

# **Children's Social Care and You**

## **Help for Children Young People, their Parents and Carers**

Somerset County Council positively values diversity, and celebrates cultural and social differences. Our Equalities Promise is to provide all services of equal quality, which meet your needs and fulfil your rights. You can expect to be treated fairly, with respect, dignity and understanding whoever you are and whatever your background.

This document is also available on request in Braille, large print, tape, disc and can be translated into different languages

Revised January 2009

## **How can we help you?**

We offer advice and information on a range of childcare issues. Many people approach us because they are unsure who to speak to about their needs, or how to contact the organisation that can best help them. We will advise you if you can be helped more effectively elsewhere.

We work closely with colleagues in education, health, housing, benefit agencies, the police and many other community services to support children and young people, wherever possible in their own families and communities.

We aim to work with parents, carers, children and young people in a partnership based on respect, equality and fairness, and to offer advice and support before a situation reaches crisis point. Any services offered will be regularly reviewed with you. If there is a delay in responding to you, we will tell you why. If we are unable to help you, we will also tell you why.

## **So what needs can we help with?**

There are limits to what we can do and who we can help. By law, we have to give priority to certain kinds of need and these situations have the first claim on our time and services. These are children and young people:

- At risk of serious harm
- Who are or who need to be looked after away from home
- Aged 16-21 who are Care Leavers
- Who have serious disabilities
- Where our involvement is required by the Courts.

## **Are those the only people we can help?**

No – we work in partnership with other services and community groups, to decide how best to help children and young people who:

- Need help at a time of family crisis or difficulty for parents or carers
- Have disabilities or health problems
- Are caring for others
- Offend or are at risk of offending
- Have limited opportunities because of their home situation
- Need special help because of stress or abuse
- Whose development is affected because of their behaviour.

With you and others involved, we work out what your needs are. We call this an 'assessment'. If we can help you, we will make a plan about what to do next. We will give you a copy of your assessment and any plan that is made.

### **We also have specialist services such as:**

- Advising people on adoption, including those who have been adopted or had their children adopted
- Recruiting, assessing and supporting people who want to adopt
- Placing children with adoptive parents
- Recruiting, assessing and supporting foster carers
- Supervising children who are privately fostered

Please ask for details about any of these services.

### **What if you are unhappy about the service you are offered?**

If this happens, your Social Worker or their Manager will listen to you, and hopefully agree with you what to do next. If not, they will help you decide if you want to make a formal complaint.

Our Information Sheet *Complaint about Social Services* explains how to do this.

For a copy of this Information Sheet, or to find out more about the help that is available for you, contact Somerset Direct: Children, Young People and Learning on 0845 345 9122

Email: [childrens@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:childrens@somerset.gov.uk)

This information is also on the Internet at [www.somerset.gov.uk](http://www.somerset.gov.uk)