence is gathered to prove the allegations

- 9.3 An allegation should not be taken as evidence of abuse, until it has been investigated fully. Any temporary action taken, such as suspending staff duties, or removing a customer to another service should merely be seen as precautionary and not taken as evidence of guilt.
- 9.4 If the person alleged to have caused harm is also subject to a criminal investigation then police guidance should be taken before they are told about any allegations.

Treat honestly and fairly

- 9.5 The person who is alleged to have caused harm has the right to give their understanding of the allegations and have this information weighed up along with any other evidence prior to a decision being made.

Ensure they receive appropriate support

- 9.6 Look Ahead recognises that being alleged to have caused harm during a safeguarding investigation can be very traumatic and will seek to give the person all appropriate help and support, whether a customer or staff member. If the person is also an adult at risk, and is interviewed by the police, they have rights to the provision of an Appropriate Adult.

10 Communication

Informing our staff

- 10.1 All staff will attend Safeguarding training which includes child protection. In services where staff work directly with children, staff will attend an additional one day child safeguarding training within their first year of service.

Informing our customers

- 10.2 All customers will be made aware of this Policy when they take up a Look Ahead service. In services where children are living we will provide information to them about how we share information with Local Authority children's services and how we will work with customers to promote the welfare of their children and keep them safe.

11 Monitoring and Reporting

- 11.1 We monitor all Child Protection concerns within our RIVO Safeguarding system.
- 11.2 Contract Managers are responsible for monitoring progress on cases in their service and updating the system. They are also responsible for keeping all key stakeholders informed about the progress of cases.
- 11.3 Each service will keep a log of safeguarding concerns and Contract Managers should review this regularly to ensure that cases are being progressed and to identify any common issues. Operations Managers should be aware of any safeguarding cases in their patch and monitor that the appropriate action is being taken.
- 11.4 Each month the Departmental Management Team review a summary of adult and child safeguarding concerns and cases across the organisation and this in turn is reported to SMT.
- 11.5 Twice a year the Board receives an adult and child safeguarding report which provides an overview of how safeguarding has been managed, any significant cases and the organisational learning.

12 Equality and Diversity

- 12.1 Services provided should be appropriate to the adult at risk and not discriminate because of disability, age, gender, sexual orientation, 'race', religion, culture or lifestyle.

Equality of Opportunity

- 12.2 The aim of those working to protect children should be to ensure that for those children who experience discrimination as a part of their daily lives, agencies' responses should not reinforce that experience and, indeed, should counteract it. Ensuring equality of opportunity does not mean that all children are treated the same. It does mean understanding and working with diversity.
- 12.3 Where children and families are from cultures different from those of the professionals working with them, care should be taken to ensure that practice is not based on assumptions or stereotypes. Child abuse should never be accepted

or excused on the basis of cultural difference, although every effort should be made to ensure that cultural issues are understood and services appropriate.

- 12.4 Individuals should always be enabled to participate fully at all stages of the process. Where a child or parent is disabled, it may be necessary to provide help with communication to enable the child or parent to express themselves. Where a child or parent speaks a language other than that spoken by the interviewer, there should be an interpreter provided.

Procedures

13 Introduction

- 13.1 Look Ahead provides housing, care and support services to vulnerable adults, some of whom will have children, as well as supporting people under 18. Therefore the organisation has a duty to comply with both our statutory responsibilities and with our partner authority Child Protection Procedures.
- 13.2 Look Ahead recognise that the protection and welfare of children is of paramount importance and all our staff have a responsibility to protect children and to pass on concerns to the relevant statutory authority if they are informed or strongly suspect a child is being neglected or abused
- 13.3 This procedure is guided by Look Ahead's Child Protection Policy which sets out the definitions of abuse, the principles of our responsibility and our approach, how we inform our staff and customers of the policy and procedure and how we monitor and report on Child Protection.
- 13.4 This procedure details how our services will be prepared to respond to allegations of abuse and the step by step process our staff will follow in response to allegations and/or concerns raised. A procedure process map is attached **(Appendix 2)**

Working in Partnership

- 13.5 All Look Ahead services are funded by local authorities who are required to have a Local Safeguarding Children's Board. This Board will have clear procedures in place to work in partnership and to respond to concerns from external agencies or members of the public.
- 13.6 All projects and services must adhere to the multi -agency policies and procedures developed by their local authority as well as any guidance or directives produced by their Local Safeguarding Children's Board. While Look Ahead's Child Protection procedure provides guidance, local authority policies and procedures should always remain the main reference point for instructions.
- 13.7 This procedure also gives guidance on what to do if the local authority does not respond to a referral from us or asks us to investigate it further.

14 Sharing information

- 14.1 We will share information in line with the principles set out below:
- All Look Ahead customers sign a 'Consent to disclose' form when they take up a service, and this sets out how and when we will share information with other agencies.
 - The person's wishes should always be considered. However, protecting children establishes a general principle that an incident of suspected or actual abuse will be reported more widely and that in so doing, some information may need to be shared among those involved.
 - Information given to an individual member of staff belongs to Look Ahead and not to the individual employee. An individual employee cannot give a personal assurance of confidentiality to any of our customers.

- Difficulties in working within the principles of maintaining the confidentiality of a child should not lead to a failure to take action to protect the child.
- Look Ahead has a “Disclosing and Raising Concerns at Work” Policy and Procedure and staff reporting concerns at work (‘whistleblowing’) are entitled to protection under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

14.2 Decisions about what information is shared and with whom will be taken on a case by case basis. Whether information is shared with or without the child’s consent the information shared should be:

- Necessary for the purpose for which it is being shared
- Shared only with those who have a need for it
- Accurate and up to date
- Shared in a timely fashion
- Shared accurately
- Shared securely.

14.3 Look Ahead’s Confidentiality and Information Sharing Procedure sets out the following guidance for sharing information:

- Sharing information with consent
- Sharing information without consent
- Information sharing when the person does not have capacity to consent
- The person alleged to have caused the harm
- Child Protection may well involve working directly with the person alleged to have caused harm and possibly providing extra support or services to this person.

If this person is a Look Ahead customer

- 14.4 In this case the safety of the child remains paramount, although Look Ahead retains responsibilities to the customers alleged to have caused abuse. This includes their ability to understand the alleged actions, the extent to which the alleged act may reflect their support needs and the potential risk they may pose to other children and customer.
- 14.5 If, for example the Police are involved Look Ahead staff will need to make an appropriate report to the police but may also need to offer the customer additional support if they are subsequently interviewed.

If this person is a Look Ahead member of staff

- 14.6 All allegations made against any staff member will be taken seriously as our staff are in a particular position of trust when working with our customers and their children.
- 14.7 If allegations are raised against staff members (including volunteers and Personal Support Assistants) a decision will need to be taken by the person’s line manager around whether they pose a risk to any child or adult (e.g. whistleblowers) and if so, they may need to be removed from their normal duties until the allegation has been fully investigated, in line with relevant disciplinary procedures.
- 14.8 Guidance should be sought during the safeguarding process as to whether further action, including a criminal investigation is required. Following a full investigation,

should a staff member be found to have abused a child, a referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service will be made. Look Ahead's HR team will make any referral and any disciplinary action will be taken in conjunction with this team.

15 Preventing Abuse

15.1 Look Ahead provides services for vulnerable adults, some of whom will have children. These children may or may not be living with their parent(s) – we provide services for teenage parents and homeless families where we have a responsibility to provide a safe environment for children. We also support customers living in their own homes who may have a child living with them.

15.2 In all Look Ahead services the Contract Manager must ensure their service has:

- **A Child Protection Protocol** in place which clearly sets out what to do if child protection concerns are raised in their service.
- This details the contact names in the local borough and the instruction to contact the Contract Manager immediately.
- The protocol will include named contacts, details of the local authority process for child protection and copies of the **Child Protection Referral Form** used by the Local Authority. It also instructs the member of staff to inform their Contract Manager immediately. A template for this protocol is attached at **Appendix 3**.

15.3 A Safeguarding file (which can be electronic) containing the following:

- A log of all concerns.
- The local Child Protection protocol.
- Copies of concern forms and relevant accompanying documents (minutes of meetings, copies of emails etc.)
- It is advised that the file is split into two sections – Adult Safeguarding and Child Safeguarding. In some services (e.g. where children are living) two separate files may be needed.
- This folder will contain very sensitive and confidential information - therefore the Contract Manager should ensure it is kept in a safe place -e.g. in their office, in a locked safe or in a secure folder on a shared electronic drive.
- A recognised Manager who is responsible for deciding whether to raise an concern with the local authority – this will normally be the Contract Manager. The Manager will have attended Management Training on Safeguarding and will understand their responsibilities.
- A staff team who have all attended Safeguarding training in the last two years, are able to recognise abuse and fully understand their responsibilities within this procedure and the local protocol.
- Customer inductions and house meetings where child protection is discussed. This will be done in an appropriate way for the customer group and the type of service. For example, at Gateway Foyer, customers receive information sheets as part of their Welcome Pack, describing abuse, what to do if they are experiencing it, and what our responsibilities are if we think it is happening to a young person or their child.
- All services are expected to have good links with their local Children and Families team.

- All services will have good links with appropriate local agencies, including those that work with domestic abuse, with clear arrangements in place with the local MARAC co-ordinator.

Working with Parents

- 15.4 In most cases the child's parent will be a Look Ahead customer who we are providing a support service to. We have a duty of care to the customer but the needs and safety of a child take precedence.
- 15.5 We have a responsibility to identify the symptoms and triggers of abuse and neglect, to share that information and to work together to provide children and young people with the help they need. As far as possible, we will work alongside parents to help them achieve the best outcomes for their children.
- 15.6 If we are concerned that a parent's actions are resulting in abuse or neglect of their child we have a responsibility to share that information with the statutory authority.
- 15.7 In most cases, we will inform the parent that we will be doing this and will endeavour to work with them to understand that this is in the child's best interests and could lead to additional support services which will help the parent to care for their child.

Working with 16/17 year olds

- 15.8 Are subject to statutory child safeguarding procedures within the local authority and Look Ahead. If they make a disclosure of abuse to us we will inform them that we have a responsibility to share that information with the statutory authority, and they will also be made aware of this when they take up a Look Ahead service.
- 15.9 We will support them through the safeguarding process to try and achieve the best outcome for their safety and best interests.

Working with children who are already subject to Child Protection Procedures

- 15.10 In some services (in particular Women's Refuge's) we will work with children and parents who are part of Child Protection Procedures from another local authority.
- 15.11 This will require the Manager of the service to liaise with the 'home' social services department and possibly also the social services team in the local authority where the refuge is based. It will be the Manager's responsibility to work within the parameters of any CAF or Child Protection Plan.

Risk management procedures in place in all services to protect children

- 15.12 In services where children are living or if a customer becomes pregnant we will complete a CAF Pre-assessment Checklist form (**Appendix 3**). This will determine if the parent requires more support and an onward referral is necessary.
- 15.13 If a child is receiving services under the CAF we may be delivering some of these services and providing additional monitoring – i.e. checking on the parent's environment daily to ensure there is adequate food for the child. This will need to be recorded and risk management plans updated accordingly.

- 15.14 We may also have early stage action plans in place as part of risk management, to address risk concerns, aiming to prevent a child in need referral.
- 15.15 In services where children are not living but may visit, and in floating support services the Contract Manager must ensure:
- 15.16 That all staff are aware that they must be concerned to children's welfare. Services will have their own procedures in place regarding child protection. At a minimum, these will cover what to do if:
- 15.17 A customer does not usually have a child with them, but a child is seen by the support worker, the worker must determine who the child is and the relationship to the customer.
- 15.18 If a child appears distressed or gives cause for concern to the support worker (ie is dirty, behaving in an unusual manner) the support worker must note these concerns.
- 15.19 In both cases, the support worker must inform their Manager at the earliest opportunity. The Manager will need to further investigate the situation – and should get advice from one of Look Ahead's Safeguarding Leads and/or the Children and Families team at their Local Authority, if necessary.

Electronic Records

- 15.20 Look Ahead uses an electronic management system, RIVO to record and track all incidents, including Child Protection Concerns. If a concern is raised and/or a referral made to the Local Authority this needs to be noted on RIVO and all actions updated. A guide to updating RIVO is attached at **Appendix 4**.

16 Recognising a Child Protection Concern

- 16.1 All staff have a duty to inform the relevant manager if they are concerned that a child:
- has been harmed, abused or neglected or
 - is at risk of being harmed, abused or neglected.
- 16.2 This concern can arise from number of sources:
- The child themselves may inform a staff member
 - A staff member identifies the potential signs of abuse
 - A third party such as the parent, another family member, others using the service, a carer or a member of the public informs staff
 - A Child Protection concern may also be made directly to the Local Authority by a third party and it will be the Local Authority who approaches Look Ahead.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

- 16.3 The FGM mandatory reporting duty is a legal duty provided for in the FGM Act 2003 (as amended by the Serious Crime Act 2015).
- 16.4 The legislation requires regulated health and social care professionals and teachers in England and Wales to make a report to the police where, in the course of their professional duties, they either:

- Are informed by a girl under 18 that an act of FGM has been carried out on her; or
- Observe physical signs which appear to show that an act of FGM has been carried out on a girl under 18 and they have no reason to believe that the act was necessary for the girl's physical or mental health or for purposes connected with labour or birth (see section 2.1a for further information).

16.5 Look Ahead are not a social care professional under this legislation however recognise and support this process as best practise. Please see [Appendix 7](#) about the additional requirements of reporting FGM.

17 Responsibilities of person receiving initial concern

17.1 In most cases concerns will be raised firstly with support workers. The member of staff who receives the information will:

- Make an immediate evaluation of the risk and take steps to ensure that the child is not in immediate danger.
- If it is believed that a child may be suffering, or at risk of suffering, significant immediate harm the concern must be referred immediately to the Police and the Duty Team in the Children's and Families Department in Social Services. If a child is in need of immediate protection the Police should be called, who have powers to remove a child to a place of safety and keep them there.
- If the concern arises out of office hours, the referral should still be made to the Police and the Social Services Immediate Duty Team. The support worker must discuss this with a Look Ahead Manager first.
- Where appropriate, dial 999 for an ambulance if there is need for emergency medical treatment.
- Do not disturb or move articles that could be used in evidence, and secure the scene, for example, by locking the door to a room.
- If possible, make sure that other children or service users are not at risk.

Responding to a Child who is making a disclosure and/or responding to an Adult who discloses that a child is being or has been abused

17.2 The first concern must be to ensure the safety and well-being of the alleged victim. Staff need to be as sensitive and accommodating of this as they can, bearing in mind the child's age and the situation which is occurring. Staff need to:

- Assure them that you are taking them seriously
- Listen carefully to what they are telling you, stay calm, get as clear a picture as you can, but avoid asking too many questions at this stage.
- Do **not** give promises of complete confidentiality
- Explain that you have a duty to tell your manager or other designated person, and that their concerns may be shared with others who could have a part to play in protecting them
- Explain that you will try to take steps to protect the child
- If they have specific communication needs, provide support and information in a way that is most appropriate
- Do not be judgemental or jump to conclusions.

- 17.3 Children of sufficient age and understanding often have a clear perception of what needs to be done to ensure their safety and well being, and they need to be helped to understand the nature and extent of their involvement in decision-making and planning processes.
- 17.4 All assessments and interviews should be child focused and the child's needs and wishes should be taken into account. It is also important that the child is given honest and accurate information about the current situation and possible future actions.
- 17.5 However, they should be assisted to understand that while their views will be taken into account, ultimately decisions will be made on information provided by themselves, their parents and other family members, and other significant adults.

Keeping the child safe and preserving evidence

- 17.6 In a small number of cases a crime may have been committed. In these situations, and where the Police have been called it is important that forensic and other evidence is collected and preserved.
- 17.7 The police will attend the scene, and Look Ahead staff can play an important part in ensuring that evidence is not contaminated or lost. Therefore:
- Try not to disturb the scene, clothing or victim if at all possible.
 - Secure the scene, for example, lock the door.
 - Keep the customers file in a secure place, preferably locked in the Managers office or safe. If a crime has been committed, it is important that this file is not tampered with as documents may be required as evidence.
 - Preserve all containers, documents, locations, etc.
 - Evidence may be present even if you cannot actually see anything.
 - If in doubt contact the police and ask for advice.

Informing your Manager

- 17.8 Once you have made sure the child is safe and there is no immediate risk, you must inform your line manager that an incident has occurred/or a concern has been reported.
- 17.9 If your line manager is not available you must contact the Operations Manager responsible for your service.
- 17.10 If you are unsure, contact one of the Look Ahead Safeguarding Leads.
- 17.11 If this is out of hours or the weekend, please contact the Manager on call.

Considering the person alleged to have caused harm

- 17.12 Do not discuss the concern with the person alleged to have caused harm at this stage, unless the immediate welfare of the child makes this unavoidable.

18 Recording the concern

- 18.1 As soon as is possible, the Support Worker/Assistant Support Worker needs to make a record of what has happened. Support workers should complete the **Child Protection Referral Form** supplied by the local/statutory authority.

18.2 The following information will need to be included:

- Date and time of the incident
- Exactly what the child (or adult reporting the abuse) said using their own words (their account) about the abuse and how it occurred or exactly what has been reported.
- Appearance and behaviour of the child at risk
- Any injuries observed
- Name and signature of the person making the record
- If you witnessed the incident, write down exactly what you saw.

18.3 The record should be factual. However, if the record does contain your opinion or an assessment, it should be clearly stated as such and be backed up by factual evidence. Information from another person should be clearly attributed to them.

Responsibilities of the Contract Manager

18.4 In most services the Contract Manager is the person designated to make Child Protection referrals to the local authority (and known as the Manager).

18.5 If an allegation has been made against the Contract Manager the Support Worker must inform their Operations Manager immediately.

18.6 Once the relevant Manager has been informed of the allegation, they must decide without delay on the most appropriate course of action.

18.7 To do this the Manager should go through the details of the incident with the support worker and speak to child and/or adult who raised the concern.

18.8 The Manager may need to take the following actions:

18.9 Check that the support worker has done the following:

- Made an immediate evaluation of the risk to the child.
- Taken reasonable and practical steps to safeguard the child.
- Referred to the police if there is immediate risk.
- Arranged any necessary emergency medical treatment. Note that offences of a sexual nature will require expert advice from the police.
- Made sure that other children are not at risk.

18.10 In addition they should:

- Discuss risk management and any potential forensic considerations.
- If there is a need for an immediate protection plan, refer to the relevant Children's Social Services team and/or the Emergency Duty Team if out of hours.

Notifying Social Services

18.11 In all cases where child abuse or neglect is disclosed or there is a strong suspicion that a child is at risk, the Manager will refer to Social Services by taking the following actions:

- If the child is known to have a social worker or care manager, s/he must be contacted (or in their absence the manager or the duty social worker).

- If the child is not known to have a social worker or care manager, the referral should be made to the Local Authorities Children and Families department
- Outside of normal office hours concerns should be reported to the (relevant) Emergency Duty Team of the Social Services Department.
- The initial contact should be by telephone, followed up by the completed Referral Form – sent within 24 hours.

18.12 Any person considering making a referral to Social Services should discuss their concerns with the family, and where possible seek their agreement to the referral being made.

18.13 If it is believed that the process of discussing the concern with the family may, either by delay or behavioural response, place the child at an increased risk of significant harm, then permission should not be sought. A decision by any professional not to seek parental permission before making a referral to Social Services should be recorded and the reasons given.

18.14 In cases of allegations of child sexual abuse, it is important that the referral is reported to police immediately and also discussed with Social Services in the first instance before contact is made with family members. Evidence of sexual abuse is frequently totally dependent on the information the child provides and it is crucial to plan the approach to the child and the family in a manner that will enable the investigators to preserve the integrity of the child's account.

Recording the incident and decisions

18.15 Once a decision has been taken about referring the matter to the local authority the Contract Manager should ensure:

- That the service's Child Protection log is updated.
- That the Local Authority Child Protection Referral Form contains all the relevant information about the incident and is completed accurately and concisely.
- The Concern Form is placed in the service's Safeguarding File, and a copy is in the Customers File (Confidential Section).
- That a copy of the incident has also been sent to their Operations Manager and the Performance Team.
- That an incident has been raised as an concern on RIVO and correctly recorded as Safeguarding.
- That the Local Authority Commissioning Manager has been informed about the incident and referral.
- That an action has been raised on RIVO about what happens next – refer to statutory authority, or decide that the concern is not a child protection issue.

19 Person alleged to have caused harm

19.1 It is important that any child protection investigation is both fair and balanced; however there is an overriding principle that no actions during the investigation should put a child at more risk. Given this the Manager will need to decide what approach to take with the person alleged to have caused harm.

19.2 They will need to:

- Consider liaising with the Police regarding the management of risks involved.
- If the person is a member of staff the Contract Manager must inform the Director of Operations along with their Operations Manager immediately. In line with Look Ahead's disciplinary procedures, the Contract Manager may need to suspend the member of staff. Always get advice from HR/A senior Manager and do not carry out any disciplinary actions until this has been done. The person has a right to know in broad terms what allegations or concerns have been made about them.
- If the person causing harm is another customer, action taken will include removing them from contact with the child at risk, pending any Police/Local Authority investigation. In this situation, arrangements must be put in place to ensure that the needs of the person causing harm are also met.
- Ensure that any staff or volunteer who has caused risk or harm is not in contact with service users and others who may be at risk – for example, staff who have raised concerns.

20 What happens next?

- 20.1 Within one working day of a referral being received, a local authority social worker will make a decision about the type of response which is required and will acknowledge the Look Ahead referral.
- 20.2 Where immediate protection is required, action will be taken as soon as possible by social worker, or the Police or NSPCC if removal is required.
- 20.3 The Social Services Department will evaluate all referrals regarding the welfare of children to establish:
- the nature of the concern
 - how and why the concern has arisen
 - what the child's needs appear to be
 - whether the concern is about abuse or neglect
 - Whether there is a need for any urgent action to protect the child.
- 20.4 If no emergency action is required Social Services will then either decide:
- No further local authority involvement is needed (although other action may be necessary, ie onward referral to early help services), or
 - An initial assessment is required, under Section 17 or 49 of the Children Act 1989.
- 20.5 This assessment will be completed in line with the Local Authorities protocol and will result in one of the following outcomes:
- A decision that no further local authority involvement is needed (although other action may be necessary, ie onward referral to early help services).
 - Where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm a Strategy discussion will be convened by Social Services.
 - This Strategy discussion will involve social services, the Police, other health services and the referring agency (such as Look Ahead. The meeting is used to share information, agree the conduct and timing of any criminal investigation, determine what information should be shared with the family and determine if legal action is required.

- 20.6 This may lead to a 'Section 47 enquiry' where a core assessment takes place.
- 20.7 This core assessment could lead to a Child Protection Conference and the development of a statutory Child Protection Plan.
- 20.8 The statutory process flow chart and more detailed explanations on the stages outlined above is attached at **Appendix 5**.
- 20.9 The Look Ahead Contract Manager should ensure all information is documented in the customers file, in their risk management plan and in the safeguarding file. An action should be created on RIVO that the local statutory authority has accepted the child protection referral.

Statutory Child Protection Procedures

- 20.10 If these are initiated, Look Ahead staff may be asked to contribute to a Child Protection Conference and/or to be part of a CAF assessment, or the Team Around the Child. Further guidance on this is available in the 'Promoting Children's Welfare' Policy and Procedure.
- 20.11 When the local authority has closed the case it should be closed on RIVO. Whilst a child protection referral is live the customers (parent of the child) support and risk management plan must refer to the decisions which have been made and the actions which are in place.

No further action to be taken by Social Services

- 20.12 If we disagree with this decision as we feel the concern is of sufficient concern and a child is being left at risk then we should write to the appropriate senior lead in the local/health authority (e.g. the Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board or the Director of Children's Social Services) setting out the reasons why we believe the case should be accepted and the internal actions we will take to safeguard the child. The Commissioner of the service must be kept updated.
- 20.13 If we accept the decision we have a responsibility to ensure the child and/or adult who made the allegation is kept informed of the reasons behind this.
- 20.14 The Look Ahead Contract Manager should ensure all information is documented in the customers file, in their risk management plan and in the safeguarding file. An action should be created on RIVO that the local statutory authority has decided not to accept the case.
- 20.15 The Contract Manager may decide that there are other actions we can take in order to promote the child's welfare and that these take place over a period of time (for example checking that the child is seen every day, or is going to school). In the case of 16/17 year olds we may offer to transfer them to another service if they wish to leave an area where the person who is abusing them (for example an ex-partner) is living. In this scenario the case should not be closed on RIVO but kept open until we are no longer closely monitoring the child further to a disclosure of abuse.

21 Monitoring

The Look Ahead Quality Management System

- 21.1 Safeguarding is a core part of Look Ahead's Quality Management System. Each service will have a verified self-assessment in place against this standard and be addressing any areas of weakness through a quality improvement plan.
- 21.2 As part of the annual assessment, each service has to demonstrate that:
- The measures set out to prevent and prepare for child protection concerns are in place
 - All Child Protection concerns are reported in line with the services protocol and local authority expectations.
 - There is appropriate follow up to all concerns and concerns raised.
- 21.3 In services where children are living staff observe and monitor their welfare and promote good parenting, working within the CAF where appropriate.
- 21.4 Services can demonstrate that children are part of support planning and risk management.

The Common Assessment Framework (CAF)

- 21.5 The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is a key part of delivering frontline services that are integrated and focused around the needs of children and young people. It is a standardised, statutory approach used by practitioners to assess children's additional needs and decide how these should be met.
- 21.6 The CAF is a four-step process whereby practitioners can identify a child's or young person's needs early, assess those needs holistically, deliver coordinated services and review progress.
- 21.7 The CAF is designed to be used when:
- a practitioner is worried about how well a child or young person is progressing (e.g. concerns about their health, development, welfare, behaviour, progress in learning or any other aspect of their wellbeing)
 - a child or young person, or their parent/carer, raises a concern with a practitioner
 - a child's or young person's needs are unclear, or broader than the practitioner's service can address.
 - The process is entirely voluntary and informed consent is mandatory, so families do not have to engage and if they do they can choose what information they want to share. The CAF process is not a 'referral' process but a 'request for services'.
- 21.8 The CAF should be offered to children who have additional needs to those being met by universal services. Unless a child is presenting a need, it is unlikely the CAF will be offered. The practitioner assesses needs using the CAF. The CAF is not a risk assessment.
- 21.9 Within Look Ahead services, we may be working with parents and their children who have been assessed under the CAF or are receiving services further to an assessment.

Appendix 1: Different Types of Abuse

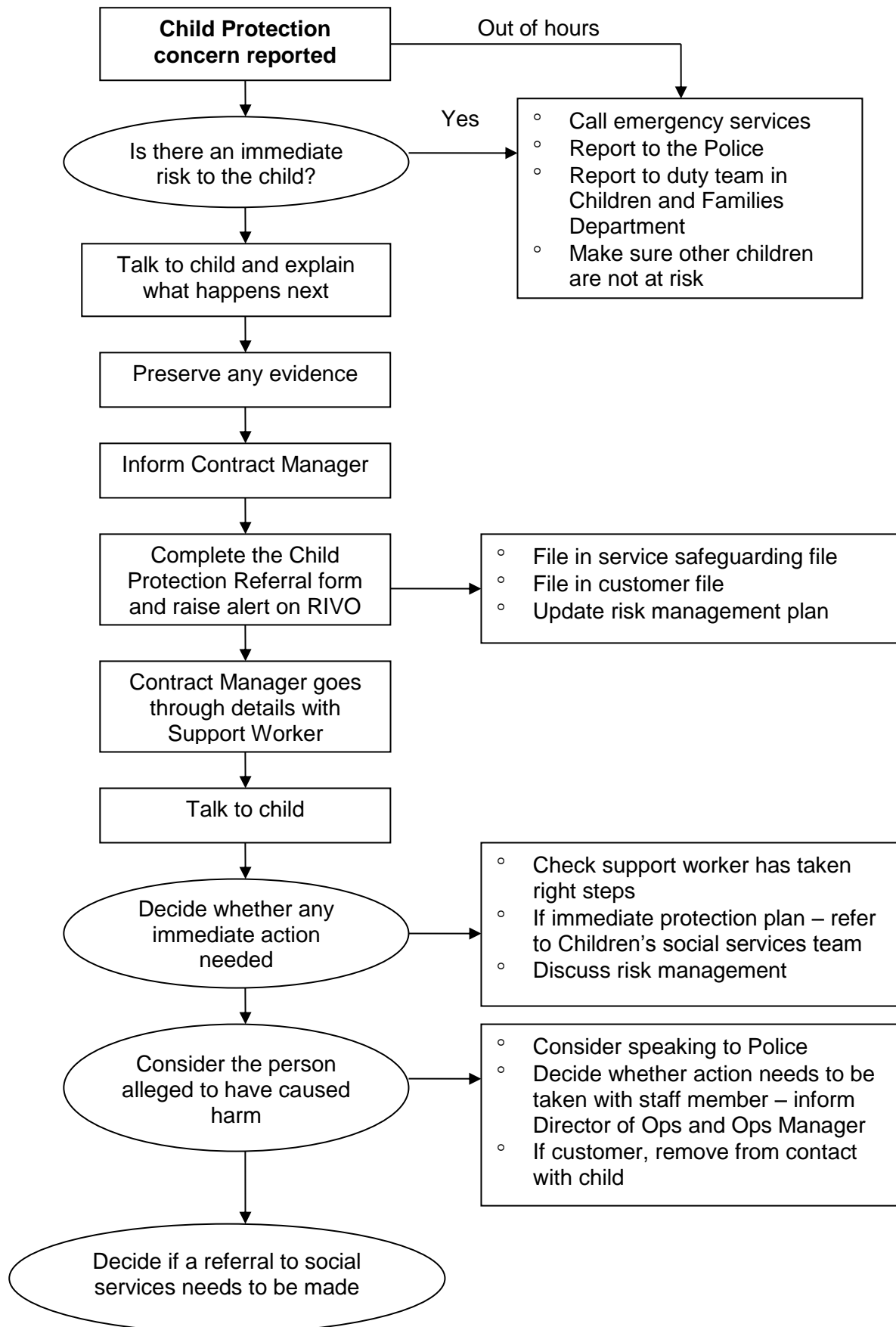
Abuse	Description
Physical	<p>This includes but is not limited to: Hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing harm to a child. Physical Injuries, especially those inconsistent with or lacking a reasonable explanation. Soft tissue injuries (bruises etc.) which are unlikely to have been caused accidentally. Overuse/misuse of medication that can cause physical harm. Exposure to heat or cold or not giving enough food or drink.</p> <p>A child showing signs of fear of carers, generalised anxiety or inability to speak up in presence of another. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.</p>
Emotional or Psychological	<p>The persistent emotional or psychological maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development.</p> <p>It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children.</p> <p>These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber-bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children.</p> <p>Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.</p>
Sexual	<p>Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing 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.</p> <p>The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet).</p> <p>Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.</p>

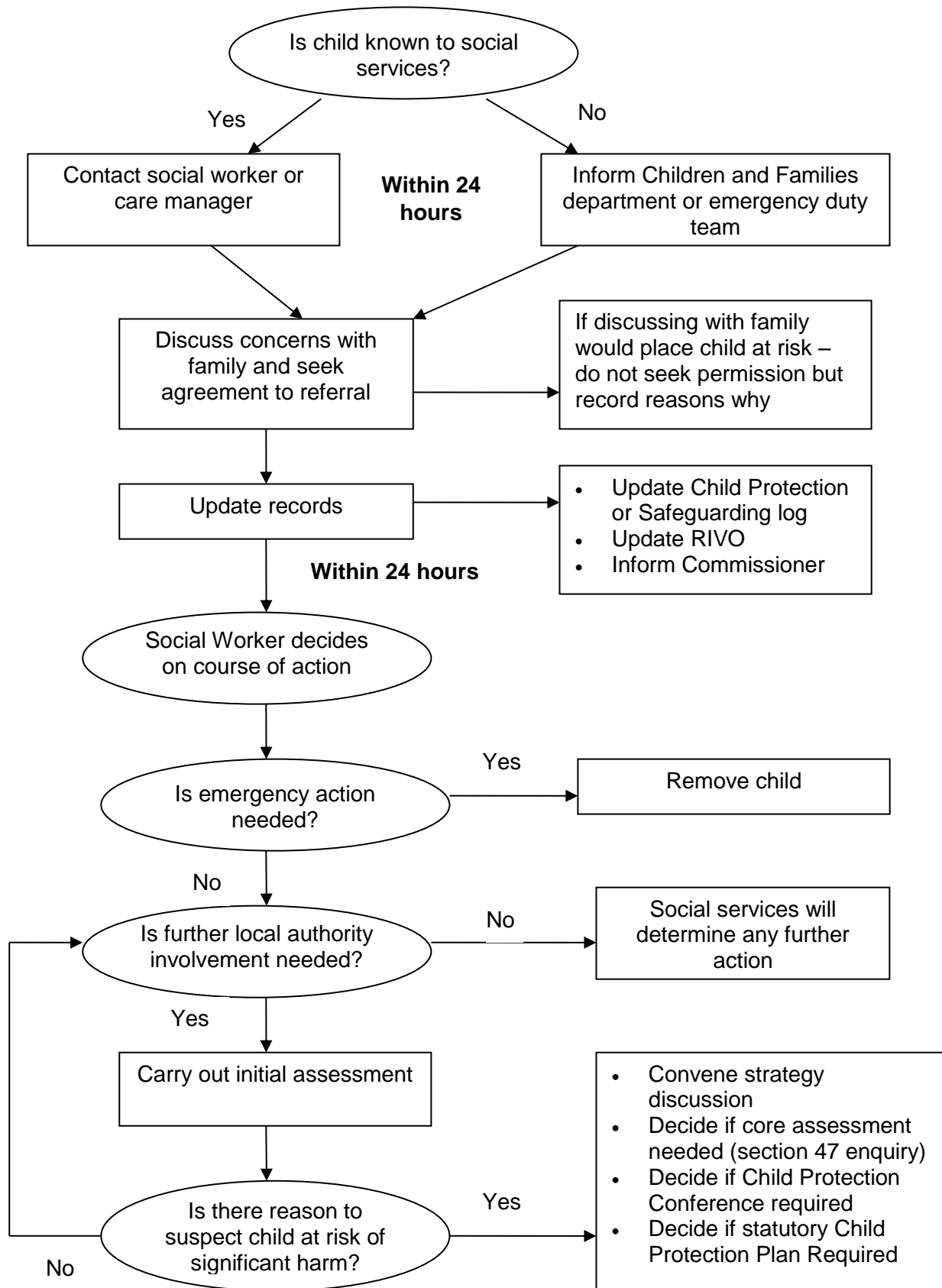
<p>Harmful Sexual Behaviour</p>	<p>Harmful sexual behaviour includes: using sexually explicit words and phrases inappropriate touching using sexual violence or threats full penetrative sex with other children or adults.</p> <p>Children and young people who develop harmful sexual behaviour harm themselves and others.</p> <p>Age differences and harmful sexual behaviour: Sexual behaviour between children is also considered harmful if one of the children is much older – particularly if there is more than two years’ difference in age or if one of the children is pre-pubescent and the other isn’t (Davies, 2012). However, a younger child can abuse an older child, particularly if they have power over them – for example, if the older child is disabled (Rich, 2011).</p>
<p>Child Sexual Exploitation</p>	<p>Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a type of sexual abuse. Children in exploitative situations and relationships receive something such as gifts, money or affection as a result of performing sexual activities or others performing sexual activities on them.</p> <p>Children or young people may be tricked into believing they're in a loving, consensual relationship. They might be invited to parties and given drugs and alcohol. They may also be groomed online.</p> <p>Some children and young people are trafficked into or within the UK for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Sexual exploitation can also happen to young people in gangs.</p>
<p>Grooming</p>	<p>Grooming is when someone builds an emotional connection with a child to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation or trafficking. Children and young people can be groomed online or face-to-face, by a stranger or by someone they know - for example a family member, friend or professional.</p> <p>Groomers may be male or female. They could be any age. Many children and young people don't understand that they have been groomed or that what has happened is abuse.</p> <p>The signs of grooming aren't always obvious and groomers will often go to great lengths not to be identified.</p> <p>If a child is being groomed they may: be very secretive, including about what they are doing online have older boyfriends or girlfriends go to unusual places to meet friends have new things such as clothes or mobile phones that they can't or won't explain have access to drugs and alcohol.</p> <p>In older children, signs of grooming can easily be mistaken for 'normal' teenage behaviour, but you may notice unexplained changes in</p>

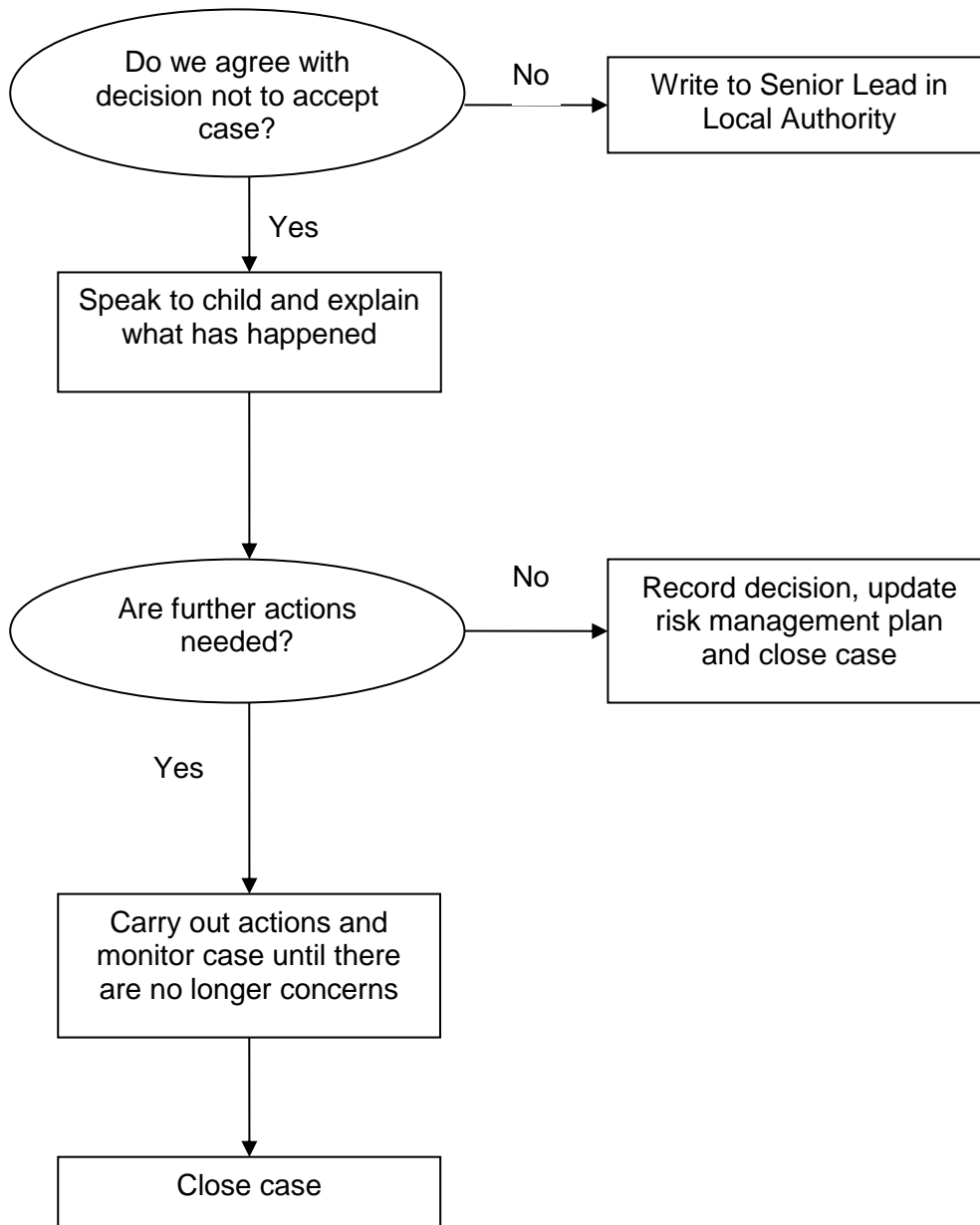
	behaviour or personality, or inappropriate sexual behaviour for their age.
Child Trafficking	<p>Child trafficking is child abuse. Children are recruited, moved or transported and then exploited, forced to work or sold. They are often subject to multiple forms of exploitation.</p> <p>Children are trafficked for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> child sexual exploitation benefit fraud forced marriage domestic servitude such as cleaning, childcare, cooking forced labour in factories or agriculture criminal activity such as pickpocketing, begging, transporting drugs, working on cannabis farms, selling pirated DVDs, bag theft. <p>Many children are trafficked into the UK from abroad, but children can also be trafficked from one part of the UK to another.</p>
Female genital mutilation (FGM)	<p>Female genital mutilation (FGM) is the partial or total removal of external female genitalia for non-medical reasons. It's also known as female circumcision or cutting.</p> <p>Religious, social or cultural reasons are sometimes given for FGM. However, FGM is child abuse. It's dangerous and a criminal offence.</p> <p>There are no medical reasons to carry out FGM. It doesn't enhance fertility and it doesn't make childbirth safer. It is used to control female sexuality and can cause severe and long-lasting damage to physical and emotional health.</p>
Neglect	<p>Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of a child's health or development.</p> <p>Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter Provide an environment which is safe, clean and hygienic. Protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. <p>It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.</p>
Online	<p>Online abuse is any type of abuse that happens on the web, whether through social networks, playing online games or using mobile phones. Children and young people may experience cyberbullying, grooming, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation or emotional abuse. Children can be at risk of online abuse from people they know, as well as from strangers. Online abuse may be part of abuse that is taking place in the real world (for example bullying or grooming). Or it may be that the abuse only happens online (for example persuading children to take part in sexual activity online).</p>

	<p>Children can feel like there is no escape from online abuse – abusers can contact them at any time of the day or night, the abuse can come into safe places like their bedrooms, and images and videos can be stored and shared with other people.</p>
Bullying and Cyberbullying	<p>Bullying is behaviour that hurts someone else – such as name calling, hitting, pushing, spreading rumours, threatening or undermining someone. It can happen anywhere – at school, at home or online. It’s usually repeated over a long period of time and can hurt a child both physically and emotionally.</p> <p>Bullying that happens online, using social networks, games and mobile phones, is often called cyberbullying. A child can feel like there’s no escape because it can happen wherever they are, at any time of day or night.</p>
Domestic	<p>Domestic abuse is any type of controlling, bullying, threatening or violent behaviour between people in a relationship. But it isn’t just physical violence – domestic abuse includes emotional, physical, sexual, financial or psychological abuse. It can happen in any relationship, and even after the relationship has ended. Both men and women can be abused or abusers.</p> <p>Domestic abuse can seriously harm children and young people. Witnessing domestic abuse is child abuse, and teenagers can suffer domestic abuse in their relationships.</p>
Radicalisation	<p>Radicalisation is defined the process by which people come to support terrorism and extremism and, in some cases, to then participate in terrorist activity. Radicalisation can be really difficult to spot. Signs that may indicate a child is being radicalised include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> isolating themselves from family and friends talking as if from a scripted speech unwillingness or inability to discuss their views a sudden disrespectful attitude towards others increased levels of anger increased secretiveness, especially around internet use <p>Children who are at risk of radicalisation may have low self-esteem, or be victims of bullying or discrimination. Extremists might target them and tell them they can be part of something special, later brainwashing them into cutting themselves off from their friends and family.</p>
Gang Exploitation	<p>There are lots of reasons why young people feel the pressure to join gangs. They might be bored and looking for excitement or feel attracted to the status and power it can give them. They might join due to peer pressure, money or family problems. Gang membership can also make a child feel protected and that they belong.</p>

Appendix 2: Child Protection process map







Appendix 3: Look Ahead Child Protection Local Service Protocol

Name of Service:

Person to contact if there is a Child Protection Concern/Incident

(Team Leader/Contract Manager):

Local Authority:

What to do if an incident occurs or an allegation is made:

- Make the situation safe. If a child has suffered harm or is at immediate risk the Police must be contacted immediately.
- Tell your Manager: (Name and Phone Number)
- If (Name of Manager is not working) contact (Name and Phone Number of Contract Manager/Operations Manager)
- If this is out of hours contact: (On-call number)
- Is this a Child Protection/Safeguarding incident? Complete local Child Protection Referral Form (attached). Ensure this information is factual, clear and concise.
- If your Manager decides the incident must be referred to the Local Authority they will check all the details on the Referral form first.

Details of Local Authority Children and Families Team in Social Services:

Name and contact details:

Appendix 4: Common Assessment Framework for children and young people (CAF)

Pre-assessment checklist

Identifying details (For unborn baby, infant, child or young person; include contact name for parent/carer)

Name:

Date of birth/Expected Date of Delivery:

Contact Name:

Contact Tel:

Address:

Person completing form:

Date form completed:

Checklist

Does the unborn baby, infant, child or young persons appear to be:

- **Healthy?**

Yes No Not sure

Comments

--

- **Safe from harm?**

Yes No Not sure

Comments

• **Learning and developing?**

Yes No Not sure

Comments

• **Having a positive impact on others?**

Yes No Not sure

Comments

• **Getting adequate food, warmth, physical and emotional needs looked after?**

Yes No Not sure

Comments

If you answered 'No' to any of the previous question, what additional services are needed for the unborn baby, infant, child or young person or their parent(s), carer(s) or families?

Comments

Can you provide the additional services needed? Yes No

If you answered 'No' or 'Not sure' to any of the previous question, or it is not clear what support is needed, would an assessment under the Common Assessment Framework help?

If you answered 'Yes' to the previous question please contact the relevant Children and Families department within Social Services. (Please provide details below.)

Name (Lead contact):

Address:

Date contacted:

Follow up to referral:

Appendix 5: Updating RIVO for Child Protection

Action	Who	Comments
Raise concern on RIVO - identify that incident relates to child	Person receiving initial concern (often Support Worker) once manager has agreed it is Child Protection	Complete local child protection referral form and attach to incident report
Check that concern should be a Child Protection incident and amend on RIVO if need be	Manager	

Create actions

Once it is agreed it is a child protection incident you must create actions to show:

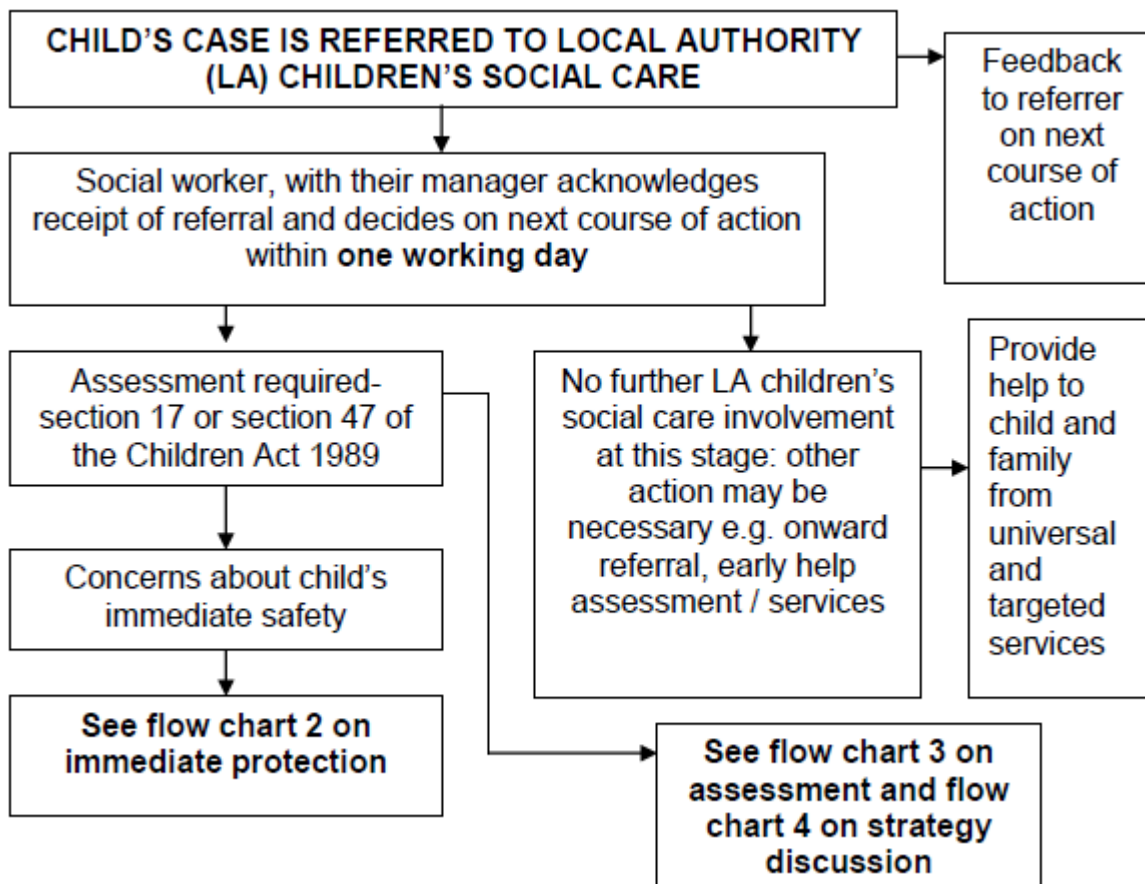
- Whether or not the incident has been referred to the Children and Families Department
- What their decision was if it was referred
- Key follow up actions depending upon the decision
- When the case can be closed

Action	Who	Comments
Decided to Refer		
Referred to Children and Families Department	Manager	
Action required by Children and Families Department		
Initial assessment	Manager	
Core assessment	Manager	
Child Protection conference	Manager	
Protection Plan agreed	Manager	
Protection plan reviewed	Manager	
All actions complete - case closed	Manager	
No further action by Children and Families Department		

Children and Families Department to take no further action	Manager	
Decision challenged	Manager	
Internal actions	Manager	
All actions complete - case closed	Manager	
Decided not to refer		
Manager decided not to refer	Manager	

Appendix 6: Working Together to Safeguard Children

Flow chart 1: Action taken when a child is referred to local authority children's social care services



Immediate Protection

Where there is a risk to the life of a child or a likelihood of serious immediate harm, local authority social workers, the police or NSPCC should use their statutory child protection powers to **act immediately to secure the safety of the child**.

If it is necessary to remove a child from their home, a local authority must, wherever possible and unless a child's safety is otherwise at immediate risk, apply for an **Emergency Protection Order (EPO)**. Police powers to remove a child in an emergency should be used only in exceptional circumstances where there is insufficient time to seek an EPO or for reasons relating to the immediate safety of the child.

An EPO, made by the court, gives authority to remove a child and places them under the protection of the applicant.

When considering whether emergency action is necessary an agency should always consider the needs of other children in the same household or in the household of an alleged perpetrator.

The local authority in whose area a child is found in circumstances that require emergency action (the first authority) is responsible for taking emergency action.

If the child is looked after by, or the subject of a child protection plan in another authority, the first authority must consult the authority responsible for the child. Only when the second local authority explicitly accepts responsibility (to be followed up in writing) is the first authority relieved of its responsibility to take emergency action.

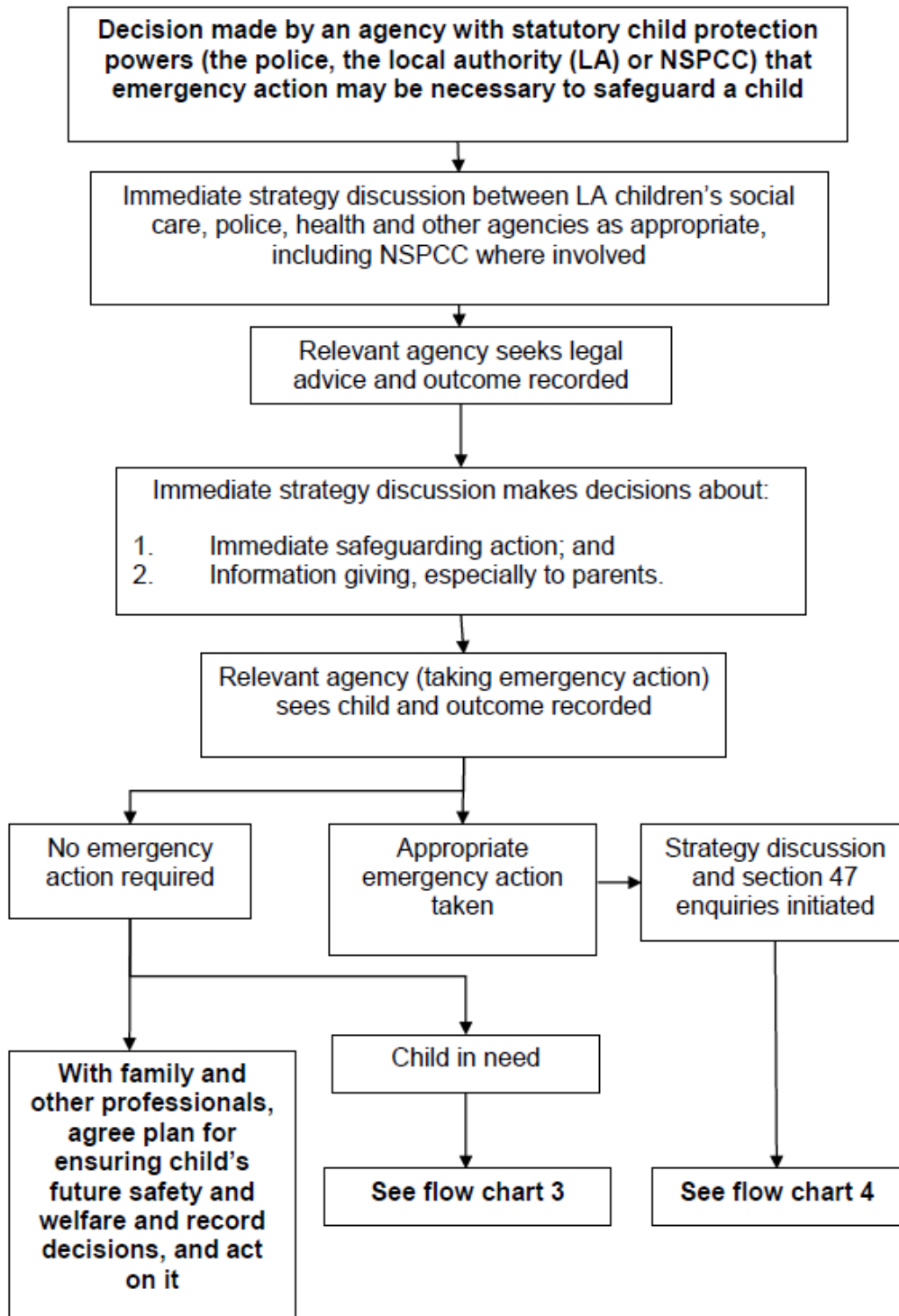
Multi-agency working

Planned emergency action will normally take place following an immediate strategy discussion. Social workers, the police or NSPCC should:

- initiate a strategy discussion to discuss planned emergency action. Where a single agency has to act immediately, a strategy discussion should take place as soon as possible after action has been taken;
- see the child (this should be done by a practitioner from the agency taking the emergency action) to decide how best to protect them and whether to seek an EPO; and
- wherever possible, obtain legal advice before initiating legal action, in particular when an EPO is being sought.

Related information: For further guidance on EPOs see pages 55-65 of Volume 1 of the [Children Act Guidance and Regulations, Court Orders](#).

Flow chart 2: Immediate protection



21/16

Assessment of a child under the Children Act 1989

Following acceptance of a referral by the local authority children's social care, a social worker should lead a multi-agency assessment under section 17 of the Children Act 1989. Local authorities have a duty to ascertain the child's wishes and feelings and take account of them when planning the provision of services. Assessments should be carried out in a timely manner reflecting the needs of the individual child, as set out in this chapter.

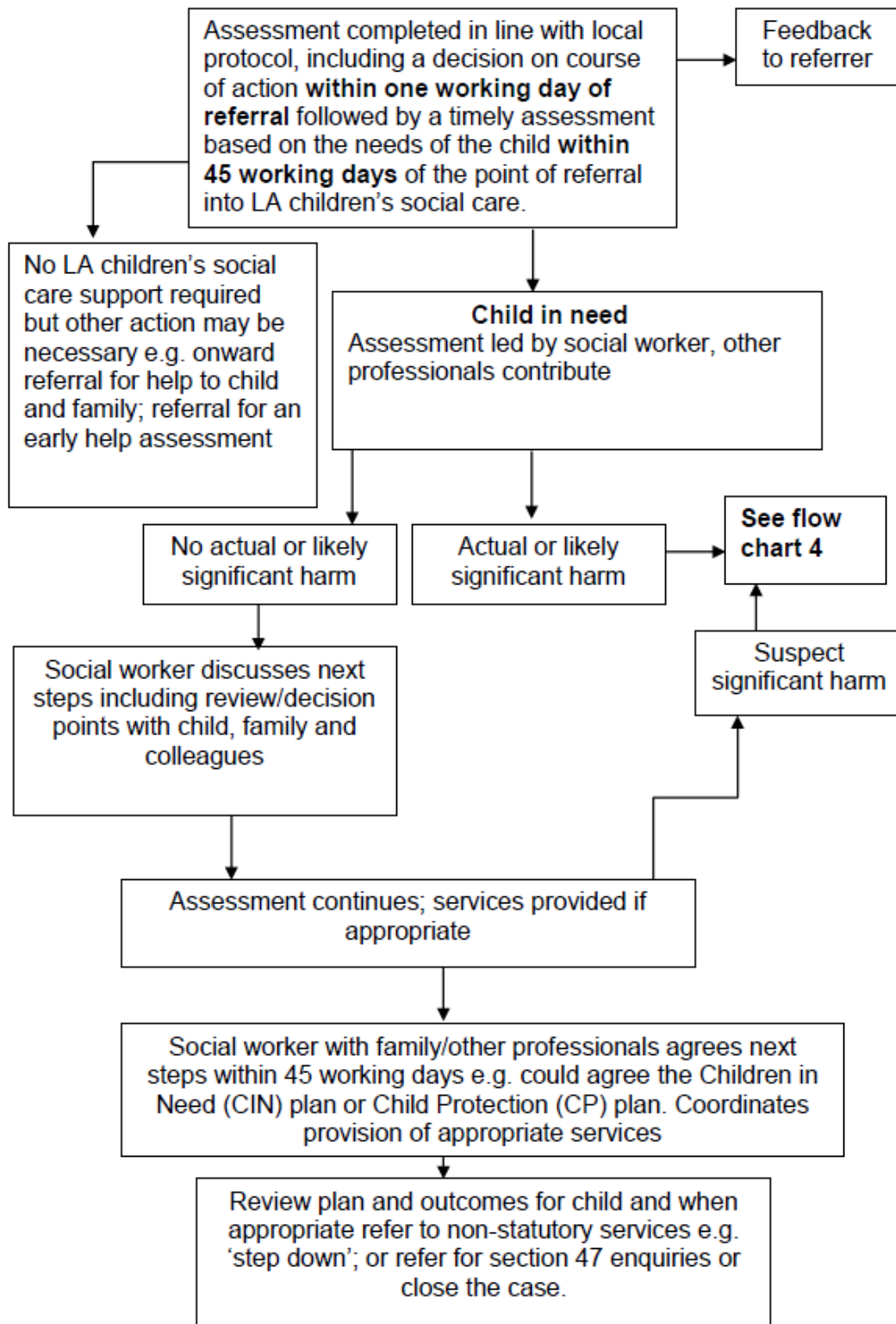
Where the local authority children's social care decides to provide services, a multi-agency child in need plan should be developed which sets out which agencies will provide which services to the child and family. The plan should set clear measurable outcomes for the child and expectations for the parents. The plan should reflect the positive aspects of the family situation as well as the weaknesses.

Where information gathered during an assessment (which may be very brief) results in the social worker suspecting that the child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, the local authority should hold a strategy discussion to enable it to decide, with other agencies, whether to initiate enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989.

<p>Purpose:</p>	<p>Assessments should determine whether the child is in need, the nature of any services required and whether any specialist assessments should be undertaken to assist the local authority in its decision making.</p>
<p>Social workers should:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lead on an assessment and complete it in line with the locally agreed protocol according to the child's needs and within 45 working days from the point of referral into local authority children's social care; • see the child within a timescale that is appropriate to the nature of the concerns expressed at referral, according to an agreed plan; • conduct interviews with the child and family members, separately and together as appropriate. Initial discussions with the child should be conducted in a way that minimises distress to them and maximises the likelihood that they will provide accurate and complete information, avoiding leading or suggestive questions; • record the assessment findings and decisions and next steps following the assessment; • inform, in writing, all the relevant agencies and the family of their decisions and, if the child is a child in need, of the plan for providing support; and • inform the referrer of what action has been or will be taken.
<p>The police should:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assist other agencies to carry out their responsibilities where there are concerns about the child's welfare, whether or not a crime has been committed. If a crime has been committed, the police should be informed by the local

	authority children's social care.
All involved professionals should:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• be involved in the assessment and provide further information about the child and family; and• agree further action including what services would help the child and family and inform local authority children's social care if any immediate action is required.

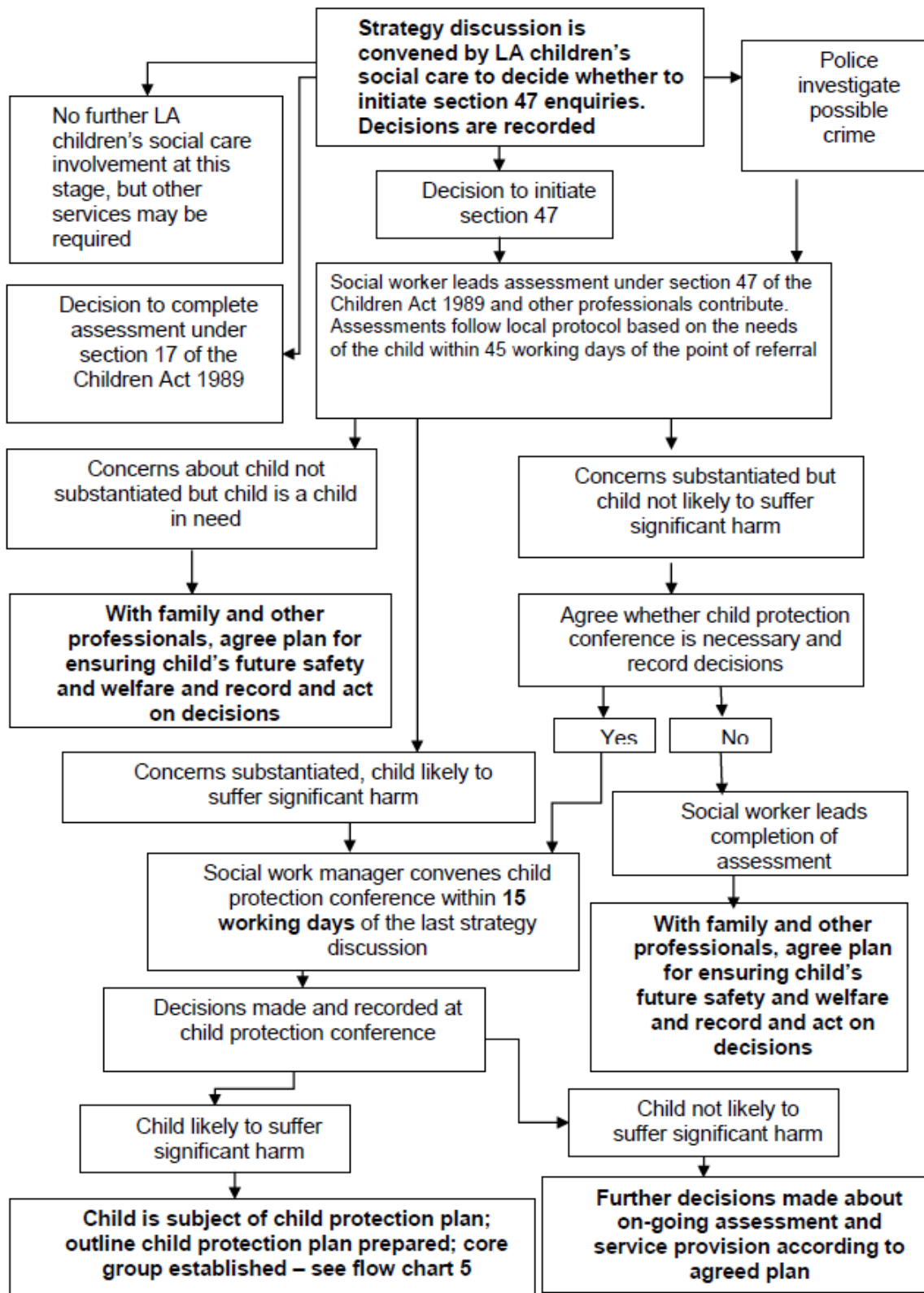
Flow chart 3: Action taken for an assessment of a child under the Children Act 1989



<h2>Strategy discussion</h2> <p>Whenever there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm there should be a strategy discussion involving local authority children's social care, the police, health and other bodies such as the referring agency. This might take the form of a multi-agency meeting or phone calls and more than one discussion may be necessary. A strategy discussion can take place following a referral or at any other time, including during the assessment process.</p>	
<p>Purpose:</p>	<p>Local authority children's social care should convene a strategy discussion to determine the child's welfare and plan rapid future action if there is reasonable cause to suspect the child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm.</p>
<p>Strategy discussion attendees:</p>	<p>A local authority social worker and their manager, health professionals and a police representative should, as a minimum, be involved in the strategy discussion. Other relevant professionals will depend on the nature of the individual case but may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the professional or agency which made the referral; • the child's school or nursery; and • any health services the child or family members are receiving. <p>All attendees should be sufficiently senior to make decisions on behalf of their agencies.</p>
<p>Strategy discussion tasks:</p>	<p>The discussion should be used to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • share available information; • agree the conduct and timing of any criminal investigation; and • decide whether enquiries under <u>section 47</u> of the Children Act 1989 should be undertaken. <p>Where there are grounds to initiate a section 47 of the Children Act 1989 enquiry, decisions should be made as to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what further information is needed if an assessment is already underway and how it will be obtained and recorded; • what immediate and short term action is required to support the child, and who will do what by when; and • whether legal action is required. <p>The timescale for the assessment to reach a decision on next steps should be based upon the needs of the individual child, consistent with the local protocol and certainly no longer than 45 working days from the point of referral into local authority children's social care.</p> <p>The principles and parameters for the assessment of children in need at <u>chapter 1 paragraph 32</u> should be followed for assessments</p>

	undertaken under <u>section 47</u> of the Children Act 1989.
Social workers with their managers should:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • convene the strategy discussion and make sure it: • considers the child's welfare and safety, and identifies the level of risk faced by the child; • decides what information should be shared with the child and family (on the basis that information is not shared if this may jeopardise a police investigation or place the child at risk of significant harm); • agrees what further action is required, and who will do what by when, where an EPO is in place or the child is the subject of police powers of protection; • records agreed decisions in accordance with local recording procedures; and • follows up actions to make sure what was agreed gets done.
The police should:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discuss the basis for any criminal investigation and any relevant processes that other agencies might need to know about, including the timing and methods of evidence gathering; and • lead the criminal investigation (local authority children's social care have the lead for the section 47 enquires and assessment of the child's welfare) where joint enquiries take place.

Flow chart 4: Action following a strategy discussion



Initiating section 47 enquiries

A section 47 enquiry is carried out by undertaking or continuing with an assessment in accordance with the guidance set out in this chapter and following the principles and parameters of a good assessment.

Local authority social workers have a statutory duty to lead assessments under section 47 of the Children Act 1989. The police, health professionals, teachers and other relevant professionals should help the local authority in undertaking its enquiries.

<p>Purpose:</p>	<p>A section 47 enquiry is initiated to decide whether and what type of action is required to safeguard and promote the welfare of a child who is suspected of, or likely to be, suffering significant harm.</p>
<p>Social workers with their managers should:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lead the assessment in accordance with this guidance; • carry out enquiries in a way that minimises distress for the child and family; • see the child who is the subject of concern to ascertain their wishes and feelings; assess their understanding of their situation; assess their relationships and circumstances more broadly; • interview parents and/or caregivers and determine the wider social and environmental factors that might impact on them and their child; • systematically gather information about the child's and family's history; • analyse the findings of the assessment and evidence about what interventions are likely to be most effective with other relevant professionals to determine the child's needs and the level of risk of harm faced by the child to inform what help should be provided and act to provide that help; and • follow the guidance set out in <u>Achieving Best Evidence in Criminal Proceedings: Guidance on interviewing victims and witnesses, and guidance on using special measures</u>, where a decision has been made to undertake a joint interview of the child as part of any criminal investigation.
<p>The police should:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • help other agencies understand the reasons for concerns about the child's safety and welfare; • decide whether or not police investigations reveal grounds for instigating criminal proceedings; • make available to other professionals any evidence gathered to inform discussions about the child's welfare; and • follow the guidance set out in <u>Achieving Best Evidence in Criminal Proceedings: Guidance on interviewing victims and witnesses, and guidance on using special measures</u>, where a decision has been made to undertake a joint interview of the

	child as part of the criminal investigations.
Health professionals should:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • undertake appropriate medical tests, examinations or observations, to determine how the child's health or development may be being impaired; • provide any of a range of specialist assessments. For example, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists and child psychologists may be involved in specific assessments relating to the child's developmental progress. The lead health practitioner (probably a consultant paediatrician, or possibly the child's GP) may need to request and coordinate these assessments; and • ensure appropriate treatment and follow up health concerns.
All involved professionals should:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contribute to the assessment as required, providing information about the child and family; and • consider whether a joint enquiry/investigation team may need to speak to a child victim without the knowledge of the parent or caregiver.

Outcome of section 47 enquiries

Local authority social workers are responsible for deciding what action to take and how to proceed following section 47 enquiries.

If local authority children's social care decides not to proceed with a child protection conference then other professionals involved with the child and family have the right to request that local authority children's social care convene a conference, if they have serious concerns that a child's welfare may not be adequately safeguarded. As a last resort, the LSCB should have in place a quick and straightforward means of resolving differences of opinion.

Where concerns of significant harm are not substantiated:

Social workers with their managers should:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discuss the case with the child, parents and other professionals; • determine whether support from any services may be helpful and help secure it; and • consider whether the child's health and development should be re-assessed regularly against specific objectives and decide who has responsibility for doing this.
All involved professionals should:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • participate in further discussions as necessary; • contribute to the development of any plan as appropriate; • provide services as specified in the plan for the child; and • review the impact of services delivered as agreed in the plan.

<p>Where concerns of significant harm are substantiated and the child is judged to be suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm:</p>	
<p>Social workers with their managers should:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • convene an initial child protection conference (see next section for details). The timing of this conference should depend on the urgency of the case and respond to the needs of the child and the nature and severity of the harm they may be facing. The initial child protection conference should take place within 15 working days of a strategy discussion, or the strategy discussion at which section 47 enquiries were initiated if more than one has been held; • consider whether any professionals with specialist knowledge should be invited to participate; • ensure that the child and their parents understand the purpose of the conference and who will attend; and • help prepare the child if he or she is attending or making representations through a third party to the conference. Give information about advocacy agencies and explain that the family may bring an advocate, friend or supporter.
<p>All involved professionals should:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contribute to the information their agency provides ahead of the conference, setting out the nature of the agency's involvement with the child and family; • consider, in conjunction with the police and the appointed conference Chair, whether the report can and should be shared with the parents and if so when; and • attend the conference and take part in decision making when invited.

Initial child protection conferences

Following section 47 enquiries, an initial child protection conference brings together family members (and the child where appropriate), with the supporters, advocates and professionals most involved with the child and family, to make decisions about the child's future safety, health and development. If concerns relate to an unborn child, consideration should be given as to whether to hold a child protection conference prior to the child's birth.

<p>Purpose:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To bring together and analyse, in an inter-agency setting, all relevant information and plan how best to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child. It is the responsibility of the conference to make recommendations on how agencies work together to safeguard the child in future. Conference tasks include: • appointing a lead statutory body (either local authority children's social care or NSPCC) and a lead social worker, who should be a qualified, experienced social worker and an
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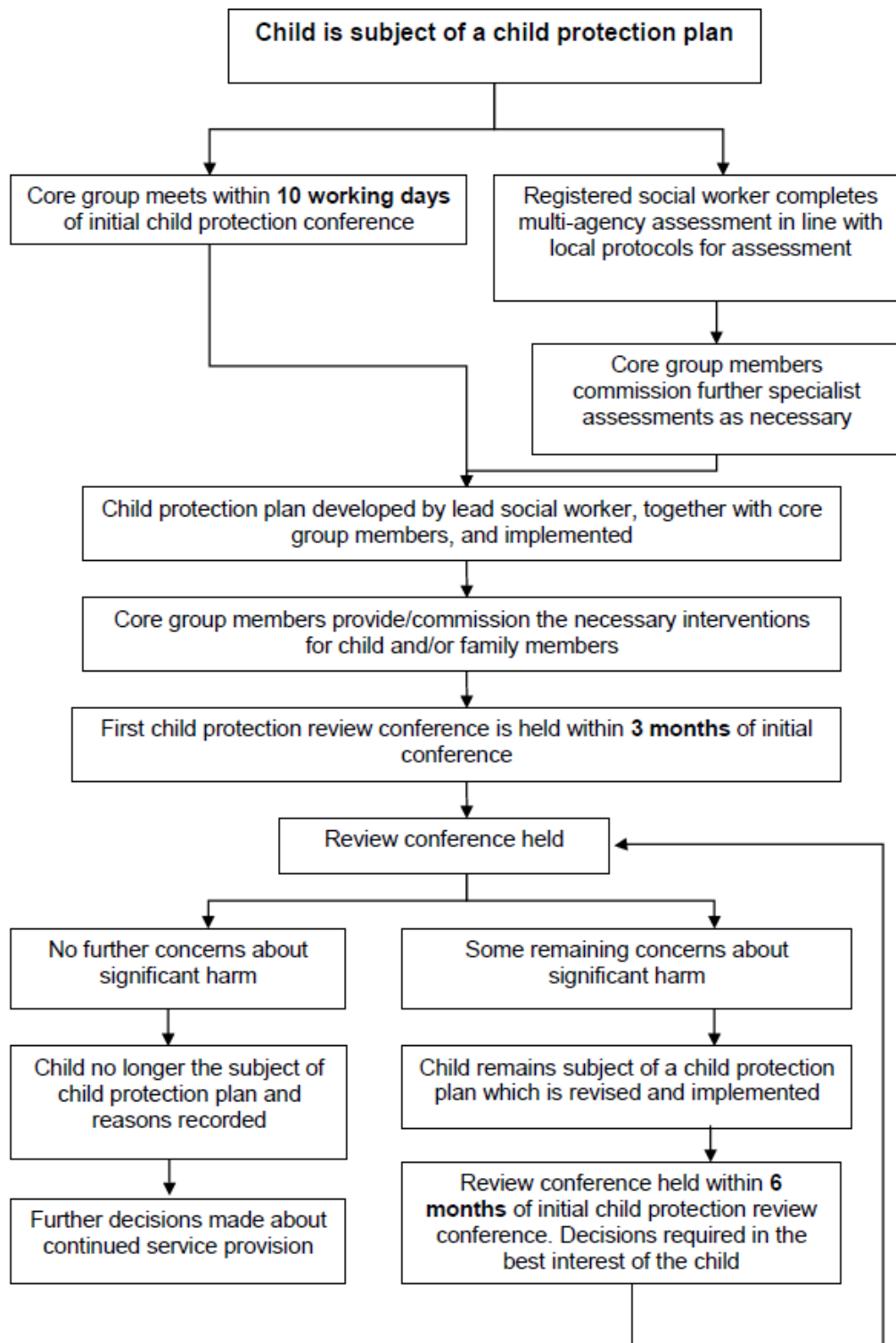
	<p>employee of the lead statutory body;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identifying membership of the core group of professionals and family members who will develop and implement the child protection plan; • establishing timescales for meetings of the core group, production of a child protection plan and for child protection review meetings; and • agreeing an outline child protection plan, with clear actions and timescales, including a clear sense of how much improvement is needed, by when, so that success can be judged clearly.
The Conference Chair:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is accountable to the Director of Children's Services. Where possible the same person should chair subsequent child protection reviews; • should be a professional, independent of operational and/or line management responsibilities for the case; and • should meet the child and parents in advance to ensure they understand the purpose and the process.
Social workers with their managers should:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • convene, attend and present information about the reason for the conference, their understanding of the child's needs, parental capacity and family and environmental context and evidence of how the child has been abused or neglected and its impact on their health and development; • analyse the information to enable informed decisions about what action is necessary to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child who is the subject of the conference; • share the conference information with the child and family beforehand (where appropriate); • prepare a report for the conference on the child and family which sets out and analyses what is known about the child and family and the local authority's recommendation; and • record conference decisions and recommendations and ensure action follows.
All involved professionals should:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work together to safeguard the child from harm in the future, taking timely, effective action according to the plan agreed.
LSCBs should:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • monitor the effectiveness of these arrangements.

The child protection plan: Actions and responsibilities following the initial child protection conference.	
Purpose:	<p>The aim of the child protection plan is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure the child is safe from harm and prevent him or her from suffering further harm; • promote the child's health and development; and • support the family and wider family members to safeguard and promote the welfare of their child, provided it is in the best interests of the child.
Local authority children's social care should:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • designate a social worker to be the lead professional as they carry statutory responsibility for the child's welfare; • consider the evidence and decide what legal action to take if any, where a child has suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm; and • define the local protocol for timeliness of circulating plans after the child protection conference.
Social workers with their managers should:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be the lead professional for inter-agency work with the child and family, coordinating the contribution of family members and professionals into putting the child protection plan into effect; • develop the outline child protection plan into a more detailed inter-agency plan and circulate to relevant professionals (and family where appropriate); • undertake direct work with the child and family in accordance with the child protection plan, taking into account the child's wishes and feelings and the views of the parents in so far as they are consistent with the child's welfare; • complete the child's and family's in-depth assessment, securing contributions from core group members and others as necessary; • explain the plan to the child in a manner which is in accordance with their age and understanding and agree the plan with the child; • coordinate reviews of progress against the planned outcomes set out in the plan, updating as required. The first review should be held within 3 months of the initial conference and further reviews at intervals of no more than 6 months for as long as the child remains subject of a child protection plan; • record decisions and actions agreed at core group meetings as well as the written views of those who were not able to attend, and follow up those actions to ensure they take place. The child protection plan should be updated as necessary; and • lead core group activity.
The core group should:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meet within 10 working days from the initial child protection conference if the child is the subject of a child protection plan; • develop the outline child protection plan, based on assessment findings, and set out what needs to change, by how much, and by when in order for the child to be safe and have their needs met;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • decide what steps need to be taken, and by whom, to complete the in-depth assessment to inform decisions about the child's safety and welfare; and • implement the child protection plan and take joint responsibility for carrying out the agreed tasks, monitoring progress and outcomes, and refining the plan as needed.
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<p>Child protection review conference: The review conference procedures for preparation, decision-making and other procedures should be the same as those for an initial child protection conference.</p>	
Purpose:	<p>To review whether the child is continuing to suffer, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, and review developmental progress against child protection plan outcomes.</p> <p>To consider whether the child protection plan should continue or should be changed.</p>
Social workers with their managers should:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attend and lead the organisation of the conference; • determine when the review conference should be held within 3 months of the initial conference, and thereafter at maximum intervals of 6 months; • provide information to enable informed decisions about what action is necessary to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child who is the subject of the child protection plan, and about the effectiveness and impact of action taken so far; • share the conference information with the child and family beforehand, where appropriate; • record conference outcomes; and • decide whether to initiate family court proceedings (all the children in the household should be considered, even if concerns are only expressed about one child) if the child is considered to be suffering significant harm.
All involved professionals should:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attend, when invited, and provide details of their involvement with the child and family; and • produce reports for the child protection review. This information will provide an overview of work undertaken by family members and professionals, and evaluate the impact on the child's welfare against the planned outcomes set out in the child protection plan.

Flow chart 5: What happens after the child protection conference, including the review?



Discontinuing the Child Protection Plan

A child should no longer be the subject of a child protection plan if:

- it is judged that the child is no longer continuing to, or is likely to, suffer significant harm and therefore no longer requires safeguarding by means of a child protection plan;
- the child and family have moved permanently to another local authority area. In such cases, the receiving local authority should convene a child protection conference within 15 working days of being notified of the move. Only after this event may the original local authority discontinue its child protection plan; or
- the child has reached 18 years of age (to end the child protection plan, the local authority should have a review around the child's birthday and this should be planned in advance), has died or has permanently left the United Kingdom.

Social workers with their managers should:

- notify, as a minimum, all agency representatives who were invited to attend the initial child protection conference that led to the plan; and
- consider whether support services are still required and discuss with the child and family what might be needed, based on a re-assessment of the child's needs.

Appendix 7: Reporting Concerns about FGM

1 Making a report

1.1 We must report FGM if we:

- Are informed by a girl under 18 that an act of FGM has been carried out on her; or
- Observe physical signs which appear to show that an act of FGM has been carried out on a girl under 18.

1.2 For the purposes of the duty, the relevant age is the girl's age at the time of the disclosure/identification of FGM (i.e. it does not apply where a woman aged 18 or over discloses she had FGM when she was under 18).

1.3 The duty does not apply in relation to at risk or suspected cases or in cases where the woman is over 18. In these cases, we should follow our safeguarding adults policy and procedure.

1.4 Where there is a risk to life or likelihood of serious immediate harm, we should report the case immediately to police, including dialling 999 if appropriate.

Verbally disclosed cases

1.5 If you are a relevant professional and a girl discloses to you that she has had FGM (whether she uses the term 'female genital mutilation' or any other term or description, e.g. 'cut') then this must be reported in addition to our safeguarding procedures.

1.6 Any such disclosure must be handled in line with wider child protection responsibilities.

Timeframe for reports

1.7 All reports will be made as soon as possible, in line with our child protection reporting procedures.

Making a report

1.8 This can be reported to the police in any way, we are required to identify the girl and explain why the report is being made.

1.9 When making a report the following information will be required:

- Explain that you are making a report under the FGM mandatory reporting duty
- Your details including: name; place of work and contact details (work telephone number and e-mail address) and times when you will be available to be called back
- Details of your organisation's designated safeguarding lead including: name, contact details (work telephone number and e-mail address)
- The girl's details including: name; age/date of birth; address
- Confirm that you have undertaken, or will undertake, safeguarding actions, as required by the English version of Working Together to Safeguard Children.

- 1.10 You will be given a reference number and should ensure that you document this in your records.

Record keeping

- 1.11 Throughout the process, you should ensure that you keep a comprehensive record of any discussions held and subsequent decisions made, in line with standard safeguarding recording process.

Informing the child's family

- 1.12 In line with safeguarding best practice, you should contact the girl and/or her parents or guardians as appropriate to explain the report, why it is being made, and what it means.
- 1.13 However, if you believe that telling the child/parents about the report may result in a risk of serious harm to the child or anyone else, or of the family fleeing the country, you should not discuss it. If you are unsure or have concerns, you should discuss these with your designated safeguarding lead.

Your responsibilities after you have made a report

- 1.14 This should continue in line with our wider safeguarding wider safeguarding and professional responsibilities.
- 1.15 Depending on your role and the specific circumstances of the case, you may be required to contribute to the multi-agency response or other follow up to the case which will follow your report. If you are unsure, you should seek advice from your designated safeguarding lead.

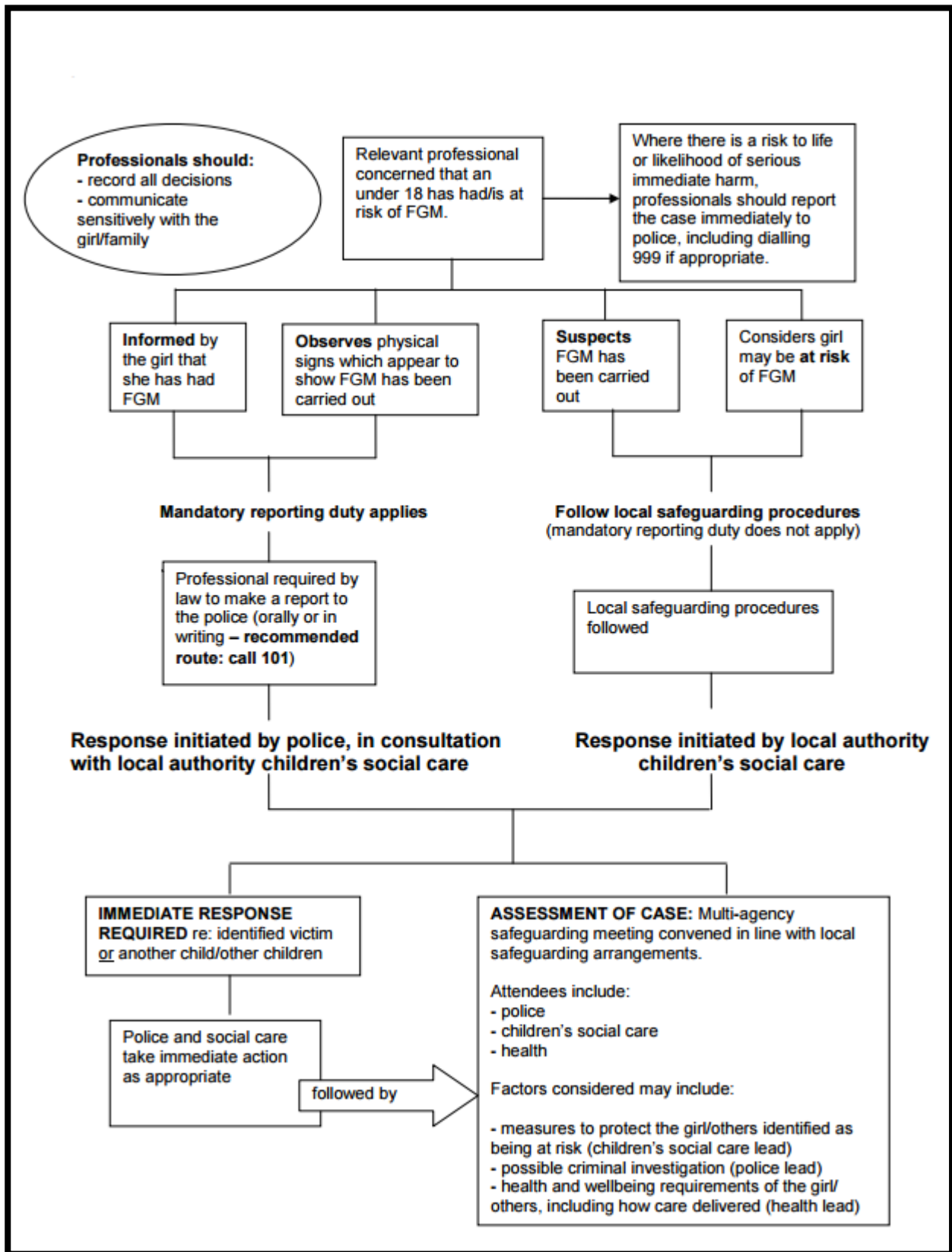
2 What happens following a report

- 2.1 Upon receipt of a report, the police will record the information and initiate the multi-agency response, in line with local safeguarding arrangements.
- 2.2 Exact procedures will vary across local areas. If the police consider that emergency action is needed to protect the child, they may take action in advance of the multi-agency response.
- 2.3 The protection of the child must be paramount at all times. The multi-agency response should consider any wider health or emotional support that the child may need.
- 2.4 In considering the case and next steps, local safeguarding processes should continue to be followed.

FGM Protection Orders

- 2.5 Depending on the circumstances of the case, the police or local authority may wish to consider applying for an FGM Protection Order (FGMPO) either to protect the girl or to protect other girls who may be at risk (e.g. siblings).
- 2.6 An FGMPO is a civil order which may be made for the purposes of protecting a girl at risk of FGM or protecting a girl against whom an FGM offence has been committed.

Flowchart: FGM Reporting Process



Related documents

Document	Link
Connected Policies	Relevant HR policies Children that go Missing Safeguarding Adults Raising Concerns at Work and Whistleblowing Complaints and Feedback Confidentiality and Data Protection Domestic Abuse.
Forms and Letters	Included
Information Sheet	Yes
Easy Read	Staying safe
External Websites	www.nspcc.org.uk www.educateagainsthate.com
Legislation/Regulation	<p>Children Act 1989, the 2004 Children Act and Children and Families Act 2014</p> <p>The Government’s statutory, multi-agency child protection guidance ‘Working together to Safeguard Children 2015 which makes it clear that ‘safeguarding children is everyone’s responsibility’.</p> <p>Local Safeguarding Children’s Board’s guidance and procedures.</p> <p>Local Authorities undertake assessments of the needs to individual children to determine what services to provide and what action to take.</p> <p>The Children Act 1989 underpins statutory work with children and families. Its core principle is that the child is of paramount importance and it outlines the responsibilities of the Local Authority to provide services to children. Especially the following sections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 17; under which social service (local authority) children in need are assessed in how well they are progressing and whether they will be impaired without the provision of services. • Section 47; under which Child Protection enquiries and assessments are carried out to determine if the child is at risk of significant harm. • Section 44; under which the court may make emergency protection orders that give the authorities powers to remove a child from the family home if he/she is likely to suffer significant harm. The court may also order for the perpetrator to be excluded from the home if another

	<p>person is able to take on custodial responsibilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Section 46; under which the police have the power to remove a child if they have reasonable cause to believe that a child is likely to suffer significant harm if not removed from the situation• Section 11 of the Children’s Act 2014 places duties on organisations such as Look Ahead to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. <p>‘Prevent duty’ in the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015.</p> <p>Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 as amended by the Serious Crime Act 2015</p>
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Services we would be proud
for our loved ones to receive