What to expect when working with your social worker

Plain English

Suffolk Joint Learning Disability Strategy

Introduction

This guide helps to explain the support offered by a member of the Social Work Team. This could be a Social Worker or an Independence and Wellbeing Practitioner.

In this guide, we will use the term 'Social Worker'. This guide can help you to know what to expect, as well as the kind of the things a member of the team might talk to you about.

People at the Heart of Care

Suffolk County Council's Social Care model is People at the Heart of Care. Suffolk County Council wants to support people to live independently in their communities.

The team will also work with you to plan ahead so that you can have:

- Wider choice in how you are supported
- Provide access to digital tools that will help you maintain independence
- Make sure information and advice is available
- Offer supported self-assessment

Preparation

Your Social Worker should prepare to work with you. This could include reading your records so they know a little bit about you.

Your Social Worker might also want to talk to other people who know you well, such as a Support Worker, family member or a friend.

Your Social Worker will also be thinking about a law called the Care Act. This law tells councils what help they should provide to people that need it.

Your Social Worker will also want to know whether or not you can make decisions about some things. This is called mental capacity.

Your Social Worker will also want to find out about where you live, who you live with and the things that you like to do. Your Social Worker should ask you how you like to communicate.

If you have technology that supports your communication, you should let your Social Worker know. When a Social Worker is working with you, they should make sure you are fully included.

It is important that you feel comfortable. This includes having the right support around you. You might want to ask someone to be with you when talking to your Social Worker.

Before your Social Worker talks to you, they should make sure you know what is going to happen and when. If you think you might forget things after a meeting, you can make notes.

You could also ask your Social Worker to send you their notes. Or, you can ask your Social Worker to include other people who can take notes, or remember things for you.

Advocacy Support

When working with your Social Worker, an Advocate can support you. Advocacy is about your voice being heard. Advocates support you to speak up and can speak up for you if you need them to. In Suffolk, our Advocacy Service is delivered by a partnership which includes POhWER, Suffolk Family Carers, ACE Anglia and Suffolk User Forum.

You can find out more about advocacy by clicking this link where you can also find referral forms for the different types of advocacy available:

https://www.pohwer.net/suffolk-advocacy-service

Paying for your care and support

You will have to pay for most sorts of care and support if you have enough money. The council will check to see how much money you have and ask you to pay what you can afford.

The Care Act guidance explains:

- How councils must decide what you pay towards your care and support
- Your right to choose a care home if you need one and to sometimes pay towards this if it costs more than the council want to pay
- How councils work out what money you have.

Personal budgets

A personal budget is the money used to buy your care.

The Care Act guidance:

- **Explains how councils should work out your personal budget**
- **Gives information about personal budgets for carers**
- **Gives information about what to do if you are not happy with what the council decides**
- **If you are not happy with your care and support. If your social worker cannot sort things out for you and you are still unhappy they will let you know how to complain.**

Review

If you have a new support plan, your Social Worker should offer you a light touch review around 7 weeks after working with you.

Light touch is a quick check-in to see how things are going. It could be a phone call or video call.

Your Social Worker should: **Arrange a date for your annual review.**

This will be around a year after the support from your Social Worker. You should then have a review every year after that.

You are at the centre of this process. Things should work around you and your needs.

Your Social Worker should: **Invite the right people to your review, if you want them to be there. This could be a Support Worker, a friend or a family member.**

Your Social Worker should: **Work with you to support you to achieve your outcomes.**

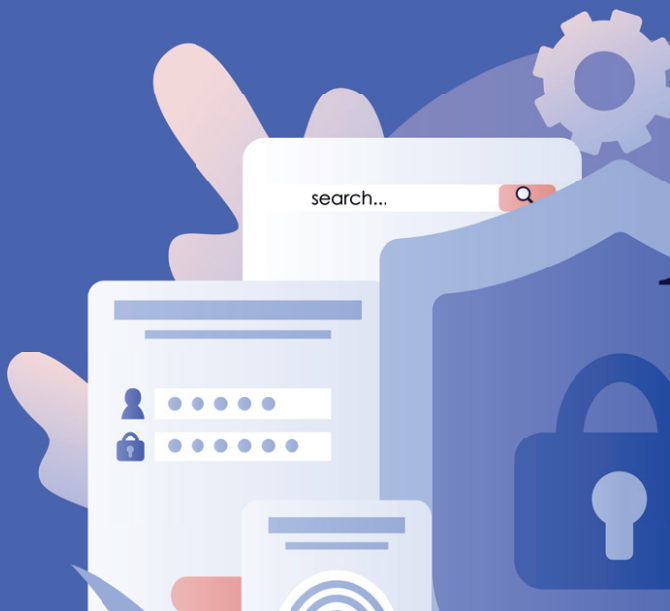
Your Social Worker should: **Talk to you about how things are going and checking you have the right support in place.**

For more information:

e-mail: **customer.first@suffolk.gov.uk**

Phone: **0800 917 1109**

Online: **suffolk.gov.uk**

This document was made in co-production with:

Experts by experience: people with a learning disability
Experts by experience: people with autism
Ace Anglia: **aceanglia.com**
Suffolk County Council: **suffolk.gov.uk**
Thinklusive: **thinklusive.org**