

# Assessments in Children's Services



## A Guide for Parents and Carers

### What is an Assessment?

Either you, or someone on your behalf, have asked Children's Social Care in Gloucestershire for help.

Children's Social Care might at this point give some advice or suggest who else to contact.

Or, they might carry out an Assessment of Need. This means finding out more about what is causing any difficulties and the best way to help.

### How does it Work?

The person carrying out the assessment will speak to you and ask you what you think the difficulties and the strengths of the family are.

With your permission, they may contact other people who know your family. They will explore the effect that any problems are having on your children, what difficulties you need support with and what strengths can be built on.

The triangle below shows you what sort of areas are talked about in the Assessment.

There are two main types of Assessment:

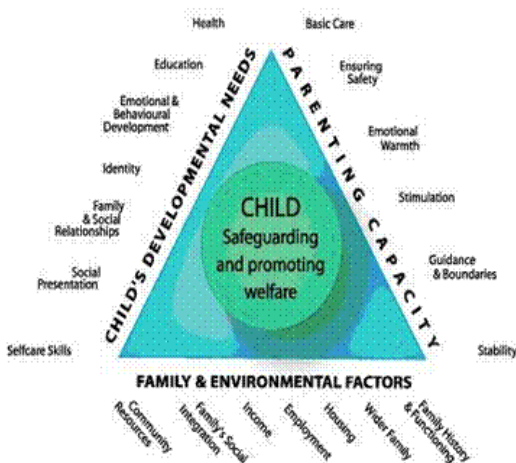
#### 1) Early Help Assessment:

An Early Help assessment can be used if you or someone who works with your child thinks that your child needs extra support. The aim is to help your child get the right support at an early stage.

An Early Help assessment, either My Plan, or My Assessment and My Plan+ is a shared assessment between you and any professionals working with your child. This means that you and your child will not have to repeat the same story to different workers. One person may be appointed as a 'lead professional' to keep you informed, listen to your views and coordinate services.

#### 2) Single Assessment:

If a referral is made and Social Care feel they need a bit more information they might do a single Assessment of Need to help them make a decision about what happens next. This looks at the developmental needs of your child, your strengths in managing the difficulties you may be experiencing, and any support you may already have in place. Single Assessments must be done within **45 working days**, to help decide if there is any support you may need but they will always try and complete the assessment as soon as possible once all of the information has been gathered to work out what should happen next.



## What can I expect from Children's Social Care?

Children's Social Care want to work in co-operation with you as much as possible. They need your special knowledge of the challenges and strengths of your family. Your views matter and will be valued and written down during all the work done with you. The person doing the assessment will listen to what you have to say, offer advice and if needed, support to help improve things. They will want to speak to the children and, to allow them to speak freely we usually ask to see the children on their own.

In most cases, your agreement is needed for an Assessment. The person writing it will need your permission to obtain and give information about you and your children and to speak to your children.

There are a few special circumstances where an Assessment may happen without your agreement, and this is decided after considering what is in your children's best interests. It is usually where there are concerns about your children being at serious and immediate risk of harm. These situations do not happen very often and your child will never be interviewed against his or her wishes.

## What will be expected of me?

Children's Social Care can help you best if you are honest with them about the problems you are experiencing and what you think will help your family. They will also ask you to keep your appointments and to advise them if there are any changes in your circumstances. Your involvement in the assessment is very important to achieve change on the things that either you, someone on your behalf, or professionals working with your children, are concerned about.

## What if I don't agree?

As a parent or carer, you should have been actively involved in the assessment. However, if you have not or if you are unhappy with the Assessment, the person writing it should record your view and correct any inaccuracies. They cannot change any factual information from another agency and will not always change their professional opinion. However, they should always record your views. If you still cannot resolve the problem you can make a complaint through the Customer Feedback and Complaints Team who you can contact on 01452 427032.

## What will the outcome be?

You will be given a copy of the written Assessment. If you need help reading it because of a disability or because English is not your first language, please discuss this with the person who is writing it.

There are a number of possible outcomes, depending on the Assessment. For example:

- No further action
- A referral to another agency to provide support
- A more in depth assessments
- A planning meeting
- A Child in Need Plan or Child Protection Plan, setting out who needs to do what, to help things improve.

### Confidentiality

Usually the information which you and your child provide will only be shared with your consent.

However there are certain times when the people working with you need to share information.

This is for example when they need to find out urgently if a child is at risk of harm, or to help a child who is at risk of harm.

## Further Advice

Parents, carers and family members have a right to be clear about the involvement of all agencies and how any decisions affect them or their children.

It is important that if you are not sure about the process, or why any particular agency or individual is involved, you should ask questions.

Talk to the person who is doing the assessment, or for confidential advice for families whose children are involved with Children's Social Care you can contact:

The Family Rights Group Advice Line  
Telephone Monday – Friday 9.30am – 3pm  
0808 8010366 (freephone)  
Website: [www.frg.org.uk](http://www.frg.org.uk)