A logo of a group of people

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A list of key terms used in child protection in England.

**Care plans**

Before a child is taken into care the local authority will produce a plan for the future care of the child. The parents and the child should be involved in developing the care plan.

The plan should show how the child’s needs would be met in care, including their health, education and contact with family members. It often includes details about:

* where the child will live
* arrangements for attending school
* arrangements for seeing parents.

Plans must be regularly reviewed and updated.

For more information, see:

[Children Act 1989 (legislation.gov.uk)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/section/31A) Section 31A

**Child protection case conferences**

A child protection case conference is held if the child is at risk of significant harm, so that all of the relevant professionals can share information, identify risks and outline what needs to be done to protect the child.

Who’s involved in a case conference:

* agencies such as social services, the police and health services
* people who have the most involvement working with the child and family, such as the child’s school(s) and family GP
* family members
* the child, when appropriate.

What’s considered during a case conference:

* background information about the family
* findings from the child protection investigation
* ongoing assessments.

**Child protection registers and plans**

In England a child may be the subject of a child protection plan (CPP).

The child protection register (CPR) is a confidential list of all children in the local area who have been identified as being at risk of significant harm. The register allows authorised individuals in social work, education, health, police and the voluntary sector to check if a child they are working with is known to be at risk.

If a child is added to the CPR they must also have a child protection plan. The child protection plan sets out:

* how social workers will check on the child’s welfare
* what changes are needed to reduce the risk to the child
* what support will be offered to the family.

A core group is responsible for making sure that the child protection plan is supporting the child effectively on an ongoing basis. The members of this group include the person who has been nominated as the Lead Professional, the child and their parents/carers, and they report about this at child protection case conference (CPCC) meetings. The core group should be set up within 15 days of the initial child protection case conference.

**Confidentiality and information sharing**

When recognising and responding to abuse, it's important to ensure that any information shared with relevant authorities about a child is done so in a confidential, systematic and respectful manner.

Topics to consider should include:

* when information should be shared
* when and how to get consent
* what information needs to be shared
* who to share information with.

**Mandatory reporting**

In England and Wales, it's mandatory for all regulated health and social care professionals and teachers to report ‘known cases’ of female genital mutilation (FGM) in under 18s to the police (Home Office, 2016).

**NSPCC authorised person status (excludes Scotland)**

In England, Northern Ireland and Wales the NSPCC is unique amongst charities as it has statutory powers to intervene on behalf of children.

In these nations, only local authorities and the NSPCC can apply to a court for a care, supervision, or child assessment order.

This is referred to as having ‘authorised person status’ because in law the NSPCC is described as an ‘authorised person’ to bring such proceedings.

The NSPCC has had statutory powers to intervene on behalf of children for more than a century. These were most recently re-affirmed by the Children Act 1989 in England and Wales, and the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995. For more information, see:

* [Children Act 1989 (legislation.gov.uk)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/section/31) Section 31 ( England and Wales )
* [The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 (legislation.gov.uk)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1995/755/article/49/made) Section 49

**Parental responsibility**

This is a set of legal rights and responsibilities, including making sure a child is kept safe. Parental responsibility gives the right to make important decisions about a child’s life like:

* who looks after them
* where they live
* how they are educated.

For more information, see: [Children Act 1989 (legislation.gov.uk)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/section/3) section 3.

**Pre-proceedings meetings (excludes Scotland)**

In England, Northern Ireland and Wales a pre-proceedings meeting takes place between the local authority, the parents and the parents’ lawyer to discuss with the parents how they can change the way they look after their child and what support and help is needed from the local authority.

If both sides agree, they will write a formal agreement that both the parents and the local authority have to follow. If parents don’t agree to the changes, or don’t follow the agreement, the local authority will probably ask the court to take the child into care.

**Significant harm**

“Harm” is the “ill treatment or the impairment of the health or development of the child” (Section 31,  [Children Act 1989 (legislation.gov.uk)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/section/31A) Article 2,

Seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another person is also a form of harm (Section 120,  [Adoption and Children Act 2002 (legislation.gov.uk)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/38/section/120)

Harm can be determined “significant” by “comparing a child’s health and development with what might be reasonably expected of a similar child”.

Although there is no absolute criteria for determining whether or not harm is “significant”, local authorities such as social services, police, education and health agencies work with family members to assess the child, and a decision is made based on their professional judgement using the gathered evidence. For more information, see:

[Children Act 1989 (legislation.gov.uk)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/section/31A)

**Section 17 Child in Need**

Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 states that it is the general duty of every local authority to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need; and so far as it is consistent with that duty, to promote the upbringing of such children by their families.

[Children Act 1989 (legislation.gov.uk)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/section/17)

**Section 47 Child at risk of significant harm**

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.

[Children Act 1989 (legislation.gov.uk)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/section/47)