

CHILDREN'S INITIAL ADVICE TEAM

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why are you changing the Children's Access Point (CAP) and Children's First Response Team (CFRT)?

We want to provide the best service to Darlington's children and families, as well as to our partner agencies. The CAP and CFRT has been under significant pressure because of increasing numbers of contacts and referrals and we want to manage these better, so that children get the right support first time, with no delay.

What are the changes?

The biggest change is the creation of our new Children's Initial Advice Team. This will be made up of social workers who will provide advice and support to other professionals and ask key questions about the risks and strengths within families. Relationship based social work is embedded into our practice and fits perfectly with our strengths based, approach. This, together with the principles of Signs of Safety as our practice framework creates a more constructive culture for professionals and families to engage and work together to address harm, identify and utilise strengths within the family and inform decision making. Together, through discussion social worker and professional will agree who is best placed to meet the needs of a child. The service will no longer take written referrals.

Will the MASH still exist?

Yes, the MASH will continue and will provide vital cross agency checks for those children most at risk. The new Children's Initial Advice Team will mean that the MASH will be able to get support to those children who need it the most without delay.

What is the aim of the new Children's Initial Advice Team?

The aim is to get the right support to children and families first time. We're basing it on what's worked well elsewhere. By talking through concerns and solutions with professionals we can work together even better and get the right support to families earlier. At the moment we are carrying out too many unnecessary social work assessments and we want to make sure that we're only doing these assessments where they are needed.

What information do I need to give when I call?

You can use the Children's Initial Advice Team flowchart to prepare for your call. This includes details on what information the social worker handling your call might need.

What is the number of the new service?

- **PROFESSIONALS:** If you are a professional, i.e. working with a child or young person in a formal or voluntary setting and not a family member or member of the public you can contact Children's Initial Advice Team on a direct line and a social worker will speak to you. The phone number for this service is **01325 406252**.
- **PUBLIC:** If you are a member of the public you will continue to contact the service using the existing telephone number: **01325 406222**. A Business Support Operator will help you with concerns about a child's safety and ensure the right service is provided.

What sort of things can I call the service about?

You can call with any safeguarding concern you might have about a child.

If there is no written referral, how do I evidence that I have made contact with Children's Services? How will information be recorded?

Every phone call will be followed up in writing by the social worker. It is best practice to 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 of the conversation will be made and how will they be kept?

This will depend on the individual discussion and the risks identified to a child. It will also depend on whether you have got consent from the child's parent. However, we will record all of the conversations on our system; by having a record, we will also be able to see when there might be a repetition or accumulation of concerns about a child.

What is the difference between a conversation, consultation and referral?

All calls will result in a conversation. The outcome of the conversation will depend on the levels of concerns raised and the agreed course of action. We are moving away from the restrictions of terminology like consultation and referral, however, social worker and caller will agree and record the outcome of any conversation.

Do I have to get parents' consent before I make a call?

It is good practice and the expectation is that you seek consent from parents. We acknowledge that there are occasions when to do so could put a child at risk or undermine the investigation into a serious crime. In these instances, we would accept a call without consent from parents. Reasons for not seeking consent should be clearly stated when speaking with the Children's Initial Advice Team and recorded on internal systems for your records.

What are the opening hours of the Children's Initial Advice Team?

The service will run from Monday to Thursday 8.30am until 5.00pm, and 8.30am until 4.30pm each Friday.

What do I do outside of these hours?

You can continue to contact our Emergency Duty Team on telephone number: 01642 524552.



What happens if I disagree with what the social worker recommends?

The aim of our new service is to work together to come up with the right support or service for a child or family. We hope that professional disagreements will be rare but if you wish to escalate you can follow the Darlington Safeguarding Partnership (DSP) Professional Challenge Procedure.

How can I provide feedback about the service?

In the first instance you can contact the team manager.

How can I contribute to the FAQs?

This is an iterative document and will be reviewed monthly. Callers can email the DSP Business Unit with questions as they arise on DSP@darlington.gov.uk and they will be passed to the Head of Service, Children's Initial Advice Team.