

Safeguarding Children is Everyone's Business!!

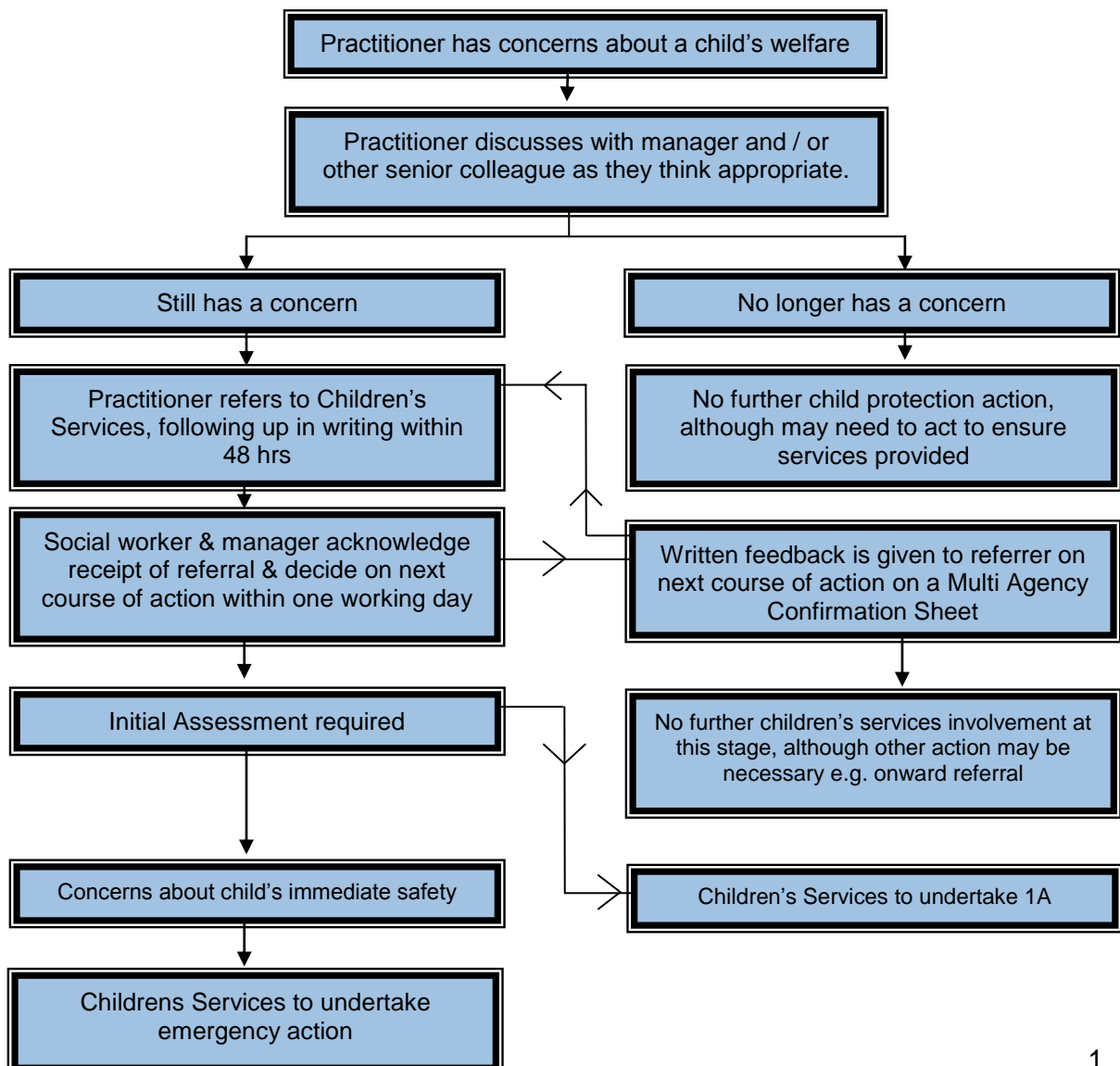
Guidance for Practitioners Completing a Multi Agency Referral Form

This guidance provides advice on how best to complete the Multi Agency Referral Form. This is the form used to inform Children's Services of a concern about the safety or welfare of a child living in the Local Authority of Barking and Dagenham.

1. What to do if you're worried a child is being abused.

If you have a concern about the safeguarding needs of a child or young person you should in the first instance follow your own organisational procedures. These should be based around the flow chart detailed below:

Flow Chart 1 – Referral, Drawn from DfES Guidance Publication, *What to do if your worried a child is being abused*



2. Background & Purpose

What is a MARF?

The Multi Agency Referral Form is the tool that is used for practitioners and individuals to inform Children's Services that there may be a concern for the safety and/or wellbeing of a child.

Where can I get one?

These forms are available from:

Barking and Dagenham Internet/Intranet Site
Local Safeguarding Children Board Website

www.barking-dagenham.gov.uk
www.bardag.lscb.gov.uk

From the Assessment Team

Tel: 020 8227 3852 / 3882 / 3860
Fax: 020 8227 3951

3. Prior to a Referral

What information do I need to make a referral?

Gather your information together including any records that you keep on the child; date of birth, address, family composition and any recorded incidents or observations. Think about what it is you want to say, sometimes you can feel overloaded with information and it might help to think about what has triggered your concern.

Some organisations across Barking & Dagenham have been involved in piloting the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). This is an assessment undertaken by community practitioners for children with additional needs who are **not at risk or in need of statutory intervention** to safeguard their wellbeing. If you are one of these organisations and have found that a child or family you have assessed requires statutory intervention to safeguard them, much of the information required on the Multi Agency Referral Form will be found on the Common Assessment Form. This guidance highlights the areas where the relevant information can be found.

4. Making a Referral

When you make a referral, you should agree with the recipient what the child and parents will be told, by whom and when. If you make your referral by telephone, you should confirm it in writing using the MARF within 48 hours. (This can be faxed) The Safeguarding and Rights assessment team should acknowledge your written referral within 1 working day of receiving it, so if you have not heard back within 3 working days, you should make contact to confirm the status of the referral.

5. Completing the Multi Agency Referral Form

Why is it important to fill in all the details in all the boxes?

Although children and families may be accessing a range of services and will be in contact with many practitioners, it may be that having identified a concern regarding a child, you hold vital information on the child's needs and any potential risk factors.

The form has six pages and although this may seem like a laborious and time consuming referral process, the form is designed to assist the referrer in sharing all the information that is important in order to make a decision on appropriate action. **It is the information that you provide on this form that will inform the duty officer's decision on how best to proceed and will form the foundation of any future assessments.**

MARF Page One

A. Child/Young Person

Ethnicity

Why is it important to complete this part?

The concerned practitioner is asked to provide details of the ethnicity of the child. It is important to complete this information as it not only gives the social worker important information on a particular child but also informs how services are planned for in the future. For example, if there is a particular issue repeatedly impacting on a specific community, services can be tailored to meet these needs.

Name and Details

Why do I need to provide all this information?

If there is a Common Assessment in existence for the child, this information can be gathered from page one of the Common Assessment Form.

It is crucial to include as much information as possible in all the boxes. One of the first things a duty officer will do on receipt of a referral is check to see if there is any history of concerns reported about this child before, this is done by name, address and date of birth. It is very likely that the family will be contacted by the children's services department and it is important that the worker understands any language or communication needs so that they can engage with the family appropriately and effectively right from the beginning of the process.

MARF Page Two

B. Child/Young Person's Principle Carers

Why do I have to give so much detail about the parents/carers?

In order to ensure that the referral is responded to according to the need of the child it is important for the worker to have relevant and correct information about any adults who have the responsibility for their care. It may be necessary to gather further information on carers to identify any potential dangers, challenges or strengths in the parent child relationship. The basic information provided in the MARF will be built on and will aid future planning.

C. Other Household Members

This section asks the referrer to complete any information on other people living in the home. It is important for the worker to understand if there are other members living in the house. A child's living circumstances can have a huge impact on their health, safety and development and workers need to be fully informed of any circumstances that may be influencing family life. Where there are siblings in the family, it is important to know their correct details in order to ascertain if there have been any concerns about them historically. Workers need to be able to plan for the needs of the family as a whole in order to make sure that all the children are adequately supported and safeguarded.

D. Other Significant People in the Child/Young Person's Life, Including Other Family Members

What is this for and why?

This lets the worker know if there are any other significant people in the life of the child in order to assess whether there might be appropriate forms of support that can be accessed from within the family. It might also inform a worker that there are specific difficulties that span across family members and will help to build a picture of the child's experiences within their family context.

Informing Parents about Referrals how, why and when you shouldn't

You must seek parental agreement to make a referral unless you consider such a discussion would place the child at an increased risk of significant harm. However, if parental consent is withheld, you should inform the parent that you must still make the referral.

It can be very frightening for a parent to be contacted by a Social Worker if they have had no idea that there have been any concerns. In most cases, it is important to let the parent know what your worries about their child might be and why you have decided that a referral to Children's Services is necessary.

However, if you think that informing a parent about your referral will place the child in further danger, detail your reasons on the MARF. When you make a referral, you should agree with the recipient what the child and parents will be told, by whom and when.

E. Reason for Referral/Request for Services

What information goes in this box?

This is where you are required to write about the incident or build up of concerns that have led to your decision to refer this child to Children's Services in order to safeguard their wellbeing. Write any details of injuries, concerning behaviour or information that indicates there is a negative impact on a child's development.

MARF Page Three

F. Information on Statutory Status

What information does this provide the Social Worker with and why is that important?

This information will help to inform the worker on the most appropriate response to your referral, it helps to direct the worker to where there may be further information stored regarding the child you are worried about. This information immediately indicates if there are other statutory services and professionals that have existing or historical involvement in the safeguarding or support of the child.

G. Key Agencies Involved

This tells the worker who best to talk to when gathering further information on the child and family. There may be other agencies that have been involved with a child and family, and hold valuable information. It also shows the worker which practitioners may be available to offer further support to the child and/or their family.

Gathering information on a child is similar to completing a puzzle. Different agencies who are involved with a child each hold a piece of the puzzle that details a child's life and experiences. It is often only when all the pieces of the puzzle are put together that we truly gain a picture of the child and their safeguarding and support needs.

MARF Pages Three and Four

H. Information Supporting the Referral

If there is an existing Common Assessment, information on pages 4 & 5 can help support your referral.

What information might be needed here?

The Local Authority currently responds to referrals in accordance with the Eligibility Criteria. This is a document that details three priority bands:

Priority 1

These children are at greatest risk and must receive an appropriate response without delay.

Priority 2

Children's Services will meet these children's needs as fully as possible within a reasonable time. It is recognised that if these needs are not met, the child will become priority 1 in the future.

Priority 3

These children are at mild risk. Some families need services to make sure their children have what they need to develop. Otherwise, these children might become priority 2 or priority 1 in the future.

Please note that these criteria may change in the future and the guidance will be updated in accordance.

Where possible your referral should include as much information as possible, you must distinguish between what you have observed and what you have been told. You will need to detail information on:

The needs of children and young people

Include information on health and safety, the child's development, daily living experiences and relationships.

The needs of parents and carers

It is important that parents and carers are able to provide for their children's health, safety and development. If parents' or carers' needs are not being met, or if they are not able to care for the children properly, services may have to be provided. Include any information you may have on parent's health and safety, daily living and relationships.

Risk Indicators

It is important to inform the worker if there are specific risks in the areas of drug and alcohol misuse, mental health difficulties and domestic violence so that workers can respond safely and appropriately to your referral.

Parents/Carers capabilities to respond to child/young person

This information will be found in section 2, page 6 of an existing Common Assessment.

Consider the parents ability to provide basic care and ensure the safety of their child. Include information on whether a parent is observed to provide emotional warmth, stimulation, guidance, boundaries and stability. Include any specific issues affecting parent/carers capability to respond appropriately to a child/young person's needs.

Family and Environmental Factors which Impact on the Child

This information can be found in Section 3 page 7 of an existing Common Assessment.

Include any information you have on the family history, functioning and the wider family network. Detail any housing, employment, income needs and the family's social integration. Detail any community resources that might be able to provide support.

When providing information, it is also important to include any perceived strengths of the child and his/her family. This is important as those strengths may be built to ensure the wellbeing and safeguarding needs of the child are met.

MARF Page 5

Referrers Details

Please make sure that you include your details as the worker receiving the referral will want to contact you and discuss your concerns.

MARF Page 6

Multi Agency Referral Form Confirmation

What might happen next?

In response to your referral, you should receive a Multi Agency Confirmation Form that confirms receipt of your MARF and details the outcome and any decisions made within 24 hours. If you have not had a response within three days, it is your duty to contact the assessment team and ask for written feedback on the Multi Agency Confirmation Form.

Possible outcomes from a referral

The Assessment Team will undertake an initial consideration (or screening) of the referral that will proceed to one of the following outcomes:

- 1 No Further Action (NFA).
 - If a referral does not seem to be about a child who is in need (of protection or statutory children's services provision), the assessment team will keep a note of the referral and response for their records.
 - If from the information they receive it appears that it is more suitable for another agency to respond, they will ask the person or organisation who referred the case to contact them.

If the information they gather from the MARF shows that a child is in need (of protection or statutory Children's services), they will carry out a review to identify the child's needs and the suitable priority level and proceed to one of the following options:

Emergency action to protect a child
A Section 47 strategy discussion.
Initial Assessment
Core Assessment

What do I do next?

Where there is No Further Action, feedback should be provided to the family and referrer about the outcome.

The decision to NFA may also be made after either the Initial Assessment or Core Assessment. If you receive feedback from the Assessment Team that the decision from them is to take no further action, you have two choices:

- 1 Given the feedback, accept the decision of NFA and continue to support the family with available community services. The assessment team should be able to provide you with a list of support services for children with additional needs.

What if I don't agree with the decision?

- 2 Contact your Safeguarding Lead (SL) representative (see table 1 at the back of this document) to discuss the case and your concerns.

Table One- Safeguarding Leads for respective agencies/sections

Children's Services		
<p>- Overarching Lead</p> <p>Chris Pelham Group Manager Safeguarding, Quality & Reviews christopher.pelham@lbbd.gov.uk</p>	<p>Safeguarding & Rights</p> <p>Laura Clements Group Manager Care Management laura.clements@lbbd.gov.uk</p>	<p>Quality and School Improvement</p> <p>Alison Crowe Team Manager Safeguarding and Quality Assurance alison.crowe@lbbd.gov.uk</p>
<p>Shared Services & Engagement</p> <p>Joy Barter Group Manager Early Years & Childcare joy.barter@lbbd.gov.uk</p>	<p>Pupil & Family Support (Including Schools)</p> <p>Steve Harley Interim Group Manager Family & Targeted Support for Children & Young People steve.harley@lbbd.gov.uk</p>	<p>Policy and Commissioning</p> <p>Craig Benning ICS Project Manager craig.benning@lbbd.gov.uk</p>
<p>B&D PCT</p> <p>Liz Doherty Nurse Consultant, Child Protection elizabeth.doherty@nhs.net</p>	<p>BHRT</p> <p>Leila Francis Nurse Consultant, Child Protection leila.francis@bhrhospitals.nhs.uk</p>	<p>NELMHT</p> <p>Ileen Ashitey Safeguarding/Child Protection Advisor ileen.ashitey@nelmht.nhs.uk</p>
<p>Connexions</p> <p>Nanette Higgins Area Manager nanette.higgins@vtplc.com</p>	<p>Police</p> <p>Angela Allgood Detective Sergeant angela.allgood@met.police.uk</p>	<p>Voluntary Sector</p> <p>Karen West Whyllie Chief Officer CIIL karen.mhbdcil@btconnect.com</p>
<p>Probation</p> <p>Nick Howell-Ives Senior Probation Officer nick.howell-ives@london.probation.gsi.gov.uk</p>	<p>YOS</p> <p>Charlie Crawford YOT Operational Team Manager charlie.crawford@lbbd.gov.uk</p>	<p>Housing</p> <p>Janet Boulton Homeless Persons, Interim Housing Advice & Homeless Prevention Manager janet.boulton@lbbd.gov.uk</p>
<p>Adults Services</p> <p>Emma Gray Domestic Violence & Hate Crime Manager emma.gray@lbbd.gov.uk</p>	<p>Leisure, Arts & Olympics</p> <p>Teresa Parish Group Manager Events, Play, Tourism & Olympics teresa.parish@lbbd.gov.uk</p>	

Referral to Safeguard Lead

Name of child(ren)	Date of Birth

Name of practitioner and agency with whom there is a concern

Name	Agency

Brief description of nature of concern

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Outcome sought

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Actions agreed by Safeguarding Lead (to be completed by referring SL)

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Should the Head of Service be contacted?

Yes No

Identify the following:

<i>Who will do what</i>	<i>What will be undertaken</i>	<i>By when</i>

Outcome achieved following completion of actions

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