

Referral Advice and Information: Working with Social Care

This document should be read in conjunction with the Inter-Agency Safeguarding Procedures and your own internal Safeguarding Policies.

- If you have a concern about a child, discuss your concerns with your manager or named designated member of staff.
- If you still have concerns, you or your manager should discuss your concerns with the Child Care Duty Officer at the Social Care Local Office. If you or your manager are unsure of whether a referral is required and want to initially seek advice, you do not necessarily need to identify the child in question. However, it is important to be aware that advice will only be given on the basis of the information you have provided if the child is not identified.
- If, after this discussion, you and your manager still have concerns, and consider the child and their parents would benefit from further services from Social Care, you or your manager should make a referral to the Social Care Team responsible for the area in which the child lives.
- In general, professionals working directly with children and their families (e.g. play workers, Sports Coaches) should seek to discuss their concerns with the child, as appropriate to their age and understanding, and with their parents and seek their agreement to making a referral to Children's Social Care unless they consider such a discussion would place the child at an increased risk of significant harm. However, if you are not confident in doing so initially you should seek advice from the Duty Officer who will provide further guidance. There may be times when you see something of concern in respect of a child when completing your work, but you have no direct contact with the family. In these circumstances it would be appropriate to contact Social Care without discussing this with the family.
- If you are a worker who is not working directly with children and their families (e.g. refuse worker, recycling officer, receptionist) there would not be an expectation that you would discuss your concerns with the family.
- When you or your manager make your referral, you should agree with the recipient of the referral what the child and parents will be told, by whom and when. If you have no direct contact with the family, Social Care will identify the District or Borough Council as the referrer.
- If you or your manager makes your referral by telephone, you should confirm it in writing within 48 hours. Social Care should acknowledge your written referral within one working day of receiving it. If you have not heard back within three working days, you should contact the Duty Officer again.
- Following a referral, the Social Care Duty Officer will discuss the information provided by you with a Social Care manager. A decision will be made by the Social Care manager on what course of action will be taken. If the information provided indicates that a service is **not** required from Social Care, the referral will be recorded as a 'contact' and the family informed. If it appears that **a service from Social Care might be required** an Initial Assessment will be completed and the family and child will be visited by a Social Worker/Social Work Assistant.

Further information can be found in the Department for Education guidance ***What to do if you are worried a child is being abused (2006)*** or in the pan-Dorset Inter-Agency Safeguarding Procedures at <https://www.dorsetscb.co.uk/site/advice-for-people-working-with-children/local-inter-agency-procedures/>