

Acting as an Appropriate Adult

What is an Appropriate Adult

When a young person under the age of 18 is arrested and interviewed there must be an “appropriate adult” present.

Who can act as an Appropriate Adult

1. Parent or guardian.
 2. Social Worker.
 3. Failing either of the above another responsible adult aged 18 years or over, who is not a police officer or employed by the Police.
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The role of the Appropriate Adult

The Appropriate Adult, which will normally be you, as parent, is not just an observer of the interview, called a PACE interview, as rules govern how it should be carried out, as set out in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, 1984. The appropriate adult is there to advise the person being questioned and to observe whether or not the interview is conducted properly and fairly, and to help communicate between the young person and the Police.

Request a solicitor

You could be at the police station for a long period. If you do not have a solicitor, ask the Custody Officer at the police station if a duty solicitor has been called. Make sure a solicitor speaks to your child before the interview. A solicitor will prepare your child for the interview, advise your child and provide important legal advice. A solicitor may take up to two hours to arrive at the station. A duty solicitor will act on your child’s behalf free of charge.

Contact your social worker

If your child has a social worker they can be contacted for advice and support. You can also contact the Youth Offending Team by telephone for advice.

On arrival

You can ask to read the custody records once your child has left custody. These will show if your child has had a PACE review. The review should, amongst other things, show that your child’s health has been checked and whether they have been offered food and drink. You can ask the police for food and drink for your child at any time if needed. You may also bring your own food.

Talking to your child

You may speak to your child in private before the interview. You do not have to wait for a solicitor, if you feel this is appropriate.

Check

1. The Custody Officer has given your child his/her rights, verbally and in writing.
 2. Your child has a solicitor. Explain how a solicitor can help them with legal advice.
 3. If you don’t think your child is feeling well enough to be interviewed, you can ask for the interview to be delayed until they are, or ask for the attention of the Duty Medical Officer.
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During the interview

You will be present during the interview, which will be recorded. Ensure your child has been cautioned and understands what has been said. If they do not understand ask the police officer to explain the caution clearly.

- If you feel the questions are oppressive or leading, you can ask for the interview to stop.
- If you do not understand anything that is said ask the police to explain the question another way.
- If you are unsure of the relevance of a question consult your solicitor. If your child becomes distressed you can ask for a break.
- You may take notes if you want, you can also have a copy of the tape. This may be ready or may have to be sent to you. When the interview has finished countersign the tape seals.

West Berkshire Youth Offending Team

Merchant House, 14-20 Oxford Road, Newbury, Berkshire, RG14 1PA.

Telephone: 01635 553600 | E-mail: yot@westberks.gov.uk

www.westberks.gov.uk/yot
