

Making a 'Good' Referral to Children's Social Care

Safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility and timely, accurate and well constructed referrals helps agencies to work together effectively to keep children and young people safe.

Pointers

Why are you worried? Is the child/ren at risk of or experiencing '**Significant Harm**'? (this could include physical, emotional or sexual harm or concerns the child is being neglected)

What have you **seen**? (where, when)

What have you **heard**? (when, who from)

What is the **impact** on the child now?

What do you think the **future impact** on the child/ren is likely to be if CSC don't become involved?

What is the **child's lived experience**? i.e. what is life like for them? What do they think about their lives? Have you asked them?

Identify **what you have tried already to reduce risk** and meet the child/ren's needs...and reasons you think the risk remains. Or, if you are making a referral without engaging with the child/ren and family at an earlier intervention level please explain why, for example where there is an immediate risk of harm or perhaps your role doesn't bring you into direct contact with children and families. Even if the information is from a third party please refer your concerns.

Remember to separate **Facts and Opinions**. You can have a professional opinion but make sure this is stated clearly. For example; *the young person said "I wanted to have sex with them" however in my view they were coerced and are being sexually exploited because...* then list evidence that leads you to this opinion – use of substances/alcohol, significant age difference etc.

Do you have **consent** to make this referral? Unless it increases the risks to the child (immediate safeguarding concern) or is a risk to your own personal safety – then having the consent of parents (or the young person if they are old enough) is required for CSC to accept the referral. However, don't let the issue of consent get in the way if you are worried – you can always call for advice. Having consent is best practice and you should always endeavour to inform parents you are making a referral, but if this has not been possible please explain this within your referral.

Have you included the **basic information** about the parents and their contact details? Do you know who has parental responsibility? Are there parents not living with the child? Do you know about them?

Use the **online form** to make a referral which can be found here: <https://www.nscb.org.uk/have-concerns-about-child> You can save a completed copy of your referral for your records **BEFORE** you submit it as long as your records are secure.

Pitfalls

Using 'Unknown' as an answer – why don't you know?

Formalising, sanitising or omitting language used. When quoting someone use their actual words, this includes swearing and slang language. You may want to include clarification of what they meant. Remember, this could become part of an evidence submission to court – don't leave room for ambiguity or dispute.

Not enough details of the impact on the child and what their lived experience is, for example a good referral would not refer to a family having "a chaotic lifestyle" but would instead separate fact from opinion and evidence the lived experiences for that child; poor school attendance (e.g. 3 days in last fortnight), child cared for by multiple adults (who they are/how many are you aware of?), lack of routine and boundaries (e.g. 4 year old playing out in the street at 3am) and poor home conditions (e.g. damp, refuse piling up, flies, animal waste on carpets, no toothbrushes for the children) etc.

The record is written in a way that is not for sharing, for example it includes **judgemental or stereotypical views and language**. State your concerns but be respectful – would you be happy for the person you are writing about reading your comments over your shoulder?

Delays in submitting the referral. If you are worried about a child/ren then making the referral should be a priority. We know you are busy with many demands on your time, but timely referrals help to minimise risk and mean we can act faster to assess and protect children.

A top tip in a making referral is to remember **that you are not telling a story you are sharing concerns about a child**. Keep the child at the centre of your referral: What is a day in their life for them? What are you worried about? What needs to happen for things to get better?

FINALLY – the thresholds for CSC intervention are not a 'finish line' for keeping children and young people safe. Safeguarding continues to be **EVERYBODY's** responsibility even for those children and young people on Child Protection Plans

You can find more tips on recording here: <http://www.writeenough.org.uk/>

You can find the thresholds document here:

https://newcastlescb.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_cont_help_supp.html?zoom_highlight=thresholds&zoom_highlight=thresholds

Or alternatively visit <https://newcastlescb.proceduresonline.com> and search for 'thresholds'

Contacts:

- Initial Response Service – 0191 277 2500
- Emergency Duty Team – 0191 278 7878
- Northumbria Police – 101 (**in an emergency always dial 999**)
- NSPCC Helpline – 0808 800 5000

