

Understanding Children's Services

A guide to helping parents understand the role of
Children's Services and feel more prepared if support is
needed.



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What Are Children's Services?



Hearing that Children's Services are involved can feel frightening.

Many parents immediately worry that they are being judged or that someone is going to take their child away.

In reality, Children's Services work with thousands of families every year to help children remain safe, supported and cared for.

Their role is to assess what support a family may need and to work alongside parents, schools, health professionals and other services when appropriate.

Many families receive support from Children's Services for reasons that have nothing to do with poor parenting. For example, families may need help because of disability, additional needs, financial pressures, mental health difficulties or significant challenges at home.

Asking for help is not a sign of failure. It is often a sign of strength.

Why Might a Family Be Referred?



There are many reasons why a referral might be made.

These could include:

- Concerns about a child's wellbeing.
- Additional support needs within the family.
- School attendance concerns.
- Significant emotional or behavioural difficulties.
- Caring responsibilities.
- Domestic abuse.
- Mental or physical health difficulties.
- Disability or neurodivergence requiring additional support.
- Requests for Early Help services.

A referral does not automatically mean that there are safeguarding concerns.

Sometimes it is simply the first step towards accessing support.

What Happens Next?



Every local authority follows its own procedures, but the process often includes:

Referral

Information is shared with Children's Services.

Initial Assessment

A social worker considers the information and decides whether further assessment or support is needed.

Meeting the Family

You may be invited to meetings or offered a home visit to better understand your family's circumstances.

Planning Support

If ongoing support is appropriate, professionals will work with you to identify goals and discuss available services. You should be involved in conversations about your child and have opportunities to share your views.

Your Rights as a Parent



Your Rights as a Parent

- ✓ Be treated with dignity and respect.
- ✓ Ask questions if you do not understand something.
- ✓ Share your views and experiences.
- ✓ Receive information about decisions that affect your family.
- ✓ Bring someone with you to meetings for support, where appropriate.
- ✓ Request copies of reports and assessments where applicable.

Working together is often the most effective way to achieve positive outcomes for children.

Understanding Common Terms



Early Help

Support offered before difficulties become more serious. This is voluntary and aims to help families access the right services early.

Child in Need (CIN)

A plan that provides additional support to help improve a child's health or development and ensure they can achieve the best possible outcomes.

Child Protection Plan (CPP)

A plan used when professionals believe a child is at risk of significant harm and additional safeguarding measures are needed.

Looked After Child (LAC)

A child who is being cared for by the local authority, either with parental agreement or through a court order.

Working Together



Meetings can sometimes feel overwhelming.

Remember:

- ✓ You know your child better than anyone.
- ✓ Professionals bring their own expertise.
- ✓ Asking questions is okay.
- ✓ It is okay to disagree respectfully.
- ✓ Take notes or ask for time to reflect before making decisions.
- ✓ If you feel unsure, seek independent advice or advocacy.

The best outcomes are usually achieved when everyone works together with the child's needs at the centre.

Remember



Being involved with Children's Services does not
define you as a parent.



Many families need additional support at different
times in their lives.



Accepting help, asking questions and advocating for
your child are all positive steps.



You are not expected to know everything.

You are simply expected to keep showing up—and
that matters.



Key Takeaways



Children's Services are there to support children and families, not just investigate concerns.



A referral does not automatically mean your child is at risk of being removed. You have rights and should be involved in decisions about your child.



Working in partnership with professionals often leads to the best outcomes.



Seeking support is a strength, not a failure.

Remember...

You know your child best.

Trust your instincts.

You are doing an incredible job.



With Love and Support,

Becky

Parenting Pandas UK

