

# Practitioner Guide for Undertaking Child and Family Assessments with Parents with Learning Disabilities



This guidance has been written to assist in practice when undertaking a child and family assessment when parent/carer(s) have a learning disability. The purpose is to ensure that parent/carer(s) with a learning disability have been afforded a fair assessment process. This must include reasonable adjustments, ensuring that an accurate assessment and subsequent recommendations are made.

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 need be, make arrangements to safeguard their children.

This guidance is informed by:

- [Equality Act 2010: guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)
- [Care Act factsheets - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)
- [Human Rights Act Reform: A Modern Bill of Rights - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

## Best Practice

There are 10 key processes when undertaking an assessment:

1. **Gather background information:** This would include information about the parent/carer(s) learning disability, their medical history, and any previous involvement with children's social work services. Any advice provided by specialist assessments need to be understood and the necessary guidance/recommendations followed.
2. **Establish rapport:** Establishing a rapport may include engaging with an individual/family member, professional or advocate working with the parent(s) to support their engagement and relationship building. It may be appropriate to include this individual in assessment sessions to support engagement and understanding. Where appropriate if a parent has a adult social worker best practice would be to involve the adult social worker in assessment sessions.
3. **Assess the parent/carer(s) strengths and needs:** This can be done through observations, interviews, and appropriate assessment tools using visual aids **and the guidance provided in cognitive assessments**
4. **Information must be accessible:** Don't use jargon, use plain language, take time to explain things, allow extra time & repeat information, consider undertaking shorter assessment sessions, consider cultural and linguistic diversity, allow short breaks, a quiet room or interpreter
5. **Involve the parent/carer(s) in the assessment process:** It's Important to explain how information will be gathered, who will be spoken to and how information will be shared with them, how disputed information will be captured and feedback will be provided on how the assessment is progressing. An assessment plan of work may be helpful tool to use so show the parent what topics/areas will be discussed, this can be formulated visually to support understanding and to ensure that they understand the process and their rights.

6. **Involve others who know the parent/carer(s) well:** It's important to involve others who know the parent/carer(s) well, such as family members or support workers, in the assessment process. They can provide valuable information about the parent/carer(s) abilities and needs.
7. **Make recommendations:** Based on the assessment, recommendations for support and services can be made to help the parent/carer(s) meet the child/young person's needs and improve their well-being.
8. **Early Identification of support needs:** This should form part of the child/young person's plan, prevent unnecessary difficulties arising and working in partnership with parent/carer(s) and professionals
9. **Review and follow-up:** It's important to review the assessment regularly and to follow up with the parent/carer(s) to ensure that the recommendations are being implemented and are effective.
10. **Access to independent advocacy and to support self advocacy:**  
Support to build confidence and self-esteem, enables parent/carer(s) to understand professional worries but empowers knowledge about their rights and responsibilities and to state their needs to be involved in decision making

### Key Messages from Parent/Carer(s) to encourage good communication (Change, 2005)

Be respectful	Turn up on time
Speak directly to the parent/carer not someone else in the room	Don't use jargon
Plan before they talk to you	Listen and 'hear' what is said
Explain what is happening	Do what you say you will do
Be honest if you cannot help	Be patient
Make enough time to communicate with people	

### Adults and Children Social Work Services Working Together

Children's Social Work services should consider making a referral to adult services at the point that they believe that a parent, carer or a parent-to-be, has a learning disability. An early referral may represent the key difference to undertaking a timely assessment which is fair.

A referral to Adult Services should only be completed with the consent of the parent/carer(s), except in cases where the adult does not have the mental capacity to make a decision, and in these cases a decision should be made in their best interest in accordance with the [Mental Capacity Act: making decisions - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

Please find information with regards to making a referral here: [Leeds and York Partnership NHS Foundation Trust -Referrals to mental health services \(leedsandYorkpft.nhs.uk\)](http://leedsandYorkPartnershipNHSFoundationTrust-Referrals-to-mental-health-services.leedsandYorkpft.nhs.uk)

#### Leeds Adult Social Care information:

**Website:** [Adult social care \(leeds.gov.uk\)](http://leeds.gov.uk)

**Telephone:** 0113 222 4401

**Email:** leedsadults@leeds.gov.uk

**Managers need to ensure all the above have been evidenced when outcoming assessments and recording their decisions.**

About the Document			
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