

What happens when

you contact us because you don't feel able to look after your child at this time

How we can help you?

We know that many families can struggle to care for their children without support at times. For example, you may be experiencing increased problems managing teenage behaviour and if a young person starts running away, missing school or perhaps using substances, you may feel unable to look after them.

We believe that in most circumstances it is best to meet children's needs through immediate or extended family care.

We aim to support children to remain living at home or within their own family, by providing you with intensive family support services when necessary, unless there are clear reasons why this may not be safe or consistent with the child's wellbeing.

What will happen if you ask the council to look after your child?

1. If you do not already have a social worker, we will refer your request to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).
2. The MASH will collect some information from you and a duty social worker will talk to you about your difficulties and how we can help.
3. You will need to tell us about any family or friends who can care for your child while we provide immediate support or make a Children

and Families Assessment. This immediate support may include referrals to other agencies.

4. If we decide to make an assessment, a social worker will visit you and your child to explore the current risks and difficulties. The social worker will also get your consent for us to contact agencies for more information, such as your GP and educational bodies.
5. The council will not agree to look after your child at this point unless there is evidence that your son/daughter is at immediate risk of significant harm by remaining in your care and there are no alternative appropriate family or friends to provide care.
6. If you are asking the council to look after your child, we will need to contact everyone with parental responsibility to inform them of your request and to determine if they are able to care for your child.

What other services can provide support?

If your child is 12 to 17 years old, then we may refer you to the Adolescent Edge of Care Team. Their aim is to support you through the immediate problems and find safe solutions to enable your son/daughter to remain living at home or with extended family or friends.

If you already have a social worker, we may also refer you to other services offered by the council such as Troubled Families, Emotional Health and the Well Being Team to help you manage specific issues.

We will refer all families for an urgent Family Group Conference. This is a voluntary approach that engages with wider family members to find solutions and build on everyone's strengths within the family to support each other.

Thurrock Children's Social Care

Parent Information Leaflet



What happens when

we think it's in your child's best interest to live with someone else within or outside of the family network at this time

What does this mean?

The council is looking to 'accommodate' your child with someone else rather than live with you as the parent or carer. Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 is the legislation which applies to this situation and states the council's responsibility and your rights.

What happens next?

1. Your social worker will explain why the council thinks this situation applies to your child.
2. For a child to be accommodated, the parent(s)/ carer(s) with parental responsibility need to give their consent. If two parties have parental responsibility, both need to give their consent for this to happen.
3. If one parent/carer does not consent and the council thinks the child needs to be accommodated, then the council will need to apply to the court for an Emergency Protection Order or an Interim Care Order for the accommodation to go ahead.
4. At all times we will make an effort to find out what the child thinks about being

accommodated, but a child under 16 cannot disagree with being accommodated if the parents and the council agree that it's in the child's best interest.

5. We will ask you to sign a form to show that you have given consent as the parent or carer. This is not a legal requirement.

What are your rights if your child is accommodated?

Under section 20, you have the right to:

- Seek legal advice
- Withdraw your consent at any time and have your child returned to your care. You do not have to give advance notice to withdraw your consent and nobody should ask you to give advance notice
- Know where your child will be staying
- Have agreed contact with your child

If your child is accommodated, how does this affect your parental responsibility?

You will still have parental responsibility. The council does not share parental responsibility for your child.

What will the council do when your child is accommodated?

1. Your child will be appointed an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) who will oversee your child's care plan. This plan includes regular reviews that you will be invited to attend.

2. Your social worker will ask you to sign a written agreement which says what we want you to do or stop doing while your child is accommodated. This is not a legally binding document and you don't have to sign it. You can also seek legal advice before signing it. If you require help to meet the agreement, tell your social worker to include this in the written document before signing. The IRO will keep this written agreement between you and the council as part of your child's care plan.

What happens if your child is accommodated and you withdraw your consent?

If you wish to remove your child from care and the council does not agree, then we will consider applying for a court order. The council may also ask the police to exercise their power to remove your child from your care for up to 72 hours. All of these are temporary measures and the council will have to go back to court to extend an order if needed.

Is there anything else that could happen?

You should be aware that in certain circumstances the council may consider another more permanent arrangement in the best interests of your child. This may be the case if a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering significant harm because of their care/lack of care. In these circumstances, if you disagree, then you should seek legal advice.