

## Significant Harm

The Children Act 1989 introduced Significant Harm as the threshold that justifies compulsory intervention in family life in the best interests of children.

[Physical Abuse](#), [Sexual Abuse](#), [Emotional Abuse](#) and [Neglect](#) are all categories of Significant Harm.

Harm is defined as the ill treatment or impairment of health and development. This definition was clarified in section 120 of the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (implemented on 31 January 2005) so that it may include, "for example, impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill treatment of another".

Suspensions or allegations that a child is suffering or likely to suffer Significant Harm should result in an [Assessment](#) incorporating a [Section 47 Enquiry](#)

There are no absolute criteria on which to rely when judging what constitutes significant harm. Sometimes a single violent episode may constitute significant harm but more often it is an accumulation of significant events, both acute and longstanding, which interrupt, damage or change the child's development.