



The Reconnecting Families Toolkit

This toolkit has been developed to assist those who wish to reconnect with family members. This may include children or families that have involvement with children's social care or family members that you have lost contact with.

My details

Address

Name

Date of Birth

- **Key words and Phrases - 3**
- **Young Children and Care**
- **Older Children**
- **Other Relatives**
- **Bereavement and Loss**
- **Bereavement and Loss Support**

Agencies

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This toolkit includes information sections, resources and definitions. It also includes sections for you to fill in. You may wish to make diagrams, write or draw.

The toolkit talks about forms that you may find useful. If the links are not directly included in that section, you will find them at the end of the toolkit under forms.

Key words and phrases

Care Proceedings

The council can start 'care proceedings' if they're very worried about a child. They can apply for a 'care order' which means the council will have parental responsibility for your child and can determine where your child can live. They can apply for a 'placement order' as well if they believe that the child should be adopted. This allows the council to place the child with suitable adopters.

Care Order

A care order is given by a court. It allows a council to take a child into care. Under the Children Act 1989 a council can apply for a care order if it believes a child is suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm. The court decides if the child can be taken into care. Care orders last until the child's 18th birthday or an order is made giving parental responsibility to another person - for example, through adoption or special guardianship. The court may also discharge the order.

Parental Responsibility

Parental responsibility means the legal rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority a parent has for a child and the child's property. A person who has parental responsibility for a child has the right to make decisions about their care and upbringing. Important decisions in a child's life must be agreed with anyone else who has parental responsibility.

Adoption

Parental responsibility means the legal rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority a parent has for a child and the child's property. A person who has parental responsibility for a child has the right to make decisions about their care and upbringing. Important decisions in a child's life must be agreed with anyone else who has parental responsibility.

Child Arrangements Order

This is a court order that will state where the child will live and with whom. It should also detail who is allowed contact and the frequency/level of contact.

Key words and phrases

Contact

The level of contact that can be granted by the court varies depending on individual circumstances and the level of risk posed to the child. Local authority must allow reasonable contact with the following;

- parents;
- any guardian;
- any person who held a Residence Order or Child Arrangements Order for residence immediately before the Care Order was made; and
- any person who had care of the child under wardship immediately before the Care Order was made.

Supported Contact

Supported contact helps to keep children in touch with parents if trust has broken down or communication is difficult. Parents do not have to meet and several families use the facilities at the same time.

This is a form of contact where the level of risk is assessed to be lower than might be the case for supervised contact. It is also used as a way to progress from supervised contact.

Supervised Contact

This form of contact is provided where it is assessed that there might be a higher risk or greater complexity in a families circumstance. These sessions will be usually at a designated contact centre and staff will be there to observe.

Indirect Contact

Indirect Contact is a form of a Child Arrangements Order which usually sets out that the 'non-resident' parent of the children will have contact with them in the form of letters, emails, cards etc.

About you



Use this page to tell us more about you and what is important to you. Use this section to tell us about your support network. This could include family members, friends or associates. You may wish to draw a diagram or pictures.

Do you have children?

1



Use this section to provide any details that you have about your children. Include names, date of birth and address if you know them.

Who cares for your children?

If you are not the sole carer for your children, use this section to provide details of the person or agency that looks after your children.



Child Protection System—Child In Need

Child protection measures are often put in place by the local authority in order to keep a child safe from harm. These concerns may come from a referral to your local children's social services , anonymous reports or if there has been significant police involvement.

Child services will then investigate these concerns. This may involve a “Child in Need” (CIN) assessment

A “Child in Need” Assessment will take into consideration the support needs of the child. For example, if they have additional learning needs or a disability. A “Child in Need Plan” may be put in place as a result of the assessment.

A Child in Need plan is usually put in place when the local authority identify that there are additional support needs for the child, but they are not at risk of harm. They are put in place to support the family. It is important to remember that a CIN is voluntary. You do not have to accept the support that is put in place, however, it is worth noting that social services may consider this as an increase in risk to the child. It is always a good idea to talk this stage through with your allocated social worker if you are not happy with what is put in place.

Child in Need Plans can include financial assistance, day care facilities or advice and counselling or recreational activities.

Child Protection System—Child Protection plans

Child protection plans are usually put in place if the child is considered at risk and a Child in Need plan would not be suitable. These are the result of a Child Protection Conference. If you have parental responsibility, you are able to attend these and have the right to bring someone with you like a solicitor or trustworthy friend. However, they will not be able to speak on your behalf.

A Child Protection Plan should do the following;

- assess the likelihood of the child suffering harm and look at ways that the child can be protected;**
- decide upon short and long term aims to reduce the likelihood of harm to the child and to protect the child's welfare;**
- clarify people's responsibilities and actions to be taken; and**
- outline ways of monitoring and evaluating progress.**

These plans are there to help and support parents and protect children. These will usually occur prior to a care order being put in place except for exceptional circumstances where the child is deemed immediately at risk. Once a care order is granted, the local council will remove the child and place them "into care". This may mean that the child is placed into foster care, with another relative or a children's home. A care order means that the local council will then share parental responsibility of your child.

Would you like contact with your children?

2



If you do not already have any contact with your children, use this section to describe what type of contact you would like. If you do have contact with your children, please specify here how often and what type ie supervised visits.

How can I contact my children if they are under the care system?

If you are unhappy with the level of contact that Children's Services are allowing, you can apply for contact through the courts using the forms mentioned below.

To apply for this order:

You need to complete a C1 form (or a C2 form if in existing court proceedings) and the supplement form C15.

If you are the child in care's parent, guardian or special guardian, or if you held a Residence Order or Child Arrangements Order for residence immediately before the Care Order was made, you will not need the court's permission to make the application.

If you are any other person (sibling or grandparent), you will need to seek the court's permission. To grant leave, the court must be satisfied that there is a real prospect of success.

You need to give notice to the Local Authority, any person who is caring for the child when you make the application and any person with Parental Responsibility for the child.

What if I don't know where my children are?

2

The Local Authority must take reasonable steps to keep parents and persons with Parental Responsibility informed of the whereabouts of the child in care. The Local Authority can only withhold this if there is reasonable cause to believe the child's welfare would be prejudiced if the information was disclosed. However, if you have lost contact with your children then you may be able to request information through your local council.

If there are ongoing proceedings for a section 8 order or wardship, the court has the power to issue an order for any person to disclose the whereabouts of a child if their whereabouts are not known. The information on whereabouts will be disclosed to the court. This power is contained under section 33 Family Act 1986 and the order is an Order for the Disclosure of Information as to the Whereabouts of a Child. It is possible to apply for this order on an emergency basis with one day notice. It would be up to the courts to decide whether they then disclose this information. This would always be based on the best interests of the child.

If you would like to find out where your children are located, you will need to complete a C4 form. Please see the link below.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/form-c4-application-for-an-order-for-disclosure-of-a-childs-whereabouts>



Do you have any older children (over the age of 18) or relatives that you would like to get back in touch with?

Use this section to tell us more about them. If you do not currently have contact with them, but would like to, please see the next section for some information on how to do this.

How can I contact them?

If you know where your child/relative is, but you do not currently have regular contact with them, you may wish to write them a letter (providing there are no court conditions that would prohibit this). The letter might include your contact number and a return address. There are a number of organisations that may be able to help with difficult family situations. It is recommended that you contact your local authority for children who were in care but have since left the care system. Please note that you may not be entitled to any information about adult children and it would be at their discretion as to whether they make contact with you.

Bereavement and Loss

2

When a person is bereaved it means that a loved one, or someone else important to them, has died. We tend to use the term 'bereavement' to describe the period after someone has died in which people who cared about them are grieving.

Here are a list of charities that offer bereavement support. Please note, this is not extensive and there may be other support out there that would be better suited. Please speak to your support worker if you would like to find other agencies.

Petals— Tel (counselling queries): **0300 688 0068**

Email: counselling@petalscharity.org

Website: www.petalscharity.org

Saying Goodbye—Telephone: 0845 293 8027

Email: info@sayinggoodbye.org

Website: www.sayinggoodbye.org

Cruse Bereavement Care—Helpline: **0808 808 1677**

Email: helpline@cruse.org.uk or info@cruse.org.uk

Website: www.cruse.org.uk

Action plan

2



Thinking about the information you have provided in this toolkit... are there any other family related areas you would like support with?

What type of support would you like to receive from services?

This could be help writing letters, help with phone calls or help with filling forms out etc.

Use the next page to think about what your next steps will be and discuss this with your support worker.



Action plan



Resources

- The [Citizens Advice Bureau](#) has information and advice about children and local authority care in the UK
- [Gov.uk](#) explains what happens if your child is taken into care in England
- [Child Law Advice](#) explains the legal processes involved in child protection and the role of children's services in England
- [Family Lives](#) gives advice on how to cope with the aftermath of having your child taken into care
- National Family Mediation provides support for families in conflict. <https://www.nfm.org.uk/> or 0300 4000 636
- Mediate UK—<https://www.mediateuk.co.uk/online-miam/>
- <https://www.standalone.org.uk>—Provides support for people who are estranged from their families.
- Family Rights Group helpline—Provides support for parents who's children may be in care or at risk of going into care.
Telephone: 0808 801 0366

Forms

C1

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/form-c1-application-for-an-order>

C2

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/form-c2-application-for-permission-to-start-proceedings-for-an-order-or-directions-in-existing-proceedings-to-be-joined-as-or-cease-to-be-a-part>

C4

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/form-c4-application-for-an-order-for-disclosure-of-a-childs-whereabouts>

C100

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/form-c100-application-under-the-children-act-1989-for-a-child-arrangements-prohibited-steps-specific-issue-section-8-order-or-to-vary-or-discharge>