

Script

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- What happens when there are concerns about a child?

When concerns are reported about a child, a social worker will talk with the person who has made the referral so they are completely clear about the situation. Within a day, the social worker must then decide what action to take next. This can be no further involvement, the police being told about the concerns, finding out whether the child is safe or being cared for properly (this is known as an assessment) or the local authority taking emergency action to remove the child.

- What is an assessment?

An assessment is an enquiry into finding out more information to help social workers conduct a plan of action that is best suited for the child. They enable social workers to get a better understanding about what is happening within a family so they can prevent the child from being at risk of harm. The assessment is conducted by speaking to other professionals like teacher, the police and doctors, talking to the child and their family and agreeing with them on what needs to be sorted out. If a child is in immediate danger, an assessment can be done very quickly.

- What happens after an assessment?

An assessment determines what action can be taken next. This can be a 'child in need plan', which will state what support is being provided from the social worker to help the parents or carers meet a child's needs, or a Child Protection Conference. This is used if there is reason to think a child is at risk of harm. An urgent discussion between social workers, the police and health workers will decide if there is any rapid action that needs to be taken and a Child Protection Plan will be created. Regular 'Review Meetings' will also take place which will look at the devised plan and ensure it remains focused on providing the correct support for the child and the family.

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- What do advocates and social workers do?

On the board is a list of what children's social care should do if there are concerns for your safety.

A social worker's job is to keep a child safe and away from danger if there is a problem. They are able to act immediately if there is an issue so it is good to confidentially talk to the social worker about any worries or troubles you may have. They do their best to allow children to live safely with their families, but if the assessment shows that a child is in immediate danger and will not be kept away from harm, they may need to remove the child from the family with permission from the police or a court of law. If you are finding it difficult to talk to a social worker about a troubling issue, they can refer you to an advocate. An advocate is someone who will provide you with information, advice and support to make sure your views are heard and understood.

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- What should the services working with a child do?

The law states that organisations and individuals working with children must always do what is best for their welfare, and ensure they are protected from harm. As well as outside organisations working to protect children, schools also have a major role in ensuring children are safe and to identify concerns they may have with a child. Every school must have a named senior member of staff that is responsible for child protection issues. Here at Oldfield, this member of staff is Mrs Mills. Schools must participate in planning for a child needing protection and make sure that guidance is followed when new members of staff are appointed. If a school identifies some concerns with a child, which can range from not being cared for properly or frequently being kept off school to witnessing strangers hanging around the school, they should report it to local authority or the police.

- What other services can be involved in child protection issues?

There are many other organisations that can be involved in protecting a child, apart from schools and the local authority. Some of the other organisations include health professionals (such as doctors, nurses and mental health workers), housing services, who focus on matters regarding a child's living conditions, the police, the prison service, who's role is to identify prisoners who pose a risk to children, Young Offending Institutions, the UK Border Agency, who are responsible for immigration and returning a child to their country of origin if necessary, and lastly, Cafcass, who are involved in the welfare of children in the care system.

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- Where can I get help?

There are many ways of getting in touch with people that can help you through any problems you may be facing. Here is a list of organisations you can call which include Childline, NSPCC, Cafcass, CEOP and VOICE. We hope you have learnt something about the processes of child protection issues and the action they take to ensure vulnerable children are kept away from harm.

Thank you for listening.