

Giving consent to assessments and enquiries

– a guide for
parents



**London Borough of Waltham Forest
Children and Families' Service**



What do you mean by consent?

Children's Social Care receive contacts requesting assistance or advice when support for children and their families may be needed. The contacts come from a number of people such as nurses, health visitors, schools staff, police or members of the local community.

In most cases Children's Social Care like to discuss the issues with you first and request your permission or 'consent' to make further enquiries with other agencies or family and friends to ensure we are undertaking a well evidenced based assessments that identify any needs or risks and identify any assistance required.

If the initial contact has come from another agency, Children's Social Care will ask that they have gained your consent to make the contact.

What happens if I give consent to information sharing during an assessment?

If you give consent, Children's Social Care carry out a Child and Family Assessment that should take up to 45 working days. This requires contacting other people who know your child such as their school teacher, health visitor, doctor, police, education welfare officer, family and relevant friends.

Sometimes it may be necessary to contact professionals who are involved with the adults in the family to establish if they will be able to help Children's Social Care understand the strengths and challenges for your family and how we can best support you and increase safety if required. This information will help us to think about the sort of help you may need.

Children's Social Care will come to see you and your family to talk with you about what you think the difficulties are and how you could be assisted to resolve them, including helping children and young people to be safe.

Sometimes another professional teacher or health visitor will discuss this with you and with your consent pass the information to Children's Social Care. However if they think telling you may put your child at risk they may not always tell you a referral is being made. On these few occasions a social worker will advise you quickly that Children's Social Care have received information about your family. Once the assessment is completed you will be given a copy.

What happens if I refuse to give consent?

If you feel that you do not want any support from Children's Social Care you can refuse for another professional to contact us. You can also refuse to allow an assessment of your situation to be undertaken.

Can Children's Social Care make enquiries or carry out an assessment without my consent?

In some situations, for example if we are very concerned about the information that we have received, we can decide to carry out an assessment and contact other agencies without your consent. If this is the case you would be informed in writing of the decision and the reason for it. We would always prefer to carry out an assessment with your consent as it enables us to help your family more fully.

What are my rights?

If Children's Social Care have decided to proceed without your consent, you can ask for the assessment to be stopped at any time. However if your child or young person is believed to be at potential risk the assessment will continue.

If we have decided to proceed without your consent, or if issues come to light that cause concern about the welfare of your children, Children's Social Care would continue with the assessment. In this situation you are entitled to be kept fully informed of the process and be made aware of the exact nature of the concern. If this is the situation you can gain independent advice from your solicitor.

How long does my consent last?

If you give consent, this will last until Children's Social Care are no longer needed. If you decide to withdraw your consent you should do so in writing so that everybody is clear that this is your wish.

Complaints

We always try to provide good quality services for children but we know that sometimes we get things wrong, and we try to resolve any problems as soon as they arrive.

The Family Rights Group is an organisation which helps families involved with Children's Social Care, who may be able to offer assistance:

The Family Rights Group
The Print House, 18 Ashwin Street, E8 3DL
Tel: 0808 801 0366
www.frg.org.uk

If you are unhappy with the service that you have received, you can:

Ask to speak to the Team Manager
Ask to speak to the Head of Service
or write to:

Complaints Team
Waltham Forest Town Hall, Forest Road, Walthamstow, London, E17 4JF
Tel: 020 8496 3000
complaints@walthamforest.gov.uk
www.walthamforest.gov.uk/complain