

# Family Connect - Frequently Asked Questions



## Why are you changing the Children and Families Front Door?

As a Families First for Children Pathfinder we are delivering on national safeguarding reforms as one of seven Local Partnerships leading the way. We want to provide the best service to Warwickshire's children and families, as well as to our partner agencies and have reflected on our current approach and the opportunities to ensure our approach is more relational.

Alongside this we have listened to those with lived experience and acknowledge that more can be done to meet the needs of Children and Families in particular with SEND or accessing support due to a disability.

## What are the Front Door changes?

The biggest change is the creation of our new Family Connect Service from the **3<sup>rd</sup> March 25**. This will be made up of multi-disciplinary professionals, who will provide advice and support to other professionals and ask key questions about the risks and strengths within families. They will then agree together who is best placed to meet the needs of a child. The service will be focused on a relational approach, where we have conversations with partners and children and families to better understand together the concerns and support needs.

This will see a number of changes the biggest being the end of the Multi-Agency Contact Form and discussions/referrals to instead take place over the phone. This is an approach that has been adopted in several Local Authorities and is based on best practice and was highlighted in the recent Independent Review of Children's Social Care.

Other changes you will see include:

- Front Door Workers have completed Coaching Training and will receive ongoing support to embed this approach.
- A Children with Disabilities Hub will be based in Family Connect to improve the knowledge of SEND and Disability support.
- Additional Education Colleagues who will better be able to navigate appropriate Education information such as on Attendance, SEND, Educational

Entitlement and children who are elective home educated.

- 2 Early Support Officers will be in Family Connect to better support partner agencies with understanding processes in Early Support and Family Help
- Family Information Service will further integrate with Family Connect to improve the whole offer, so the Service will cover from Information, advice guidance to those needing more immediate protection.
- The Family Support Worker line be part of Family Connect from April 25.

### **Who will be in the Front Door?**

- Children's Social Care
- Early Support
- FAST
- Health
- Police
- Education
- Family Information Service
- Children's Domestic Violence Advisors
- Probation
- Youth Justice

### **Will we be able to get through on the phone?**

We acknowledge at peak times there can be a wait to get through to someone on the phone. The Front Door model was built around referrals being completed via the MAC Form and calls to be regarding more immediate concerns. The Service has also seen a sustained increase in the number of contacts to the Front Door over the last eighteen months.

Our new model is being set up to manage in this new relational way. Additional workers will be in the Front Door from January 25 and the number of staff available on the phones will increase further for March 25. We are also making IT and telephony changes to better improve the timeliness and tracking of demand into Family Connect.

### **Will the MASH function still exist?**

Yes, the MASH will continue and will provide vital cross agency checks for those children most at risk. The new Family Connect Service will mean that the MASH will be able to get support to those children who need it the most.

### **What is the aim of the new Family Connect Service?**

The aim is to get the right support to children and families, at the right time. We're basing it on what's worked well elsewhere. By talking through concerns and solutions with professionals we can work even better together and get support earlier to

families.

At the moment we are carrying out too many unnecessary assessments, that take too long to respond to the needs of children and families.

### **What is the number for Family Connect?**

The contact number remains the same for Professionals and Families making contact - **01926 414144**. Children's Emergency Duty Team, for calls at weekends and outside of core hours is **01926 886922**.

### **What information do I need to give when I call?**

You can use the Family Connect Service flowchart to prepare for your call. This includes details on what information the Family Connect Worker handling your call might need.

### **What sort of things can I call the service about?**

If you are a professional working with children and families, you can call with any safeguarding concern you might have about a child.

### **If there is no written referral, how do I evidence that I have made contact with Children's Services? How will information be recorded?**

Every phone call will be followed up in writing by the Family Connect worker. Family Connect Workers will be supported by Generative AI to support with providing a timely and accurate summary of the discussion and any decisions made. You should also record whether you have obtained parental consent and if not, why not.

### **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 parent. However, we will record all of the conversations on our system; by having a record, we will also be able to see when there might be a repetition or accumulation of concerns about a child.

### **What is the difference between a conversation, consultation and referral?**

All calls will result in a conversation. The outcome of the conversation will depend on the levels of concerns raised and the agreed course of action. We are moving away from the restrictions of terminology like consultation and referral; however, the Family Connect Worker and caller will agree and record the outcome of any conversation.

**Do I have to get parents' consent before I make a call?**

It is good practice and the expectation that you seek consent from parents. We acknowledge that there are occasions when to do so could put a child at risk or undermine the investigation into a serious crime. In these instances, we would accept a call without consent from the parents. Reasons for not seeking consent should be clearly stated when speaking with Family Connect and should be recorded on internal systems for your records.

**What are the opening hours of Family Connect?**

The service will run Monday to Thursday: 8.30am – 5:30pm and Friday: 8.30am – 5:00pm

**What do I do outside of these hours?**

You can continue to contact our Emergency Duty Team on **01926 886922**.

**What happens if I disagree with what the Family Connect worker recommends?**

The aim of the new service is to work together to come up with the right support or service for a child or family. We hope that professional disagreements will be rare but if you wish to escalate you can follow the [WSCP's professional escalation policy](#).

**How can I contribute to the FAQs?**

This is an iterative document and will be reviewed monthly. Callers can e-mail the Families First Programme Team with questions as they arise on [FamiliesFirst@Warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:FamiliesFirst@Warwickshire.gov.uk)