

Children's Advice and Duty Service FAQ

What is the MASH?

The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) provides vital cross-agency checks for those children most at risk. The Children's Advice and Duty Service (CADS) within the MASH helps to support those children who need it the most.

What is the aim of the Children's Advice and Duty Service?

The aim is to get the right support for children and families when there are safeguarding concerns and a child is at risk of significant harm, including physical, emotional, sexual abuse or neglect. By talking through concerns and solutions with professionals we can work even better together and support families earlier.

When do I call CADS?

Please remember that the CADS should only be contacted when there are concerns about a child's safety or wellbeing, and you believe they may be at risk of harm. This includes:

Immediate Safeguarding Concerns - where a child is at risk of significant harm, including physical, emotional, sexual abuse, or neglect.

Escalating Concerns - where previous support or interventions have not improved the situation and concerns are increasing. This includes when you have completed a plan which has been reviewed and amended, and the child's needs are not being met or have increased.

Concerns About Parenting Capacity - where a parent or carer's ability to meet a child's needs is compromised due to issues such as substance misuse, mental health, or domestic abuse.

Professional Consultation - Where the situation is complex and you require advice or guidance on appropriate next steps.

If you consider the incident to be an emergency, please call **999**.

If the child, young person or family have an allocated worker, please contact them directly.

When do I request Early Help support?

For concerns that do not meet the above threshold, Early Help support & guidance can be accessed via [Request for support - Norfolk County Council](#). Early Help is designed to support children, young people, and families experiencing difficulties that may affect their wellbeing, development, or ability to flourish. It aims to:

- Prevent problems from escalating by addressing issues early.
- Support the wider family context, including parents, carers, and siblings.
- Improve outcomes such as school attendance, mental health, and relationships.
- Encourage multi-agency working, bringing together professionals to create a coordinated support plan.
- Empower families by focusing on strengths and helping build resilience.

How do I contact CADS?

If you are a professional and have concerns about a child, you can call **0344 800 8021**.

Please choose from the following options:

Option 1 -the child or young person is currently being supported by a Social Worker or Family Practitioner

Option 2 -your call relates to Child Exploitation

Option 3 -your call relates to Domestic Abuse

What number do members of the public call?

Customer Service Centre number 0344 800 8020.

What information do I need to give when I call?

You can use the Children's Advice and Duty Service [Professional Flowchart](#) to prepare for your call. This includes details on what information the Consultant Social Worker will need handling your call.

Do I have to get a parents' consent before I make a call?

Ideally yes, but you can make a call to the service without parents' consent. While it is good practice to seek consent, there are some exceptions when it comes to protecting children. For example, if having a conversation with the family would place the child, or another child, or someone else, or you the referrer, at increased risk of suffering harm you do not need consent. You also don't need consent if it might undermine the investigation of a serious crime. CADS will confirm this information with you when you call.

How do I evidence that I have contacted Children's Services? How will information be recorded?

It is best practice to keep a record of the contact you have made; the discussion and any decisions made within your own agency recording system. You should also record whether you have obtained parental consent and if not, why not.

CADS will provide written feedback from every conversation.

What records of the conversation will be made and how will they be kept?

This will depend on the individual discussion and the risks identified to a child. It will also depend on whether you have got consent from the child's parents. However, we will record all the conversations on our system; by having a record, we will also be able to see when there might be a repetition or accumulation of concerns about a child.

What are the opening hours of the Children's Advice and Duty Service?

9am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

What do I do outside of these hours?

You can continue to contact our Emergency Duty Team on 0344 800 8020.

What happens if I disagree with what the social worker recommends?

The aim of the service is to work together to come up with the right support or service for a child or family. We hope that professional disagreements will be rare but if you wish to escalate you can follow the [Resolving Professional Disagreements Policy | NSCP](#)

How can I provide feedback about the service?

When the caller receives the record of the conversation, there will be a link included to a short survey so that all callers can provide feedback on the service provided.

How can I contribute to the FAQs?

Callers can email the NSCP Business Unit with questions as they arise on nscb@norfolk.gov.uk and they will be passed to the Children's Advice and Duty Service.