



Hull  
City Council

# Children's Social Care Assessments

a guide for parents  
and families

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### What an assessment is

An assessment is a way of looking at your family to help us get to know you and your children better, and how best to help. We will talk to you about how your family life is for you and if there is anything that you are worried about that is making things difficult for you or your children. An assessment will also look at your ethnic and cultural background and any difficulties you may have about where you are living.

We will meet with your children and talk to them, both with you there and on their own, to see how they are, as well as talking to other members of family with your permission. We will look at how healthy your children are, how they are doing in school or nursery and how you feel your children are growing up.

If we are in contact with you and your family it will usually be

because a concern has been raised about your children's well-being or because you have contacted us to ask for help.

### Who is involved and what happens

Assessments by Children's Services are called Children's Social Care Assessments and they are carried out by a social worker from the Access and Assessment Team in Hull or from your local Social Work Pod if they have worked with your family recently.

The main people who will be involved in an assessment are you and your children if they are old enough. The worker leading the assessment will also want to talk to other adults who know you and your children, for example a school teacher or health visitor.

You will be told how long the assessment will take and will also be given an idea of how many times we will need to meet with

you and your children and anyone else both you and the worker feel should be involved.

A Children's Social Care Assessment involves gathering detailed information about you and your family to help us make decisions about the future needs of your family and how best you can get the support you need. It can tell us if you or your children need help or if you need support in caring for them. It is also the starting point if it was felt that your children were at risk of harm.

Children's Social Care Assessments can take up to 45 working days to complete. The assessment and plans for your children will be updated as your family's situation changes.

## Information needed for a Children's Social Care Assessment

We will talk to you in more detail about the assessment with your family. Some of the things we may want to know include:

- Who is in your family and what their background and personalities are

- The nature and cause of concern about your children
- What day to day life is like for your children
- Your children's physical and emotional development
- Where you live
- The relationships between the people in your family and how you all get on
- The type of contact you and your family has with relatives and friends
- Which other professionals or organisations are working with you
- Your view of your children and also your children's views
- Any financial difficulties you might have
- The help you and your children and family will need and how long it might take for any changes to occur
- What you understand about your children's needs
- Anyone who might be a risk to your children

Our approach is guided by the following principles. We want families to feel listened to; receive help when it is needed; have a clear understanding of what needs to change in order to keep children safe; and to be helped to make positive change, when needed, by building on strengths.

### If you don't want an assessment or if you don't agree with its outcome

Your involvement in the assessment is central to its success. We want to work with you to ensure that your children are well cared for, and will try to work out any difficulties you may have and find a way to help.

Before completing an assessment, we will ask for your permission to do so and for us to talk to other organisations about your children and your situation.

We will also explain to you who will be considered to help with the assessment. Organisations will not share information about you without your agreement unless they consider that it is necessary in order to safeguard your children's welfare.

If you are unhappy about the assessment and the reason why we feel one has to be carried out, please tell the worker involved why you are unhappy about it. A manager will then decide whether or not to continue with the assessment.

If we think that your children may be in danger then this will override the need for you to give your consent for an assessment, and it will have to go ahead; we will explain to you why this happens. If your children are in danger or at risk, we may need to take immediate action to ensure they are safe.

If we feel your children are at risk and you refuse to work with us, this will be viewed as serious, and you will be advised to seek legal advice; we will also take legal advice. Most families are able to work with us and take an active part in the assessment process. You should talk over any worries you have with your social worker or their manager.

## Your views on assessments

Your social worker and other professionals will talk to you and your children about how you see things, how you will all be involved, and explain what will be expected from you.

Your views and your children's views will be part of the assessment, and you will have the opportunity to comment on the assessment and this will be recorded on the report.

## After the assessment has been completed

It might be decided that your family does not need to have any more involvement with Children's Services after the assessment.

We may be able to help you access other services which would be more suitable.

It could be that we feel that you and your children would find things easier if you were to have some help and support services or we might suggest that courses to help you with parenting would be a good idea. We might also suggest that you or a family member needs to undertake a

further assessment with a specialist worker, for example a psychologist.

If further work with us is agreed, we will work with you (and with other professionals such as education and health) to make a 'child in need plan' about what needs to be put in place to help. This will explain what support and services will be provided for you and your children, when and how long, and when the plan will be reviewed to see if things are improving for you and your family. A core group of people, including you, the social worker and other professionals (such as staff from health and education) will meet regularly to check the progress of the plan.

If there are serious concerns about your children, or we feel that they are at risk of harm, we will make this very clear to you. The next step might be to hold a Child Protection Conference where a 'child protection plan' to protect your children might be made.

If a Child Protection Conference is held, you will be invited to attend and involved in this

meeting unless there are very serious reasons why you should not be there. Please ask the social worker for a copy of **The Child Protection Conference**: A guide for parents and carers – this leaflet explains conferences in more detail; there is also a leaflet for your children to read.

Children who have a child protection plan are considered to be in need of protection. This includes protection from physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect. The plan will give details of the main areas of concern, what action will be taken to reduce those concerns and by who (including you), how your children will be kept safe, and how we will know when progress is being made.

A core group of people, including the social worker and other professionals (such as staff from health and education), will meet within ten days of the initial conference to draw up a detailed child protection plan. You will be asked to contribute to this and the core group will decide how to monitor the plan and how often they will meet.

The first review will be held within three months of the initial child protection conference; after that a review must be held and least every six months. When a review conference is held it will consider whether it is necessary for a child to continue to have a child protection plan.

## The Assessment Report

During a Children's Social Care Assessment, the information is put together in a report, you will be given a copy of this and have the opportunity to comment on it yourself. In circumstances where your children have been made the subject of a child protection plan the report may be shown to a Child Protection Conference or sometimes a court to help them make informed decisions.

The report will help you and the people working with you to address the needs of your children and ensure that the right services are in place to meet their needs. The assessment will also look at the wider needs of your children and family in planning any future support that might be needed.

Where your children are at risk or are likely to be at risk of harm, the assessment will help you and the people working with you to be clear about the risks to your children and what needs to change to avoid harm in the future.

### Who receives a copy of the assessment

Once all the information has been gathered and the report has been written, we will visit you to talk about what will happen next. You will be given a copy of the assessment report and if we have spoken with other people involved with your children (like their teacher or doctor) they will be informed what the outcome of the assessment is.

We will keep a confidential record of any information you give us and will only share this with other people who are working with you. You have a right to see this information and can ask to see your children's case files at any time, this is called a Subject Access Request.

We will only share information without your permission if we believe that there may be a risk of harm to your child. If this

happens, we will tell you and explain what your rights are.

### If you disagree with what the assessment says


If the assessment report contains specific details which are wrong, for example your children's dates of births or names, these mistakes will be corrected. If you are unhappy with the professional opinions that have been made or feel that what you have told people had been misunderstood, you must explain this to the social worker and your comments and concerns will be recorded on the assessment report.

### Tell us what you think

Your comments help us to improve the quality of our services, so please let us know what you think. Please give your feedback directly to your social worker or another member of the Pod or Team.

It helps if you tell us when we do things well. If you are not happy with the service you receive, try to sort it out with the person you are dealing with first. If you are still unhappy, we have a formal complaints process and you can contact the Complaints Team on 01482 616 143





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