



Children's Guide to Child Protection in Camden





What is

Child Protection?

Child protection is about keeping children safe from harm by making sure they are being looked after properly and not being hurt.

Children's Safeguarding and Social Work (CSSW) has to make sure that all children that live in Camden are safe from harm and this leaflet tells you all about how we do this.

Why do children need protecting?

Sometimes, adults may harm children by:

- physically hurting them, such as hitting them
- not looking after them properly
- making them feel unhappy
- involving them in sexual activity.

If this happens to you, remember it's not your fault and you can get help to stop it.

What is a child protection enquiry?

If someone like your teacher or the police thinks that you are being harmed, they will tell a social worker at CSSW. This is called a referral.

To decide if you are safe, a social worker has to find out lots of things about you and your family. They will talk to your parents and other people who know you, like your teacher, school nurse

or doctor, to find out what has happened. This is called a **child protection enquiry**.

A social worker will come to see you about what has happened to you. They will ask you some questions but mostly, they will listen to what you want to say. You can speak to the social worker on your own if you want to, and tell them if you are worried or frightened about anything.

Sometimes, a police officer may visit too. Sometimes, the social worker will ask a doctor to look at you to see if you have been hurt or injured.

When the social worker has spoken to everyone, they will decide what to do next. If they think you are safe at home, the enquiry will finish, but the social worker may still keep in touch with your family to offer any help you may need.

If the social worker thinks you are not safe, they will arrange a child protection conference.

What is a child protection conference?

This is a special meeting where people who know you well, like your parents and your teacher, will talk about how you are, whether you have been harmed and what needs to be done to make sure you are not harmed again.

Who goes to the conference?

- Your parents
- Your social worker
- Your teacher
- Your health visitor/school nurse
- A police officer

Other people may also go if they have any special information, so if your mum or dad has their own social worker, they will go too. The person in charge of the meeting is called the Chair. It's their job to make sure everyone gets a chance to speak and that the meeting makes a plan that keeps you safe from harm.

Can I go?

If you are 12 years old or more, your social worker will normally arrange for you to go to the conference.

If you are under 12 years old, you can talk to your social worker about going to the conference. If they think that you would be able to understand what's going on, they can arrange for you to go. But no matter how old you are, if your social worker or the chair thinks it would not be good for you to go to the conference, they may have to say no, or that you can only go to part of the conference.

This may be because someone who hurt you is going to the conference, or that some of the information would be too upsetting for you to hear.

How can I get everyone to listen to me?

You can talk to your social worker about how you want to get involved and get heard at the conference. The chair will also meet with you just before the conference to talk about what will happen and how you can get your views across.

You might want someone you know to go with you, or you can ask for an advocate. This is someone who is specially trained to help children speak up for themselves at meetings.



What if I don't go?

Don't worry if you don't want to go to the conference. You can ask your social worker to make sure everyone hears what you have to say, maybe by writing a letter that your social worker can read out, or making a video recording or tape message.

After the conference, your social worker will let you know what happened and what was decided as soon as possible.

What happens at the conference?

- Everybody says who they are and how they know you.
- The social worker explains why they think you are not safe and why a conference had to be held.
- Everyone gets a chance to say how they think you are and whether you and your parents need help in keeping you safe from harm.
- If everyone thinks you are not safe, they make a plan called a **child protection plan**.

What is a

Child Protection Plan?

This is a list of things that have to happen in order to make sure that you are kept safe. The plan could include how often your social worker will come to visit you, or whether you need to see a doctor, or about going to school regularly.

How long will I have a Child Protection Plan?

Every 3-6 months, another conference is held to look at whether:

- your plan is keeping you safe
- your plan needs to be changed to make sure you remain safe
- you don't need a child protection any more.

If things have improved, and your social worker thinks you and your family no longer need any help to keep you safe from harm, you will no longer have a child protection plan and there won't be any more conferences.

Will I still live at home? What will happen to my mum and dad?

Most children will still live at home with their parents when a child protection enquiry is happening.

If CSSW want you to live away from your parents, they have to go to court to get permission. This only happens if your social worker thinks you are in serious danger at home.

If your mum and dad are having trouble keeping you safe or looking after you properly, your social worker will help them so they can make things better for you at home.

What if I'm not happy?

Although we always listen to your views, sometimes we can't always do what you want as it may not be right for you.

If you are unhappy about anything, you can talk to your social worker. You can also make a complaint; ask your social worker for the special children's complaints form.

If you feel you want talk to someone outside CSSW about what's happening to you, contact any of these groups for help.

Childline: 0800 1111

NSPCC: 0800 800 5000

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