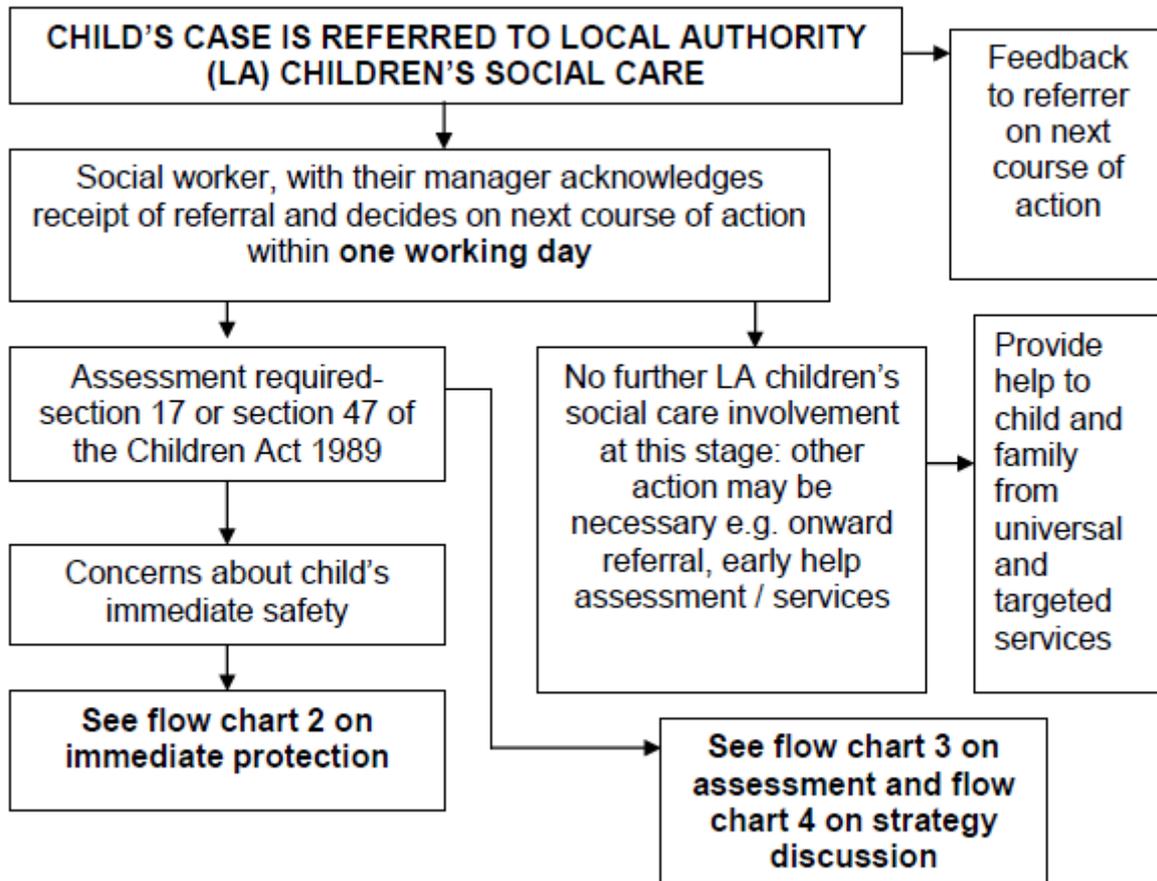


Flow chart 1: Action taken when a child is referred to local authority children's social care services



Immediate Protection

Where there is a risk to the life of a child or a likelihood of serious immediate harm, local authority social workers, the police or NSPCC should use their statutory child protection powers to act immediately to secure the safety of the child.

If it is necessary to remove a child from their home, a local authority must, wherever possible and unless a child's safety is otherwise at immediate risk, apply for an Emergency Protection Order (EPO). Police powers to remove a child in an emergency should be used only in exceptional circumstances where there is insufficient time to seek an EPO or for reasons relating to the immediate safety of the child.

An EPO, made by the court, gives authority to remove a child and places them under the protection of the applicant.

When considering whether emergency action is necessary an agency should always consider the needs of other children in the same household or in the household of an alleged perpetrator.

The local authority in whose area a child is found in circumstances that require emergency action (the first authority) is responsible for taking emergency action.

If the child is looked after by, or the subject of a child protection plan in another authority, the first authority must consult the authority responsible for the child. Only when the second local authority explicitly accepts responsibility (to be followed up in writing) is the first authority relieved of its responsibility to take emergency action.

Multi-agency working

Planned emergency action will normally take place following an immediate strategy discussion. Social workers, the police or NSPCC should:

- initiate a strategy discussion to discuss planned emergency action. Where a single agency has to act immediately, a strategy discussion should take place as soon as possible after action has been taken;
- see the child (this should be done by a practitioner from the agency taking the emergency action) to decide how best to protect them and whether to seek an EPO; and
- wherever possible, obtain legal advice before initiating legal action, in particular when an EPO is being sought.

Related information: Related information: For further guidance on EPOs see [Chapter 4 of Court orders and pre-proceedings: For local authorities \(April 2014\)](#).