

5.1 Referral and Assessment.



Wigan Children's Social Care has particular responsibilities towards all children whose health or development may be impaired without the provision of support and services, or who are disabled. These children are described as Children in Need by the Children Act 1989.

Consultation between agencies and practitioners prior to and regarding referrals for assessment is positively encouraged and is an essential aspect of good practice when working to safeguard children.

Some children are in need because they are suffering from Significant Harm, or because they are likely to suffer Significant Harm. Any practitioner or member of the public, who suspects that a child has been, or is being, abused or neglected, should contact Children in Need Duty Team, by telephone, without delay (**tel. 01942 828300**).

Any practitioner unsure as to whether their concern about a child should result in a referral of safeguarding concerns to the Children in Need Duty Team should consult with the designated professional within their organisation.

Where further advice or consultation is necessary, the Children in Need Duty Team will be able to provide such. Referrers should have an opportunity to discuss their concerns with a qualified social worker. The purpose of the consultation is to assist the potential referrer in deciding whether or not to make a formal referral to the Children in Need Duty Team.

Referrers should be asked specifically if they hold any information about difficulties being experienced by the family/household due to domestic abuse, mental illness, substance misuse, and/or learning difficulties.

Where a referral is made to the Children in Need Duty Team and the child concerned already has a social worker, then the child's social worker, the team manager or a team colleague should be the point of contact.

Where the child concerned does not have an allocated social worker, contact should be with Children in Need Duty Team. Enquiries out of office hours should be made to the Out of Hours **Service (tel. 01618342436)**.

When a practitioner has made such a referral to the Children in Need Duty Team this should be confirmed in writing, within 5 working days, to the appropriate Team Manager.

All referrals should be made using the multi-agency referral form <http://www.wigan.gov.uk/Services/HealthSocialCare/ChildProtection/WSCB/ProfessionalReferralForm.htm> the Children in Need Duty Team should acknowledge the written referral within three working days. If the referrer has not received an acknowledgement within three working days, they should contact the Children's Duty Team again.

At the end of any discussion about a child, the referrer and social worker should be clear about the proposed action, who will undertake what actions, by when and for what purpose, or that no further action will be taken. The decision should be recorded by both the Children in Need Duty Team and, where the referrer is another practitioner, the referrer.

If a referral is taken and it appears that a crime may have been committed against a child, the assessing social worker will contact the police as soon as possible as part of the Initial Assessment. Any other practitioner or member of the public can report such concern to the police in addition to making a referral to the Children in Need Duty Team.

In the interests of working in partnership with children and families, practitioners should seek the permission of parents before discussing a referral about them with another agency. Where there is concern that a child may be suffering Significant Harm this should only be done where such discussion will not itself place the child at increased risk of further Significant Harm . Where there is concern that a criminal offence may have been committed, any decision about informing the parents should only be made after proper consultation with the police.