



**BEDFORD**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

# Why is a Social Worker here?

A guide for  
children and young people

## A guide for young people

Someone who knows you has asked us (Children's Social Care) to visit you as they are worried about you. This is called a referral to Children's Social Care. We are here to listen to you and work out how we can help.

You will be given a Social Worker who will talk to you, your family and agencies that know you, like your school teacher and your GP. Your Social Worker will make sure that you are safe and have the support you need.

## What does a Social Worker do?

First of all, a Social Worker will decide if anything further is to be done.

This could be:

- no further action
- asking another organisation to provide support and advice to you or your family
- for an assessment to be completed with information gathering to help understand the difficulties in your family and what sort of help you may need
- In a small number of cases, it may be necessary for the Social Worker to meet urgently with other professionals, such as Teachers, Doctors, the Police. This is because they feel that you may be harmed. In this case the Police or one of your parents/carers might ask for the help of the Courts to protect you by stopping the person who may be hurting you. You may have to be seen by a doctor to see if you need any treatment.

## What will happen?

### Interviewing you

If you are old enough, it will be important for you to have a chance to talk to your Social Worker. Also your Social Worker prefers to have your permission (known as consent) to be able to share what we know about you with others, such as Teachers, Doctors, the Police. We have a separate leaflet called “Information Sharing and Consent - A Guide for Children and Young People” please ask your Social Worker for this leaflet which will explain this in more detail.

In some cases your Social Worker and the Police will need to record an interview with you on video. An adult who you trust can go with you to the interview session (but the adult cannot sit with you during the actual interview). The Police Child Abuse Investigation Unit may also carry out their own investigations if they feel a criminal offence has been committed.

During the enquiry you can expect:

- To be listened to and treated with respect
- To be offered support and advice
- To be kept informed
- That information is kept confidential and only shared with other people who are working with you.

If English is not your first language, please let your Social Worker know and they can arrange for an interpreter who speaks your language and understands the child protection system to be present at any meetings.

### Interviewing your parents/carers

Your Social Worker will also need to speak to your parent(s) or the person caring for you. This gives them a chance to discuss the concerns raised and what happens next. If English is not their first language, please let your Social Worker know and they can arrange for an interpreter who speaks their language and understands the child protection system to be present at any meetings.

## Medical Assessment

In some situations, a doctor will examine you to check for any signs of harm. If you can decide for yourself, your Social Worker will ask for your permission. If not, your parents/carers will be asked. If they refuse, Children's Social Care might obtain legal advice and make an application for a Court Order.

## What happens next?

Your Social Worker will collect information from people who have contact with you and your parents/carers. This will include your school, your doctor (GP) and anyone else who may work with you.

This information will form what we call an assessment and a decision can be made on whether, abuse has taken place, you are suffering from harm, or likely to be.

## What information are they looking for?

During an assessment, your Social Worker will talk to these professionals and will look at:

### Your development

- Do you have any health needs such as a disability or do you need any medication?
- Do you need extra support at school or with learning?
- Do you/your parents/carers find it difficult to cope with looking after you?
- Are you confident about yourself or do you get nervous?
- How well do you fit in with your family and how do they act towards you?
- What do other people think about you when they see you?
- Can you do things for yourself like dressing and feeding?

We just want to make sure that everyone is helping you properly.

## What your parents/carers do well

- Are they able to look after you well?
- Are they good at making sure you are safe?
- Do they make you feel loved and wanted?
- Do they help you to play and to learn?
- Do they help you understand the difference between right and wrong?
- Do you move house a lot?

## Family

- Do you live with lots of different people?
- Who lives with you and how are they related to you?
- Who are the wider members of your family such as aunts and uncles and grandparents?
- Do your parents work? How does this affect you?
- Does your family mix with other people who live nearby?



## How will agencies work together?

Social Workers will work with other agencies, such as Schools, Doctors and the Police by:

- Listening to each other
- Showing respect
- Being honest
- Talking to you about things you have said before they talk to other people
- Making decisions with you.

## Will I be taken away?

Children's Social Care do everything they can to help families to stay together unless you need to be protected or you are in danger of being harmed. In extreme circumstances, the Police or Courts might decide that it would be best for Children's Social Care to find someone else to look after you, but this does not happen a lot.



## **The assessment has been completed, what happens next?**

Once the assessment has been completed, the decision may be:

- That no further action is needed and that will be the end of the assessment
- You may be referred to another agency for some support or advice
- If there are sufficient concerns a multi-agency meeting called a Child Protection Conference will be arranged (please see our leaflet called “Child Protection Conferences – Information for Children and Young People” for more details).

Once the assessment has been completed, the information in it will be shared with you by your Social Worker and they will explain what will happen next.

## **What can I do if I am not happy with what is happening?**

If you feel unhappy with any aspect of the enquiry please speak to your Social Worker, or if you feel unable to do this speak to the Social Worker’s Team Manager.

If you are still not satisfied after speaking to them, you have a right to make a formal complaint.

### **Contact the Bedford Borough Customer Relations team on:**

Telephone: 01234 228597/228992 or

Text: 07795 686 459 or

Email: [be.heard@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:be.heard@bedford.gov.uk)

**You can also contact the Local Government Ombudsman,  
their contact details are:**

Government Ombudsman

PO Box 4771

Coventry

CV4 0EH

Telephone: 0300 061 0614

Text: 07624 804323

## **Useful National Contacts**

Here are some numbers you might find useful if you want to talk to someone other than your Social Worker or parents/carers. Some of these calls do not cost anything. If you don't want to ring parents/carers from home you can ring from a mobile or a call box. These people are there to listen and help you.

### **The Office of the Children's Commissioner**

Responsible for Children's Rights across England.

Telephone free on 0800 528 0731

Email: [advice.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:advice.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk)

Website: [www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk](http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)

### **Childline (NSPCC)**

You can contact Childline about anything, for any problems including home or social life. ChildLine is the UK's free, confidential helpline for children and young people. Trained volunteers provide advice and support, by phone and online, 24 hours a day. Children can also receive advice by text.

Telephone: 0800 11 11 or talk via 1-2-1

webchat at [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)



## **Barnardos**

Supporting and enabling children and young people's voice in decision making about their life choices. Enabling individual and families to gain confidence and skills needed to influence and participate in community activities.

Website: [www.barnardos.org.uk](http://www.barnardos.org.uk)

Telephone: 0208 550 8822

## **National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS)**

If you feel that you need someone to speak up for you, talk to them on –

Telephone: 0808 808 1001

Website: [www.nyas.net](http://www.nyas.net)

## **Who Cares Trust**

A virtual world of information and support for young people in care.

Website: [www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk/who-cares-town](http://www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk/who-cares-town)



## The Site

An online guide to life for 16-25 year-olds in the UK. Support and information on everything from sex and exam stress to debt Website:

[www.thesite.org/ask-a-question/ask-about-relationships](http://www.thesite.org/ask-a-question/ask-about-relationships) drugs

## Kidscape

Charity in the UK established specifically to prevent bullying and child sexual abuse. Website: [www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk)

## Young Minds

Offer information to young people and children about bullying, mental health and emotional wellbeing. Website: [www.youngminds.org.uk/for\\_children\\_young\\_people](http://www.youngminds.org.uk/for_children_young_people)

## Coram Voice (Voice for the Child in Care)

Offer help to young people who are living in care or have recently left care, but can also help you if you cannot live at home anymore and feel you need extra support and services. Freephone 0808 800 5792

Website: [www.coram.org.uk](http://www.coram.org.uk)

## Think U Know

Website with the latest information on the sites you like to visit, mobiles and new technology. Find out what's good, what's not and what you can do about it. Most importantly, there's also a place which anyone can use to report if they feel uncomfortable or worried about someone they are chatting to online. Website: [www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk)

## Childhood Bereavement UK

If someone important to you has just died, or you have just found out they are very seriously ill, you are not alone and you can get help and support.

Telephone: 0800 02 888 40

Website: [www.childbereavement.org.uk/Support/Youngpeople](http://www.childbereavement.org.uk/Support/Youngpeople)

## **Bullying UK**

Get advice and support whenever you need it.

Confidential and free\* helpline service (previously known as Parentline).

0808 800 2222

Website: [www.bullying.co.uk](http://www.bullying.co.uk)

## **CEOP**

Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre. Provides the latest information on online sites, mobiles and new technology. Find out what's good, what's not and what you can do about it. Most importantly, there's also a place which anyone can use to report if they feel uncomfortable or worried about someone they are chatting to online.

Website: [www.ceop.police.uk](http://www.ceop.police.uk)

## **Brook**

Provides free and confidential sexual health services and advice for young people under 25.

Website: [www.brook.org.uk](http://www.brook.org.uk)

Telephone: 01234 761090

## **Safe Sex in Beds**

For a safe, inclusive and broad range of sexual health in Bedfordshire.

Website: [www.safesexinbeds.co.uk](http://www.safesexinbeds.co.uk)



## Finding out more

If you would like further copies, a large-print copy or information about us and our services, please telephone or write to us at our address below.

Për Informacion

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برای اطلاع

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Informacja

للمعلومات

ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਲਈ

Za Informacije

Per Informazione



**01234 267422**



### **Children's Services**

Bedford Borough Council  
Borough Hall  
Caudwell Street  
Bedford, MK42 9AP



**childrensservices@bedford.gov.uk**