

# Children's Social Care

A guide for parents involved in  
the assessment process



[lancashire.gov.uk/family](http://lancashire.gov.uk/family)

**Lancashire**

County  
Council



01524 5757

**This guide**

This guide is for parents whose child has been referred to Children's Social Care. Sometimes families get in touch with us themselves, or ask someone to get in touch on their behalf. In other cases someone who is concerned about a child or children may contact us. The leaflet tells you how we will work with you and what you can expect to happen.

All children have a right to develop in a healthy and safe way. Parents and families want to do their best for their children, but sometimes they need some extra help or support. We know that with a little help most families can sort out their own problems, and our aim is to help you to do that.

When you are first referred to us, we will work with you to see what help and support your family might need, and who could best provide you with this support.

We'll find this out by carrying out an assessment. Sometimes when you are referred to us, an assessment is not undertaken, because other services are more able to meet your needs.



As we have a team that looks at all the referrals that come to us, initial enquiries may suggest that your health visitor, for example, could support your family by helping you access a children's centre or parenting support group.

### **An assessment**

An assessment is a way of finding out:

- How your child is doing in terms of education, health and learning about how they are getting on with other people.
- What issues, if any, are affecting your child or children.
- What support you, as a parent, are able to give your child or children.
- What other things may be helping you with bringing up your child, or may be making your life more difficult.

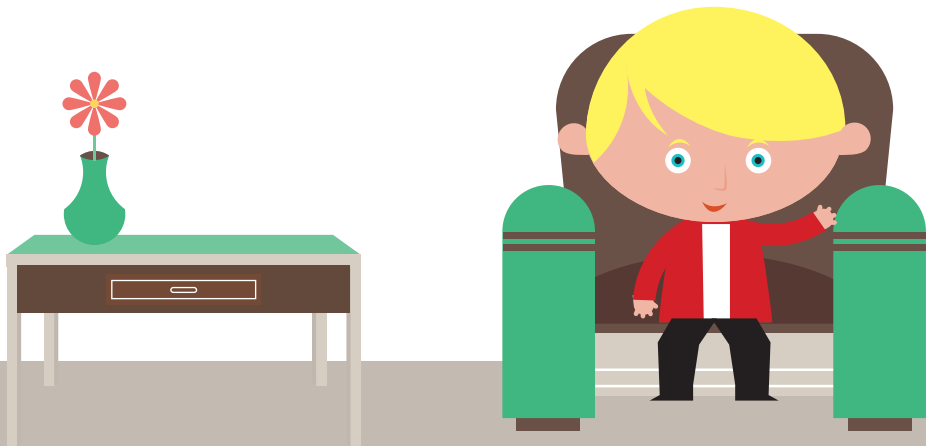
Although we recognise that some families find the assessment process difficult, we also know that many families do find that life starts to improve as a result of the assessment and the support it brings.

### **The assessment process**

The assessment is carried out by a social worker.

They will:

- Meet with your child or children alone.
- Meet with you and members of your family, maybe a number of times.
- Talk to other people who work with you and your family, such as your child's teacher or your family doctor. In most cases, we will ask for your consent to do this. If we are concerned about a child's safety this is not required, but we will still ask you and explain if this is the case.
- Write down all the information we gather, and use it to help work out what strengths and difficulties your family has.



### **Putting Children First: How long an assessment takes**

An assessment, can take up to 45 working days depending on how complex your situation is.

There may be a wait between us getting the referral and starting the assessment, depending on how urgent your situation seems to be. If you would like a copy of the assessment once it has been completed please let the social worker know.

### **After the assessment**

After the assessment one of two things might happen:

We may decide that there is no need for our support services. We will let you know this if this is the case. However we may recommend other organisations to you who provide help which you and your child would benefit from. In this case, we will write a Child in Need Plan explaining what will happen and what difference the support services should make, We will let you have a copy of the plan and will discuss it with you. If you would like a copy of the plan please let your child's social worker know. (Support services are provided under section 17 of the 1989 Children Act)



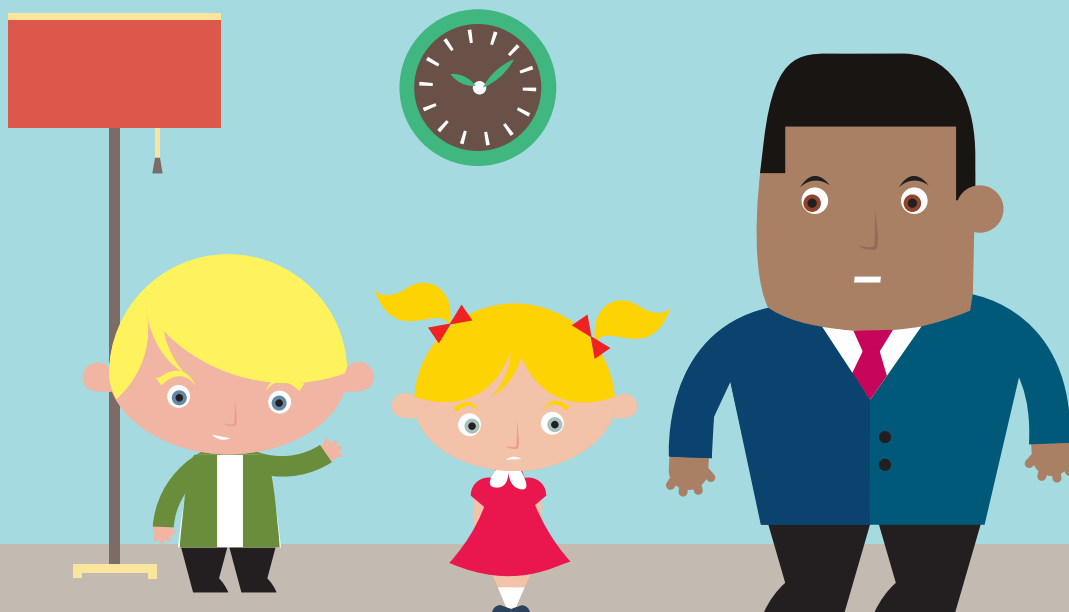
## Assessments and the safety and protection of children

We do what we can to support families to stay together whenever this is best for the child. In a very small number of cases, there are serious concerns about a child's safety. Making sure your child is safe will be our first priority. We may need to carry out child protection enquiries, (under section 47 of the 1989 Children's Act).

We will listen carefully to what you have to say, offer advice, and, if necessary, support you to bring up your children and resolve your difficulties. The support services we offer may help you through a short-term crisis, or work with you longer-term. We will try our best to offer you any services you need as soon as possible. Occasionally there may be delays in providing you with the service(s) you need. As far as we can, we will keep you informed about what we are doing and planning.

We will keep information you give us confidential, unless you give us permission to share it with other people, or unless we need to share the information to protect your child.

If a child protection enquiry finds that your children are at risk and their safety is a concern, we will hold a multi-agency child protection conference in order to decide whether your child requires a child protection plan. If this is the case the social worker will provide you with further information regarding this process.



### What we'll need from you

We know that the vast majority of parents want to do their best for their children, and completing the assessment will help the social workers recognise the strengths you and your family have, as well as your difficulties. We can help you best if you tell us about your difficulties and what you do well in your family. Do not be afraid to ask questions or tell us what you are concerned about.

### Comments and complaints

We welcome any comments about our services – good or bad. We are interested to hear how we could do things better, and we like to know when we are doing well. If you are unhappy with the services you receive, we encourage you to make a complaint. Full details are given in the factsheet Speak Up (see across), or contact the Customer Feedback Service.

Customer Feedback Service on **01772 539414**

Customer care **0300 123 6720**

You can also use the online form on our website:

**[lancashire.gov.uk/childrensservices/telluswhatyouthink](http://lancashire.gov.uk/childrensservices/telluswhatyouthink)**

**[cyp.telluswhatuthink@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:cyp.telluswhatuthink@lancashire.gov.uk)**



**You can write free of charge to:**

Freepost LANCASHIRE SOCIAL CARE CUSTOMER  
FEEDBACK

**(Freepost can be in upper & lowercase and the  
NAME must always appear in uppercase as above)**

Tel: **01772 530671**

You can contact Advocacy Services who can support  
your child/ ren to express their views, wishes and feelings,  
including how to make a complaint.  
National Youth Advocacy Services at  
**<https://www.nyas.net/>**

If you are a child, young person or ringing on behalf of a  
child, young person or vulnerable adult and need help,  
information or advice, please contact our freephone  
helpline on **0808 808 1001** or **email [help@nyas.net](mailto:help@nyas.net)**

Young people can telephone the Young People's  
Interactive Services on

**0800 511111**

Text **07786 511 111**

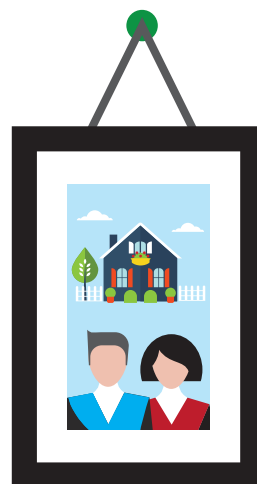
Visit **[q2a.co.uk](http://q2a.co.uk)**

(365 days a year, from 10 in the morning to 10 at night).

**Information Sharing**

Lancashire Children's Social Care and Personal  
Information

When you are in touch with Children's Social Care, we  
will keep information about you in written records and  
computer files. We will keep this information confidential,  
and if there is a need to discuss this information with  
anyone else, we will normally ask for your permission.



The only exception to this is if information come to light which, in the social worker's view, may indicate a serious threat to the welfare of your child. If this is the case, you will be told what your rights are in this new situation. You have a right to ask to see records we keep about you, including the assessment record. If there is anything in it which you disagree with, you can ask to have your views written down on the record. We can give you more information about how we handle personal information. Phone **0300 123 6720** for our factsheet Your Personal Information.

### **How we will use your information**

We want to offer a wide range of social care services that meet your needs and will give you the best possible coordinated care. To help us do this it is important that all partner agencies (for example health, education and housing) can – within reason – share information about your welfare. During your contact with Lancashire County Council, we will ask you for information so that you can receive an appropriate social care service.

We keep this information securely, together with details of our work with you and any services you receive, because it may be needed if we see you again.

### **Access to your records**

You are entitled to know what information we hold about you. If any of your details are wrong, tell us and we will correct them.

If you would like access to your information you should apply in writing. You can either send us a letter or complete the request form attached to this document.

Applications should be sent to:

The Data Protection Officer  
PO Box 100, County Hall  
PRESTON, PR1 0LD

We are obliged to reply to your request within 40 days. The Data Protection Act sets out the fees we can charge. However, we believe you should be able to have access to your information free of charge, so it will not cost you anything.





**Application for access to Lancashire County Council records.**

**1. Your details**

Surname: .....

Forename(s): .....

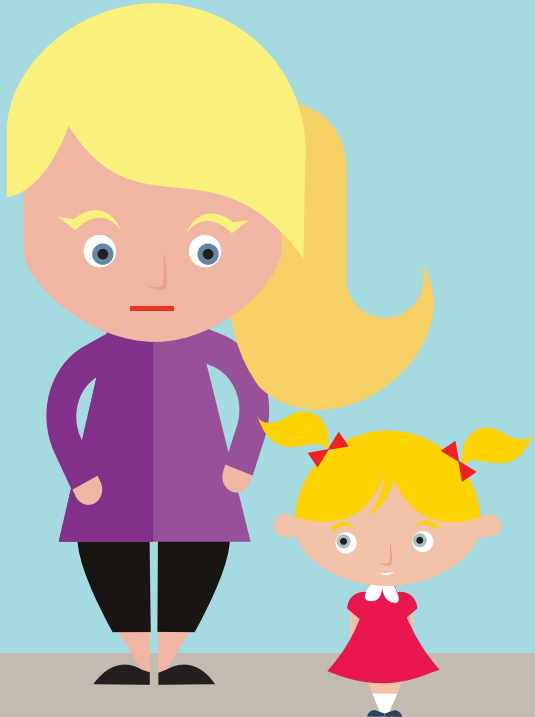
Date of birth: .....

Address: .....

Postcode: .....

Tel Number: .....

Signature: .....



**2. Are you requesting Information about yourself:** Yes/No

(If you are asking for information about yourself, please go to section 5)

If you are asking for information about someone else, please give their details below:

Surname: .....

Forename(s): .....

Date of birth: .....

Address: .....

Postcode:.....

Tel Number: .....



### 3. What is your relationship to the person whose information you are asking for? (e.g. parent, partner etc)

Please note that if you are applying on behalf of someone else, we may have to contact them for their written permission to disclose information to you. If you are a parent applying for access on behalf of your child, we can only disclose their information to you if it is considered to be in the child's interests.

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### 4. In the space below, please provide us with any other details that may help us in locating the information you have asked for. (This may include details of previous names the person whose information you are requesting may have had, or addresses they may have lived at)

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### 5. To help us

To help us process your request as quickly as possible, please enclose proof of your identity with this application. For example a photocopy of your birth certificate, benefit book, passport or driving licence. Please note that we do not require the original documents.

Please return completed forms to:  
 The Data Protection Officer  
 PO Box 100, County Hall  
 PRESTON, PR1 0LD

And finally if you want further information regarding a referral you have made or about the referral process please see the contact details below:

#### **Referrals to Children's Social Care:**

If you need the Customer Service Centre to raise a new referral then please put details on an email and send to: **[cypreferrals@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:cypreferrals@lancashire.gov.uk)**

If your referral is urgent please telephone one of the following:

Customer Access Team – **0845 053 0009** – weekdays 8.45am to 5.00pm

Emergency Duty Team – **0845 602 1043** – outside office hours, weekends and public holidays.



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