

## **Children's Advice and Duty Service FAQs**

### **What changes are you making to the way professionals make contacts and referrals?**

The biggest change is the creation of our new Children's Advice and Duty Service. Consultant social workers will be available through a professional's only telephone line to provide advice and support when partner professionals are concerned about a child or young person. They will ask key questions about the risks and strengths within families and then agree with the professional who has concerns who is best placed to meet the needs of a child.

You will no longer be asked to complete an inter-agency referral form, and all referrals will be taken following a professional discussion.

### **Why are you changing this?**

We want to ensure that when families need social work support, this is provided immediately and that children are protected from risk of harm and the consultant social workers will be able to gather all the important information to progress a referral. However, we know that many families who need support would prefer this to come from professionals they already know and trust. We want to provide advice and support to professionals so that children get the right support, from the agencies who can best meet their needs, first time.

### **Will the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) still exist?**

Yes, we will continue to provide the vital cross-agency checks for those children most at risk, working closely with the MASH police and health partners to ensure children are protected from risk of significant harm.

### **What is the aim of the new Children's Advice and Duty Service?**

The aim is to get the right support to children and families, from the right agencies, first time. We have been completing many unnecessary social care assessments with families and this has made it harder for social workers to work effectively with the children who most need their support and protection.



The changes we are making are based on what is working well elsewhere, and we know that by talking through concerns and solutions with professionals, we can work together to get earlier support to families to stop concerns escalating and help create sustained change and better outcomes for children.

### **What is the telephone number of the new service?**

The new 'professionals only' telephone number for all agencies and children service providers is **01305 228558**. This is the same number for daytime and out of hours calls. **This number will be live from 2 October.**

### **How do children, families and members of the public contact the service?**

Families and members of the public will continue to contact the service on **01202 228866**.

### **Do I need consent from the family before I make a call?**

It is good practice to speak to families about your concerns and seek consent before contacting the Children's Advice and Duty Service as this might reduce the concerns and avoid the need to contact us. Although these conversations can be difficult, we know that families respond better when professionals are open about their concerns. However, if you believe that a criminal offence might have been committed or that seeking consent might increase risk, please contact us for advice before speaking to the family.

### **What information do I need to give when I call?**

The more information you have the better able we will be to advise and support you. You can use the Children's Advice and Duty Service flowchart to prepare for your call. This includes details on what information the consultant social worker handling your call might need.

### **If there is no written referral, how do I evidence that I have contacted Children's Services? How will information be recorded?**

All phone calls will be confirmed in writing by the consultant social worker, but it is also best practice that you keep a record of the contact you have made, the discussion and any decisions made. You should also record whether you have obtained parental consent and if not, why not.

### **What records will be made of the conversation and how will they be kept?**



This will depend on the concerns and level of risk. If you have consent from the family to share information, or if the concerns indicate the child is at risk of harm, will record the discussions we have on the child's electronic file. However, you can ask for a consultation to check out concerns with us without naming the child if you do not have consent and are unsure about the levels of risk.

### **What if I disagree with what the consultant social worker recommends?**

The aim of the new service is to work together to come up with the right support or service for a child or family, at the right time, first time. We hope that professional disagreements will be rare but if you cannot reach agreement, you should follow the multi-agency escalation policy which can be found at:

[https://pandorsetscb.proceduresonline.com/p\\_escalation.html?zoom\\_highlight=escalation](https://pandorsetscb.proceduresonline.com/p_escalation.html?zoom_highlight=escalation)

### **What are the operating hours of the Children's Advice and Duty Service?**

The daytime service is available Monday to Friday between 8am and 10pm.

### **What do I do outside of these hours?**

A consultant social worker will be available until 10pm weekday evenings and between 9am and 10pm Saturdays and Sundays if you are concerned that a child is at imminent risk of harm. You should use the professionals only telephone number if your call cannot wait until the usual operating hours.

We will have an 'on call' social worker available if immediate protective action is required 24-hours-a-day. The same number should be used, and the call will be transferred. It is essential that this service is not used unless there is an evidenced immediate risk as misuse of the service could put other children at risk.