

Children's social care A-Z guide

Plymouth City Council



If you would like this document in your language, please contact, Tel No.
01752 307329

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01752 307329

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Welcome to the A – Z of Children’s Social Care Services in Plymouth

This leaflet provides information about the types of help available to children, young people and families from Plymouth City Council Children’s Social Care Services. It will explain what we can help with and how you can contact us to access the services we offer. It also lists some other useful agencies that we work with in order to help you.

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Your first contact

If you have never contacted Children's Social Care services before and you're wondering where to begin, below is a quick guide to help you.

If you need to contact Children's Social Care, the best place to start is by calling our contact centre and speaking to our Advice and Assessment Team. They can help with all initial enquiries and can be reached on the helpline below:

Telephone: 01752 308600

For more detailed information about who to contact and what services are available to you, please look through this booklet.

Introduction

We provide services to 'children in need' and their families. This is a definition in the Children Act 1989. We offer a range of family support services to families where children may not thrive and reach their full potential without some help - this includes children in need of protection. We are responsible for children who, for a variety of reasons, cannot remain within their own families and who are 'looked after' by the local authority. This used to be known as being in the care of the local authority.

We believe in equal opportunities in everything that we do and will not unfairly discriminate against anyone because of their age, background, sexuality, marital status, family size, disability, employment, race or religion.

Service aims

Our foremost aim is to work with and support families so that children can live in a safe, nurturing environment and achieve their full potential.

We are committed to:

- ensuring stable, secure and safe care for all children
- helping parents who may be having difficulties in caring for their children
- protecting children from abuse and neglect
- giving better life chances for children in need and who are looked after
- enabling young people leaving care to live successful adult lives
- meeting the needs of disabled children and their families
- ensuring that child care workers are properly skilled and trained to do this work

Working with partners

We work closely with partner agencies, which include professionals like health visitors, doctors and school nurses from schools, the police and the voluntary and community sectors to provide:

- information and advice about a range of social care services
- assessments to identify the needs of children and families
- services for young carers
- family support services
- services for children with disabilities
- children with learning difficulties and disabilities
- services for children who are at risk of harm
- adoption services and post adoption support
- services for children and young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties
- services for young people leaving care
- services for children and young people who are in care
- services to meet the needs of early years children between 0 to 4 years
- services for young offenders

Our structure

Children's Social Care services is divided into eight areas:

Advice and assessment – This service is usually the first point of contact for Children's Social Care. We provide information, assessments, care planning and service reviews for children in need. If families need more intensive, ongoing support they can be referred to other parts of Children's Social Care services.

Children in the community – This service provides advice and support to children in need living with their families in the community so that they stay safe and can reach their full potential.

Child protection – This service oversees child protection procedures to ensure that children are safe from harm.

Children with disabilities – This service provides advice, assessments and services to families with children aged 0 to 18 years who have significant disabilities or long-term illness and includes children with learning disabilities and those with sensory impairments.

Looked after children – Social workers from this service provide advice and support to children in care. Most of our looked after children live in foster homes. Social workers visit them regularly and work alongside carers to make sure that, as far as possible, our children and young people are able to be part of normal family life and reach their full potential.

Fostering – This service provides support to children who cannot live with their own families. We recruit, train and support foster carers including family and friends. We are responsible for ensuring that we know about children who are privately fostered and that these children are safe.

Adoption – This service finds adoptive homes for children who cannot grow up with their family of birth. We assess people who would like to become adoptive parents, provide support at every stage of the adoption process and provide post-adoption services.

Leaving care – This service provides practical and emotional support to young people leaving care to make sure they are properly prepared for adult life.



Adoption

Our Adoption Agency is responsible for finding permanent families for children who cannot grow up with their family of birth. Adoptive parents are always needed and we welcome applications from anyone who thinks they could give a child a stable and loving home for life. You can apply to be assessed as an adopter whatever sort of family you are. Single people can also adopt.

We assess every prospective adoptive parent carefully to ensure that they are suitable for the city's children. Once they have been approved to adopt, we work hard to match people with a suitable child. Support is available every step of the way.

A post-adoption service is also available to support adoptive families, birth relatives of adopted children and children who were adopted in the past.

Contact details

For more information about adoption, please use the contact details below:

Telephone: 01752 306800
Email: adoption@plymouth.gov.uk
Website: www.plymouth.gov.uk/adoption

Advice and assessment

If you make contact with Children's Social Care services, the Advice and Assessment Team will be the first people you talk to. The service provides information, assessment, and, where needed, support for children who are 'in need'.

There is a dedicated Advice and Assessment Helpline, which is the first point of contact for all children's social care enquiries. The helpline gives you the opportunity to speak to a qualified social worker about any problems you may need to talk about.

Some callers will be referred to other services if that seems more appropriate. If families need more intensive, ongoing support they can be referred to other parts of Children's Social Care services.

Advice and assessment social workers carry out assessments of children who have been referred to children's social care – see 'assessment' and 'referral' for more details.

Contact details

For more information or to speak to someone in advice and assessment, please use the contact details below:

Telephone: 01752 308600

Advocacy

Advocacy is a way of helping children, young people and families to make sure their rights are respected and their views and wishes are heard by the people who make decisions. Advocacy services provide independent and confidential information, advice, advocacy representation and support for children and young people, including children who are looked after.

We can help to arrange advocacy services on your behalf.

Contact details

For more information about advocacy, please speak to your social worker or if you do not have a social worker, please speak to our Advice and Assessment Team by calling us on the number below:

Telephone: 01752 308600

Assessment

Before anyone can receive a Children's Social Care service, we must firstly find out the best way we can help. That means we need to assess your needs and match those needs to the most appropriate service for you.

The aim of an assessment is to:

- agree your needs with you
- give you information about services that may be available to you, which may be provided by us or by other agencies

Contact details

For more information about assessments, please speak to our Advice and Assessment Team by calling us on the number below:

Telephone: 01752 308600



Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)

These services are provided by a multi-agency team that includes specialist social workers, psychiatrists and psychologists. We offer assessments and treatment services to children and young people aged 0 to 18 who suffer from emotional, psychological and/or psychiatric distress. Most of these services are community based.

Children with the most difficult or severe problems or symptoms are offered services at Mount Gould Hospital.

Contact details

For more information about the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, please ask your social worker or if you don't have a social

worker, please speak to our Advice and Assessment Team by calling us using the number below:

Telephone: 01752 308600

Child protection

Child abuse takes many forms including physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect. Discrimination, harassment and bullying are also abusive and can harm a child, both physically and emotionally. It is our duty to make sure that children and young people in the city do not suffer from abuse and neglect and that they grow up safe from harm.

We have a legal duty to look into situations where there are concerns about a child's safety or wellbeing. Information about children and young people who may be at risk of abuse may come from members of the public, friends or relatives, professionals (like teachers or doctors) or from the child or parents themselves. If you suspect a child or young person may be at risk of harm or abuse, please contact us. A leaflet "What to do if you think a child is being abused" is available in our offices and in many public places.

Contact details

If you are concerned about the safety or wellbeing of a child or young person, please speak to our Advice and Assessment Team as soon as possible by calling us on the number below:

Telephone: 01752 308600

Children with disabilities

If you are the parent of a child with disabilities, there is help available for you. The Children's Disability Team offers assessments and services to families with children aged 0 to 18

years who have significant disabilities or long-term illness. The team provides information, advice and support, and sometimes practical help such as support for you and your child within your home and short breaks where this is helpful.

Occupational therapists work within this service and can give advice about:

- Equipment within the home setting
- Major and minor adaptations within the home
- Therapeutic intervention to promote the well-being of a child

Contact details

For more information about services for children with disabilities, please ask your social worker or if you don't have a social worker, please speak to our Advice and Assessment Team by calling us on the number below:

Telephone: 01752 308600

Complaints, comments and compliments

We believe everyone has the right to express their views and make complaints, suggestions or compliments about the services we provide. We see your feedback as a way of improving the quality and effectiveness of our services, so we're always ready to listen.

Contact details

To find out more about making a complaint, comment or compliment, please contact the Customer Relations Team:

By calling: 0800 068 1249
 01752 307304

By fax: 01752 307330

By email: complaints.social.services@plymouth.gov.uk

In writing to: Customer Relations Team
Plymouth City Council
Plymouth
PL1 2AA

D

Drug and alcohol related problems

We can work with you or refer you to other services able to offer help if you have a drug or alcohol dependency and are finding it difficult to look after your family. We can also put you into contact with organisations that can provide individual support based on your needs.

Contact details

To receive help for drug or alcohol related problems a social worker will need to assess your needs to see what is the best way to help you and your family. To find out more information, please speak to our Advice and Assessment Team by calling the number below:

Telephone: 01752 308600

E

Emergencies

If you need to contact someone from Children's Social Care in an emergency, please use the contact details below:

Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5.30pm	01752 308600
Monday to Friday 5.30pm to 8.30am	01752 346984
Weekends and bank holidays	01752 346984

Emotional abuse

For more information about what to do if you suspect a child is suffering from emotional abuse, please see the 'child protection' section of this booklet.



Family support

Our family support service aims to help families to cope during difficult times by providing support so that children and young people grow up in stable family settings.

There is a dedicated team called the Children's Action Support Team (CAST) that provides support to families in the community by working with young people aged between 8 to 16 years old who live with their families and 16 to 18 year olds who are not receiving a service from the Care Leavers Team.

The team provide practical support, particularly to help prevent family breakdown. They can

- work with children expelled from school
- address bullying issues
- address anti-social behaviour
- help young people to access services
- carry out health promotion work

There are also three family centres looking after different geographical areas of the city able to offer family support services.

Contact details

Referrals to family support services are generally made by a social worker or other professionals, with your agreement.

For more information about family support services, please speak to your social worker or if you do not have a social worker, please speak to our Advice and Assessment Team by calling the number below:

Telephone: 01752 308600

Fostering

Most children who cannot live with their birth families or relatives live with foster families.

The Fostering Service recruits, trains and supports foster carers to help them to provide the best possible care for the children they look after. New foster carers are always needed and people from all lifestyles and backgrounds are encouraged to apply. There are as many types of foster carers as there are children, and carers can choose to provide short breaks (respite care), short-term care or permanent homes to children.

Contact details

For more information about fostering, please contact us using the details below:

Telephone: 0800 085 8034
Email: fostering@plymouth.gov.uk
Web: Plymouth.gov.uk/plymouthfostercare

Address: Plymouth Fostercare
Plymouth City Council
Plymouth
PL1 2AA

Foster carers support

There is a dedicated team called the Children's Action Support Team (CAST, Fostering), who provide support to foster carers by working with young people living in foster care and other substitute families.

The team provide practical support including:

- work with children expelled from school
- addressing bullying issues
- addressing anti-social behaviour
- helping young people to access services
- carrying out health promotion work

Contact details

If you are a foster carer and would like some extra support, please speak to your social worker who will need to assess your needs and make a referral to the CAST team.



Interpreting and translation

An interpretation and translation service is available for people whose first language is not English. Please ask any member of staff in Children's Social Care if you need to use this service and we can help arrange it for you.



Learning disabilities parenting service

If you are a parent with learning disabilities, we can help you or we may ask another agency to help you prepare for the birth of your child by looking at what you may need when your baby is born,

helping you to learn about the things you will need to do to look after your baby and helping you cope with the changes having a new baby brings to your life.

You will also have the opportunity to meet other parents in similar situations and learn together.

Contact details

To find out more about the help available to parents with learning disabilities, please speak to your social worker or if you do not have a social worker, please speak to our Advice and Assessment Team by calling the number below:

Telephone: 01752 308600

Leaving care service

We provide practical and emotional support to young people leaving care to make sure that they are properly prepared for adult life. This includes making sure that young people are supported to reach their full potential in education, training and employment, that they have proper accommodation when they move to independence and that they are properly prepared with the skills needed to move in to the adult world, including basic skills such as cooking, budgeting and paying bills...

The service works with young people who are or have been in care and are aged over 16. The service continues to support some young people until they are 21, or 24 if they are in education. We also provide an out of office hours service to young people who have left care, so that someone is on-hand if they are needed.

Contact details

To find out more about services for young people leaving care, please contact us using the details overleaf:

Telephone: 01752 305141
Email: care.leavers@plymouth.gov.uk

Address: The Care Leavers Service
Plymouth City Council
Plymouth
PL1 2AA



Neglect

For more information about what to do if you suspect a child is suffering from neglect, please see the 'child protection' section of this booklet.



Out of hours

We provide an out of office hours social care service for members of the public, both for families and for vulnerable adults, when daytime offices are closed.

You can call the out of hours service if you need to talk to a social worker. You do not have to be in a crisis before you use this service. We are there to provide advice and to protect anyone who might be vulnerable. We are able to speak to you on the telephone and will visit you at home if we agree with you that this is necessary.

Contact details

For opening hours and contact details for the out of hours service, please see the 'emergencies' section in this booklet.



Partners

The term 'partner' means the other groups of people that we work with to provide the best services we can for children and families in Plymouth. Some examples of the people we work with are doctors, teachers, health visitors and police officers.

Physical abuse

For more information about what to do if you suspect a child is suffering from physical abuse, please see the 'child protection' section of this booklet.



Referral

A 'referral' is the term used when someone makes contact with us and asks us to become involved with a family. This is also known as a request for service.

All first referrals are made to our Advice and Assessment Team.

For more information, please see the 'Advice and Assessment' section of this booklet.



Sexual abuse

For more information about what to do if you suspect a child may be suffering from sexual abuse, please see the 'child protection' section of this booklet.

Short breaks

Short breaks or respite care are sometimes available to children and young people with disabilities, or families and foster carers who need a break.

Contact details

To find out more information about short breaks, please speak to your social worker or if you do not have a social worker, please speak to our Advice and Assessment Team by calling the number below:

Telephone: 01752 308600

Social worker

Social workers can offer support and guidance for you and your family. With your help, they will assess what kind of support you and your family may need and will decide with you whether this should be provided by Children's Social Care or from another organisation.

Contact details

To speak to a social worker, please call our Advice and Assessment Team on the number below:

Telephone: 01752 308600

Additional information

Advice and Assessment, Plymouth Children's Social Care

To find out more information about Plymouth's Children's Social Care service, please call the Advice and Assessment Team on the number below:

Telephone: 01752 308600

Connexions – Devon and Cornwall

Connexions provides information, advice, guidance and access to personal development opportunities for young people. It aims to remove barriers to learning and progression, and ensure young people make a smooth transition to adulthood and working life. For more information, please call the number below:

Telephone: 01752 207701

Harbour Centre – alcohol and drug advisory service

This centre offers friendly, individual support, advice and information for people with drug or alcohol issues, including education and training, relaxation sessions, counselling and a needle exchange. There are creche facilities. For more information, please call the number below:

Telephone: 01752 267431

Health Services

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) provides advice and support about NHS services. For more information, please call the number below:

Telephone: 01752 211818

NCH

NCH is one of the UK's leading children's charities, helping children achieve their full potential. They offer support to vulnerable and

excluded children and young people. For more information, please call the number below:

Telephone: Tel: 01179 354440

NHS Direct

For information and advice about health issues, please call the number below:

Telephone: 0845 4647

NSPCC

A free 24 hour service that provides counselling, information and advice to anyone concerned about a child at risk of abuse.

Telephone: 0808 800 5000

Plymouth Children's Information Service

For information about childminders, crèches, playgroups, pre-schools and day nurseries, before and after school care or Child Tax Credit/Working Tax Credit, please call the number below:

Telephone: 0800 783 4259

Plymouth Service Directory

This service provides information about family support resources and can be accessed by logging onto the website below:

www.plymouthparentpartnership.org.uk

Sure Start

Sure Start is the Government's programme to support children, parents and communities through early education, childcare, health and family support services. There are four local Sure Start centre in Plymouth and they can be contacted by the following numbers:

Four Woods Sure Start:	01752 366795
Keystone Sure Start:	01752 208345
Lark – North Prospect Sure Start:	01752 313293
Tamar F.O.L.K Sure Start:	01752 516085

The Zone

Formerly the Youth Enquiry Service (YES), the Zone offers a wide range of free, confidential services for 13 to 25 year olds including counselling, general support, sexual health advice, personal development and help with accommodation. For more information, please call the number below:

Telephone: 01752 206626

Youth Enquiry Service

Please see ‘the Zone’ for contact details.

Youth Offending Team

The Youth Offending Team (YOT) provides help and support to young offenders in Plymouth. They identify suitable programmes to address the needs of young people with the intention of preventing further offending. For more information, please call the number below:

Telephone: 01752 306999

YP Mix

YP Mix is an area on Plymouth City Council’s website that’s been designed by young people, for young people. It is a one-stop-shop for information, advice and discussions about topics close to young people’s hearts. For more information, please log onto the website below:

www.plymouth.gov.uk/ then go to YP Mix

Tell us what you think

Where did you get this leaflet?

- | | | | |
|------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Social worker | <input type="checkbox"/> | Plymouth City Council office | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Doctor's surgery | <input type="checkbox"/> | Library | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Hospital | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Was the information in this leaflet useful?

Yes No

Was the information in this leaflet easy to understand?

Yes No

Your comments about this leaflet

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Please send the above form to:

Communications Officer, Communications Unit,
Plymouth City Council, Civic Centre, Plymouth PL1 2AA

To request further copies of this leaflet, please call: 01752 307329

You can also see this information on Plymouth City Council's website under the children's social care section by logging onto the address below:

Department for Children's Services
Plymouth City Council
Civic Centre
Plymouth
PL1 2AA

Tel 01752 308600
Fax 01752 307330
Email communications@plymouth.gov.uk
www.plymouth.gov.uk

