

Practitioner Guide to undertaking Section 5 of a Child and Family Assessment, Childs' Needs and Risk



This guidance has been written to assist in practice when undertaking Section 5 of a child and family assessment. Where parents are separated, and there is shared care or regular contact with a separated parent, case decisions about safety planning or risk reduction **should explicitly include both parents, unless to do so would increase risk**. Where both parents have parental responsibility (PR) there should be a presumption that each parent has the information they need to exercise their PR and, if necessary, make arrangements to safeguard their children.

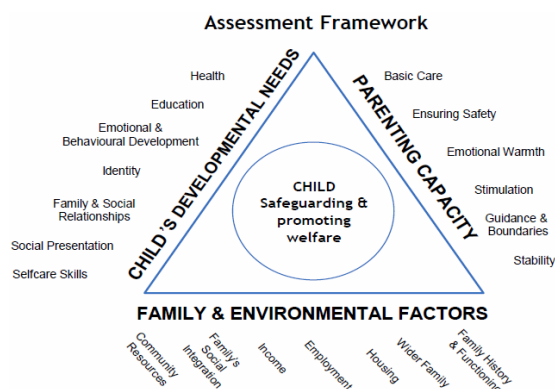
It is informed by:

- [One minute guide: child and family assessment \(leeds.gov.uk\)](https://www.leeds.gov.uk/one-minute-guide-child-and-family-assessment)
- [Working together to safeguard children - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/working-together-to-safeguard-children)
- [Munro review of child protection: a child-centred system - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/munro-review-of-child-protection)
- [Assessments \(trixonline.co.uk\)](https://www.trixonline.co.uk/assessments)

Best Practice

Analysis is central to everyday social work practice and involves paying careful attention to what is going on in any situation to understand that situation and make recommendations for support. Analysis is an ongoing process that social workers are engaged in all the time.

What are the needs of a child?



[Framework for assessing children in need, 2000](#)

There are 10 key processes when undertaking Section 5 of the Child and Family Assessment- Child's needs and risk:

1) Focus on the reason for the assessment: This will support to identify if there are unmet needs for the child in relation to the reason an assessment was requested. Other information may be gathered in the process of the assessment which will either support initial worries, add to the initial worries, or identify the child or family do not require further support at that time.

- 2) Observe, Listen, think:** you can better understand a child's situation if you actively listen, observe their behaviour, how they respond to their care givers, family members and home environment. Reflecting on what you have seen and heard will support you to analyse the current situation from an unbiased approach, rather than jumping to conclusions to support you develop the best plan for the child and family. This will support you to identify what needs are unmet and consider the impact of this upon the child
- 3) Multiagency information gathering to evidence unmet needs:** Information with consent can be gathered from a range of sources this could include health, education and other professionals who may be working with the child and family. This information will support to identify any unmet needs as this will gather evidence to identify if the worries are or are not substantiated and what the risks may be if the situation were to continue for the child.

- 4) **Be Specific:** The needs of the child and any risks posed need to be specific to that individual child and their current circumstances rather than generic. **ALL** children require to live in a safe and clean home and feel loved and cared for but what have you specifically found out within this assessment that the individual child needs and what is the risk if that need is not met?
- 5) **Use Theory to Support Decision Making:** There is significant information with regards to the impact of adverse childhood experiences. When identifying the child's current experience or unmet need what does research tell us about the impact of this upon child's development both now and in the future?
- 6) **Cumulative Harm:** When risk of harm, the focus is not just on the specific incident that may have been notified, as this may lead to non-identification of cumulative harm. A holistic approach is required, with harm being considered along a continuum - with any cumulative harm from past experiences together with current harms and future risks being considered. Integrating information obtained about child protection history, risk factors, protective factors, family strengths, and the family's access to services and resources will support in decision making and identifying if there are any unmet needs
- 7) **Protective Factors:** It is vital this is included to ensure that the assessment is written balanced and that you can identify needs which are met, however it is useful for this information to be included within the main body of the assessment, rather than within Section 5 as these are not unmet needs of the child and will not present as a current risk.
- 8) **Formulation:** Formulation should be used as a way of exploring the presenting issues with the family and to gain a better understanding and knowledge as to the perpetuating factors which further keep the presenting issue going. By utilising formulation, a hypothesis stemming from the perpetuating factors would create next steps and inform the hypothesis.
- 9) **Supervision:** It is essential that formal supervision and case discussions are utilised with colleagues and managers to assist within the analysis process of the assessment
- 10) **Good Practice Examples:** Please find attached a good practice example [Needs Risks Example.docx \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

Tools

[Voice of the Child Toolkit - Free Social Work Tools and Resources: SocialWorkersToolbox.com](#)

[This is my World: Gathering child's views on self, family, friendships, school, illness & the future - Free Social Work Tools and Resources: SocialWorkersToolbox.com](#)

About the Document			
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Author & Role	Hannah Dumphy, Practice Improvement and Development Manager		
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