

# Islington's Children's Services Contact Team: A new single point of contact for requesting services for vulnerable children and young people

## A new single point of contact

We have established a new Children's Services Contact Team (CSCT) to make it as easy as possible for residents and professionals to gain access to support or safeguarding services for children and young people. This will be the single point of contact for requests for services for vulnerable children and young people in the borough.

## Before you get in touch

Use the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) to get a complete picture of a child or young person's additional needs. It is strengths-based and addresses all unmet needs, not just those in which individual services specialise. It can be used by anyone who works with the child or young person.

The CAF benefits children and young people who don't have to go through the time-consuming and potentially distressing process of telling their story over and over again to different people. The CAF also saves you time, as all the required information is provided at the start, rather than going back and forth with the CSCT to enable an accurate assessment to be made.

You will need to obtain the consent of the family for the information contained within the CAF to be shared with other practitioners. Once you have completed the CAF, you will be better placed to understand whether a multi-agency intervention is required.

## Why would you need to contact us?

Professionals can make a request for support if a Common Assessment (CAF) indicates that a child or young person aged under 18 years has additional needs and requires a multi-agency intervention. The concerns may be in relation to the behaviour or circumstances of adults in the family or the child itself and may include: persistent absence, violence, anti-social behaviour or offending, chronic health problems, or ongoing behavioural problems that are putting the child, young person or others at risk.

*Before sharing information to request a service, you should obtain the consent of the child and parent(s) unless doing so would put them at risk of serious harm.*

**If you are worried that a child is at risk of significant harm, e.g. through abuse or neglect, you *must* make a request for a safeguarding service and should not delay your contact.**

## The benefits of a single point of access

- Vulnerable children and their families receive the services they need, when they need them and where they can best access them
- We get involved early to support vulnerable families and nip problems in the bud – helping them to build resilience so that emerging problems do not become more serious
- Service providers (Schools, Children's Centres, Health services, Families First, Children's Social Care, Targeted Youth Support, the voluntary sector, and Housing and Adult Services) work together to make sure families receive the services they most need when they need them most.

## How do I request a service?

If you have access to Islington's e-CAF, please use this to request a service. This is the most efficient and secure way to contact us.

If you do not have e-CAF access, please use a paper CAF and send to [csctreferrals@islington.gov.uk](mailto:csctreferrals@islington.gov.uk). Unless you are sending from an email address that contains '.gov' it will not be secure and must be password protected. **From Monday 6 January 2014, only requests for service made via the secure e-CAF will be accepted unless there is an urgent and immediate concern that a child is at risk of significant harm<sup>1</sup>** If you foresee a problem in securing access to Islington's e-CAF, please contact [michelle.virdi@islington.gov.uk](mailto:michelle.virdi@islington.gov.uk) as soon as possible.

Or you can telephone 020 7527 7400 for advice between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday. Outside of these hours, contact the Emergency Duty Team for urgent matters on 020 7527 0992.

## What happens next?

The Children's Services Contact Team includes representatives from Children's Social Care, Families First, Children's Centres and Targeted Youth Support. The team will check which service(s) the child/family has received or is currently receiving and the professionals involved. This helps to prevent duplication of service, ensures that professionals who know the family are informed and promotes an improved service from the team around the family.

The team can also check whether the family qualify for the borough's Stronger Families programme, which ensures the appropriate support, challenge and co-ordination is in place to make lasting positive changes for families affected by multiple problems including offending/ anti-social behaviour, educational issues and worklessness.

## How long will this take?

The Children's Services Contact Team will make a decision about which service is best placed to respond to your request within 24 hours where a child appears to be in need of protection and otherwise within 72 hours. You will be notified of the decision once this has happened.

*Incomplete information within the Common Assessment, and, or lack of consent will delay access to services, and unless there is a child protection matter, the referrer will be required to obtain full information and or consent before the referral can be progressed.*

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that GPs and Accident and Emergency staff will not be required to use the e-CAF system.

## **Information sharing within the Children's Services Contact Team**

Apart from basic information, e.g. date of birth or services provided, information is not shared within the Children's Services Contact Team without consent. Information will be stored securely and is held according to the Council's Data Protection Policy.

For more information see [http://www.islington.gov.uk/about/council-documents/access\\_to\\_information/dataprotection/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.islington.gov.uk/about/council-documents/access_to_information/dataprotection/Pages/default.aspx)

## **How does this relate to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)?**

The Children's Services Contact Team also contains a MASH. The MASH in Islington includes Children's Social Care, Community Health, Education, Families First, Police, Adult Mental Health, Probation, and Targeted Youth Support.

When a referral is received which raises safeguarding concerns, but the level of need or risk is unclear, the referral will be subject to a MASH check. This enables multi agency information to be shared to avoid children falling through the net of services by building a full picture of risk to assist early decision making. The aim is to identify vulnerable children earlier and more efficiently through better information sharing and to enable agencies to act quickly to keep children safe.

The MASH is a confidential environment where information is only shared between designated MASH professionals within a specified timeframe. Once the level of need and risk is clarified, the child will be matched to the most appropriate type of service, through the normal Children's Services Contact Team processes.

MASH checks can only be carried out where there is consent or serious safeguarding concerns that indicate that seeking consent would prejudice the child's welfare.

**Contact the Children's Services Contact Team:**

**Monday – Friday, 9am-5pm - 020 7527 7400**

**For urgent enquiries out of hours contact the Emergency Duty Team on 020 7527 0992**