

# Children Of All Nations



## **Safeguarding Children/Child Protection Policy and Procedures**

# **Duties and responsibilities of local authorities and Children of all Nations**

## **Introduction**

This document outlines the safeguarding children/child protection policy and procedures adopted by Children of all Nations as required by Regulation 12 and 13 of the Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011.

All foster parents and employees and volunteers of Children of all Nations are expected to be aware of the policy and the procedures to be followed in the event of actual or suspected abuse. The policy should be read in conjunction with Children of all Nations policies and procedures on safe caring, health and safety and allegations against foster parents.

**Fostering Services (England) Regulations 2011 regulations 12 and 13, Fostering Services: National Minimum Standards 2011 standard 4, and The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 4, London Child Protection Procedures and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013.**

This statement of policy and procedures applies to all Foster Carers, staff and volunteers employed by children of all nations fostering. It is about safeguarding children, promoting their welfare and protecting them from harm or exploitation.

## **Child Protection Concerns**

**Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015 definition is used in all cases in which it is alleged that a foster carers has:**

Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child;  
Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child; or  
Behaved towards a child or children in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children.

## **Duties placed on Fostering Agencies**

The fostering service (registered person) must ensure that the welfare of child/ren placed or to be placed with foster parents is safeguarded and to promote at all times any decision which affects a child/ren placed or to be placed with a foster parent whilst ensuring due consideration is given to the child's wishes, feelings, religious persuasion, racial origin, cultural and linguistic background.

## **Local Authority Safeguarding/Child Protection Procedures Duties and responsibilities of the local authority**

Local authorities have specific duties in respect of children under the Children Acts 1989 and 2004. They have a general duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need in their area and provided that this is consistent with the child's safety and welfare, to promote the upbringing of such children by their families by providing services appropriate to the child's needs. They should do this in partnership with parents in a way that is sensitive to the child's race, religion, culture and language

and that takes account of the child's wishes and feelings. Services might include childcare for young children, after-school care for school children, counselling, short breaks, and family centre services, practical help in the home or targeted parenting and family support. "Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013.

A list of children and young people subject to a child protection plan is maintained by each child's social care local authority which lists all children who are at continued risk of significant harm and for whom there is a child protection plan. The DFES Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013 (Statutory Guidance) required local authorities to implement an IT integral recording system for all Children. The Local Safeguarding Children Board is an inter-agency forum which acts as a focal point for co-ordinating local agencies to safeguard children. The DFES Statutory Guidance "Working Together to Safeguard Children" 2013 sets out how all agencies and professionals should work together.

### **Fostering Agencies arrangements for the protection of Children**

The fostering agency must prepare and implement a written policy which intends to safeguard children placed with foster parents from abuse or neglect, outlining the procedure to be followed in the event of any allegation of abuse or neglect. These procedures should provide guidance for the following:

- Liaison and co-operation with any local authority which is, or maybe, making child protection enquiries in relation to any child placed by the fostering provider.
- The prompt referral to the area authority of any allegation of abuse or neglect affecting any child placed by the fostering agency.
- Notification of the instigation and outcome of any child protection enquiries involving a child placed by the fostering agency to the Chief Inspection.
- Written reports to be kept of any allegation of abuse or neglect, and of the action taken in response.
- Consideration to be given to the measures which may be necessary to protect children placed with foster parents following an allegation of abuse or neglect, and

Arrangements to be made for persons working for the purposes of the fostering service, foster parents and children placed by the fostering service, to have the address(including email address), and telephone number of :

- (i) **The London Borough of Croydon**  
**8 Mint Walk, Croydon, CR0 1EA**  
[childreferrals@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:childreferrals@croydon.gov.uk)  
**02087266464**

and

- (ii) **OFSTED NATIONAL BUSINESS UNIT**  
**Piccadilly Gate**  
**Store Street**  
**Manchester**  
**M1 2WD**  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
**0300123 1231**

A written policy must include a statement of measures to be taken to safeguard any child before making parent and child arrangements with that foster parent.

In this regulation “child protection enquiries” means any enquiries carried out by a local authority in the exercise of any of its functions conferred by or under the 1989 Act relating to the protection of children. Fostering Regulations (England) 2011, Regulation 12, standards 1, 2,3,4,5.

#### **Safeguarding Children Procedures**

Each Local Safeguarding Children Board has its own **Safeguarding Children Procedures** which all agencies operating in that area must follow. Children of all Nations will ensure that copies of local authority procedures are available to its staff, Foster Carers and volunteers that a copy of the Children of all Nations Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures are consistent.

#### **Allegations of abuse or neglect**

If there is an allegation of abuse or neglect, or if abuse or neglect is suspected, Children of all Nations staff and foster parents and volunteers should follow the Safeguarding Children Procedures of the “area authority” i.e. of the local authority in which the foster parents live and where the child is placed.

#### **Reporting concerns or allegations of abuse disclosed by a child/ren**

If you have concerns about a child or a child makes an allegation of abuse to you, you must share this with the Registered Manager or a senior member of staff responsible for child protection immediately.

Outside office hours (5pm – 9am) you must share this with the Children of All Nations Fostering out of Hours Service. Foster Carers will share such information with their Supervising Social Worker or the Children of All Nations Fostering duty officer who will act as described above and share the information with the Registered Manager or senior member of staff immediately.

#### **Notify the local authorities (Regulation 12(2) C) FSR**

Children of all Nations should ensure that a verbal referral is made and followed up in writing within 24 hours of allegation.

The Registered Manager, senior member of staff or the Out of Hours Service will refer the concern/allegation to the relevant local authority safeguarding team or contact service for children's social care referrals and the child/young person's Social Worker, team manager or duty team of the "responsible local authority" i.e. the authority responsible for the child/young person. They may also ask you to do this having decided that a referral is needed and agreed the reasons for making the referral. This should be made to the "Area Local authority" i.e. the children's local authority in which the foster parents live and where the child is placed.

The initial notification will usually be by telephone. The Children of all Nations Foster Carers must record and report incidents/allegation worker must complete the Notifiable Events/Incidents form for the Children of all Nations Director attention and dispatch to the "area authority" (children's local authority where the foster parents live) and to the "responsible authority" (children's local authority responsible for the child). A copy should be placed on the child/young person's file. The report should include details of the allegations received with appropriate dates, times, action taken and the names and designations of people contacted together with any outcome known at this stage.

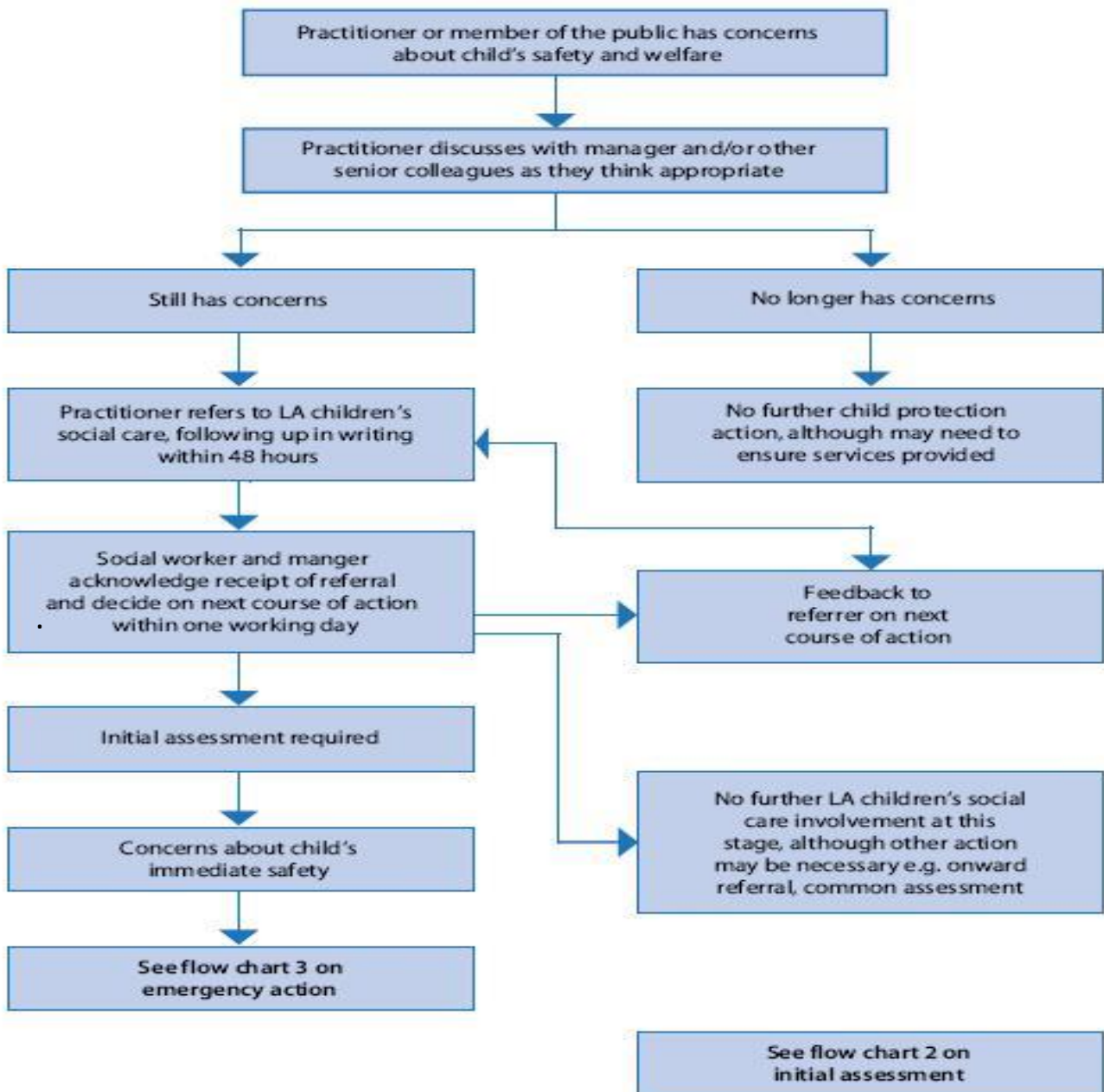
Local authorities must acknowledge written referrals within one working day of receiving them. If no acknowledgement is received, either in writing or via a noted telephone response from the relevant local authority, within three working days, the referrer should contact the local authority again. Failure to adhere to timescales can (and should) be referred to the relevant Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). There is a set process for dealing with all referrals made to local authority children's social care authorities. This should be explained in the local safeguarding board child protection/safeguarding procedures.

The timescales for initial response and confirming a verbal referral are described above. Once a referral has been made, the responsible local authority will decide whether to undertake an initial assessment, Section 47 core assessment and whether to continue through the child protection process. The process has a number of steps: initial assessment; strategy discussion; Section 47 core assessment; initial child protection conference and review child protection conference.

You may be asked to contribute to each step in some way. The flowcharts below will help you to understand each step and how it fits into the process as a whole. Also consult "Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013 (p.6)

**Working Together to Safeguard Children. A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.**

**Flow chart 1: Referral**



This flow chart was extracted from: Working Together to Safeguard Children. A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children

### **Child Protection Investigation**

Any investigation will be undertaken by the “area authority” in conjunction with the “responsible authority” i.e. the authority responsible for placing the child. Children of all Nations must notify the “responsible authority” and OFSTED of the instigation and outcome of any child protection enquiry involving a child placed with foster parents and monitor allegations or suspicions of abuse.

### **Safeguarding/Child Protection Policy**

Children of all Nations believe that all children/young people have a right to protection from exploitation, neglect, physical, emotional and sexual abuse. The welfare of children/young people placed with Children of all Nations overrides all other considerations. Foster parents and Children of all Nations employees will take seriously and immediately report allegations or suspicions of abuse concerning children/young people placed with foster parents.

Children of all Nations will work in partnership with local authorities and other agencies to enable children/young people to understand what abuse is and their right to be protected from harm.

Children of all Nations will ascertain the wishes and feelings of children/young people on their care and treatment, inform them of their rights, help them put forward their views (using advocacy services if appropriate) keeping them fully informed.

Children of all Nations will pay particular attention to the needs of children with disability who are statistically at an increased risk of abuse and neglect. These include the increased likelihood of social isolation.

Their potential dependency on a number of carers for daily living and intimate care, and their communication needs may prevent them from being able to tell someone. The relationship between social care staff and parents and carers may also influence how situations are interpreted.

A real knowledge and understanding of the child or young person will assist in interpreting unusual behaviour, the impact of their disability on their behaviour and the impact of any specific medical condition. In spite of their increased vulnerability children with disabilities are underrepresented amongst the group of children with child protection plans. The DCSF has produced detailed practice guidance called “Safeguarding disabled children, Practice guidance”.

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/safeguardingandsocialcare/safeguardingchildren/safeguarding/>.

Children of all Nations are committed to providing an effective complaints procedure for children and young people in foster care. In considering the needs of children and

young people, Children of all Nations will positively promote their ethnic origin, cultural background, religion, health, gender, sexuality and special needs.

Children of all Nations is committed to providing high quality support and supervision to foster parents of children/young people who have suffered abuse, and appropriate support services to the children themselves.

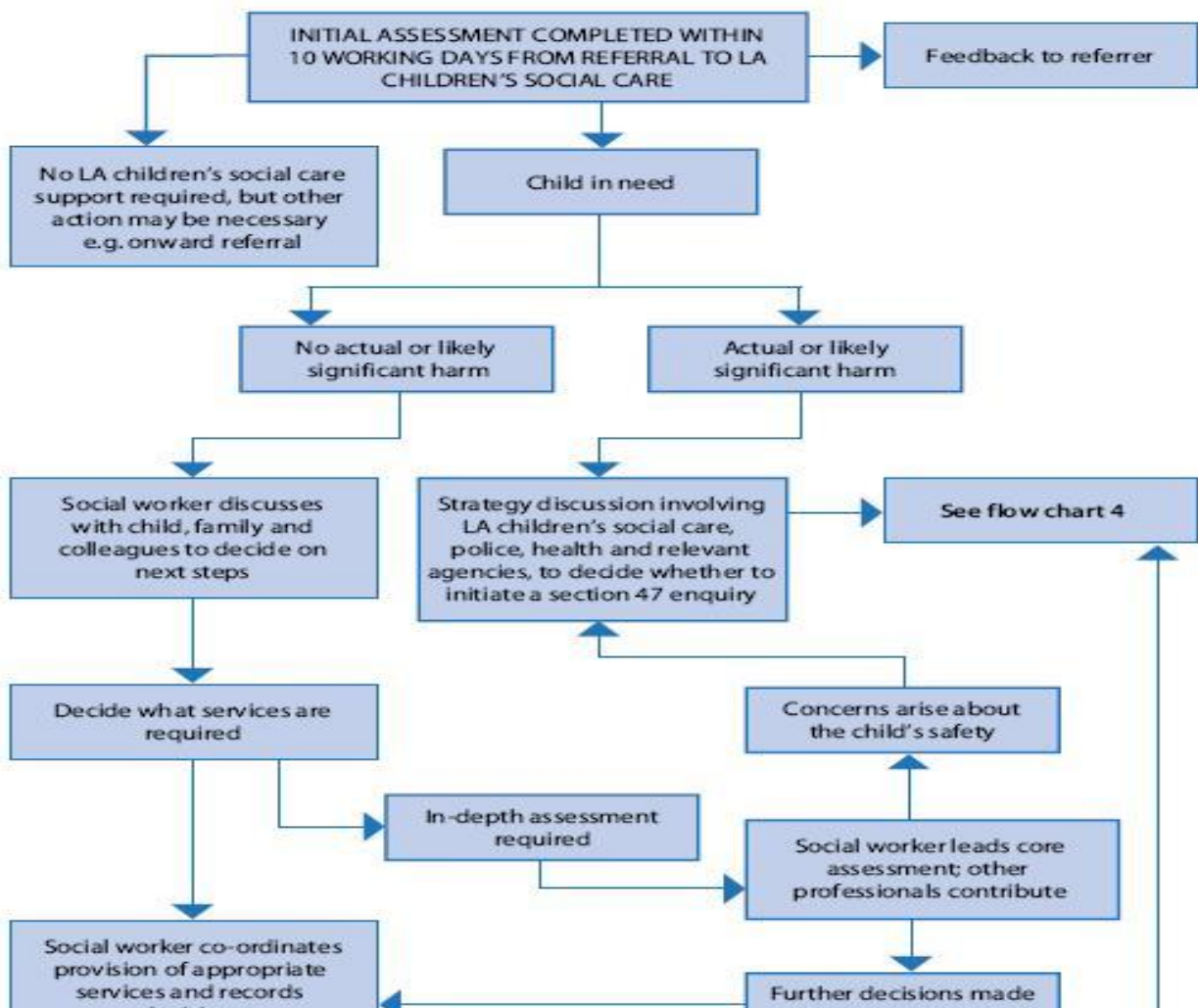
Children of all Nations will work in partnership with the families of children and young people who have suffered abuse and keep them fully informed.

Training in Safeguarding Children will be provided for foster parents and staff. This will be included in pre-approval courses for new foster parents and core training for all foster parents following approval.

**“Children of all Nations adopt the ‘Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013’ guidance whilst ensuring that they comply with the child protection procedures relevant to the local authority in which the child/young person placed. This should be reflected in the contractor’s internal policies and procedures of Working Together to Safeguard Children 201 (p.9)**

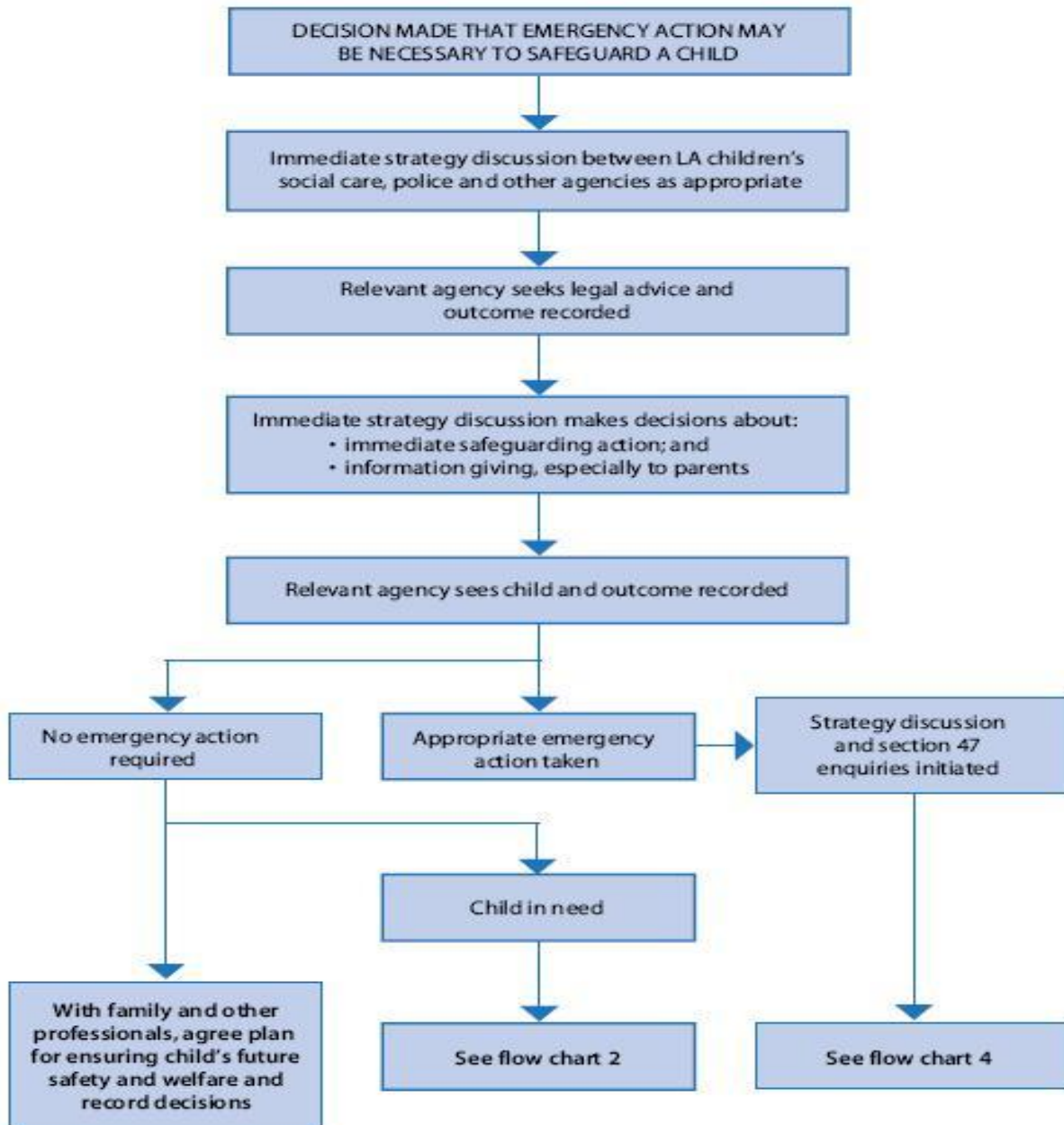
**Working Together to Safeguard Children. A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.**

**Flow chart 2: What happens following initial assessment?**





### Flow chart 3: Urgent action to safeguard children



*Extracted from: Working Together to Safeguard Children. A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.*

### **The Local authority makes decisions on Investigation under Safeguarding Children Procedures**

The “local authority” in consultation with the “responsible authority” will decide whether to carry out an investigation under the child protection/safeguarding procedures. This will usually happen after a strategy meeting (i.e. a discussion between relevant professionals to determine the need or otherwise for further child protection planning and intervention). The Children of all Nations Fostering Social Worker will usually be invited to attend the strategy meeting and should be kept informed of the progress of any subsequent investigation.

### ***The local authority and statutory agencies can investigate an allegation of abuse. (Section 47, Children Act 1989)***

Foster parents are likely to have contact with the child/young person’s Social Worker or person conducting any investigation under Safeguarding Children procedures. The Children of all Nations social worker should keep the foster parents informed and offer them support and assistance in seeking independent advice and support if requested.

In some circumstances an allegation against a Foster Carer may result in the responsible local authority deciding to move the child or children in placement. COAN will be consulted about such decisions but cannot overrule them. In such a situation the desirable advance notice of cessation of placement cannot be provided by COAN to Foster Carers.

COAN will do all that is reasonable to ensure that such unanticipated placement disruptions are minimised. When they do occur, as the direct result of an allegation or serious concern, COAN will, at the discretion of the Manager, continue to pay some contribution to the Foster Carer for up to four weeks from the date of the placement disruption. Any payments in excess of this agreed amount are extremely unlikely and may only be authorised by the Director, where he/she decides that exceptional circumstances apply.

### **Liaison and co-operation with local authority**

Children of all Nations foster parents and employees should co-operate fully with any child protection enquiries being conducted by the local authority.

### **Measures to protect children following an investigation of abuse**

Measures may need to be taken to protect the child/young person following an investigation of abuse e.g. injunctions, restricted contact, supervision of child/young

person, attention to sleeping arrangements or if deemed an emergency a child maybe moved to another placement.

### **Working with the Child Protection Plan and Review Conferences**

Children of all Nations foster parents and employees are expected to co-operate with any child protection plan to protect the child or young person and you may be invited to attend and contribute to the inter-agency child protection conference.

### **Recording**

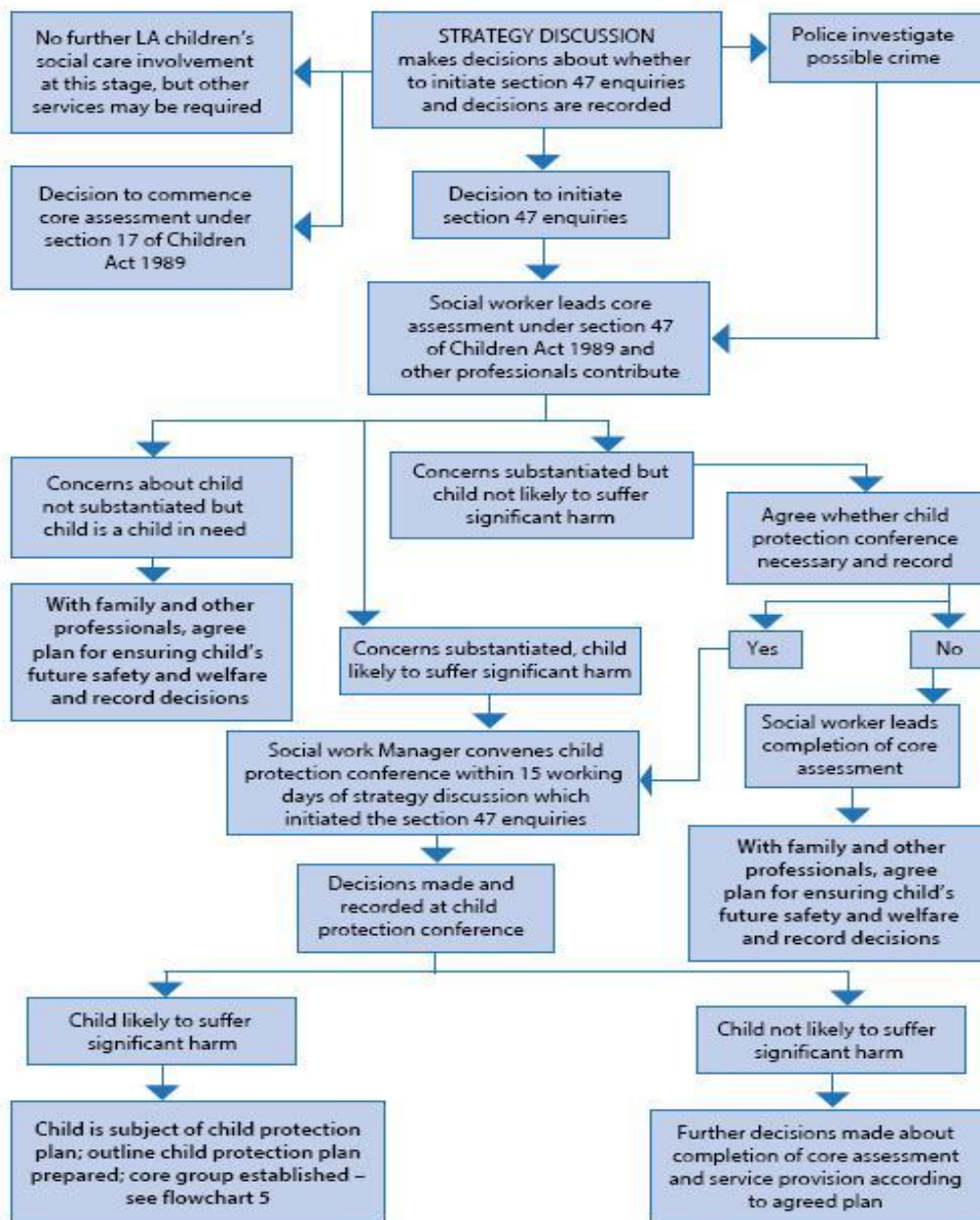
Foster parents and Children of all Nations employees should keep written record of what has happened and actions taken, which should be placed on the child's file by the fostering social worker. This will include copies of information exchanged including correspondence and telephone messages. This is very important as all records could be required as part of the investigation or any subsequent legal action. Allegations will be kept in a confidential section on Foster Carers files (NMS 22.7 and 22.8).

### **Support and Supervision**

Situations involving allegations of child abuse and neglect are usually very stressful for all concerned especially the child/young person. It is important that the needs of the child/young person remain central at this time, that the child is listened to and his/her views taken into account. It may be helpful to arrange some independent support or advocacy for the child; this will be done as necessary by the fostering social worker. Similarly, attention should be given to arrangements for supporting foster parents and Children of all Nations employees.

**Working Together to Safeguard Children. A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.**

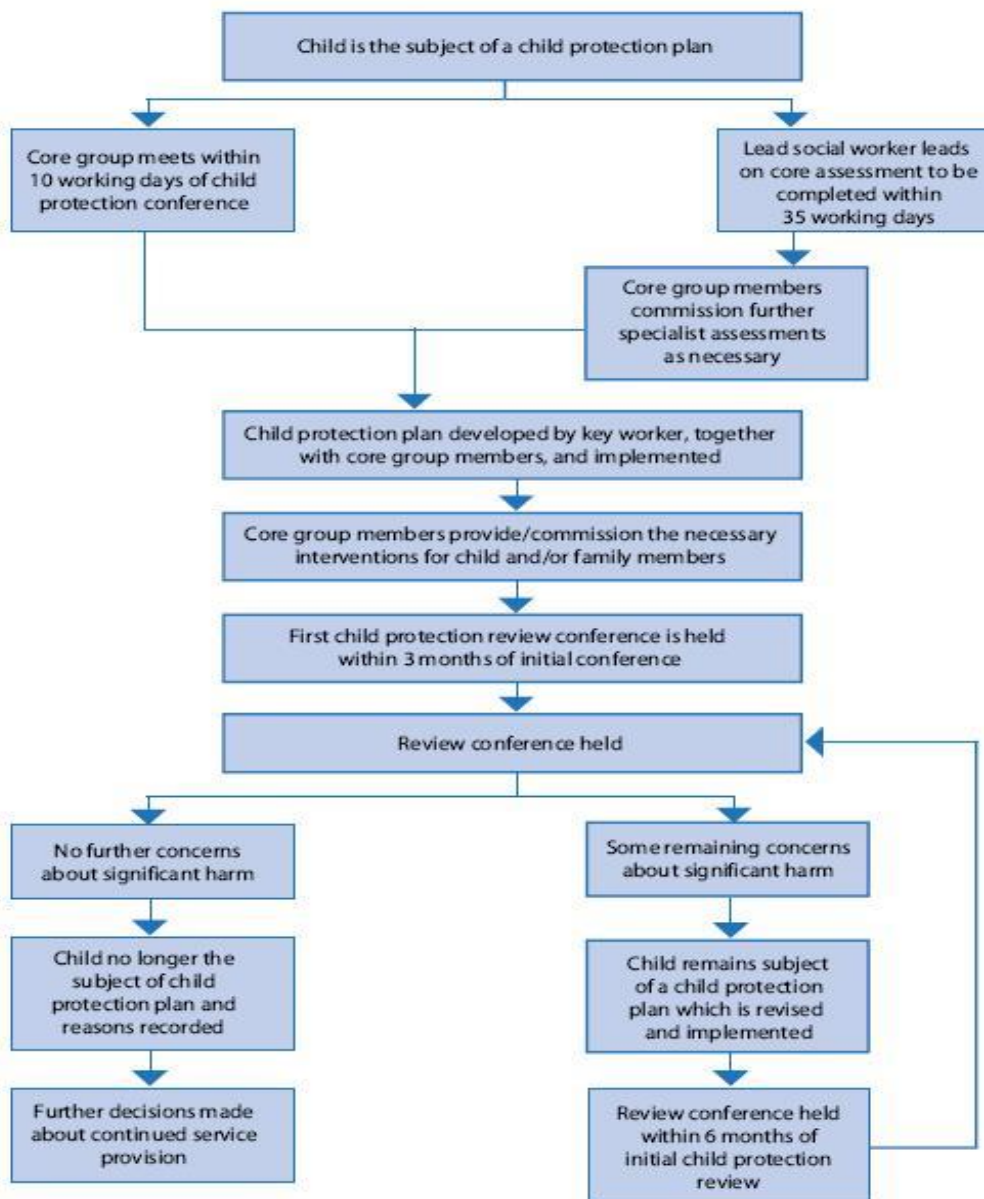
**Flow chart 4: What happens after the strategy discussion?**



Extracted from: Working Together to Safeguard Children. A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children

## Working Together to Safeguard Children. A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

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



*Extracted from: Working Together to Safeguard Children. A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.*

## **Safeguarding Training for Foster parents**

Children of all Nations provides pre and post approval training in relation to safeguarding/child protection for foster parents and this is given high priority. Foster parents are expected to attend – some child protection/safeguarding courses are designated mandatory.

## **Definitions and Categories of Child Abuse**

The following definitions are taken from Working Together to Safeguard Children

### **Physical Abuse**

A form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child.

### **Emotional Abuse**

Emotional Abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. 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.

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. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

### **Neglect**

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. 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:

- Provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)

- 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.

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

### **Sexual Abuse**

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. 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 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). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

### **Parent and Child Placements**

Children of all Nations agency have procedures in relation to Parent and Child Placements. The welfare of the child in placement is paramount in the event of a risk to the child, including a risk from the child's parent; immediate steps must be taken to protect the child. Children of all Nation agency policy and practice is that a Risk Assessment should be completed and signed by the placing authority prior to placement for each parent placed in the household. The Risk Assessment covers care of the child or children, history or background, any known violent or threatening behaviour, contact, practical arrangements and the impact on other members of the fostering household. The Risk Assessment must be used for all Parents and Child assessed placements, parenting placements and pre-birth placements, even where the parent is below 18. The Risk Assessment is intended to safeguard children placed with Foster Carers and also other members of the fostering household. These are the measures that must be taken to safeguard any child before making a parent and child arrangement with a Foster Carer.

In the event of a safeguarding or child protection concern arising in relation to the child, the same process will be followed as with any child in placement. The Foster parent will ensure the immediate safety of the child and report the incident immediately to the agency Supervising Social Worker. Children of all Nations agency staff will respond immediately and report the matter to the responsible Area Local Authority and the child's Social Worker. In the event of an allegation being made against the Foster Carer the agency's safeguarding process will be followed.

### **E-Safety**

Children of all Nations agency have a specific E-Safety policy in relation to use of the internet and mobile phones in fostering households. The policy is contained in the Foster Carer Handbook Section. This is a constantly changing area of life, as technology continuously changes and develops. It offers great opportunities for

communication and learning, but inevitably brings risks as well. Children of all nations Fostering promotes the view of Child Exploitation and Online Protection ([www.ceop.gov.uk](http://www.ceop.gov.uk)) and the [www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk) website. We encourage and support children and young people to use technology safely and wisely, being aware of the dangers. The agency also has policy and procedures in relation to the staff use of mobile phones and the internet. The policy and procedures identify inappropriate use that will result in disciplinary action.

### **Child Sexual Exploitation**

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a form of sexual abuse that involves the manipulation and/or coercion of young people under the age of 18 into sexual activity in exchange for things such as money, gifts, accommodation, affection or status. The manipulation or 'grooming' process involves befriending children, gaining their trust, and often feeding them drugs and alcohol, sometimes over a long period of time, before the abuse begins. The abusive relationship between victim and perpetrator involves an imbalance of power which limits the victim's options. It is a form of abuse which is often misunderstood by victims and outsiders as consensual. Although it is true that the victim can be tricked into believing they are in a loving relationship, no child under the age of 18 can ever consent to being abused or exploited.

Child sexual exploitation can manifest itself in different ways. It can involve an older perpetrator exercising financial, emotional or physical control over a young person. It can involve peers manipulating or forcing victims into sexual activity, sometimes within gangs and in gang-affected neighbourhoods, but not always. Exploitation can also involve opportunistic or organised networks of perpetrators who may profit financially from trafficking young victims between different locations to engage in sexual activity with multiple men.

This abuse often involves violent and degrading sexual assaults and rape. The Children's Commissioner's report on sexual exploitation by gangs and groups found that oral and anal rape were the most frequently reported types of abuse. Experts agree that these types of abuse are particularly humiliating and controlling, and, as such, may be preferred by those who exploit vulnerable young people. Exploitation can also occur without physical contact when children are persuaded or forced to post indecent images of themselves online, participate in non-contact sexual activities via a webcam or smartphone, or engage in sexual conversations on a mobile phone (DfE, 2011).

Technology is widely used by perpetrators as a method of grooming and coercing victims, often through social networking sites and mobile devices. This form of abuse usually occurs in private, or in semi-public places such as parks, cinemas, cafes and hotels. It is increasingly occurring at 'parties' organised by perpetrators for the purposes of giving victims drugs and alcohol before sexually abusing them.

### **The signs and symptoms of child sexual exploitation**

Grooming and sexual exploitation can be very difficult to identify. Warning signs can easily be mistaken for 'normal' teenage behaviour and/or development. However, parents, carers, school teachers and practitioners are advised to be alert to the following signs and symptoms:



- inappropriate sexual or sexualised behaviour
- repeat sexually transmitted infections; in girls repeat pregnancy, abortions, miscarriage
- having unaffordable new things (clothes, mobile) or expensive habits (alcohol, drugs)
- going to hotels or other unusual locations to meet friends
- getting in/out of different cars driven by unknown adults
- going missing from home or care
- having older boyfriends or girlfriends
- associating with other young people involved in sexual exploitation
- truancy, exclusion, disengagement with school, opting out of education altogether
- unexplained changes in behaviour or personality (chaotic, aggressive, sexual)
- drug or alcohol misuse
- getting involved in crime
- Injuries from physical assault, physical restraint, sexual assault.

If you suspect or discover that someone is sexually exploiting a child you must report your concerns with the child's social worker, supervising social worker or designated person for safeguarding. The agency policy and procedures will be followed. This is not an exhaustive list and indicators can change over time.

### **How can we help to prevent child sexual exploitation?**

Preventative work focuses on raising awareness amongst young people and their carers about sexual exploitation and how to keep safe. It is particularly important that young people are aware of the link between drug and alcohol use and the risk of sexual exploitation.

Schools have an important role to play in delivering age-appropriate information to young people in Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) lessons to help them make positive and informed choices which will reduce their risk of entering into abusive relationships. Children going missing regularly can be both a cause and an effect of child sexual exploitation.

Action taken to reduce the number of children who go missing will reduce incidents of child sexual exploitation. Such action includes schools intervening quickly to establish reasons for children frequently missing school; and relevant agencies / practitioners interviewing children after a 'missing' episode to understand why they go missing and planning preventive strategies based on this information. It is important agencies work together to plan appropriate interventions and to engage with vulnerable young people who may find it hard to trust adults. Providing advice and support to children and their families, particularly during difficult times, is also important. (DfE, 2011 and Home Office, 2011).

Young people leaving care are potentially very vulnerable to sexual exploitation and the right package of support during their transition to independence is vital in protecting them from harm (DfE, 2012)

[www.nspcc.org.uk/childsexualexploitation](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/childsexualexploitation)  
[www.everychild.org.uk/](http://www.everychild.org.uk/)

### **Safe Recruitment**

Children of all Nations agency operate safe recruitment procedures in relation to Foster Parents and employed staff (and deployment of self-employed individuals). Fostering recruitment is in line with the Fostering Services Regulations 2011 (England) and recruitment of staff is in line with current safe recruitment practice guidance. All staff and Foster Carers have Enhanced DBS checks and the referees for successful candidates are contacted directly to verify their references. (See the agencies DBS Policy and Guidance, 2013).

### **Serious Case Reviews**

Occasionally Children of all Nations may be asked to contribute to Serious Case Reviews. These are reviews of multi-agency safeguarding performance in specific cases identified by local safeguarding children boards. In these circumstances Children of all Nation Fostering will identify an independent manager to undertake the Individual Management Review (IMR) as per the guidance in *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013* Advice and support with this process can also be obtained from the Quality Assurance Section.

### **Guidance for Foster parents and employees on Handling Disclosures of Abuse or Allegations of Abuse**

If a child/young person discloses abuse or makes allegations against a foster parent or another young person, the following steps should be taken:

- Listen to what the child/young person has to say but on no account question the child/young person. Reassure the child/young person that you have listened very carefully and understand what they say.
- Explain to the child/young person that you need to let the Fostering Social Worker from Children of all Nations know what has happened and that they will then talk to their local authority Social Worker about it. Ask the child/young person if there is anyone they would like to talk to themselves.
- Write down in detail exactly what the child/young person has said and record the time and date that you have received the information.
- Notify your fostering social worker from Children of all Nations. If they are not available, ask to speak to the Regional Manager or the most senior member of staff.
- Make a record all telephone conversations and the time that they took place. The foster parent's records will need to be available to the child's social worker or those undertaking a child protection investigation.
- If a serious incident or allegation of abuse happens out of office hours, inform the Children of all Nations out of Hours immediately.

- No matter how insignificant the incident or situation may appear to be, it is essential that the information is communicated to an appropriate person at Children of all Nations.
- Foster parents or Children of all Nations employees should not alone make judgements on what constitutes a serious allegation or disclosure by a child or young person – share the information as described above.

## **Child Protection Conferences: guidance for Foster parents**

### **Introduction**

Foster parents are often required to attend Child Protection Conferences (CPC) concerning the child or young person in their care. These conferences can be quite large, and foster parents who are not used to them can find them quite daunting.

Your contribution as the foster parent is crucial to the process of gaining a full and accurate picture, and to help ensure the safety and well-being of the child or young person you are working with. This guide is to give you an idea of how Child Protection Conferences function to help you feel prepared when attending.

Local Authorities do things differently, so there is not one clearly defined method of holding Child Protection Conferences, however there are several areas that they will all have in common.

This guide will look at the following areas:

- A. The purpose of holding a Child Protection Conference (CPC)
- B. Who is invited to attend?
- C. The foster parents' role
- D. Possible outcomes
- E. Categories of abuse and criteria for registering and de-registering children from the Child Protection Register
- F. Some key points for foster parents

### **A. The Purpose of holding a Child Protection Conference (CPC)**

A CPC is held when there is concern over the welfare and safety of a child. Its purpose is to enable all the different agencies involved with the child and his/her family to meet and share information, highlighting concerns about the child's safety and wellbeing and how these might be addressed. C.P.C's are convened and chaired by the relevant local authority Social Services Department (Children's Social Care). All local authorities keep a list of children and young people subject to a child protection plan. One function of the C.P.C. is to decide whether a child should be subject to a child protection plan. The C.P.C. will also make decisions about any action that needs to be taken to ensure the child's welfare and protection (e.g. the provision of specific support services to the child and/or his or her family/foster parents), who will undertake this action and how and by whom progress will be monitored. In most instances the C.P.C. will determine a Core Group to deliver and monitor the child protection action plan. This core group will usually be a small group of three or four people who will work with

child/family and maintain close liaison; where appropriate this could include a foster parent. Within the core group, the C.P.C. will usually specify a Key Worker, or Lead Professional, who carries the responsibility for coordinating the delivery of the agreed action plan. This will usually, but not necessarily, be a local authority Social Worker.

## **B. Who is likely to attend a Child Protection Conference?**

Depending on the reason for holding a Child Protection Conference, and the family composition, the following list includes people who may be invited:

- Chair (Usually a manager from, or Independent Professional designated by, the Local Safeguarding Children Board)
- Minute Taker
- Community Physician
- Parent(s)
- Teacher(s)
- Child(ren) (age appropriately)
- Childminder
- Foster parent
- Police
- Social Worker for the family
- Duty Social Worker
- Social Worker's Manager
- Education Welfare Officer
- GP
- Family Placement Social worker
- Health Visitor
- Grand Parents
- Residential Social Worker
- Family Centre Worker
- School Nurse
- NSPCC
- Youth Worker
- Child Protection Social Worker
- Local Authority Lawyer

This list, long as it is, is not exhaustive. It is unlikely that all invited will be able to attend, but CPCs can be big meetings, and the Chair will begin by asking everybody to introduce themselves and indicate if they have any direct involvement with the children who are the subject of the conference. Remember, if you find such a large meeting of mostly strangers intimidating, how much worse it must be for the child and his/her parents.

## **C. The Foster parent's Role at the Child Protection Conference**

The Chair will ensure that everyone who has something to contribute has a chance to do so. As the person who is looking after one or more children of the family, the contribution of the foster parent is vital. The conference will want to hear how the child has settled with you, any worrying behaviour, whether there is contact with his family and whether that appears to be working. If the child has recently come to live with you, you should report something about how he came, his physical and emotional state at that time.

Don't forget the positives! Details of good things that indicate something positive about the child's life with his/her family are important. If you have information that the

conference needs to know, but you are uncomfortable about saying it, or not sure how to say it, always discuss this beforehand with the local authority social worker or your Children of all Nations fostering social worker.

If you have to report some information that is not well received by the parents, state your view clearly: Parents naturally get angry and upset and might challenge your statements, sometimes aggressively. Clarify your comments where appropriate, but avoid arguments. The role of the Chair is to ensure people can say what they honestly believe without being attacked. If the parents respond angrily to your comments, the Chair might ask you for clarification. It is easier to address your remarks to the Chair rather than to the parents, and respond to the Chair.

#### **D. Possible Outcomes from the Child Protection Conference**

The conference now has to make any decisions and recommendations.

N.B. You have fulfilled your role in giving information, and foster parents are not involved in the decision making. Once all the information has been gathered, the Chair will normally summarise, picking out the major points. The following decisions will then be made, and an action plan agreed: The conference should consider the following questions when determining whether the child should be the subject of a child protection plan: has the child suffered significant harm? And is the child likely to suffer significant harm in the future?

- a) Is the child at risk and in need of a protection or safeguarding plan?
- b) What are the reasons?
- c) Should the child's name be subject to a child protection plan?
- d) What is the category of abuse?
- e) Who will be the responsible worker(s)?
- f) Should any other view or professional opinion be sought?
- g) Any dissent regarding these decisions?

Finally, the conference will make its recommendations and devise an outline protection plan to include the following. Issues requiring a recommendation include the following:

- a) Is legal action recommended?
- b) Is the removal of any child from home recommended?
- c) What services should be provided to the family, and who should provide them – the action plan?
- d) Who will be part of the Core Group?
- e) Is a recommendation to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board appropriate?
- f) Date for first Review Conference.
- g) Record any dissent to these recommendations.
- h) Are there any specific danger signals which need highlighting?
- i) If parents not present, how will they be informed?
- j) Contingency plan

### **E. Timescales for subsequent conferences**

The first child protection review conference should be held within three months of the initial child protection conference and further reviews should be held at intervals of not more than six months for as long as the child remains the subject of a child protection plan. Where the child is also looked after, the child protection review should be part of the looked after child review (see paragraphs 5.144–5.148 of Working Together to safeguard Children).

It is important to ensure that momentum is maintained in the process of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child. Where necessary, reviews should be brought forward to address changes in the child's circumstances.

Attendees should include those most involved with the child and family in the same way as at an initial child protection conference, and the LSCB protocols for establishing a quorum should apply.

### **F. The Purpose of the Review Conference**

The purposes of the child protection review are to: Review whether the child is continuing to suffer, or is likely to suffer, significant harm and their health and developmental progress against planned outcomes set out in the child protection plan.

### **G. Criteria for discontinuing the child protection plan**

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

It is judged that the children is no longer continuing to, or be likely to, suffer significant harm and therefore require 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 which event may discontinuing the child protection plan take place in respect of the original local authority's 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 UK.

When a child is no longer the subject of a child protection plan notification should be sent, at a minimum, to all those agency representatives who were invited to attend the initial child protection conference that led to the plan.

A child who is no longer the subject of a child protection plan may still require additional support and services. Discontinuing the child protection plan should never lead to the automatic withdrawal of help. The key worker should discuss with the parents and the child what services might be wanted and required, based upon the re-assessment of the needs of the child and family.

### **H. Some key points for foster parents**

Child Protection Conferences are held to try and ensure that children's interests are safeguarded; that individual health, safety, development and overall welfare are promoted and not exposed to unnecessary risk. As a foster parent for Children of all Nations you may perform an important part in this process. To do so you need to feel comfortable in the conference setting and confident to speak out.

If you are invited to a Child Protection Conference you should:

- Talk through any worries you may have, and the contribution you can make, with your Children of all Nations fostering social worker and/or the child's social worker before attending.
- Consider making some brief notes about your intended contribution (key points).
- Have a 'de-briefing' discussion with your fostering social worker and/or the child's social worker soon after the conference – to clarify understanding of outcomes and any actions agreed.
- Keep the confidentiality of the conference – if you are unsure about whom you may/may not share information with, this must be clarified with the Children of all Nations fostering social worker.
- Keep brief records – consult with your Children of all Nations fostering social worker.

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