

# Assessments in Children's Social Care

## Information for parents and carers

This document aims to answer questions that you may have about our Access and Assessment Service now that we are working with you and your family.

### Why is an assessment being done?

We will carry out an assessment if we have received a referral from you, somebody you know, or a professional who works with your family.

The assessment is a tool which helps us to understand what is happening in your family and if there needs to be change to ensure that your children are safe and their needs are being met.

### What will happen?

We strongly believe that you and your family are the best source of information regarding your welfare. Therefore, your social worker will meet you and others in your family. The social worker will also see and talk to your child and help them to join in. It is important to make sure your child has a say in the assessment, wherever possible.

We will probably need to talk to other professionals who know you, like your GP, child's teachers or health visitor to gather all relevant information. This will help us to create the strongest assessment which will assist us to help and support you and your child.

We are committed to taking account of language, religion, culture, health, education and disability. If you need an interpreter, please let us know and this will be provided.

### What can you expect?

We will listen carefully to what you have to say, offer advice and, if necessary, offer support to help you with your difficulties. We will keep you updated at all times.

We know that with a little help most families can sort out their own problems and our aim is to help you do that. In a very small number of cases, we may identify concerns about a child's safety. Making sure your child is safe will be our first concern.

### What is an Assessment?

In an Assessment we will look with you at your family situation to see what your immediate needs are. To do this, we will speak to you, your family, your child (if old enough) and other relevant parties. We will also involve people who have knowledge of your family like your GP, health visitor, school or nursery. These people will tell us what they know about your family, and any contact they have had with you. This will help us decide what needs to happen and if necessary we will create a plan of



support for you and your family which supports and protects your children from significant harm. You will be involved at all times and will be given a copy of the assessment once it is complete.

### More about the assessment

We use an assessment framework that has been developed nationally by the Department of Health. If you would like more information about this, please see [guidance on the NHS website](#) or visit:

[www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH\\_4003256](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_4003256)

### How will you be part of the assessment?

We are aware that you want what is best for your child and so do we. We believe the best way to do this is by working together. You can be involved by:

- telling us about your family and being open and honest about any problems;
- giving us as much background information as you can - remember, it is the welfare of your child that is most important;
- telling us if things change


Although the assessment will be led by your child's social worker, it may involve working with other childcare specialists e.g. family support workers and family therapists. The assessment will be undertaken by one of our Social Work Units, which is a small team of staff with different skills, who work together to support families to care for their children safely. Different members of the unit may be involved in the assessment process.

### What might happen after the assessment?

Here are some likely outcomes from an assessment;

- If we think your family does not need any help or there is no risk of harm to your children, we will take no further action;
- If we think your family may benefit from some help provided by another agency, we will make a referral;
- If we think your family needs some ongoing help in caring for your children, we will provide longer term help. What we will do, and what we expect of you, will be outlined clearly in a Child in Need Plan. We will review this plan regularly;
- If we are concerned that your child is at risk within your family, we will hold an Initial Child Protection Conference. This is an opportunity for you, your family, and other professionals to discuss concerns about your child's care and agree a way forward. If the conference agrees that your child is at risk of significant harm, they will ask the social worker to develop a Child Protection Plan for your child. This will set out what everyone needs to do to keep your child safe.

In some circumstances, we may have such serious concerns that we do not think the children can continue to be cared for within your family. If this is the case, we will discuss this with you and seek

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your agreement for someone else to look after your children. We will always try to make sure that this is a family member or friend. If we feel that the children need to be looked after by a foster carer, we will discuss this with you and seek your agreement. This is called a 'Section 20' agreement. Where children are looked after through a Section 20 agreement, the parents can request that the children are returned home at any time.

If our concerns are so serious that we feel that we need the legal power to look after the children without your permission, and take day to day decisions about the children's welfare, we will apply to the Court for an order (called a Care Order) that gives us the power to do this.

We always try to support families to care for their own children and it would only be in very exceptional circumstances that we would ask courts to agree to children being cared for by someone other than a family member.

### Tell us what you think

Your comments help us to improve the quality of our services, so please let us know what you think. It helps if you tell us when we do things well.

If you are not happy with the service you receive, try to sort it out with the person you are dealing with first. If you are still unhappy, we have a formal complaints process. For more information, you can contact the Quality and Improvement Unit on 020 8356 5800 or [children.complaints@hackney.gov.uk](mailto:children.complaints@hackney.gov.uk).



### Useful contact details

Your consultant social worker is: ..... ext.....  
Your clinician is: .....ext.....  
Your social worker's name is:..... ext.....  
Your children's practitioner is: .....ext.....  
Your unit coordinator is: .....ext.....

They can be contacted at the address and phone number below.

### Children and Young People's Access and Assessment Service

Hackney Service Centre  
1 Hillman Street,  
London  
E8 1DY  
Tel. 020 8356 5500

### Emergency contact:

Out of Hours / Emergency Duty Team  
Weekdays: Monday to Friday 5.00pm to 9.00am  
Weekends: From Friday 5.00pm until Monday at 9.00am  
Tel. 020 8356 2346

