



Understanding the Child Protection Process

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In this booklet you will find:



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Jargon Buster

In meetings, some people may use abbreviations, short words, or language that you might not have seen or heard before. We have listed some here which may help you.

Self-advocacy	Self-advocacy is speaking up for yourself and telling people what you need and want to happen about decisions that affect your life.
EHA	Early Help Assessment.
CIN	Child In Need (is a partnership. A Child In Need plan needs a parent's permission).
CSC	Children's Social Care.
CSE	Child Sexual Exploitation.
CCE	Child Criminal Exploitation.
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service.
DSO	Designated Safeguarding Officer.
DSL	Designated Safeguarding Lead.
CP	Child Protection.

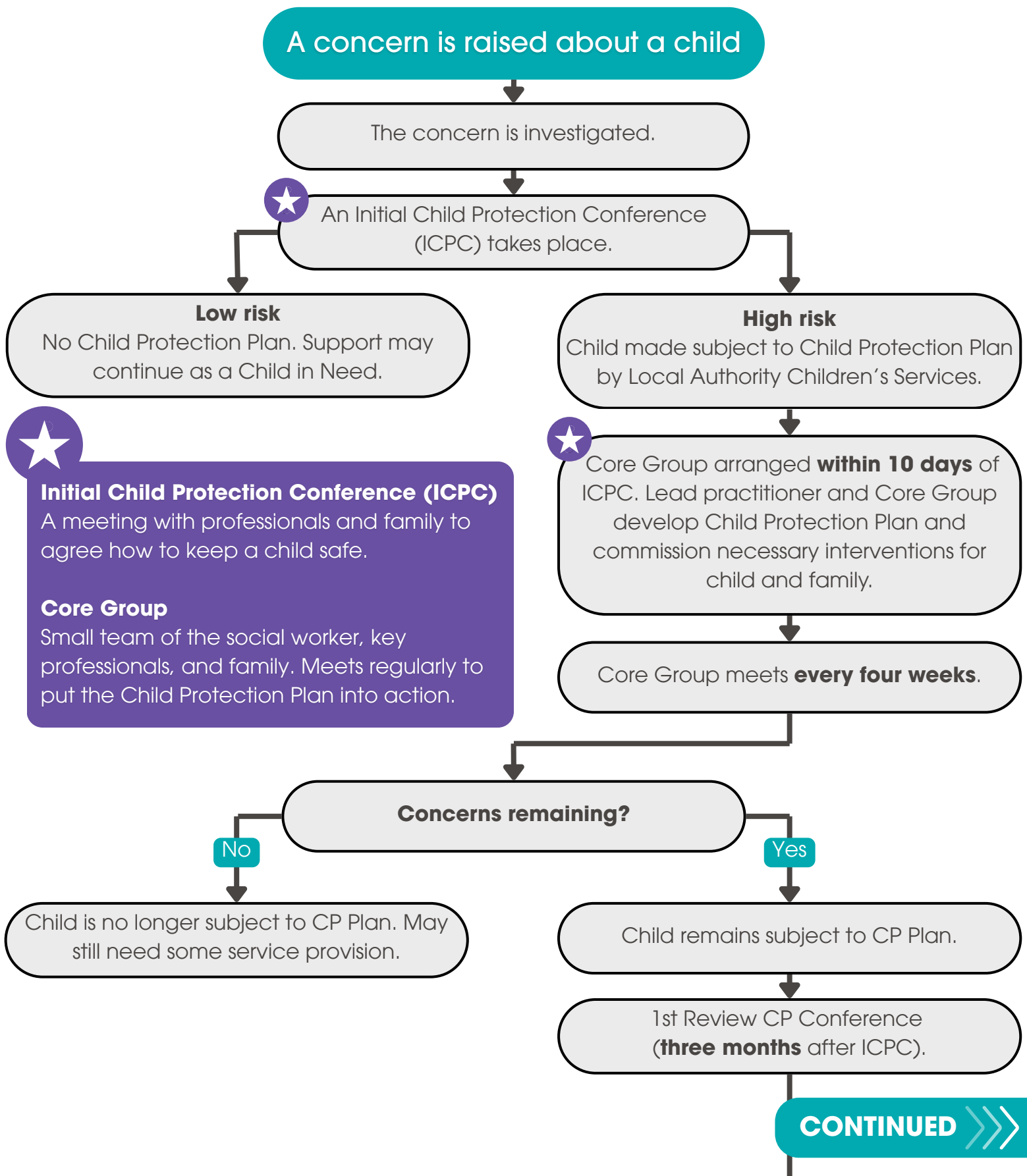
Jargon Buster

SW	Social Worker.
ICPC	Initial Child Protection Conference.
PLO	Public Law Outline.
EHCP	Education Health Care Plan.
IRO	Independent Reviewing Officer.
C4C	Looked After Child or Cared for Child.
LA	Local Authority - responsible for providing services and support for children and families in your area.
LADO	Local Authority Designated Officer.
MACFA	Multi-agency Case File Audit.
MARF	Multi-agency Referral Form.
Graded Care Profile	A piece of paper completed by two people, with your help, about your child.
AIM assessment	A Sexual Harmful Behaviour assessment.

Jargon Buster

DASH	Domestic Abuse Stalking Harassment.
MARAC	Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference.
SCR	Serious Case Review.
TAF/C	Team around family/ Child Level 2. This is called “early help” and you would have no Social Worker involved.
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation.
FII	Fabricated Induced Illness.
HYM	Healthy Young Minds.

Child Protection Flow Chart



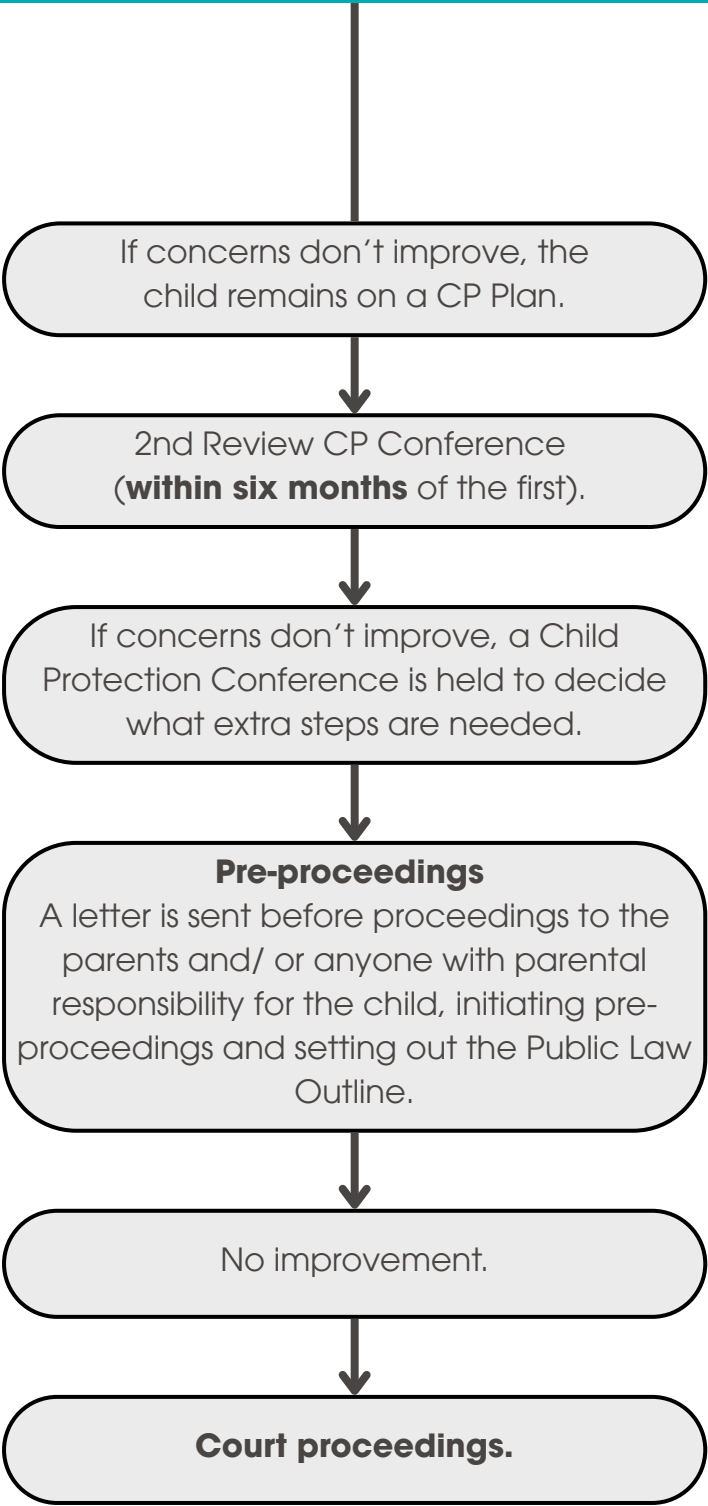
Child Protection Flow Chart

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Process and Meetings
We go into more detail about this process and what to expect in these meetings on pages 7-11.

Pre-proceedings and Court
Information about pre-proceedings and court proceedings can be found on pages 12-17.

Need a moment?
We have colouring activities on pages 22-25.



Child Protection Process

If Children's Social Care are given information that leads them to believe that your child is at 'risk', they will undertake a child protection enquiry. Which could lead to an investigation to find out whether a child needs protection.

How does this work?

A social worker or a police officer will visit your home with or without an appointment. Upon arrival they must:

- Provide ID (identification like a badge).
- Explain the reason for visiting.
- Discuss their concerns with the parents or carers and gain their views.
- Arrange to see the child.
- Assess any immediate risk to the child.

What happens next?

After the first visit, the family will be told if there is a reason for any further concern. If there is no concern the family will be informed.

If there is a concern, then a Child Protection Conference will be held. Also known as ICPC (Initial Child Protection Conference) which will be followed by an RCPC (Review Child Protection Conference), within three months of an ICPC.

Child Protection Process

What is an ICPC?

This is a conference meeting to discuss and record all concerns about the child. The first meeting should be held after 20 working days.

The aim of this meeting is to:

- consider whether a child has been harmed or is at risk of being harmed and the concern about the child.
- assess the risk to the child's health and wellbeing, and whether the child needs protection.
- decide whether the child should become the subject of a Child Protection Plan.
- Discuss any further action needed to help the child.

Who attends the ICPC?

- The parents and people who know the family are invited to attend the conference like teachers, doctors, social worker and health visitor.
- Parents do not have to go to the ICPC. However, it is important that their views are shared.
- The meeting will be held by someone who is not involved in the case. This is so that everyone has a chance to give their views. The child also may be invited – if it is appropriate. Advocacy support can be given to your child, free of charge, during this.

Child Protection Process

What happens next?

If your child is thought to be at risk of harm, they will be subject to a 'Child Protection Plan'.

This means that actions are taken to reduce the risks of harm to your child.

An RCPC (Review Child Protection Conference) will be held every three months to see if the plans remain the same.



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About the Meetings

There are lots of different meetings that you might be invited to. It can get confusing. Below are some of the most common types of meetings you may be invited to.

Child in Need (CIN) (Every four to six weeks)	They look at your child's needs and how they are being met with the support that is in place. Lots of different people will attend and talk together. You will be asked to explain how you feel the plans are working and if you need any extra help.
Child Protection (CP)	
Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC) (Within 20 days)	An initial meeting to discuss any concerns around your child.
Review Child Protection Conference (RCPC) (Every three months)	To look again if the plans remain the same or any changes are to be made.
Core Group Meetings (Every four to six weeks)	These include the child's social worker and all the people working with the child and you as the parent. They will all talk about how your child's needs are being met.

About the Meetings

Child Looked After (CLA)	
Looked After Child Review (LAC) (Held regularly)	This may also be called a 'Cared For Review'. The meeting will be with all the people involved in your child's care. The meeting is to talk about how things are working and to see if the care plan still meets the needs of your child. And to see if anything needs to be changed to make things better.
Care Planning Meetings (Held regularly / as needed)	These take place to make sure things are working well for you. More meetings can be held if changes need to be made to the current plan.
Family Time Meeting (Every four to six weeks)	To discuss family time and see how this is working. The social worker and the family time worker will be involved in this meeting.
Legal / Other	
Pre-Proceeding Meeting (PLO) (One-off, before court proceedings)	This happens when the local authority believes they have enough reason to take the case to court for care proceedings. However, they give parents one last chance to work with them before going to court.
A Pre-Proceeding Review Meeting (Around eight weeks after the first PLO meeting)	Will take place after the first meeting to see how things are progressing.

Pre-Proceedings

Pre-proceedings (PLO) is an opportunity for you to work with local authority social services to address any issues or concerns that the local authority may have. The aim is to avoid going to court or being involved with care proceedings.

Why pre-proceedings might happen

Sometimes, even when a child has previously had a social worker, been on a Child Protection plan, or been classed as a Child in Need, the local authority may feel that a child's safety or wellbeing is still at risk. In these cases, they may start considering legal action. The pre-proceedings stage gives families one final opportunity to work with the local authority to address concerns before any court action begins.

Pre-proceedings meetings:

This happens when the local authority thinks they have enough reason to take the case to court for care proceedings. However, they give parents one final opportunity to cooperate with them before moving forward with court action.

The child:

Your child may have previously had a social worker and been on a child protection plan, been classed as a child in need, or this may be your first baby and you are pregnant (an unborn baby can be subject to pre proceedings).

Pre-Proceedings

After the Pre-Proceeding Meeting:

Parents will receive a pre-proceedings letter outlining the concerns of the local authority and will be asked to get a solicitor. Pre-proceedings meetings will be held to discuss what changes need to be made to address the concerns and avoid going to court.

Pre Proceeding Review:

A pre-proceeding review meeting will usually take place eight weeks after the first meeting to see how things are progressing.

If things are going well:

The goal of this process is for parents to work well with services and show they can provide a good level of care for their children. If successful, children's services will reduce their involvement. They may either close the case and take no further action, or continue to help through a Child Protection Plan or Child In Need plan if they think support is still needed.

If things are NOT going well:

If children's services believes parents have not followed the agreement, they will start court proceedings under Section 31 of the Children Act 1989 for a Care Order or Supervision Order. These proceedings are very serious. You have the right to legal aid to get representation in these cases.

The court case can be called 'Care Proceedings' OR a 'Presentation Hearing'. This can sometimes be done after an ICPC.

A pre-hearing is where the child's solicitors, other people, and you, will have a discussion shortly before seeing the judge. This could be via a 'Teams' app or face-to-face. This is to make sure that everyone knows what will be discussed during the actual court case and allows you to ask any last-minute questions.

Care Proceedings/Presentation Hearings is when a Local Authority is making an application to the court for a "Care Order" or "Supervision Order" for your child.

The court case should take up to 26 weeks and should be done quickly and there should not be any delay. The Local Authority will write documents to the Court.

This will say:

- Why they believe that the child is at risk of suffering harm.
- Details of where they think the child should live until a final court case is heard.

You, as a parent, will have a solicitor to help you during the court case. You can share your views in a statement, which is a written document that tells the court how you feel. Your solicitor will help you with this.

Court

The judge is the person who makes the decisions. A decision can be made called an 'Interim Care Order'.

The Social Worker will ask the court to make an Interim Care Order. If the court agrees, the Local Authority can take the child into foster care temporarily. The child can be either placed with a foster carer which is known as an Interim Custody Order or another family member which is known as an Interim Supervision Order.



Types of Court Hearings

You may be required to visit court on more than one occasion as there are different types of court hearings. These are:

- **A Case Management Hearing** – this must take place within 12 days of the Local Authority writing to the Court to ask them to make decisions.
- **An Issue Resolution Hearing** – the judge will ask for everyone's views on your child and where they will live. They will look at what problems there are and if any of those problems can be removed. If they can, the court case might stop. If people cannot agree, the case will have to go to a Final Hearing.
- **A Final Hearing** – if you and the local authority are not able to agree on a plan for your child, then the Judge will make a final decision. This is called a Final Hearing and can be over one day or over several weeks.
- **Finding of Fact Hearing (FoF)** – this looks at the case and whether something took place or not.



Court Orders

The Judge will decide on what order the child will be placed on. Here are the different types:

- **Care Order** – this is when a child is under the care of a Local Authority until they turn 18. This means the Local Authority have Parental Responsibility (PR) and they do not need your consent. Your rights can be overridden.
- **Child Arrangement** – the judge will decide where your child will live and when they can see you.
- **Supervision Order** – the Local Authority are granted the power to monitor your child.
- **Special Guardianship** – this is when your child will live with someone other than you on a long-term basis. This tends to happen when your child goes to live with a family member.
- **Placement Order** – where the Local Authority can ask the Judge to put your child up for adoption. Even if you disagree, as they do not need your consent.
- **Court Intermediary** – during the court case the court will decide if you need an intermediary. This is someone who will help you understand the court process. They will work with your solicitor.

Who's Who?

There can be a lot of people involved and you might not always be sure what it is they do. Here is a list of some of the people you might meet or hear from.

- **Social Worker** – your social worker (SW) will say what is going well and what is not going as well. They will also keep you informed on what is happening.
- **Advocate** – someone who can help you be listened to in meetings or speak on your behalf. Sometimes, there might be two Advocates, one working with you and one working with your child .
- **Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)** – the person who will make decisions. They will run certain meetings like 'Child Looked After' (CLA) review meetings.
- **School Representative** – is someone from your child's school who will say how things are going at school. This is for meetings such as Personal Educational Plan Meeting reviews.
- **Personal Educational Plan Meeting (PEP)** – is about your child's education. This will look at if your child needs any additional support.
- **Foster Carer** – provides a safe and secure home for children, during the process and until any decisions are made.

Who's Who?

- **Judge** – the person in court who makes legal decisions about plans for your child.
- **Health Visitor** – someone who will give you an update on your child's physical and emotional health and will let you know if any health appointments are outstanding.
- **Solicitor** – someone who helps in childcare law who will support you through the court process. They can help you with your paperwork and statements. They can inform you of any updates. They will also talk to the other solicitors involved.
- **Family Time Worker** – someone who sits in on family time, in a place that allows you and your child to spend time together, until a decision is made about the future.
- **CAFCASS** – The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service, who looks after the interests of children involved in court proceedings. They are also known as the 'Children's Guardian'.
- **Police Officer** – someone who will be investigating any crimes.

Useful Tips

Sometimes the things that are talked about in the meetings or court case may be difficult for you. There is lots of help which may make things easier.

There may be things that you want to ask or say at the meeting. It might be helpful for you to write these down.

You might like to ask the people involved:

- To avoid using abbreviations and terms you might not know.
- Not to ask you too many questions all at once.
- What will happen in the meeting?
- What will happen after the meeting?
- How long will the meeting last?
- Can you have a break during the meeting?
- What happens if you don't understand something?
- Can you have the meeting written down, so that you can read it on your own?

You can get your Advocate to ask for you too.

There might be things or people you want to bring to the meeting with you:

- A family member.
- An Advocate.
- A pen and some paper.
- Some tissues.
- A drink of water.
- Any paperwork about your children that you would like to discuss.

Resources

Here you can make some of your notes or write any questions you may have.

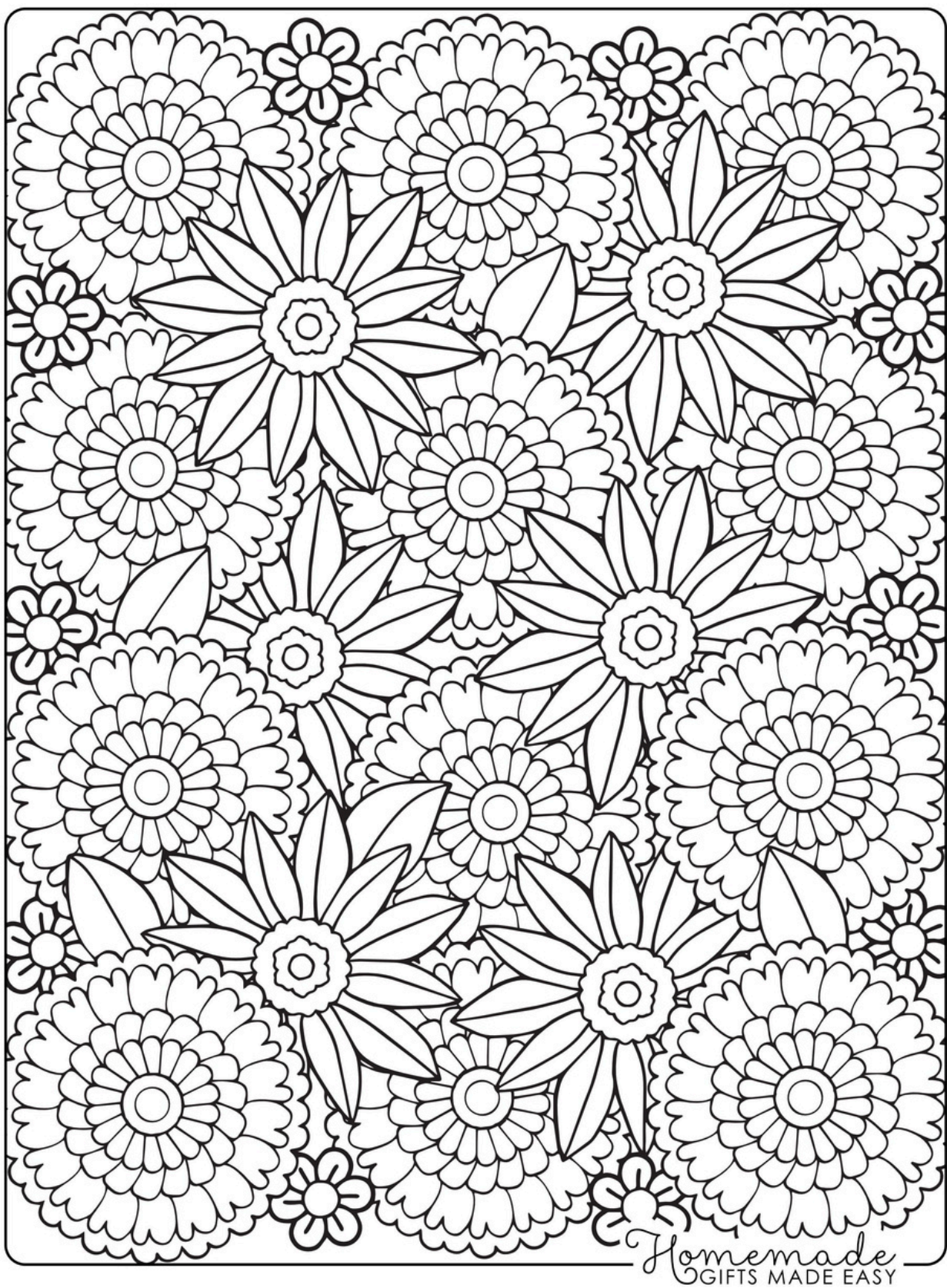
Resources

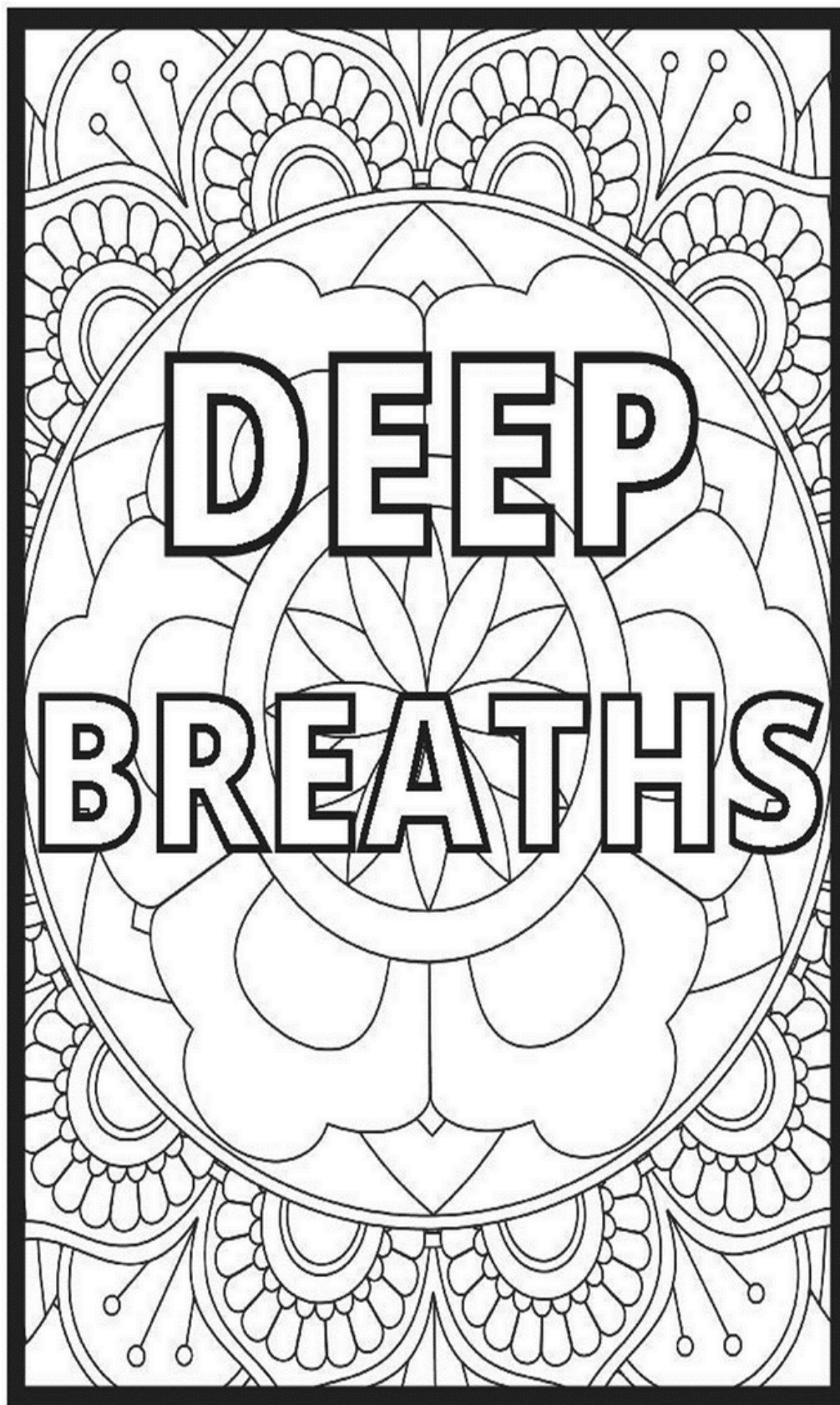
The next few pages are a distraction if you are feeling stressed in your meetings.

Advocacy Focus has lots of resources to help you manage stress, if you think this might be helpful let your Advocate know and they can bring some more for you.

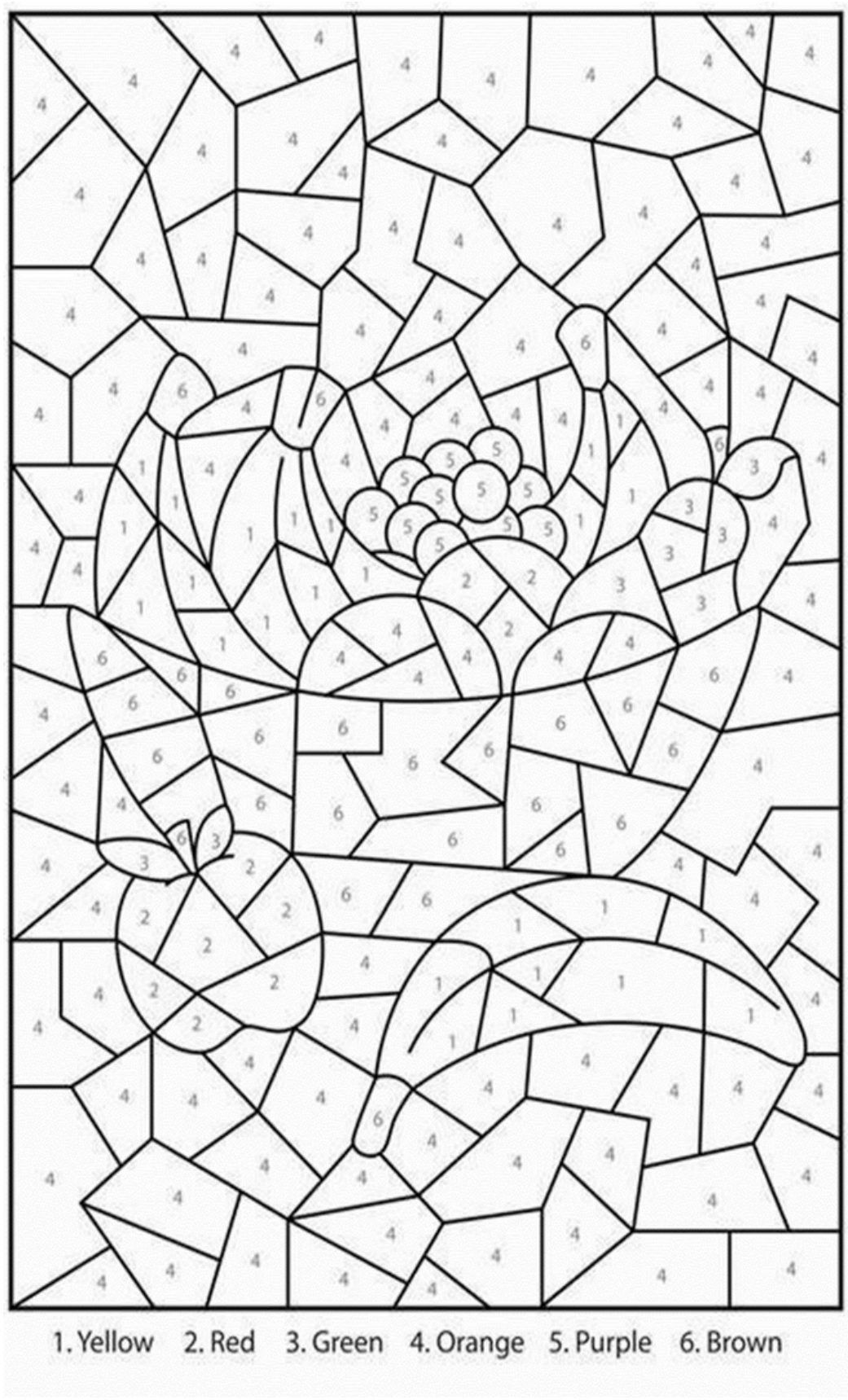


Resources





Resources



Who Else Can Help?

Samaritans

Provide confidential support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair.

- Helpline: 116 123 (Everyday, 24 hours)
- Website: www.samaritans.org

Mind

Provides information on mental health problems and where to get help.

- Infoline: 0300 123 3393. Text: 86463 (Mon – Fri, 9:00 AM – 6:00 PM)
- Website: www.mind.org.uk

Anxiety UK

Provide support and help if you've been diagnosed with or suspect you may have an anxiety condition.

- Text service: 07537 416905
- Infoline: 03444 775774
- Website: www.anxietyuk.org.uk

FRANK

Confidential information for anyone concerned about their own or someone else's drug misuse.

- Helpline: 0300 123 6600
- Web: www.talktofrank.com

Pact (Prisoners' Families Helpline)

Offers support to anyone affected by imprisonment.

- Helpline: 0808 808 2003 (Mon – Fri, 9:00 AM – 8:00 PM, Sat – Sun and bank holidays, excluding Boxing Day and Christmas, 10am – 3pm)
- Website: www.prisonadvice.org.uk

BEAT – The UK's eating disorder charity

- Helpline: 0808 801 0677
- Website: www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk

Who Else Can Help?

OCD Action

Offer support and information to anybody affected by OCD

- Helpline: 0845 390 6232 (Mon – Fri, 9:30 AM – 5:00 PM)
- Website: www.ocdaction.org.uk

SANE

Offers specialist emotional support and information to anyone affected by mental illness, including family, friends, and carers.

- Helpline: 0300 304 7000 (Everyday, 4:00 PM – 10:00 PM)
- Website: www.sane.org.uk

SHOUT

Shout is the UK's first 24/7 text service, free on all major mobile networks, for anyone in crisis anytime, anywhere.

- Text: 85258
- Website: www.giveusashout.org

Stonewall

Information and advice for LGBTQ+ communities and their allies.

- Helpline: 0800 0502020
- Website: www.stonewall.org.uk

Young Minds

Information for both parents and young people on child and adolescent mental health.

- Parents' Helpline: 0808 802 5544 (Mon, Thurs, Fri, 9.30 AM - 4:00 PM / Tues, Wed, 9:30 AM - 6:00 PM)
- Website: www.youngminds.org.uk

Article 39

Resources for Advocates and children and young people.

- Website: www.article39.org.uk

**This information booklet and self help toolkit
has been created by:**



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If you have any comments, compliments or complaints about Advocacy Focus, or our Advocates, please get in touch.



Tel: 0300 323 0965



Live chat: www.advocacyfocus.org.uk

We hope that this information booklet has been useful. If you have any ideas how to make this booklet any better, please email us at:



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