

Significant harm

The Children Act 1989 uses the concept of significant harm to justify **compulsory intervention** in family life in the best interests of children

The local authority is under a **duty to make enquiries** where it has reasonable cause to suspect a child is suffering significant harm. They will need to consider

- the **nature** of harm
- the **impact** on the child's health and development
- the child's **development** within the context of their family and wider environment
- any **special needs** such as a medical condition, communication impairment or disability that may affect the child's development and care within the family
- the **capacity** of the parents to adequately meet the child's needs
- the **wider** environmental context
- ill-treatment (including sexual abuse and physical abuse)
- **impairment** of health (physical or mental) or development (physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural) as compared to a similar child