



Children's Advice and Duty Service (CADS) FAQ

What is the MASH?

MASH is the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub which provides vital cross-agency checks for those children most at risk. The Children's Advice and Duty Service (CADS) within the MASH helps to support those children who need it the most.

What is the aim of CADS?

The aim is to get the right support for children and families when there are child protection or immediate safeguarding concerns. CADS Practitioners will discuss concerns sensitively and proportionately and provide clear guidance on next steps.

When do I call CADS?

If there are concerns that a child may be suffering significant harm, a child with unexplained injuries, domestic abuse in the household, or a child at risk of exploitation.

How do I contact CADS?

The Service is open Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm. Outside of these hours, please contact the Emergency Duty Team on **0344 800 8020**.

If you are a professional working with a child or young person in a formal or voluntary setting and not a family member or member of the public, you can call CADS on **0344 800 8021**.

During the call, please choose from the following options:

Press 1 – if the child or young person is currently being supported by a Social Worker or Family Practitioner

Press 2 – if your call relates to Child Exploitation

Press 3 – if your call relates to Domestic Abuse

Press 0 – for Child Protection and immediate safeguarding concerns.

(If the lines are busy and your call is not answered within 40 minutes, a call back option will be offered).

If you consider the incident to be an emergency, please call **999**.

To use the service, members of the public can call the Customer Service Centre number **0344 800 8020**.



To request a Consultation

If you believe a consultation with CADS is required, an initial discussion should take place with your Designated Safeguarding Lead prior to completing a [Request for support form via the online portal](#). Once this is received, a member of the team will be in contact.

How do I request universal, community-based Early Help and Family Help?

Community-based support and targeted early help can be accessed after completing a [Request for support form via the online portal](#). Early Help is designed to support children, young people and families experiencing difficulties that may affect their wellbeing, development or ability to flourish.

Delivered as a coordinated local system rather than a single service, this support is offered through universal provision such as education, health, and wider community services. It includes services like Best Start Family Hubs, youth and housing support, and after school provision.

[Best Start Family Hubs](#) offer a clear pathway from pregnancy to age 19 (or 25 for young people with SEND), bringing together multi-agency partners to provide accessible, ongoing community support, and to safeguard families, including those transferring from targeted or specialist services.

Family Help is offered where universal services and community based early help have not achieved sufficient or sustained improvement, or where a child and family present with multiple, complex or escalating needs. Delivered through a coordinated, multi-agency approach led by Children's Services and its partners, Family Help provides structured support to address identified risks and concerns.

Family Help will only be initiated where there is an agreed Family Plan, or a Graded Care Profile (GCP) in cases of neglect, which has been shared with CADS.

Do I need a parents' consent before I make a call or complete a request for support?

Yes, but you can make a call to CADS without parents/carers' consent if having a conversation with the family would place the child, another child, or someone else, or you as the referrer, at significant harm. You also don't need consent if it might undermine the investigation of a serious crime, but CADS will confirm this information with you when you call.



How do I evidence that I have called CADS? How will information be recorded?

Professionals should ensure that a record is kept of the conversation you have had and the reason for the call, the discussion, and any decisions made within your own agency recording system.

You should also record whether you have obtained parental consent and if not, why not. CADS will provide written feedback to the original referrer.

What records of the conversation will be made and how will they be kept?

This will depend on the individual discussion and the risks identified to a child. It will also depend on whether you have got consent from the child's parents/carers. In all cases, we will record each conversation to monitor any emerging pattern of concerns about a child.

What happens if I disagree with the recommendations made by CADS?

The aim of the service is to work together to provide the right support or service for a child or family. We hope that professional disagreements will be rare, but if you wish to escalate any disagreements you can follow the [Resolving Professional Disagreements Policy](#).

How can I provide feedback about the service?

When a referrer receives an overview of the contact, usually within 10 working days, a link to a brief survey is included so that the referrer can provide feedback on the service provided.

I'm having problems accessing the online portal, what can I do?

Check that you are using your Children's Services Online account. Refer to the portal guidance on this page. [Professional request for support form - Norfolk County Council](#).

How can I contribute to the FAQs?

Professionals may submit suggestions or questions by emailing the NSCP Business Unit on nscb@norfolk.gov.uk and they will be passed to CADS.