

What to expect: Initial Contact with Children & Family Services



All initial contacts with Children & Family Services are made via the Contact Advice and Assessment Service (CAAS).

All calls made to CAAS during working hours will be answered by a business support.

Their role is to take your details and connect you to the appropriate person.

Business Support workers are not trained social workers and will not be able to discuss the details of your case with you.

- **If your call is about a new referral you will put through to a qualified Social Worker within CAAS.**

This worker will be able to discuss your concerns with you and will be able to give you advice where appropriate.

The worker will ask if you have Parental Responsibility (PR) for the child or children who you have called about.

If you do not have PR the worker will listen to and record the information which you wish to report to Children & Family Services.

However, **if you do not have PR it will not be possible for the worker to give you any information** about that child or family.

If you are raising a concern about a child or children the worker will use their professional knowledge to assess if there might be a risk of harm to that child or children. The worker will also consider if the child or children are in need of any support or services.

The possible outcomes of an initial contact are

- You might be offered **Advice** and if necessary you will be **directed to another service which can best meet your needs**
- **No further action** is taken
- **Further enquiries or information gathering** are undertaken. **This could include enquiries** being undertaken by **MASH** (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) The **MASH** process is carried out by a multi agency team of professionals who work alongside CAAS.
- A **Single Assessment** is undertaken
- **Child Protection** enquiries are undertaken

Gathering information from other professionals helps Children & Family Services to understand if the professionals who know your child or children are concerned about their welfare. This helps CAAS to make sure your child or children are adequately safeguarded and that you know where to go for support.



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You will usually be asked to give consent before information gathering is carried out. However, there will be times when the need for consent is overridden by the Duty Manager. Children & Family Services have a statutory responsibility to ensure that a child or children are adequately safeguarded.

There are **clear thresholds** in place for when a **Single Assessment (SA)** must be carry out or when **Child Protection** must be started.

Following any initial contact with CAAS those people with PR for a child or children will be **sent an Outcomes Letter**. This letter outlines what Children & Family Services intend to do as a result of any concerns that have been brought to their attention. If the initial contact was made by a professional they will also be sent a copy of the Outcome letter. Any professional who has been contacted for information during enquiries will also be sent an outcomes letter.

Children & Family Services have a statutory duty to investigate all concerns about the welfare of children which are drawn to their attention.

Children and Family Services want you to understand how we can best work together to put the needs of your child or children first.

Time Scales

We aim to respond to all initial contacts within 24 hours. However, this time can sometimes be extended to allow for further investigation to be carried either by the duty worker or through the MASH process.

If a safeguarding issue is identified, immediate action will be taken.

All of the contacts made with Children & Family Services via the CAAS team are overseen by an experienced Manager.

PLEASE NOTE

- **If you already have an allocated worker your call will be put through to this worker.**

If your allocated worker is not available, you will either be asked to leave a message or offered a call back. A record of all calls received by the Social Work teams is kept on the central electronic record.

- **If your allocated worker is unavailable and you need to speak to a Social Worker urgently you will be put through to a member of the relevant team.**