

Concerned about a child: Frequently Asked Questions

Can I just ask for advice?

Yes. We will help you with many problems you may have and, if we can't give you advice ourselves, we will try and give you details of someone who can.

If I am concerned that a child is being abused, what should I do?

All people who come into contact with children have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This means that you have a right to be concerned for a child, and the right to bring it to the attention of those who can help. **If you are concerned that a child is in immediate harm, then you should call the police.**

If your concerns are not of an immediate nature then you should [call us](#) and make a referral. We will ask you about details of the child (e.g. their name and where they live) and about the nature or your concerns so that we can get as clear a picture as possible. The referral will then be investigated to make sure the child is protected from harm. We will make every effort to ensure that your concerns are confidential as far as our investigation allows.

What do you do?

The first thing we do is an assessment. This involves us finding out about your child's situation, talking it through with you and agreeing what might be done.

What is an assessment?

An assessment will be done if you, or someone on your behalf, have contacted us about some difficulty our child (or children) may have. Before we can help you we need to know more about you and your family, so we do an assessment where we collect information and talk it through with you. We then agree with you what might be done and put together a statement of need for you and your family. We then pass this statement of need onto a service which can help you.

How long will an assessment take?

Initial assessments usually take 10 working days. Full assessments, known as core assessments, usually take 35 working days.

What will happen next?

When we have done an assessment, and if the decision is that further action is needed, a plan of intervention is made to improve the outcomes for your

My child will not go to school, can you help?

Matters of school attendance are dealt with in the first instance by school and the authority's education welfare service.

I have money problems, can you help?

We are not an agency like the Benefits Agency that can supplement people's income. In exceptional circumstances we may provide small amounts of money, or material goods, to promote a plan of work within a family.

If I have a problem with drink/drugs, will you help, or will my child be taken into care?

We do not take children into care purely because one or both parents are using alcohol or drugs of any kind. Our consideration is whether the use of alcohol or drugs is significantly affecting a child's safety or welfare.

I have been hit by my partner but don't know what to do, can you help?

The help we offer will depend on the help you want:

1. If you want to leave, we would assist you to either leave the family home, or remove the violent partner from the family home.
2. If you are not yet ready to leave, we would work with you at ways to keep yourself and your children safe from further abuse and violence.
3. If you and your violent partner wanted help to break the cycle of violence, we would identify the help that you needed and either work with you ourselves, or refer you to someone who can.

We usually hear about cases of domestic violence when police have been called and they contact us. The police have a domestic violence officer who advises us when they have attended incidents where there is a child in the household because, research tells us that children's safety and welfare is often at risk when there is violence in the home.

My mum is being hit by my dad, what should I do?

It is important you know that domestic violence is not your fault, and you're not alone. We also want you to know that asking for help is ok. If there is domestic violence in a home, research tells us that you may be at risk. So, the first thing you need to do is stay safe. It is also important you know that you do have choices- and not just running away!

What to do then and there:

1. You need to make sure you are safe, and this means, even though you may really want to, don't try and stop the violence.
2. Go somewhere in your house that you feel safe (if you are a young person this may be a neighbour's or a friend's house)
3. You can call 999 for help if you're really worried about your mum being hurt.

What to do now:

1. Tell someone. It's helpful to tell a friend or a grown-up that you trust, maybe your teacher or your school nurse, or an uncle or aunt. This can give you the choice to get away if you feel it isn't safe to stay at home.
2. You can call us on 01225 396312 or 01225 396313 (or 01454 615165 for emergency out of hours calls).
3. It may be helpful if you talk to your mum about it. You may be worried that this will upset her, but talking to each other may make you both feel better.
4. Making a safety plan (<http://www.thehideout.org.uk/>) of what you will do when it happens will make you feel more in control and ready.

We are moving to a new flat/house, can you help me with furniture?

If you need furniture we may refer you onto the Sofa Project, who might be able to help.

If you have small children you can ask your Health Visitor for a charity application that may be able to help you.

What about confidentiality?

- When working with adults (parents), we would respect any request for confidentiality, unless the situation placed a legal responsibility on us to share information.
- When working with children, we always advise you, when asked to keep a secret, that we don't keep promises like that, but, if you tell us anything you don't want people to know, we will find out why, and look with you at who needs to know.

We will always tell you when we are going to share information, and only ever share the minimum of information with people who are directly involved in your case.

In exceptional circumstances we may have to share information without telling you first.

Our policy if you are aggressive towards us?

If you are aggressive to staff our policy is:

- We seek at all times to treat people with respect and listen sympathetically to your problems.
- We are not able to assist people who are abusive or threatening, or who make us afraid of them.
- If abuse is on the telephone, we will advise you that the call cannot continue unless the verbal aggression stops. If it does not, we will hang up and then try to re-contact you.
- If the aggression or violence is in a face to face situation, we will leave you and return to finish our work with whatever assistance is necessary.
- If you assault a member of staff we will contact the police.
- If we regard you as a risk in any way to ourselves, or professional colleagues, we will write to you explaining the risk we believe you to present and the steps we propose in order to overcome that risk.

Note: These answers are a general guide only. As everyone's circumstances are different, we suggest you contact us on 01225 396312 / 396313 to discuss your own personal situation or concerns