



**First Contact Service**  
**03000 26 79 79**



## **Guidance for Professionals**

### **Getting children and their families to the right service, at the right time**

#### **Are you concerned about a child or need support for a family?**

**Our aim at First Contact is to help you get families the support they need, when they need it, from the right service. The guidance will help you provide us with the details we need.**

If your concern needs immediate action, call us on 03000 26 79 79 or dial 999 if a child is in immediate danger.

If your concern doesn't require immediate action, you must speak to the family about your concerns, unless doing so places the child at risk of harm. You should arrange to visit the family if you cannot discuss your concerns over the telephone. If you are not sure what to do, please call us for advice on 03000 26 79 79.

#### **Does the family already have a Team Around the Family (TAF)?**

##### **Yes, there is a TAF**

If you do not think immediate action is needed, and there is a TAF, you should discuss your concerns with the Lead Professional to see if the TAF can help. To find out who the Lead Professional is, please call us on 03000 26 79 79 and we can assist you.

If you agree as a TAF that a referral to First Contact is appropriate, you need to send us your 'multi-agency chronology' or timeline of actions already taken, along with TAF minutes, an updated Early Help Assessment with clear and current concerns identifying why this case should be escalated, and where this has been used, a copy of the Engaging Families Toolkit.

If you are a Lead Professional who has contacted us following a TAF decision, you must let the parents know about your concern and where appropriate, complete the 'Engaging Families Toolkit' at [www.durham-scp.org.uk](http://www.durham-scp.org.uk) The family has a right to know what you intend to do, unless doing so would put the child at risk of harm.

It is important that you tell us how the TAF has supported the family and what has and has not worked, so that we do not repeat actions which have not worked.

##### **No, there is no existing TAF**

If there is no immediate risk to the child, please complete sections one to seven of the Early Help Assessment form at [www.durham-scp.org.uk/categories/professionals](http://www.durham-scp.org.uk/categories/professionals) under the Single Assessment Tool/Referral Form. Please email your completed form to [firstcontact@durham.gov.uk](mailto:firstcontact@durham.gov.uk). You can also call us on 03000 26 79 79 if required.

If you submit an Early Help Assessment Form without sufficient information for us to make a decision about how best to help the family, it will be returned to you for extra information to be added. As a professional, we cannot agree to keep your details anonymous. If you call us to report your concern, please ensure that you use the Early Help Assessment Proforma as a guide as this will help you to prepare for your call to us.

## When you call us we will ask you:

### Your details

We will ask you for details such as your name, which agency you work for, and how we can contact you (address, email, telephone and work mobile).

### What has prompted you to contact us today?

It is important for you to tell us what your concerns are, how this affects the child, and what support or services you think the family need or require.

### Tell us about the child and any other children we need to consider

- Name(s)
- Date of birth/estimated date of delivery
- Gender
- Ethnicity/nationality/religion/language /special educational needs and disabilities
- Address/telephone
- GP surgery/health visitor/midwife/school nurse
- School/nursery
- Other agencies involved

### Tell us everything you know about the child and their family

It is important you tell us about the family's strengths, as well as your concerns and any barriers to helping them access support services in the community.

What we need to know:

- Name, date of birth, address and telephone of parents
- Development of baby, child or young person
  - Education
  - Health
  - Behaviour
  - Relationships
- Parental capacity
  - Substance misuse
  - Mental wellbeing
  - Domestic abuse
  - Criminality/anti-social behaviour
- Any concerns about other family members

### Tell us about other types of support available to the child and their family

- Is support offered by extended family or friends?
- What community services do the family access?
- Have you considered inviting a targeted service to the TAF, such as Harbour (domestic abuse outreach service) or the Family Intervention Project (if the family are facing eviction)?
- Have you considered the Stronger Families programme?

**By following this guidance, you are helping First Contact to get families the right support, from the right service, when they need it.**