

Practitioner Guide for Undertaking Child and Family Assessments



This guidance has been written to assist in practice when undertaking a child and family assessment. It is informed by:

- [One minute guide: Leeds Practice Model](#)
- [Working together to safeguard children 2023: statutory guidance](#)
- [Munro-Review.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Best Practice

Child and Family Assessments are key to understanding the needs of children and families. The Child and Family Assessment must be completed within **45 working days** as a maximum. However, wherever possible child and family assessments will be **completed in 10 working days**, where this is not possible the team manager will undertake a review at **10 working days** to consider **how much more time and information** is needed to complete the assessment

The child and family assessment gather's **information from professionals** as well as the children, their parents/carers, family members and those that are significant in a family's life. It allows for a comprehensive understanding of the child/ren's needs and family's circumstances including history, family dynamics, strengths, and risk for the social worker to analyse the impact on the child/ren, gather the child/ren and parent/carers views and formulate a plan.

Please read; [10 Ways to Improve Assessments | Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership \(leedsscp.org.uk\)](#)

Good quality assessments will show evidence that they:

- Address the presenting issue whilst linking back to past/historical concerns if relevant
- Are child centred
- Are rooted in child development
- Are ecological in their approach (an understanding of the child is located within the context of the family, community, and culture)
- Take account of a child's identity including ethnicity, gender identity, religion, culture, disability including those that are invisible and background
- Involve working WITH children and their families
- Focus on the child/ren's lived experience and child/ren impact, including observations of the child/ren
- Take account of individual and family strengths as well as identify difficulties
- Take account of parent's own childhood experiences and the impact that this may have on their own parenting capacity, experience, and knowledge of support services
- Are interagency in their approach to assessment and the provision of services
- Are a continuing process, not a single event
- Separate out facts from opinions
- Focus on analysis and child impact
- Provide critical analysis which incorporates the available facts, evidence, and observations to develop a deep understanding and a point of view in relation to the issue.
- Are grounded in evidence-based knowledge and clearly stipulate professional opinion. (Working Together 2023)
- Provide clear recommendations including creating plans, identifying services and signposting for support

- Reflect where appropriate on theory which informs the practice and creates professional credibility

All social work assessments should cover the three domains as highlighted in the assessment framework;

1. Child’s developmental needs
2. Parenting capacity
3. Family and environmental factors



The assessment framework (DOH 2000)

Social workers need to evidence in the assessment that they have;

1. Sought consent and this can be completed through the *Information for Parents and Carers Explaining Assessment Leaflet*
2. Understood the reason for referral and what the assessment will cover
3. Considered the needs of each child in the household
4. Seen children alone and observed them with their care givers
5. When working with pre-verbal children or those with communication difficulties, the Social Worker should record the child's demeanour, interaction and body language and consider using more specialist tools such as Makaton, BSL & use of interpreters
6. Spoken to/seen both the resident and non-resident parent and partners of those parents particularly if they live in the child’s home and or play a significant role in their life. If there are any difficulties or safeguarding concerns relating to the non-resident parent this should be discussed with the Team Manager to decide whether their engagement in the assessment will be possible
7. Recorded child/ren’s views and parents views of the reason for referral
8. Understood any risks and the impact on each child
9. Considered strengths within the family and any safety measures
10. Ensuring that any previous referrals and history are analysed and where appropriate establish any themes/patterns.
11. Explore wider family, network support and those adults who are frequent visitors to the family home
12. Liaise with other services, professionals working with the family and gather information
13. Be clear as to the analysis of the evidence gathered and the professional judgment linking back to the reason for referral, with a plan of what needs to happen next
14. Ensure each parent has the final copy of the approved assessment with the Team Managers comments. If there are any issues/difficulties this must be discussed with the Team Manager who will make a decision and detail this on the child’s record.
15. Completed the assessment within timescales

Working with Fathers/Partners

It is important that all assessments fully consider the significant role of fathers, partners (including same sex relationships) and wider family members, even if the parents/carers are not living together and, where possible, involve them in the assessment. This should include the father/partner’s thoughts, feelings, and views about the reason for referral.

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.

Please listen to; [Working with men: Sharing learning from Leeds | Research in Practice](#)

Managers need to evidence their oversight for the assessment and include;

1. Offer a professional written analysis and judgement of the assessment being clear as to whether this is endorsed

About the Document			
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Author & Role	Hannah Dumphy (Practice Improvement & Development Manager)		
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