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What are my rights as a parent?

You have the right to:

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

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Further helpful information

- Your local Citizens Advice Bureau
- Family Rights Group (Advice Line) Tel: **0808 8010366**
- Children's Legal Centre (Child Law) Tel: **0808 802 000**
- West Mercia Police - To make a complaint, please visit www.westmercia.police.uk/article/8553/Making-a-complaint or by **post** to;

The Professional Standards Department
Warwickshire Police and West Mercia Police
Stratford upon Avon Police Station
Rother Street
Stratford upon Avon
Warwickshire
CV37 6RD

Complaints

If you have a complaint please contact your social worker or if necessary their Team Manager. You may contact Worcestershire Customer Services by telephone **01905 766 366**, or go to www.worcestershire.gov.uk and search 'complaints'.

Remember

- You are the most important person in your child's life
- Your views and feelings will be heard and respected
- There is a commitment from all Children's Agencies to help and support you at this difficult time
- If you are able to work with people who are committed to help you, it is likely that your child will remain safe.

A guide to...

Section 47

Child Protection Enquiries

Information for Parents and Carers



Find out more online:
www.worcestershire.gov.uk

 **worcestershire**
county council

1 Why does Children's Social Care need to be involved?

If Worcestershire Children's Services is told by someone that your child may be suffering harm or may be at risk of suffering harm, the law says that they must look into the matter to make sure that your child is safe. Anyone can contact Children's Services if they are worried about a child.

2 What sort of harm?

Harm means child abuse or child mal-treatment. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by acting to cause harm or not acting to stop harm.

It is often described in one of the following ways:

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

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

3 What is likely to happen?

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

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

You will be asked to give permission for the interview to take place, however if you do not give permissions and your child is at risk of harm this may still happen without your permission. This will be discussed with you at the time. If you are able to talk openly with the people involved about the concerns, the best decisions will be made for your child.

4 What else might happen?

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

If there are other children in the family they may also need to be seen in order to make sure that they are alright.

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

5 Will my child be taken away from me?

In the majority of reported child abuse cases it will be assessed that it is in the child's best interest for them to remain at home with their families.

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

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

If your child is in danger of significant harm:

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

6 After the child protection enquiry - what happens?

Children's Services may do one or more of the following:

- Take no further action;
- Offer advice and help;
- Arrange a meeting to decide what will happen next. This is called an Initial Child Protection Conference;
- If necessary take legal action in order to protect your child.

7 Police

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