



## Children and Young People's Services

### Tips for Parents on Accessing Social Services

As a parent/carer of a child/young person with a disability, it can at times be very challenging. This is mainly so because many families are unaware of what is available to them or what their rights are in accessing services from the Children with Disabilities Team. Lack of knowledge of what is available can leave families in a desolate place, feeling rejected by society and suffering fatigue which may lead to ill health. As a result, this can leave families, feeling alone and isolated. It is for the reason the Equality Act 2010 was put in place to make you feel included in society and also give you an awareness of services available to you, your rights, entitlement and how to access these services. Listed below are a few tips which we hope will help you to access services available to you and your family.

If a child/young person has a disability, they are classed as a 'child in need' under the Children Act 1989. This means that they are entitled to ask social services for an assessment, who determine what support is needed. Listed below are the types of support you and your child/young person may be able to access, dependant on your individual circumstances and your Local Authority/Borough Council eligibility criteria:

- Housing – an Occupational Therapist may visit you if necessary to determine whether your home is suitable and make recommendations for aids and adaptations to make living comfortable for your child/young person. Some of the things they may recommend could include:
  - Holiday play scheme
  - Short break services
  - Financial help towards travel cost for hospital visits
  - Respite
  - Benefits to include Disability Living Allowance
  - Referral to other organisations/charities for help and support
- Personal care – you may need help with washing or feeding your child/young person



- Someone to come to your house to care for your child/young person while you go out shopping or for an evening out.
- Direct Payments – this allows you to pay for your child/young person’s care giving you more independence and flexibility.
- Knowledge of what is available in your local area, for example support groups.
- If your local authority is unable to support you because you have not reached their eligibility criteria, then they should be able to refer you on to other organisations who may be able to support you

**Note:** Any recommendations or services from the Children with Disabilities Team (CWDT) will be funded by them.

If you feel comfortable you can contact social services yourself asking for an assessment of needs to be done. If you do not feel comfortable in doing this, then a referral can be made to them on your behalf. Once in receipt, they will send you, or the individual making the referral, a form to complete. This is a simple form and it is basically asking you to explain in detail the child/young person’s needs and how beneficial it will be for you and the family as a network to access appropriate services. It is therefore important that you get some things right from the initial stage to get the best result.

On receipt of the form the Children with Disabilities Team (CWDT) will let you know whether you are eligible for support. They will then arrange a visit to see you at home if you meet their threshold and should carry out what is called an initial/core assessment. It is important that you prepare yourself for this interview by recording a diary of events as they occur. This will enable you to answer any questions asked by the Social Worker. You will be asked lots of questions so be prepared and if you are unsure of what to mention then seek advice.

You will not only be asked about the child/young person but the whole family so be clear and concise as to the impact this is having on the family.

If possible you should get a representative to sit in with you on the initial/core assessment. This is only an option, if you feel confident that you can do it on your own then that’s fine.



The Social Worker will be taking notes as they converse with you, so you should take notes yourself so that nothing is unclear or misunderstood and ask as many questions as possible as the interview progresses. Following this stage you should ask for any notes taken by the Social Worker to be read out to you. This is to ensure that it is an accurate statement of what had been discussed. The Social Worker will usually discuss your case at panel and the decision made will be sent to you in an Initial Assessment Plan along with the outline of the provision they have agreed to make.

If you are struggling to care for your child/young person you can also request a care assessment. The Carers Act 2014 states that you are entitled to ask for your own needs to be assessed in order to help you to continue to care for your child/young person more effectively, as deemed necessary, Social Services may put things in place to support you and your child/young person.

### **Some points to remember:**

- First and foremost, you should keep a diary of events as they occur in order to give a clear picture.
- Ensure you are available for the appointment, so check your diary
- Always use the worst case scenario
- Be clear and concise about your child/young person needs and keeping a diary will help with this
- Write down questions you have before and during the interview
- Ask for a copy of the assessment
- Proof read it and ensure you are happy with its contents
- If the assessment needs amendments request the changes and ask for an updated copy of the assessment to be sent to you.
- Ask for a time frame as to when you should expect to hear from them

For further support contact:

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