



STOCKPORT
METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Child and Family Assessment and Planning Framework

October 2019

Version	Date	Authors	Issue Reason	Revision Date
1	July 2013	Deborah Woodcock – Service Manager	Single Social Work Assessment implementation	
2	August 2015	Deborah Woodcock – Director of operations SF. Philip Wilkinson, Service Leader	Service redesign to Stockport Family	
3	15 October 2018	Philip Wilkinson, Service Leader	Revised Social Work Assessment template	
4	10 October 2019	Kath Carey	Retitled	
5	Sept 20	Kath Carey	Review date added	Oct 21

1. Contents:

2. Introduction
3. The purpose of an assessment
4. Statutory Assessments under the children Act 1989
5. The role of planning
6. Assessment - timely, transparent and proportionate to need
7. Principles & Values

8. Appendix 1: The Social Work Planning and Assessment Model - Flowchart

The Stockport Child and Family Assessment and Planning Framework

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This child and family assessment and planning framework sets out how Stockport Family will assess, plan and manage assessments when the decision is made that there is a need for a child and family assessment and intervention.
- 1.2 From April 2019 statutory social work assessments in Stockport will be called 'Child and Family Assessment' replacing the title "social work assessment".
- 1.3 This protocol and framework has been drawn up in line with Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 and the Children Act 1989.
- 1.4 This model is applied to new referrals to children's social care, stepping up from the Early Help Assessment (EHA) and Team Around the Child/Family [TAC/TAF] activity, child protection s47 (Children Act 1989) assessments and open cases for example open cases of looked after children, or children subject to a child protection plan where assessment and planning is needed to review and refresh plans, to avoid drift and ensure timely decision making based on effective, evidence based assessment.
- 1.5 Assessment should be a continuous process that has the needs of the child at the centre and can demonstrate an understanding of the child's journey through services. An assessment must be completed by a suitably qualified and registered social worker. If an assessment is allocated to a student social worker, the responsibility for oversight and guidance will sit with the practice educator and the accountability will be with the team leader. An assessment will build on information already known as a result of early help and TAC/TAF activity with the child and their family.
- 1.6 A comprehensive chronology is always required at the beginning of the assessment process. This should provide the framework for the assessment and professional judgement is required to identify possible connections. Factual, analytical recording should underpin the child and family assessment. (Reference: Writing Analytical Assessments in Social Work, Chris Dyke 2016)
- 1.3 For assessments to be proportionate to need, appropriately comprehensive and for children and families to receive the right help at the right time, everyone who comes into contact with the child and family; for example midwives, health visitors, GPs, early years' professionals, teachers, youth workers, youth offending services, police, voluntary bodies, adult facing services and social workers, has a role to play in contributing to the assessment, by identifying concerns and strengths, sharing information and taking prompt action.

2 The purpose of an assessment

- 2.1 The purpose of the assessment is to gather information and evidence about a child and their family and identify whether the child has unmet needs and/or is in need of protection. The social worker should use their skill and judgement to analyse all information about the child's needs and any risk or harm being suffered.

- 2.2 A plan should then be developed in a multi-agency setting to establish appropriate, meaningful intervention to address these needs and improve the outcomes for the child.
- 2.2 The assessment needs to inform whether the child is a child in need (s17 CA89) and/or is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm (s31/47 CA89)
- 2.3 An assessment is a dynamic process and not an end in itself but the means of informing the delivery of effective services for children and families.
- 2.4 An assessment must be based on a sound knowledge of child development and located in the context of the child's family and their environment. It must be informed by the child and their family members and by other professionals who know them.
- 2.5 No system can fully eliminate risk. Understanding risk involves judgment and balance. To manage risks, social workers and other professionals must make decisions with the best interests of the child in mind and within a timescale which has the child's safety as its paramount concern.

3 Statutory Assessments under the Children Act 1989

- 3.1 An assessment will analyse the developmental needs of the child and the nature and level of both the risks and protective factors in the child's life. An assessment must be proportionate to the needs and the nature of any harm faced by the child. The assessment will inform decisions about whether a child is a child in need or is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm as defined in s31 of the Children Act 1989.
- 3.2 A child in need is defined under the Children Act 1989 as a child who is unlikely to reach or maintain a satisfactory level of health or development, or their health and development will be significantly impaired, without the provision of services, or children who are disabled. In these cases, assessments by a social worker are carried out under s17 of the Children Act 1989. The purpose of these assessments is to gather evidence about a child's developmental needs and the parents' capacity to meet these needs within the context of their wider family and community. This information must be used to inform decisions about the help needed by the child.
- 3.3 Where there are concerns about an unborn child the assessment will be undertaken as soon as the referral is received so that where identified needs require a multiagency plan is required this can be established as soon as possible and reviewed during the pregnancy.
- 3.3 If the social worker believes that the child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, then the local authority under s47 of the Children Act 1989 is required to make enquires to decide what action must be taken, with partners, to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child. There may be a need for immediate protection whilst the assessment is carried out.
- 3.4 The child and family assessment is used in Stockport to consider whether there is a need for further statutory intervention in a child's life. The assessment must address whether legal advice is needed and may be used as the assessment in Legal Planning or legal gateway meetings.

- 3.5 The assessment will also consider whether the child's needs should be met by accommodation under s20 of the CA89.
- 3.6 When the local authority are notified under section 85 of the Children Act that a child has been in hospital for 3 months or more a child and family assessment will be undertaken.
- 3.7 A child and family assessment or updated assessment will be required to assess the child's needs when considering the end of a period of accommodation. The assessment will consider the exit plan and support needs of a child returning from care into their parent's care. This assessment should be completed and available before the statutory review at which the changed care plan is recommended. The assessment will detail the care plan within the TAC process following the child's return home.

4 The Role of Planning

- 4.1 The assessment process must ensure the child and family experience a single assessment and planning process. Active multi agency planning should take place at the earliest opportunity during the assessment period. This will identify and put in place services and/or interventions which will deliver the right help at the right time to improve the child's outcomes.
- 4.2 This assessment and planning process should include and be guided by a thorough understanding of the child's journey to date and evidence of the impact of plans in place at the point of referral. Chronologies and genograms should inform the approach to assessment, planning and interventions.
- 4.3 Early planning will complement and inform a process of robust assessment, but changes in circumstances should prompt a proportionate review of current interventions and not lead to 'open-ended' assessment.
- 4.4 Professional judgement and management oversight should identify when an assessment, assessment update or a change in plan should be triggered. The assessment and planning process should deliver an agreed plan, with clear outcomes which can be measured as part of formal review and performance management arrangements.

5 Assessment - timely, transparent and proportionate to need

- 5.1 When the First Response team in the Multi Agency Safeguarding and Support Hub (MASSH) receive a new contact they will undertake enquires to determine the needs of the child and the level of any harm being suffered. This will inform whether the assessment is under s17 or s47 of the Children Act 1989 and timeframes for the assessment. Once the decision is made to undertake a child and family assessment the referral is created and passed to the locality duty social work team to allocate in accordance with the transfer protocol.
- 5.2 When allocating the assessment, the team leader and social worker will discuss the child's identified needs and any harm they are suffering to agree the timescales for seeing the child and completing the assessment.
- 5.3 In Stockport the following timescales have been set as **internal review points** in the children's child and family assessment and planning framework .

- The First Response team leader must make a decision about the response that is required **within one working day** of a referral being received.
- Where First Response decide that a child and family assessment is required under s17 of the Children Act 1989 this will be allocated in the locality social work teams **within 24 hours**. In respect of a child with disabilities this will be allocated by the team team leader in Stockport's Children with Disabilities team within 24 hours.
- Where complex safeguarding issues are identified such as domestic abuse, children at risk of organised crime groups, children at risk of female genital mutilation, trafficking, advice and support will be sought from the ASPIRE team and consideration given to co-working arrangements with the locality social work team.
- The **child must be seen** by a qualified social worker **as soon as possible** following a referral and at least **within 10 working days**.
- Urgent **child protection concerns** will be prioritised without delay **with an immediate visit** to assess the child's welfare; in all urgent cases **this assessment will occur within 24 hours**.
- **Child and family assessments should be completed as soon as possible proportionate to the level of need or harm identified**. No child and family assessment will take more than 45 working days to complete and many will be completed before this. It is the responsibility of the social worker to make clear to children and families how the assessment will be carried out and when they can expect a decision to be made on next steps.
- All children must be seen on their own as soon as possible within 10 working days; **internal review point 1**. Consideration should be given to whether other professionals have seen the child, for example is it school holiday, or is the child pre-school to determine when a child is seen within the 10 day period?
- The social worker should analyse all the information gathered from the enquiry stages of the assessment to decide on the nature and level of the child's needs including an assessment of risk. The social worker and team leader must consider this together as soon as possible, but no later than day 15; **internal review point 2**. In this reflective discussion the social worker and team leader will consider the social workers working hypothesis and analysis of the child's needs. If the assessment will not be completed by day 15 this discussion will consider and agree the plan and timescale for assessment completion, interventions required and arrangements for a multiagency meeting to agree the plan. The team leader must record this as a manager's decision on the child and family assessment template.
- The social worker can recommend step-down or closure at this juncture. This will require authorisation by a team leader.

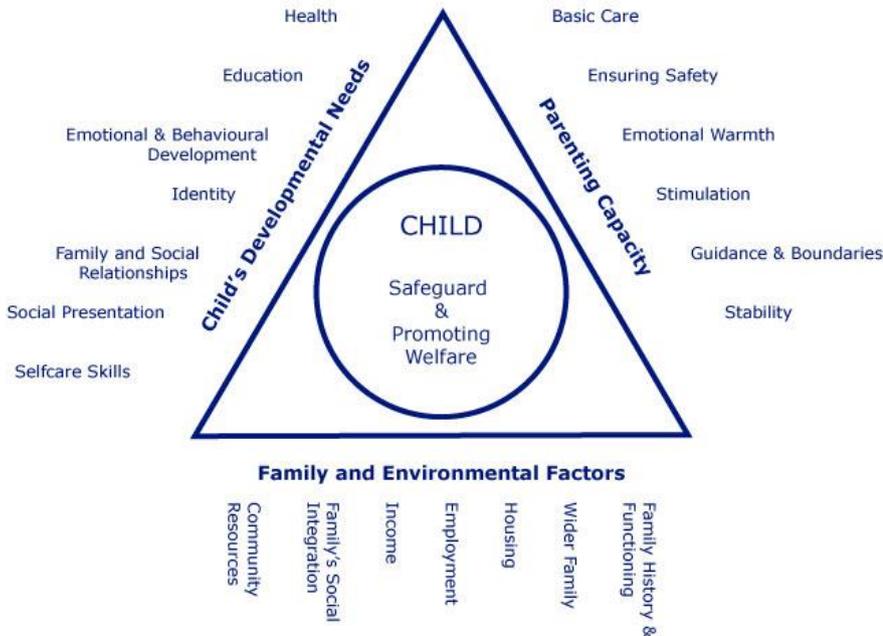
- The team leader will read and authorise all child and family assessments and the plan included within it and record their decision on the Child and family assessment template.
- 5.3 For cases where child protection concerns arise and assessments are being completed in accordance with s47 of the Children Act 1989 and the decision has been made to call a child protection case conference, the assessment will always be completed within timescales to allow for the assessment to be the social work report to the Conference which must be held within 15 days of the strategy meeting/discussion leading to conference.
 - 5.4 The social worker should ensure that their enquiries to complete the assessment draw on all historical knowledge of the family and all available assessments including Early Help Assessment Framework (previously CAFs), special educational needs (SEN) assessments health assessments and assessments completed by the Youth Offending Team, Education Health and Care plan (EHCP), MOSAIC and information from the child and parent's GP.
 - 5.5 The social worker will consider whether the child has needs as a young carer; children who are carers should be offered an assessment as a child in need under the Children Act 1989. This assessment must include their new rights under the Carers (Equal Opportunities) Act 2004, which says that their assessment must consider their work, education and leisure needs.
 - 5.6 The assessment must also consider whether the child is involved in the youth justice system and assessments completed within Stockport's Youth Offending team should contribute to the child and family assessment.
 - 5.7 The Social Worker must liaise with all relevant agencies in completing the assessment. The social worker completing the assessment will ensure that all partners working with a child and their family are invited to provide information to contribute to the assessment.
 - 5.8 It is the social worker's responsibility to complete or add to an existing chronology detailing the child's history and journey through services. This must be available at the latest by the completion of the assessment and earlier for children going to child protection case conferences. Chronologies should be seen as an integral part of the assessment to help understand the child and family's story.
 - 5.9 A Team around the Child (TAC) meeting will always be held between the 15th and 45th day in Child in Need cases. A TAC plan will be drawn up at this meeting and recorded and available for the child, family, carers and other professionals.
 - 5.10 The social worker must discuss the child's case with other professionals – teachers, health, early year's staff, police etc. and agree how quickly meetings should be convened so that timely help is provided which meets the needs of the child and their family.
 - 5.11 The assessment must incorporate and clearly evidence the child's voice and that of all involved family members and those with parental responsibility and carers.

- 5.12 The children and families wishes and feelings must be recorded and taken into account when completing an assessment and deciding what services to provide
- 5.13 Every assessment needs to consider stability and permanence for the child. Ideally permanence should be secured with the parents/ carers with parental responsibility for the child or within the child's birth family. However the social worker and team leader completing the assessment must consider permanence in its widest sense when assessing a child's needs. This child and family assessment may need to be used in court settings. A genogram should be completed and thorough consideration given to referral for a Family Group Conference to explore kinship support networks for a child.
- 5.14 Feedback must be given to the referrer on decisions made and action being taken. The child and family must be informed of the action to be taken and the complaints process explained and leaflets provided
- 5.15 The conclusions of any assessment must be shared with the child and their family and parents must always be given a copy of the assessment documentation

6. Principles & Values

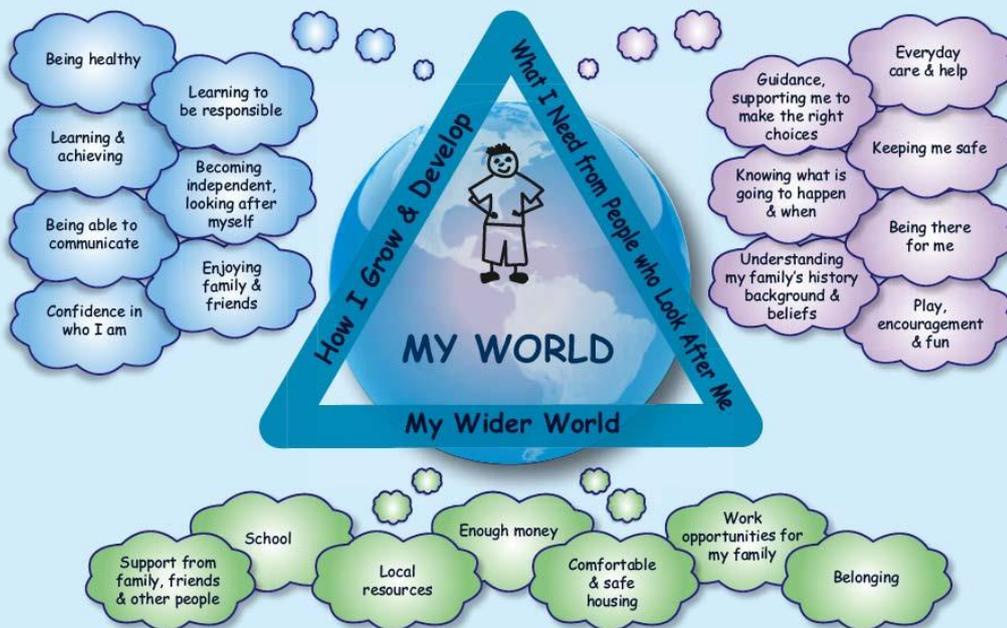
- 6.1 Assessment and planning with children and families should:
- Be child centred. where there is a conflict of interest, decisions must be made in the child's best interests.
 - Ensure the child's lived experience is understood with reference to all aspects of diversity as relevant to that child and family
 - Be fair and proportionate.
 - Be rooted in an understanding of child development.
 - Be focused on outcomes for children.
 - Be holistic in approach –addressing the child's needs within the context of their family and wider community.
 - Build on strengths and protective factors as well as identifying difficulties.
 - Be integrated in approach.
 - Be a continuing process not an event.
 - Provide and review services.
 - Be informed by evidence and be transparent and open to challenge.

Assessment Framework



My World Triangle

getting it right for every child



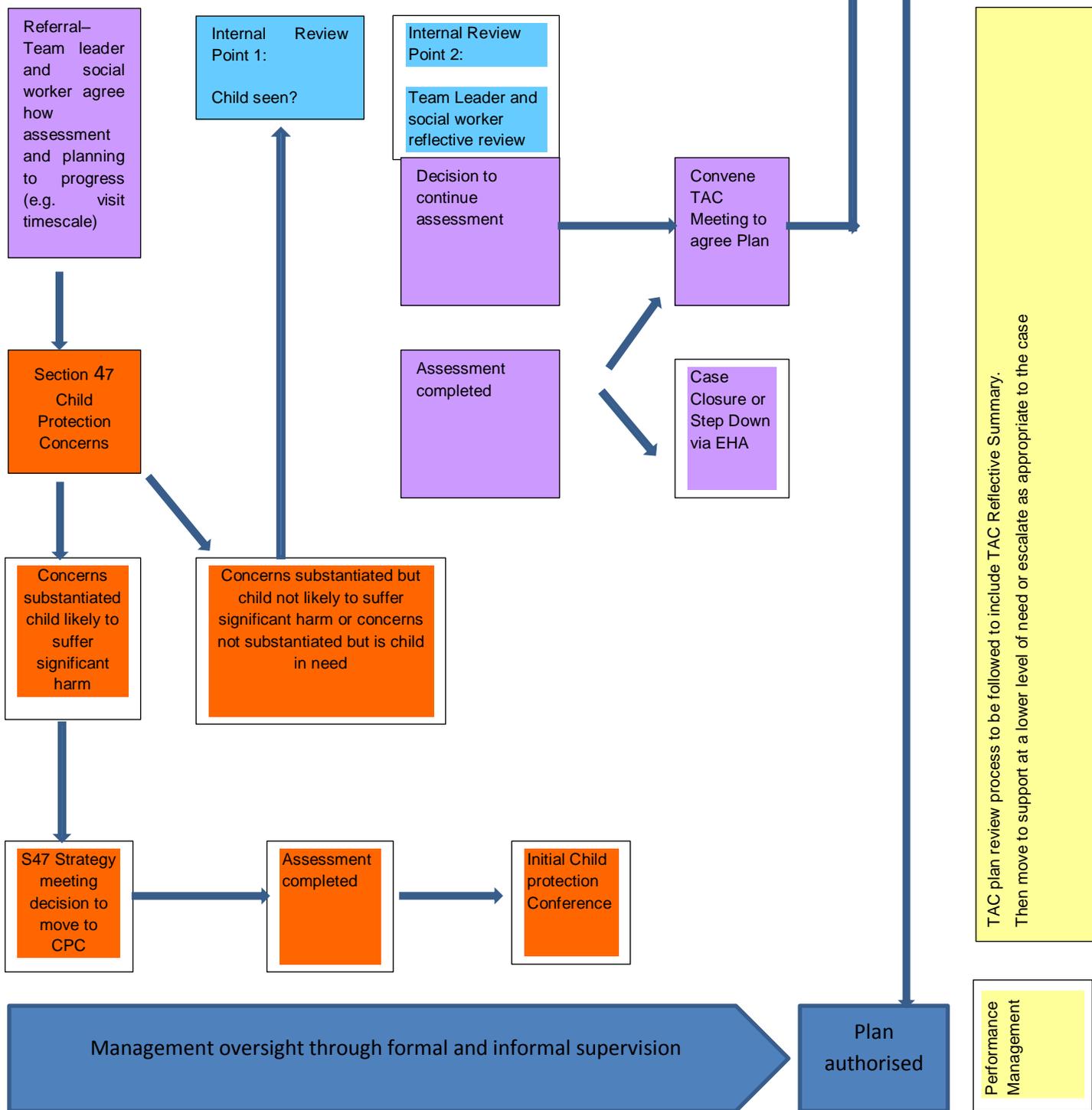
The whole child or young person: Physical, Social, Educational, Emotional, Spiritual & Psychological development

The Social Work Planning and Assessment Model – Flowchart



©

0 1 Upto 10 Upto 15 Upto 45



TAC plan review process to be followed to include TAC Reflective Summary. Then move to support at a lower level of need or escalate as appropriate to the case

Performance Management