



Plymouth
Parent
Advocacy
Project

When Children, Young People and Families Services are involved

A booklet made with and for parents with
Learning Difficulties

Who is going
to be
involved?



What do I
need to do?

Who can
support me?

This booklet will help you understand what will happen if Children's services are worried about your child.

Here are some things you will need to know before you start reading

In the booklet, some of the words are in **bold**.

At the back of the booklet there is a Glossary.

The Glossary will tell you what the words in **bold** mean.

We will also explain the different types of **abuse**.

Make sure you get the right support

You may want to have someone with you while you are reading the booklet.

That way if you don't understand anything, the other person can support you.

This person could be your **advocate**,

or a friend who you trust.

Right at the back of the booklet, there is a blank page for you to write down anything important you would like to remember.

You could also use it to write down any thoughts, feelings, or questions you have.

What is in this booklet?

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Who are Children, Young People and Families Services?



Children, Young People and Families Services work within Plymouth City Council.



They are social workers and family support workers.



They make sure that children are being well looked after by their parents or carers.



The social worker may hear some information about your child that worries them.

This information could come from anyone who knows you or your child, or even a member of the public.



They will need to find out whether this information is true or not.



A social worker will need to come and visit you, to see how you and your child are doing.



These visits and conversations will help the social worker decide whether your child is safe.



They may decide that your child is **at risk of significant harm**.



If the social worker thinks this, then they will have a meeting with other professionals to talk about this.

This news may worry you.
You may want some support.

Who can support you?



An **advocate** can support you.



An **advocate** does not work for Plymouth City Council or any other agency.



Your **advocate** can support you to understand anything you might find difficult.



They will come and meet you and your family before the meeting happens.



Your **advocate** will go through any paperwork with you, to make sure you are prepared for the child protection conference.

The Child Protection Conference

Who might be there?

Some of these people will know you.
Some of them may not have met you before.



Police Officer



Your Health Visitor



Your Social Worker



Your advocate



Everyone will introduce themselves.

What will happen at the child protection conference?



All the professionals will talk about the different reports they have written.



They will all talk about what they are worried about.



They will also talk about what you do well as a family.



Tip

It is good if your social worker gives you a copy of the report they have written before the meeting. They should explain the report to you.

You and your advocate



Your **advocate** is there to support you to understand anything you might find difficult.



Your **advocate** is there to make sure your views are heard.



All the professionals will decide together what needs to happen.



It may be that your child needs a Child Protection Plan or a Child in Need Plan.

The Child Protection Plan



It may be they decide your child is at **risk of significant harm**.



All the professionals will say what they think needs to happen for your child to be safe.



This could be that your child doesn't see anyone who might put them **at risk**.

What will the Plan say?



The Child Protection plan will have a list of action points.



The plan explains what you need to do to keep your child safe.



The plan also says how professionals will support you to keep your child safe.



You will be given a printed copy of The Child Protection Plan.

Tip



It's important to keep all documents given to you in a safe place.

You can keep them in a folder so you don't lose them

Who can support me with my emotions?

You may be feeling lots of different emotions.

Worried

Confused



Frustrated

Angry



There may still be things you don't understand.



This may make you feel **frustrated** or **angry** or **worried**.



Your **advocate** can help you to understand things better.



Your **advocate** can help you find someone who can support you to talk about your feelings.

What happens after the Child Protection Plan is put in place?



You will need to attend **Core Group** meetings.



These meetings will be held every 4 weeks.



The professionals who are working closely with you and your child will be there.



They will talk about whether the action points in the Child Protection Plan are being met and if things are getting better for your child.



Your **advocate** can come with you.



Before the meeting, your **advocate** can support you to write a checklist of questions you would like to ask at the meeting.



You can also write down or talk to your advocate about anything you would like the professionals to know.

What happens if professionals are still worried?



Sometimes professionals supporting you will still have some concerns about your child's safety.



They will need to do something about this. A **Legal Planning Meeting** will be organised.



You will be given a letter telling you when the meeting is and what the social workers concerns are.



You will be advised to
find a good **solicitor**.

This will be free.



They will know a lot
about families and the
law.

Solicitors in Plymouth

Here is a list of solicitors who are based in or near the city centre



The Family Law Company

01752 674 999



Wolferstans

01752 663 295

Nash&Co
Solicitors

Nash and Company

01752 664 444



Gill Akaster

01752 203 500

WoolcombeYonge

Woolcombe Yonge

01752 660 384

Solicitors in Stoke



Owen Lawton

01752 201 169

Solicitors in Devonport



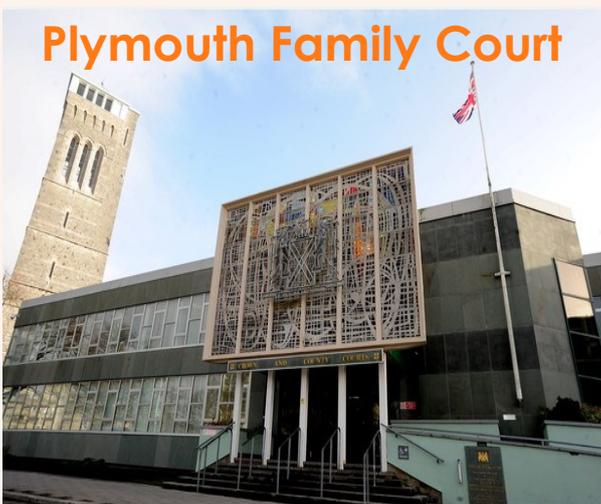
Howard and Over

01752 556 606

What could happen at the Legal Planning Meeting?



At this meeting,
Children, Young People
and Families Services
may tell you they would
like a **Judge** to
decide the future of
your child.



This means that the
case will go to court.
Sometimes this will be in
Plymouth but might
also be in Torquay,
Exeter or Truro

Legal Proceedings

What will happen with you...



During the court hearings, you will be represented by your **solicitor**.

This means they will speak for you in court.



Sometimes you might be represented by a **barrister** who is like a **solicitor**.



Your **solicitor** or **barrister** will speak to the **Judge** on your behalf and tell the **Judge** about your case.

What will happen with you...



There can sometimes be a very long wait at Court before you see the Judge.



The solicitors or barristers will talk about what they think should happen.



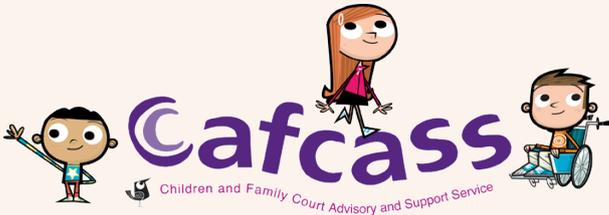
They will ask you what you would like to do.

What you say to them will be taken seriously.



They will explain what is happening and help you make the right decisions.

What will happen with your child



Your child will be represented by a guardian. They will work for **CAFCASS**.



The guardian's role is to make sure that your child is safe.



It is important for the guardian to make sure that the best decisions are made for your child.

What could the Judge decide?



The **Judge** will make decisions about...



Where your child will live.



Who will look after your child.



What kind of **contact** you will have with your child.



When you will **contact** your child.



How you and your child can be supported and who will support you.

Different types of abuse

The next few pages
will be
telling you about the
different types of
abuse.

It's very important that you have someone with you when you read through it.

That way they can support you to properly understand the different types of abuse.

They can also support you if you find any of it upsetting.

What is emotional abuse?



Emotional abuse is when someone makes a child feel unloved.

Some examples are saying unkind things to the child.

Not letting them spend time with children their own age.

Another example is involving the child in grown-up issues like relationship problems.

If a child is being emotionally abused, they may want a lot attention from other people.

They may show signs that they have hurt themselves in some way.

They may say they want to hurt themselves.

What is neglect?

Neglect is when a child is not being looked after properly by the person who is supposed to be looking after them.

It can be not giving a child safety and warmth.



Not making sure a child is clean and dry.

Not taking a child to the doctors if they are ill.

Children who are neglected may have very bad physical appearance.

They may smell bad.

Their clothes may not fit them properly.

They may be ill a lot or be very tired a lot.

What is physical abuse?

Physical abuse is harm caused to your body.



Examples of physical abuse are hitting, scratching, punching, biting or burning.

If a child has been physically abused, there may be signs of this.



They could have cuts, bruises or burns.

These may be on parts of their body that are hidden under clothes.

What is sexual abuse?

Sexual abuse is when an adult forces a child to be involved in sexual acts.



This is always wrong.

An example of sexual abuse is kissing or touching private parts of the body like the penis or vagina.

Children may also be forced to watch or look at photographs or videos that they should not be watching.

If a child is being sexually abused, they may act differently.

A child may talk about things that they are too young to know about.

How can abuse affect someone?

Abuse can cause someone to feel very badly about themselves.

Abuse can mean it is difficult for the victim to trust other people.



Abuse can mean that people struggle to form happy relationships.

Abuse is always wrong and should never happen to anyone.

Child Abuse.

Children cannot protect themselves from abuse.



Children need to be protected from abuse.

This is because they don't properly understand what is right and what is wrong.

Children normally love and trust their parents or carers very much.

They may not realise that their parents or carers are doing something wrong.

They may not want their parents to get into trouble.

Glossary

Advocate



An advocate is someone who does not work for the council or any other agency.

An advocate makes sure your views are being listened to and that you understand information.

Abuse



Abuse is when someone disrespects or hurts someone else.

Abuse can be done in different ways. It's not just physical .

“At risk”



If your child is 'at risk' it means that they could be harmed in some way.

Barrister



A barrister will speak for you in court. They sometimes wear a wig and a gown, but not usually in Family Court.



CAFCASS

CAFCASS stands for 'Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service'.



Core Group Meeting

Core group meetings happen after your child has been put on a Child Protection Plan.

The professionals working closely with you and your child will be there.

In the meeting, you will talk about what everyone needs to do to make sure your child stays safe.

Glossary

Contact



If it is decided that your child needs to live with someone else, the **Judge** will decide ways you may stay in **contact** with your child.



You may be able to see your child in person at a contact centre.



You may be able to speak to your child on the phone.



Most of the time, the judge will decide that you can write letters to the adoptive parents, so you can know how your child is doing.

Glossary



Harm

Harm is when another person does something to deliberately hurt someone else.



Harm can be caused to your body as well as your feelings.



Judge

A person who makes legal decisions about your child.

Glossary



Solicitor

Someone who specialises in child care law.



“Significant risk of harm”

This means that your child is very likely to be harmed in some way.

Useful Telephone Numbers



Plymouth
Parent
Advocacy
Project

Plymouth Highbury Trust
Advocacy Services
01752 753 712



Learning Disability Parenting
Team
01752 304 656



Community Learning Disability
Team
0845 155 8077



Learning Disability Liaison Team
01752 431 566



Children, Young People and
Families Services
01752 668 000



Adult Social Care
01752 306 900



Plymouth Domestic
Abuse Service
01752 252 033



Pregnancy Crisis Centre
01752 246 788



SALT (Sexual Abuse
Listening Therapy)
01752 600 599



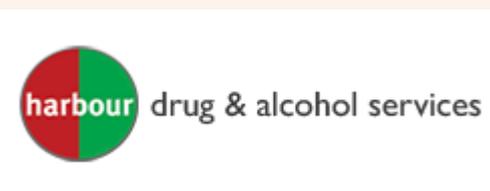
CAMHS
(Child and Adolescent Mental
Health Services)
01752 435 125



Home-Start
01752 346 039



Trevi House
01752 255 758



Harbour Drug and Alcohol Services
01752 434 343

Important Notes

Thank you very much!

This booklet was put together with the help of parents with learning disabilities and difficulties involved with the Plymouth Parent Advocacy Project.

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