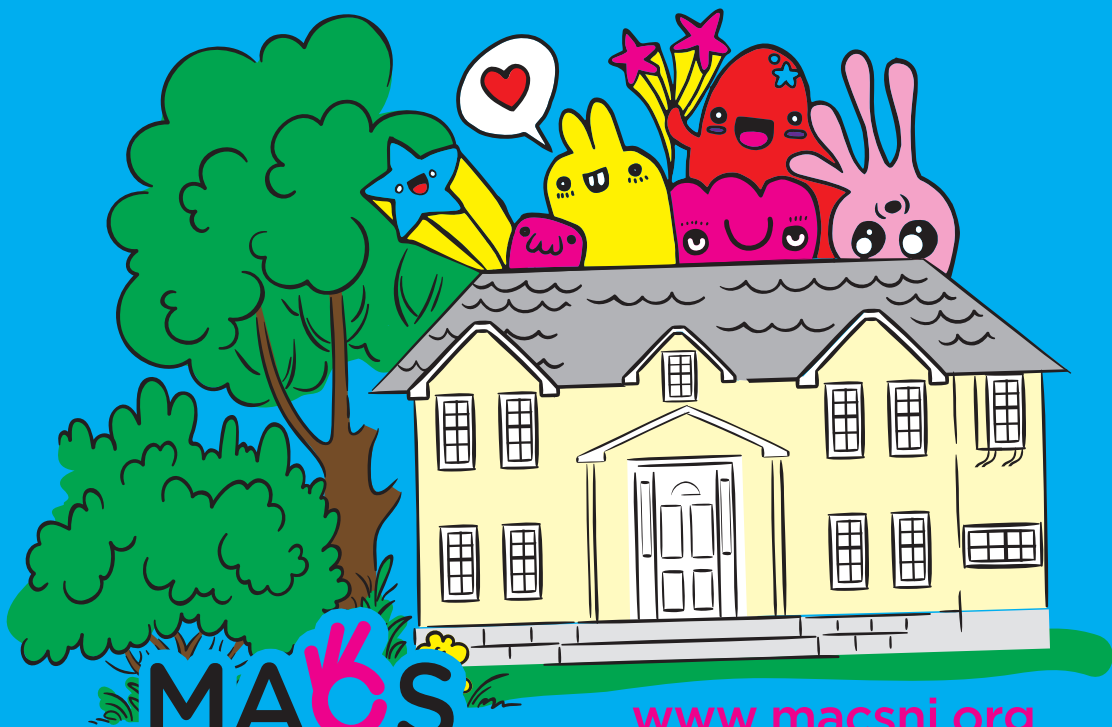


# M♥HOUSE

MACS THERAPEUTIC COMMUNITY FOR CHILDREN

# CHILDREN'S HANDBOOK



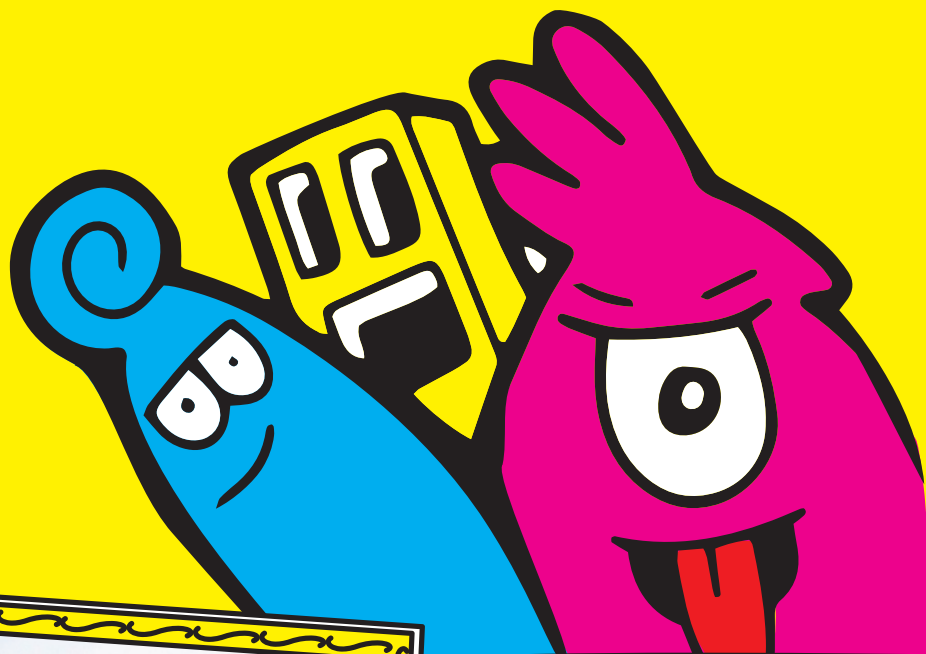
**MACS**

SUPPORTING CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

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# THIS IS THE HOUSE AND GARDENS



These are the grown ups who are there for children living in the House:

# HOUSE PARENTS

The grown ups who live in the House with you.



# ACTIVITY WORKERS

The grown ups who do fun activities, help you keep in touch with your social worker and family, and help you with school and learning.



# MY HOUSE

CHILDREN AGED 6-13 YEARS OLD LIVE AT OUR HOUSE. ALL OF THE CHILDREN ARE HERE BECAUSE HOME WAS NOT SAFE FOR THEM IN SOME WAY.

All of the children here will have good times and bad times and will be taken care of and shown love no matter what.

We are working together to support children to be ready for foster care.

At our House, children will have a place to live that is safe and caring.

At our House the grown ups are kind & understanding. They know how to have fun & play.



At our House the grown ups will help children to understand and deal with their feelings. They know that sometimes children get angry, sad, upset, and frightened. They know that these feelings can be changed.

At our House we use play like climbing, swinging, bouncing, stretching, using tunnels, building tents, playing tug of war, and skipping to help us all feel happier and more in control of our emotions.

## STAY CLOSE

When you come to live at My House we will go everywhere with you for around 12 weeks. We will go with you when you meet with family, foster carers, to activities and even to school. This is to help us to get to know one another and the people around you. We want to be there to help and support you.

AT OUR HOUSE WE FIND WAYS TO FEEL  
COMFORTED AND SECURE.



# OUR HOUSE IS A HOME

We decorate our own spaces with the things that make us happy and make our House comfy.

Meal times are fun and we catch up when we eat together and cook together. You help decide what we will all eat.

We bake all the time, the smell is amazing and the buns and cakes are delicious. You can help us with cooking, shopping, preparing meals and snacks.

There is always good and tasty food in the House. We can always make something to eat.

We have chill out nights, movie nights, lazy days and busy days, go to the park, play games and board games, make arts and crafts. We play, build and discover in the garden, visit with animals, grow and explore things in the garden. We have some animals at the house.

We do things together and not alone.



We go on picnics, holidays and day trips together.

We read stories with you.

We give you hugs when you want them.

We go along to the things that are important for you and for each child.

We ask children about their thoughts, feelings, ideas and worries about living in the House. **WE MAKE CHANGES FOR CHILDREN.**

We use our time at the House to help children get ready for the things they might need to do when they are bigger.

We plan with the children for moving out of our House. We do this long before they are ready to go, finding out what works for them and getting them ready for this time. We plan for children to go to a foster family.

We plan for children to gradually build up a relationship with foster carers and we will plan for keeping in touch with children when they move on.



# WHAT HAPPENS BEFORE I MOVE IN?

**YOU WILL HAVE TIME TO VISIT THE HOUSE, SEE YOUR BEDROOM, MEET THE GROWN UPS AND OTHER CHILDREN.**

You will be involved in getting ready for your move and we will talk with you your social worker and other people who are important to you about this.

You will meet the grown ups and start to get to know them.

We will start to work out what you need to feel “Just Right” - this will then help us all to understand what to do to help you feel safe and comforted.

# FOR ME AT MY HOUSE?

You will have a place to lock away things that are important to you if you want to.

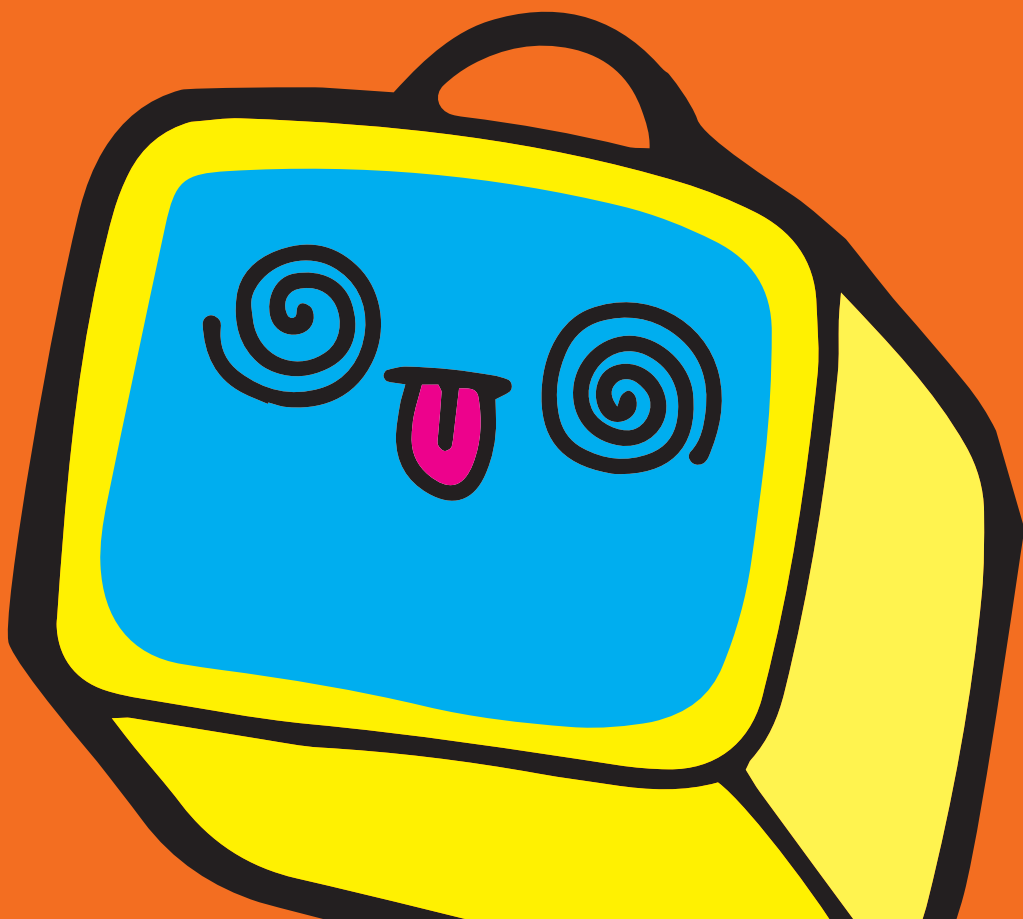
You pick your own shampoos, shower stuff, smelly stuff, bath bombs, deodorants, soaps, towels, toothpaste, toothbrushes, combs, hair products and so on.

You will have pocket money, money for clothes and holidays. We will help you save some of your pocket money each week so you can save up for bigger things that you may want.

You can help us decide on the shopping, the meals we eat and the snacks we have. You can help us cook and help out with things around the House that you enjoy.

You can help us decide on the things we do together like activities, playing, chilling out, day trips, events and holidays.

We will help you find a day to day routine that works for you. That helps you with sleeping and resting, meals, bedtime and getting up and ready in the morning, to get ready for important events. This way you will know how and when things will happen. You will feel more ready and rested.



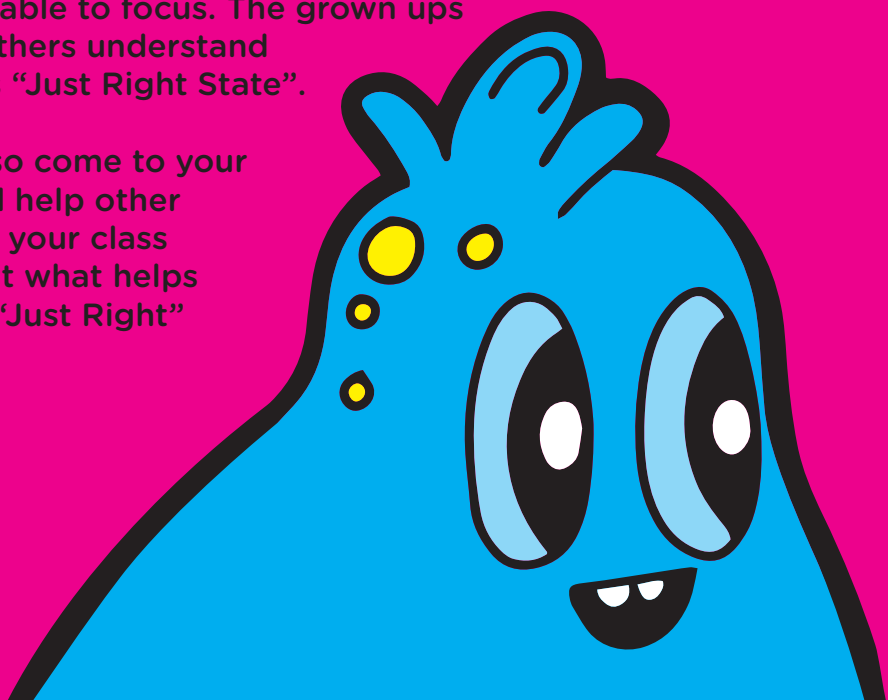
# MY COMMUNITY AT MY HOUSE

The grown ups will help all children to know the area that they live in now and where they are from. They will talk with you about your family, community and faith.

The grown ups will know a lot about activities, clubs, sports and events that go on locally, in Belfast and in Lisburn. They will help you to get involved in things that are fun, enjoyable, new, interesting, exciting or maybe just curious about.

All children will get support with education, school and homework. This will be linked up with your Personal Education Plans (PEP). We will help with reading, writing and maths. We will help others understand how children like to learn and what happens when they are tired or unable to focus. The grown ups will help others understand everyone's "Just Right State".

We can also come to your school and help other children in your class learn about what helps them feel "Just Right"



# MY STORY AT MY HOUSE

All children will have their story of their time at the House. This is your book where you draw, write, use art and photos, keep memories and keepsakes, and keep a track of your time.

The grown ups also have to keep the story of childrens time at the House. This is kept in files. One file has all the stuff that comes from the social worker. The other file is for children. It's about what you do each day, the things you enjoy and the things we see in you that are just brilliant!

You will have a calendar so you can plan and record what's coming up for you. The grown ups will help you write this calendar if you want to use it.

You will have your own "Just Right State" plan and a "therapeutic" plan. These will help you and all the grown ups understand what you need to feel safe, cared for and secure.



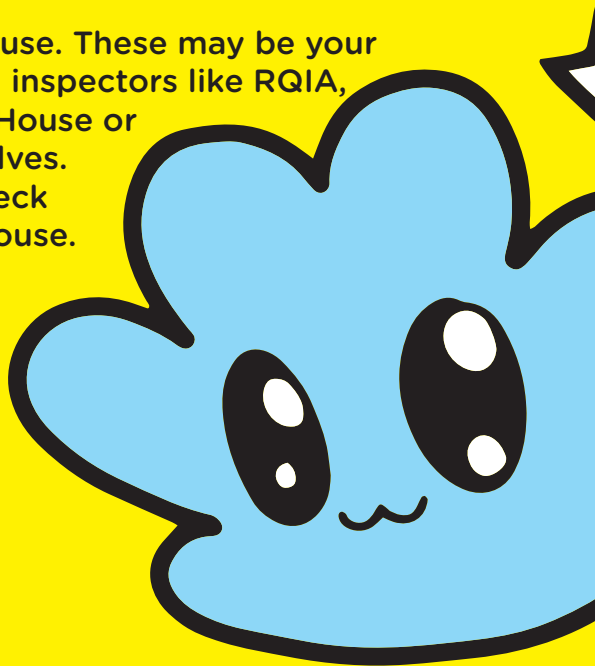
# FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Social workers have to make decisions on who children can spend time with, for how long and where this needs to happen. Sometimes there are people that are not safe to be around. The grown ups will talk to you and your social worker about friends and family. If its ok with your social worker, the grown ups will help you to spend time with family and friends and to keep in touch with them. They will help you with all of the feelings you have about your family, friendships and relationships with all the people you meet and see. Remember, grown ups will go to everything with you for at least 12 weeks when you move in - even to visit family and friends.

# VISITORS

We will have visitors at the House. These may be your friends or family, foster carers, inspectors like RQIA, people to do jobs around the House or garden that we can't do ourselves. The grown ups will have to check everyone who comes to the House.

We don't let anyone into our House that we don't know.



# FOOD, DOCTORS AND STUFF

We will have a good mix of healthy meals and snacks with not so healthy, but very comforting foods, like pizza, pasta and take away. There will always be fresh fruit in the House. We even have vegetables and fruit grown in our own garden!

The grown ups will help you to understand healthy and comforting food and how these are good in different ways, but that a balance of each is best.

You will have a doctor, dentist, nurse and optician or other specialists (if necessary). The grown ups will support you to be healthy and to take care of your health in a fun way that works for you. We will go with you to appointments and take care of you when you are unwell.



# STAYING SAFE

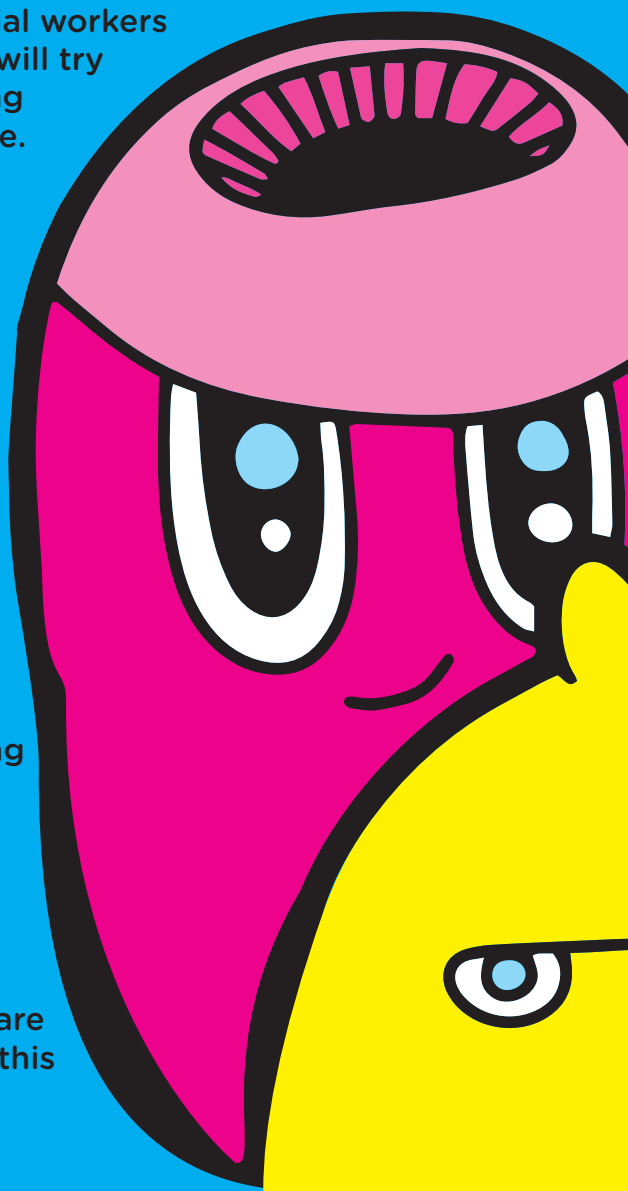
Sometimes the things we do or say, or the people we want to spend time with, are not safe.

There may be plans in place about keeping safe that you do not like or really understand. The grown ups will help you to understand why they or social workers have made these plans. We will try to get you involved in making plans about keeping you safe.

Grown ups will use the 'Just Right State' to help you become more settled. When we feel more settled we are unsafe less often.

The grown ups will take the responsibility of keeping you and the other children safe very seriously.

The aim will always be to keep you safe by talking it out or trying to do something distracting. However, grown ups may need to get into your bedroom without permission or maybe hold you back or stop you from doing things to keep you and others safe. Grown ups are trained to hold you safely if this needs to happen.



Sometimes the grown ups will need to call the police but this will not happen often and they will tell you if this is how they may have to keep you safe.



# WHAT HAPPENS IF I GET UPSET, OR ANGRY, OR SAD, OR FRIGHTENED?

The grown ups know that sometimes things just get too much and that we all get annoyed, upset, sad or frightened. The way we behave can really change when we feel these emotions.

We use the “Just Right State” to help us all understand what emotions come up for us and why. We all use the “Just Right State”, that means the grown ups in the House as well as the children.

The “Just Right State” helps us all to understand what we can do to help settle these emotions down.

The “Just Right State” teaches us what movement, routines, comfort and foods work for us to help us feel settled. It helps us to understand our feelings and to do things every day that help us to feel more settled overall. All the children will have their own “Just Right State” plan that the grown ups will support them with.

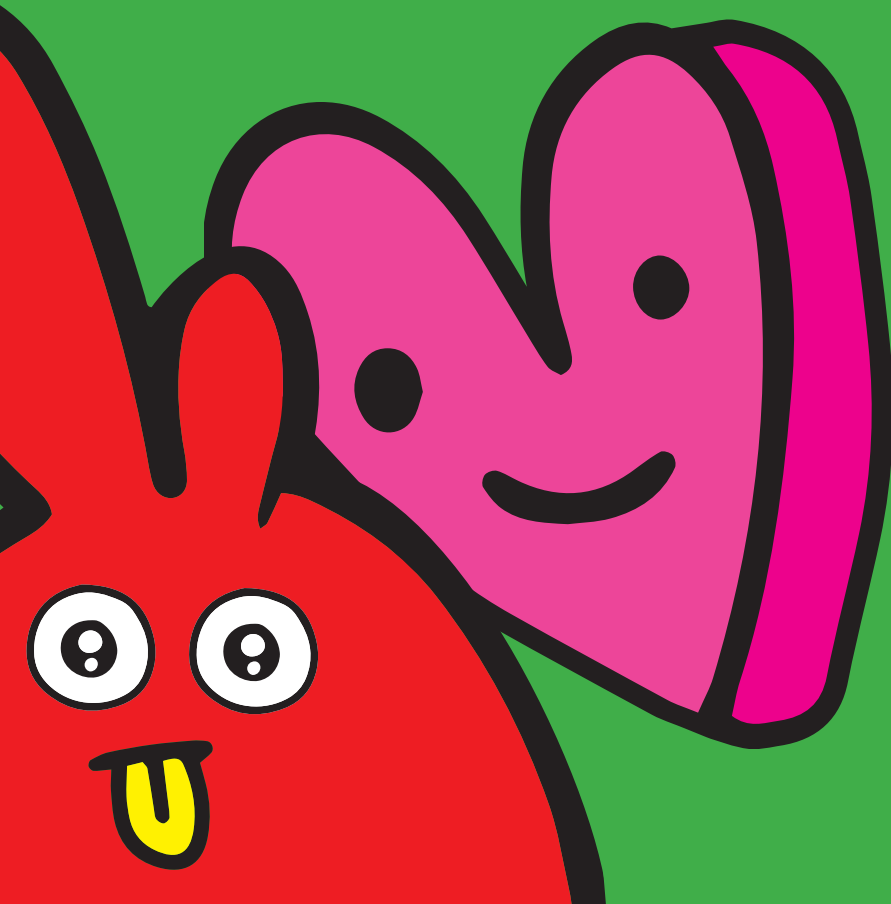
The grown ups will be patient and kind when you or other children are upset.



# BULLYING

We don't want a House where children are bullied or bully. Children may be bullied outside of the House or in the House.

The grown ups are always looking out for signs of bullying but they also want you to feel able to talk openly if you are being bullied. The grown ups will act quickly if they think bullying is going on. They will work with and spend more time with everyone involved, to figure out what is going on and to help everyone feel safe.



# FEELING ANNOYED AND WANT SOMETHING TO CHANGE?

There will be times when you get annoyed and frustrated about living in the House. No matter what, the message is that its ok to be annoyed, to let us know your annoyed and for us to try and fix it together.

It may be bigger than being annoyed, you may feel you have been treated unfairly or badly. This then is a complaint and Sinéad needs to get involved to find out what happened. Sinéad will talk to you, and anyone else involved and make decisions on what to do. You and your social worker will be kept involved in any complaint.



# HELPING ME SAY WHAT I WANT TO SAY

We know that it's not always easy to say what is on your mind. We know that its hard even to tell the people you see all the time, like the grown ups in the House. There are other people you can talk to about certain things like:

- Led By You (LBY) are young people from other parts of MACS who can help to have changes made for children and young people all across MACS - You can talk to Trevor from LBY.
- VOYPIC who will help you if you are unhappy with the things your social worker is doing or with things in the House - You can call VOYPIC on 028 9024 4888.
- Guardian ad Litem who is to make sure your thoughts and feelings and best interests are heard by the Courts.
- Your social worker or their boss, or someone else in MACS who you may find it easier to talk to.
- Some helplines like Childline - 0800 1111 - [childline.org.uk](http://childline.org.uk) or NSPCC - 0808 800 5000 - [nspcc.org.uk](http://nspcc.org.uk)
- Other people in MACS (Mary, Kate, Suzanne & Joanne) come out to the House every month to check that children are safe, cared for and feel involved in what's happening at our House. You can talk to them when they are out, or contact them at the main office (028 9031 3163)



# MY MEETINGS

You will have LAC reviews and possibly other meetings. These can be in your calendar so you know when they are happening. Grown ups will help you to get ready for meetings. This will be about having your say and who you do / don't want to be at the meeting. We know meetings can be tough, we will work with everyone at the meeting to make it short and easier for you to feel involved. A note of the meeting and what was agreed will be in your file at the House.

# SAFETY IN THE HOUSE

The grown ups will make sure the House is safe, that broken things are fixed or replaced, and that the place is clean enough so that no one gets sick.

The grown ups will do fire safety checks every week and fire drills every month. Each day they will do a health and safety check of the House. This is to make sure there are no broken or damaged items that someone could trip over or get hurt by.





# CHILD PROTECTION

## WHAT WILL HAPPEN

- Some people hurt children by hitting them, shouting at them, touching their private areas, and by not taking care of them.
- If someone has hurt you or someone else like this, please tell someone!
- You can tell a teacher, your social worker, the police, someone at MACS, or a safe person.

- They will listen to you and help make you safe.
- The safe person will tell your social worker or the police and they will talk with you about what happened.
- The grown-ups at My House will look after you. They will help you with all your feelings and worries.
- The grown-ups will only tell the people that **NEED** to know what has happened. No one else will know.

# ...AND JUST TO WRAP UP...

**We want you to know that you  
will be welcomed into our House.**

**We will take care of you, be  
there for you, have fun with you  
and believe in you.**



# MY HOUSE

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