

Your information, your rights

Confidentiality and access to your
social work services records



About this leaflet

Social work services have to find out a lot of information about families we work with so that we can provide the best services and support.

This leaflet tells you:

- why we keep information
- how we use the information
- how and why we share information with others
- how long we keep the information for
- your rights on the information we keep

Our duties

We must take care of any information we hold on families to make sure it is kept safe and confidential and only used for the right reasons.

Getting information

To make sure children are safe we need to get information from parents and children so that we can find out what help they need. Your social worker will explain what sort of information we keep and what we use it for.

Contacting other professionals

We need to get the right information about you so that we can provide the right kind of services to help you. This means we will ask other professionals who work with your family for information about you.

Normally we will ask for your consent before we ask others for information, unless we think your child is at risk of serious harm and we need to carry out a child protection enquiry.

Sharing information

All the information you give us is confidential; that means we won't share it without your permission (except in the circumstances listed below). Because we work with many other organisations like health services, we often need to give out information about your family so they can provide the help you need.

You will usually be consulted on what information will be shared with other organisations; we will ensure that we only pass on the information needed to provide services and only to the people working with you.

The only time we will share information with other organisations without permission is when we:

- think a child is at risk of serious harm
- need to report a serious crime
- have been ordered to share the information by a court
- have to because the law says so.

Storing information

All the information you give us is kept on paper files and on computer records. We keep these safe and secure and only staff at social work services who work with you and your family can see them.

How long we keep case records after your case has been closed depends on what sort of service we have provided; the general rules are:

Children in need cases	25 years
Child protection cases	30 years
Looked after children cases	100 years

If we look after a child, we keep the case records for longer, so that as children grow up and want to know why they were looked after, they can see their records.

Your rights

The law says that you have certain rights regarding any information held about you. These are:

- asking to see your case record (known as “access to records”)
- asking social work services to consider making changes to any information written in the record that you think is wrong

Accessing your records

Information you can see

- You can see all information relating to you that is kept in your case record apart from the exceptions listed below.
- If the child is under 12 years old, parents can see any information held about the child.
- If a child is over 12 years old and can understand the information held on their case record, they will be able to see their records and will have to give permission if their parents ask to see the information.

Information you cannot see

- You cannot see any information about another person that is kept on your record, unless they have given permission or we think it is reasonable for you to see it.
- If we are given information about you by another person, for example a health visitor or the police, we will ask them before we show you this.
- If we have been in contact with our legal department because we thought about going to court regarding your child, you will not be able to see any advice they have given us.
- We may also withhold information about you if we think that it might cause you or someone else serious harm or severe distress.
- Adoption records are covered by different rules; if you were adopted and want to see these records, please state this on the application form and we can send you our adoption information leaflet.

Keeping records private

All records we hold are confidential and no-one else is allowed to see your record unless you give permission first. If you nominate someone else to access your records on your behalf, we will always make sure that this is in your best interests before we show them any information.

Who to contact

If you have a social worker, and you want to find out what information is on your case record, you can ask them. Your social worker should always discuss what they are recording and show you copies of any assessments or reports they write about you whilst they are working with you. This should give you an opportunity to make sure the information is accurate at the time it is written.

If you want to see your case record, you need to complete the form at the back of this leaflet and send it to the records manager at the freepost address.

What happens next

Once we receive your request, we have a duty to have everything in place within 40 days, although it may take longer if there are a lot of files or we need to get permission from other people.

When your records are ready, the records manager will contact you to make arrangements for you to come in and see the information. You will be asked to provide proof of your identity, for example a passport, driving licence or utility bill, before you can access your records.

We will provide copies of all the information you can see. We recommend that there is a social worker with you while you go through the information to answer any questions. You do not have to do this, but we may not let you see any information that we think may cause you undue distress.

We may ask you to make a small payment for this service unless you are in receipt of benefits.

Other records

Children, schools and families may also hold your education records if you went to school in Camden; you can ask the records manager if you want to see these. Please note that we do not hold school records and you will need to contact your school to see these.

If you are unhappy...

If you are not happy because:

- we have withheld information from you
- you think the information we have written is wrong or should not have been included on your case record
- you think we used the information unfairly

you should discuss this with the member of staff who is helping you with access and they will try to resolve any problems.

If you want to take the matter further, or want any information in the case record changed, you need to write to the Records Manager at:

Records management and access to information team

Children, schools and families
London Borough of Camden
FREEPOST RRAR-KKUL-RCEZ
218 Eversholt Street
London NW1 1BD

Phone: 020 7974 5912
Fax: 020 7974 1439
Email: records.csf@camden.gov.uk

You can also write to the Information Commissioner at:

Wycliffe House

Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Phone: 01625 545 745
Fax: 01625 524 510
Email: mail@ico.gsi.gov.uk

Access to records request form

Please complete this form if you would like to see your case records. You can contact the Records Manager on **020 7974 3668** if you need any help.

Surname:

First name(s):

Date of birth:

Name at time of receiving service (if different)

Present address:

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Telephone number:

Address at time of receiving service (if different):

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Please give us any details that may help us to find your file, for example the dates you received a service, names of social workers or foster carers, or Council offices you attended.

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If you want to access adoption records, please give us any information you have about your birth parents, adoptive parents and date of adoption.

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If you want someone else to look at your records on your behalf, please complete this box.

Name of person to have access:

Address:

I authorise this person to have access to the following information on my behalf: (please state what information the person is able to have access to)

Signed:

Date:

If you want access to information about a child under 18, please complete this box.

Name of child:

Date of birth:

Name of person requesting access:

Relationship to child:

The child is over 12 years and consents to the request

or

The child is under 12 years and does not understand the request

I understand that I may not be able to see information recorded about another person without their consent. I also understand that Camden may need more detailed information in order to establish my identity and find the relevant information.

I would like a social worker to be present whilst I look at my records

I would not like a social worker to be present whilst I look at my records

I declare that the information given above is correct to the best of my knowledge and that I am the person named above/parent or guardian of the person named above.

Signed:

Date:



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Private and confidential
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