



Directorate of Social Care and Housing

Who can social care help?

Uned Plant a Theuluoedd

Children and Families Unit



Who can social care help?

We believe that the best place for almost every child to grow up is at home with their own family. This means that we work with the whole family and other agencies, like health and education, to find the best way of helping this happen. We will always take account of your family's religious, cultural and social background.

We can help children and young people and their parents, family members and carers. We can only help you if you live in Conwy.

We help people with problems or stressful circumstances that could seriously affect children's or families' wellbeing. For example, we can help:

- parents or young people needing advice;
- parents having problems with their children;
- people worried about a child's welfare;
- children who are at risk of harm;
- children or young people who have been in care;
- victims of domestic violence;
- single parents who need support;
- anyone who wants to foster or adopt;
- anyone who wants to know what we do to help children;
- young people leaving care;
- children and their parents if the children are (or could be) on the disability register; and
- parents with drug, alcohol or mental-health problems.

What sort of help can you offer?

Our trained staff can help you think about your problems and work out what help you might need. They will help you to look at the options and offer advice on how to help. We can offer:

- information and advice;
- emergency, short-term help;
- help for children and families with a lot of needs;
- support at home to help you cope, so your child doesn't need to go into care; and
- foster care or residential care (but only if this is really needed).

By law, we have to do what is needed to protect the welfare of children and young people.

Who decides what help I get?

If your family is coping well but you have a particular problem, we may be able to offer advice and information. We may also be able to suggest other organisations that can help you.

However, there are times when families feel under extreme pressure and unable to cope. There can be many reasons for this. For some people there is a particular crisis. For others it is because a child or family has complex needs. If your family is not coping well, we will find out more about your family's needs and the needs of each child in your family. This is called an assessment. We do the assessment by working with you and other agencies such as health and education.

Once we have done the assessment, we will see if you can get help from us. If you can, we will decide what services you can have and who will provide them. If we offer you a service, you can say whether you want the service in Welsh or English.

If you would like more information about how we decide who can get help from us or any of the services described in this booklet, please contact us. Our address and phone number are at the end of the booklet.

The services we have

Children and young people at risk

By law, we have to investigate if any child or young person seems to be in danger, at risk of neglect or at risk of physical, emotional or sexual abuse.

We always try to work with the agreement of children's parents or family. However, if we feel that a child or children are in danger, we have to act even if the parents object. If the parents object, we may have to get a court order.

If you are worried that any child or young person is in danger, please contact us. Children and young people can contact us themselves. We will always deal with any call – including calls from children themselves – in the strictest confidence. You do not even have to tell us who you are.

Family and Community Support Services

It is almost always in a child's best interests to live with their family. We work with parents to help this happen and make it less likely that a child will need to come into care. If the child or young person is already in care, we work with everyone to try to help the child or young person return home. We offer advice, guidance and counselling. We also offer practical support to people who feel overwhelmed by parenting problems or other difficulties. We have different teams to provide different types of help.

- **Community support team**

This service is only available for children and young people aged over 10. The team provides an '8 till late' service seven days a week (which is available out of office hours) and a 'rapid response' in an emergency. We work with families if a child or young person is at risk of coming into care. If the child or young person is already in care, we can work with everyone to try to help them get back home. We also work with foster families if they are struggling to look after a fostered child or young person. The team helps draw up contracts between parents and foster carers, the child or young person and the family social worker. These contracts make it clear who needs to do what.

- **Drug and alcohol rapid-response team**

This service is for any family where children are at risk because of their parents' drug or alcohol misuse. The team offers a service, according to need, any time of the day or night seven days a week for between four and six weeks. The team helps draw up a contract to make it clear who needs to do what.

- **Family group conferences**

Every family is unique, with its own culture, personalities and history. Sometimes, families can sort out difficult situations involving children with help from relatives and friends. Some families may need help from outside agencies such as health, education and social services. Family group conferences are a way of giving families the chance to get together to try and make the best plan possible for children. At a family group conference, the people making the decisions are the family members, not people from outside agencies.

- **Sessional support team**

This service is for children, young people and their families who already receive help from us. Help is available seven days a week. The team runs summer playschemes, a Saturday Club for children with disabilities, orienteering groups and a go-kart scheme. The team can help young people aged 14 and over to take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award. Team members also do one-to-one work if that is part of an overall plan to meet a child's or young person's needs.

- **Parent support team**

This service is for parents who need extra help in parenting. We offer an '8 till late' service seven days a week. We focus support on the parents. We draw up a contract between the parents, social worker and parent support team to make it clear who needs to do what. We review the contract every six weeks.

The parent support worker can help with:

- parenting skills;
- managing money and debt;
- life skills;
- dealing with neighbours;
- working more effectively with your children;
- getting professional support; and
- shopping and general errands.

Psychological and therapeutic service

This service is for families with a child or young person who has psychological, emotional or behavioural problems.

We can offer help to families, young people, parents, foster carers and adopters. We work with groups and individuals. We also run training on psychological and therapeutic issues. The service is provided by a chartered psychologist and a therapeutic social worker.

• Young carers

The young carers' group helps young people who care for a family member. These young people often have responsibilities that most people their age do not normally have. The group gives them the opportunity to enjoy the friendships and experiences that could be missing from their lives because of the time they spend caring for others.

All young carers can have an assessment of their needs, and families may get services to help young people in their caring role.

Services to children with disabilities and their families

The children with disabilities team is made up of experienced social workers, a transition co-ordinator (who makes sure the move from children's services to adult services is smooth), a senior practitioner and a principal practitioner. The team works with children who have a disability and who meet our conditions for receiving a service.

The team works closely with health, education, voluntary organisations and private agencies to develop, plan and run services. The services are designed to meet the needs of children and young people with a disability, from birth until they move to adult services when they are 18 years old.

The children with disabilities team provides or can arrange many services for children and young people with disabilities. These can include:

- social work and counselling;
- information on services;
- support from home-visiting services like community nurses;
- advocacy services (to help people represent their own views and interests);
- sessional work support;
- parent support;
- community support;
- playschemes;
- youth clubs;
- respite care (giving the carer a break);
- a Family Link scheme;

- longer-term care;
- psychological and therapeutic support; and
- assessments by occupational therapy to see if the child or young person needs any personal aids or adaptations to their home.

Services for a child or young person who is unable to live at home

We always try to keep children with their families, but there may be times when this is not possible. If so, we will try to come to an agreement with the parents about how the child or young person will be cared for. Most children and young people stay with foster carers, but some are cared for in a children's home. Occasionally we cannot come to an agreement with the parents and we have to provide care against a parent's wishes. We usually need a court order to do this.

Children and young people who are living away from their families need support services to make sure that they get the best possible care. We provide the following:

Care planning

Each child in care has a care plan which says what their needs are and how they will be met. The care plan must be understood by and developed with the help of the child, and say what we want to achieve. The senior social worker and the care planning officer make sure the care plan is done properly. They meet the child or young person to make sure they are clear about what the plan says. We review the care plan regularly and hold regular progress meetings. Once the care plan is clear and working well, the senior social worker and care planning officer stop being involved.

Exit interview

We are always trying to improve our services to children and young people. As a result, about two weeks after someone leaves care or goes to live with another family, the care planning officer makes an appointment to see them again to fill in a questionnaire. We call this an exit interview. We use it to find out what children and young people think of being in our care. We find out what we do well and where we need to do things better. It also gives children and young people a chance to say anything they didn't feel able to say while they were in care. We use all this information to help us improve our services.

Education services for children and young people in care

In the past, being in care has sometimes meant that children and young people's education has suffered. For example, changing where a child lived sometimes meant they had to change school and this had a bad effect on their education. To make sure children and young people don't lose out, we now have an Education Co-ordinator for Looked After Children. This person's job is to make sure that children in care can make the most of their educational chances. Each child or young person in care has a personal education plan. The child's teacher, social worker and the Education Co-ordinator for Looked After Children all help write the plan. Education isn't just about passing exams, so the personal education plan covers the following topics.

- Friendships
- Bullying
- Self-esteem
- Sports
- Hobbies
- Other interests
- Attendance at school
- Literacy (reading and writing)
- Achievements
- Choices after leaving school
- Links to college and university

Health services for children and young people in care

In the past, children in care didn't get all their health needs met. We now have a qualified nurse as Public Health Practitioner for Looked After Children to make sure this doesn't happen any more. In particular, the nurse:

- makes sure that everyone has their immunisations;
- is registered with a GP and a dentist; and
- has regular health checks.

Another important part of the work is to make sure that young people know about the effects of drugs and alcohol. The nurse advises young people on other health issues as well so that they know how to stay healthy as adults. Our nurse also runs health projects and training for foster carers.

Services for young people leaving care

We try to help young people in care to go back to live with their families. However, we need to look after some young people until they are ready to live on their own. We have a duty to help these young people as much as possible. This includes helping them prepare to leave care, and supporting them once they have left care to help them to lead independent lives.

We work with these young people to find out what they want to do in the future and what help they will need. We write this down as a pathway plan.

We can help with:

- housing;
- money;
- further education;
- careers advice;
- skills to live independently; and
- information about other agencies and services.

We can help until young people reach 21 (or 25 if they are still in education or training).

Adoption services

We are an adoption agency. This means that we work with people who want to adopt children and with people who have been adopted. We:

- recruit, train, assess and support people who are thinking of adopting;
- carry out enquiries into birth records;
- help to trace birth parents;
- act as a go-between when someone wants to contact their birth family;
- help step-parents who want to adopt, and adoptions between countries;
- offer counselling after adoption;
- offer counselling to birth parents; and
- offer 'letter-box' contact between adopted children and their birth families (if appropriate). (This is a way for letters, cards and photographs to be passed between birth families and adoptive families without names and addresses being exchanged).

How to ask for help

If you need help or you are worried about a child or young person, please contact our Children and Families Unit at:

The Civic Annex
Abergele Road
Colwyn Bay
Conwy
LL29 8AR.
Phone: 01492 514871

We are open Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm. We also run an emergency service during the evenings, weekends and bank holidays. If you have an emergency (including worries about a child's or young person's safety) outside office hours, simply phone the office number given above and you will be able to speak to a qualified social worker.

What help is available from other people?

Sometimes we cannot give you the help you want. If this is the case, we will try to put you in touch with people from other organisations who may be able to help.

Sure Start

This is a government-funded scheme. It aims to improve the health and wellbeing of children and families, before birth and from birth up to the age of four, so that children are ready to thrive when they go to school.

Sure Start co-ordinates a range of services to do with the health, education and social development of young children. There are two Sure Start centres in Conwy. You can contact them at the following addresses:

Sure Start
Ty Tudno
15a Ffordd Las
Llandudno
LL30 1ER.
Phone: 01492 872444

Sure Start
The Church Hall
Watling Street
Llanrwst
LL26 0LS.
Phone: 01492 642082

The Conwy Children's Rights and Independent Visitor Service NCH Cymru provides this. It is for children and young people who have any kind of contact with us, particularly young people living away from home.

Children's Rights provides a confidential service. They can:

- help young people to sort out problems;
- give advice about making a complaint;
- give advice and support about reviews; and
- give advice and support about a young person's rights.

Independent visitors are people not connected to social care and housing. They visit young people in care to spend time listening to any worries or difficulties a young person might be having.

You can contact them as follows:

Glenys Jones
Conwy Children's Rights Project
NCH Cymru
Eryl Wen
Eryl Place
Llandudno
LL30 2TX.
Freephone: 0800 587 5006
Phone: 01492 879625

Youth offending

If you would like information about services for young people who are at risk of committing offences, please ask for the leaflet 'Central North Wales Youth Offending Team'. The Youth Offending Team is based at:

68 Conwy Road
Colwyn Bay
Conwy
LL29 7LD.
Phone: 01492 523500

Homestart

This voluntary organisation helps families with at least one child aged under five. Volunteers offer practical support and advice to families in their own home. They also offer support through parent and child groups and activities held regularly at the Homestart Centre in Llandudno and at the Sure Start Centre in Llanrwst. You can contact them at:

Eryl Wen
Eryl Place
Llandudno
Conwy
LL30 2TX.
Phone: 01492 860842

Relate North Wales

This voluntary organisation can often help parents with relationship problems. You can contact them at:

8 Rivières Avenue
Colwyn Bay
Conwy
LL29 7PD.
Phone: 01492 533920

For legal advice in separation and custody disputes, you should speak to a solicitor. You may be able to get their help through the Community Legal Service (previously Legal Aid).

For financial help, please contact the Benefits Agency. We cannot give money to families except in very unusual circumstances. You can contact the **Benefits Agency** at:

4a Coed Pella Road
Colwyn Bay
Conwy
LL29 8LR.
Phone: 01492 614800

For housing services, please contact the following:

Colwyn Bay Phone: 01492 530523

Conwy Phone: 01492 576272

Llandudno Phone: 01492 574031

For **Housing Benefit**, please contact the following:
Eastern Area - Colwyn Bay and Llysfaen, Old Colwyn, Towyn, Kinmel Bay, Mochdre, Rhos on Sea, Cerrigydrudion, Llanefydd and Henllan, Llanfair TH, Llangernyw, Llansannan, Llanfihangel and Maerdy, Pentrefoelas, Llangwm, Abergele, Betws yn Rhos, Llanddulas and Rhyd y Foel.

Phone: 01492 762555

Western Area - Conwy, Llandudno Junction, Deganwy, Llanrhos, Llanfairfechan, Llanrwst, Glan Conwy, Penmaenmawr, Trefriw, Llandudno, Betws y Coed, Bro Garmon, Bro Machno, Caerhun, Capel Curig, Dolgarrog, Dolwyddelan, Eglwysbach, Henryd, Llanddoged and Maenan, and Ysbyty Ifan.

Phone: 01492 576259

For problems at school, please contact your child's school.

Many children and families have problems and can sort them out with help from family, friends and neighbours. You can also get advice from health visitors, nurses and other voluntary organisations.

What else do I need to know?

Compliments and complaints

We aim to provide you with the best possible service. To do this, we need to know what you think about the services you receive. We use this information to improve areas that are not up to standard and increase or maintain services that are working well.

Compliments

If you have been pleased with a service, it would help us to know. We all like to be thanked for doing our jobs well, and you can pass any compliments to the member of staff you normally deal with or write to us. We will record them and use them to improve the service.

Your right to complain about social services

You have the right to complain if you feel you or someone you care for has not been provided with a good service. You can also complain if you have been refused a service.

How do I complain?

Start by talking to the member of staff you normally deal with, or to their manager or head of service. Most complaints can be settled quite simply that way.

If you are not satisfied with the answer you get, you can make a formal complaint.

Contact the Representation and Complaints Officer at:

Social Care and Health Department
Builder Street
Llandudno
LL30 2DA.

24-hour answerphone: 01492 574065

The complaints officer will look into your complaint and give you a full report in writing. We will do all we can to reply within 10 days. However, if this is not possible, we will write and let you know when you can expect to hear from us about your complaint.

Confidentiality

We treat all personal information given to any member of staff as confidential. We may share personal details with people involved in your care and support only if they need to know. There are times when staff may tell their managers something you have told them if there is a risk of harm to you or another person.

If you want to know more about the information in this leaflet, contact:

Children and Families Unit
Directorate of Social Care and Housing
Civic Annex
Abergele Road
Colwyn Bay
LL29 8AR.
Phone: 01492 514871

You can get this leaflet on audio tape, in Braille and in large print. If you want one of these, please phone 01492 574065.

If you want any of our information in a language other than Welsh or English, we will try our best to get it translated for you.

You can get more information about this leaflet from:

Directorate of Social Care and Housing
Builder Street
Llandudno, LL30 1DA.

Phone: 01492 574065

