

Children's Front Door Service

One Minute Guide

The term 'Front Door' is used when we talk about our arrangements where partners and families work with us, in partnership to safeguard children and young people.

In Darlington the social work team working as part of the Children's Front Door Service is known as the Children's Initial Advice Team (CIAT). This team is the first point of contact where professionals or members of the public raise any concern they may have for a child. The service also offers information and advice to ensure families have the right help and support without delay, this means it stands out from many other Front Door Services. Social workers are reached directly by way of a designated telephone number for professionals, there is also a different designated telephone number for members of the public.

CIAT are the social work team who take all contacts to safeguard children. Social workers also take contacts to help determine the right support for the child, young person and family. A contact is any information received about a child when there is a concern, or a contact may be a query about help/support or signposting.

Social workers will consider every contact and depending on the nature of the information received and gathered this might lead to a fuller 'contact enquiry'. A contact enquiry is a piece of work that determines what the outcome needs to be for the child, the safety of the child is the priority and this might lead to a referral to social care, however once the safety of a child has been carefully considered then there might be a referral to Building Stronger Families, discussions with partners about Universally led help, or discussions with partners about agencies leading on an external Early Help Assessment (single agency). A contact or contact enquiry may also lead to an outcome of signposting and closure to CIAT.



How does the Team work?

CIAT social workers are trained and skilled in analysing information to decide the best way forward to help the child and family. In Darlington we believe that all good social work is dependent on relationships and therefore social workers start by creating positive relationships through discussion so that children and their families will benefit and positive change can be sustained.

Relationship-based social work is embedded into our practice and fits perfectly with our strengths-based approach to working with families to help create solutions for the long-term and not just the short-term. This creates a constructive culture using specific tools and processes for professionals and families to engage and work together to address harm, identify and utilise strengths within the family and to inform decision making.

To ensure effective partnership working, practitioners must seek agreement from families before ringing CIAT, unless in exceptional circumstances where doing so would place a child at risk of significant harm. Unless there is the risk of significant harm, information cannot be shared between agencies without parental consent.

After telephone contact the social worker will email the professional a summary of the discussion and clarify the outcome within 24 hours of the completion of a contact enquiry.

What happens when a contact is taken?

Following discussion with the professional, and where the social worker has decided that it is appropriate to take a contact because the child is at risk of significant harm under section 47 of the Children Act 1989, or whose health and development is at risk of impairment under section 17, the contact will be sent as a referral to a social work assessment team.

Where the social worker decides that social work involvement is not needed advice will be given, the social worker may recommend that Early Help support is more appropriate. If this is the case the social worker will forward the contact to a suitable practitioner in the Early Help Service, or to another agency for Early Help work to be carried out.

Key Contacts

Professionals are be able to contact a CIAT social worker on telephone number:

01325 406252

Members of the public should contact a member of CIAT Business Support Team on telephone number: **01325 406222**

Out of hours, professionals and members of the public can continue to contact the out of hours Children’s Emergency Duty Team on telephone number:

01642 524552

MYTH

FACT

It’s not my job to report child abuse

Not at all – we all have a role and responsibility to keep children safe from harm – in Darlington you should discuss your concerns with the CIAT

It’s best to wait until you’re absolutely certain you have firm evidence before reporting your concerns

Not at all – if you have concerns you should discuss with your line manager in the first instance, however if you believe a child is at immediate risk you should contact CIAT

When reporting a concern – this is known as a referral

Not at all – in Darlington when you report a concern this is known as a contact. A referral is when the contact has resulted in a contact enquiry being completed by a social worker and agreement for the outcome to be referred into social care, early help or other service, e.g. 4 Kids

You must seek consent from families before ringing

Yes – you should seek agreement from families before ringing CIAT, unless doing so would place a child at further risk of significant harm

Early Help is a one off service offered by children’s services

Not at all - Early Help or family help can be accessed easily and whenever families feel it might be needed – it is not a single service that sits alone with any one agency

Early Help Assessment is always needed when a child or family has needs that are not being met

Not at all – an early help assessment is not required if the need can be met by a single service or if there are concerns that a child or adult is at risk of significant harm. It is only needed when a family require multi-agency support that would benefit from coordination

Early Help assessment should be led by children’s services

Not at all – any agency can lead an assessment – to enable the best outcomes to be achieved - it should be led by the service best placed to support those families and invites made to wider agencies

