

Safeguarding Information for Parents



Understanding Child Protection Processes

A Child Protection Conference is a meeting that follows a Child Protection Enquiry if the social worker is still worried that your child/children is at risk of being harmed.

You will be invited to attend the meeting and will be asked to say what you think about the concerns and you will be able to ask questions of the professionals. You can bring someone with you to support you if you wish.

If they are old enough to understand, your children may be invited too.

An independent person chairs the meeting. It is their job to make sure the meeting is fair and that everyone can safely share their views. Sometimes parents may be asked to leave for a while, if there is information that cannot be shared for legal reasons.

The chairperson will meet you before the meeting to explain how the meeting will work and to make sure you feel able to say what you think.

If you cannot attend the meeting, you can share your views with the chair in writing or by telephone in advance and the chairperson will make sure these views are shared in the meeting.

The professionals will decide whether your child needs a Child Protection Plan. This plan will outline what needs to happen to make your child safe. The plan will also say what might happen if the plan isn't working.

If your child is made subject to Child Protection Plan, there will be review meeting after three months to see if progress has been made and whether a Plan is still needed. You will get a record of the meeting afterwards.

Child Sexual Exploitation

Child sexual exploitation can be hard to identify and a change in behaviour in a young person may often seem like normal teenage behaviour. However, for some, these could be the signs of something far more serious. It is not always easy to know what young people are up to and abusers can be very clever in their manipulations.

A young person may feel they are in a loving relationship, while perpetrators will often seek to break the bond between the child and their family.

If you have concerns about a child you know, who is at risk of being sexually exploited;

- Call Wolverhampton's Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH): 01902 555392
- You can also report your concern to West Midlands Police by calling 101
- Always call 999 in an emergency
- Deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired people can use textphone 18001 101
- You can call Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111
- Pace- (Parents Against Child Sexual Exploitation) – offer support for parents
- For help and advice call: 0113 240 5226

Recognising Child Abuse & Neglect

Physical Abuse

When an adult, child or young person deliberately hurts a child, such as hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, drowning or suffocating.

Emotional Abuse

This would happen, for instance, when a child is all the time being unfairly blamed for everything, or told they are stupid and made to feel unhappy.

Neglect

Where a child is not being looked after properly, for example, not getting enough to eat or being left alone in dangerous situations.

Sexual Abuse

An example of sexual abuse would be where a child has been forced to take part in sexual activities or in the taking of rude photos.

In addition to these 4 categories of abuse, there are other ways in which a child or young person can suffer harm including;

- **Bullying** – e.g. calling names, damaging property, stealing, spreading rumours, cyberbullying, hurting, getting people into trouble.
- **Domestic Abuse** – is when one adult in a family or relationship threatens, bullies or hurts another adult e.g. physically, psychologically, emotionally, sexually or financially.

You can find out more information by visiting the following organisations;

- [Childline – abuse and safety](#)
- [Bullying UK – advice for parents / carers](#)
- [Kidscape – advice for parents /carers](#)
- [The NSPCC – child abuse and neglect](#)
- [The NSPCC – The Underwear Rule](#)

Keeping Children Safe Online

Many young people will have access to or own the latest gadgets such as tablets, smart phones and games consoles.

The internet and all it can offer, is a wonderful tool for keeping in touch with friends and family, however parents and carers need to be aware that it is possible for people who are unknown to children and young people to communicate with them via the internet.

Some parents, carers or relatives might not realise that even games consoles such as Xbox and PlayStation are connected to the internet and can be used for communicating as well as playing games. You can find more information by clicking on either of the links below;

- <https://www.net-aware.org.uk/>
- <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/online-porn/>
- <https://www.childnet.com/resources/online-gaming-an-introduction-for-parents>
- <https://parentinfo.org/article/the-internet-watch-foundation-iwf-removing-illegal-online-images>
- <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>
- <https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/>

Advice for Carers / Adoptive Parents

Through your local council or fostering agency, you may feel equipped to deal with the vulnerabilities your child faces as a 'looked after child' in the real world, but how confident are you with the online world?

Rules and boundaries you set in the real world can apply online. It is advised that you take the time to read all of the information available to parents and carers. It is important to learn the technologies they use, the positive aspects of being online, but also what can go wrong.

As well as this there are specific risks looked after children may face online;

- Contact from birth parents or relatives
- Risk taking behaviour
- Bullying
- Security and safety

There are preventative methods you need to take as their carer pre-, during and post-placement to create a safer online environment.

You can find advice on the issues mentioned on the [Thinkuknow website](#) – Children and young people's use of the internet: advice for adoptive parents

Many adopted children and young people encounter negative experiences in childhood. These experiences such as loss, grief and disrupted family lives can make them more vulnerable to risk both online and in the real world.

In the online world, they may be additional vulnerable to the range of risks that all children and young people face. Adopted children also face the possibility of contact from their birth family. This can pose additional risks. Sometimes birth families bypass the traditional route of using an adoption agency to find their relatives and instead use online sites such as Facebook to trace and locate them. Some adopted children also actively search for their birth relatives in secret; where they are successful, this can place them in risky situations.

For a child, finding their birth family when using the traditional channels can be emotional and challenging. Offline this would involve preparation and significant support; however, the speed of the internet means online contact can be instant, direct and can happen without anyone knowing. This contact causes additional complexities; what may start well and feel like a 'honeymoon' period, can quickly spiral out of control. The children could find themselves facing demands from additional relatives looking to make contact. These individuals may have varying accounts of the events leading up to the adoption, which could leave the child confused and upset.

As an adoptive parent, it is important that you;

- Take an interest in your child's online life.
Use the internet as a family. Discuss their favourite sites and the "friends" they have in these spaces.
- Talk to your child about what they would do if they did hear from a member of their birth family online.
If the situation does arise having a plan in place means they will be more likely to come to you for support.
- Recognise that your child may be curious about their past and the people in it.
Let them know that you understand their curiosity and that it is ok to talk about it with you.
Emphasise that you won't be upset or angry.
- Ask your child to set privacy settings on the sites they use online.
This will ensure that they have more control over their personal information and who can gain access to it. Do the same on the sites you use and be careful what information you and the rest of the family post about your adopted child.
- Don't be afraid to seek further support.

Contact your child's adoption agency if you have any queries about online contact from birth families and if you are concerned that your child may be in danger – call 999.

New technologies open up many exciting benefits and opportunities for children and young people but they can also present some risks. Technology is becoming all pervasive, touching all areas of society, with children and young people having increasing access to personal technology such as web-enabled phones.

If you require support from a member of our Safeguarding Team please do not hesitate to contact; safeguarding@oswba.co.uk