

## Wiltshire Council Protocol for Assessment

Updated March 2017

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015 sets out that – ‘Local authorities, with their partners, should develop and publish local protocols for assessment. A local protocol should set out clear arrangements for how cases will be managed once a child is referred into local authority children’s social care’. The detail of each protocol will be led by the local authority in discussion with their partners and agreed with the relevant LSCB.

Under the Children Act 1989, local authorities are required to provide services for children in need for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting their welfare. Local Authorities undertake assessments of the needs of individual children to determine what services to provide and action to take.

### **Single Assessment Process**

Wiltshire Council has a **Single Assessment** process in line with requirements set out within WT 2015. The Single Assessment incorporates the Assessment Framework Triangle and considers the 3 areas; Child’s Developmental Needs; Parenting Capacity and Family and Environmental factors.

The timescale for completing any assessment of a child or young person’s needs will reflect their individual circumstances, however all assessments should be completed within a maximum of 45 working days.

At all times where an assessment is being undertaken children and young people and their parents/ carers will be fully involved in the process, including being informed of any decisions and actions arising from the assessment.

### **Children in Need**

A child in need is defined under the Children Act 1989 as a child who is ‘unlikely to achieve or maintain a satisfactory level of health or development, or their health and development will be significantly impaired, without the provision of services; or a child who is disabled’.

In these cases, assessments are carried out under **section 17** of the Children Act 1989. Children in need may be assessed in relation to their special educational needs, disabilities, as a carer or because they have committed a crime. The assessment process will also be used for children whose parents are in prison and for asylum seeking children.

## **Children in Need of Protection**

Local authorities have a duty to make enquiries under **section 47** of the Children Act 1989 if they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, to enable them to decide whether they should take any action to safeguard and promote the child's welfare.

Concerns about maltreatment may be the reason for a referral to Children's Social Care or concerns may arise during the course of undertaking and assessment or providing services to the child and family. In these circumstances, Children's Social Care will initiate enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 to find out what is happening to the child and whether protective action is required.

Where children are considered to be at risk of or suffering significant harm, Wiltshire's child protection procedures will be followed. The Single Assessment will be undertaken alongside any protective action or service provision.

## **Specialist Assessments**

There are occasions when children and young people may require more specialist assessments. Where possible, these will be coordinated so that the child and family experience a coherent process and a single, outcome focused, action plan.

Any specialist assessments already in place (i.e. for those with specialist education needs; disabled children etc.) will be considered and inform the single assessment as appropriate.

## **Recording and Reviewing Assessments**

Recording of the child's needs as identified in the assessment and any actions and services being provided to address needs will be recorded on the child's plan. (Dependent on the outcome of an assessment and age of child, this will be either; a child in need plan, my plan, child protection plan, care plan or pathway plan). The action/service plan will include outcomes to be achieved, how these will be measured; and within what timescales. The plan should be reviewed on a regular basis and at least every 6 months to ensure the child's needs are being addressed and appropriate services are being provided. Regular reviews will also reduce the need for repeat assessments. Each open case should have an updated single assessment within a 12 month period or as required

## **Involving child, young people and parents/carers**

Children and young people are central to the assessment process. Their views, wishes and feelings should be sought and reflected in the assessment and any plans. Culture, ethnicity and diversity issues must also be considered in all assessments as they impact on the child and their experience.

**Parents and carers should be fully involved and informed in the assessment of their children; and in identifying appropriate services or resources that will help support them in their parenting role.** Parents need to be informed of any risks identified during the course of the assessment and be clear on how they can contribute to improving their children's circumstances as well as the help they can expect from social care and other agencies.

## **Process**

### **1. Referral to Children's Social Care**

Where a referral made to Children's Social Care meets the threshold, a Single Assessment will be initiated.

For a *child in need* the Single Assessment will be undertaken alongside provision of services.

For a *child at risk of suffering significant harm*, the single assessment will be undertaken alongside the child protection process which begins with a strategy discussion; S47 enquiries and child protection conference and any required action to keep the child safe. The single assessment forms the report to the ICPC.

## **2. Agency involvement**

Where a social worker is undertaking a Single Assessment, all agencies working with or providing services to children and their families should be invited to contribute to the assessment. This will include provision of information and reports; attendance at meetings; and agreeing actions and services to be provided to support the child and their family.

Agencies and professionals should wherever possible contribute fully to the assessment process and any subsequent action plan to reduce risk and promote the welfare of the child.

## **3. Review**

The Line Manager will review the progress of a single assessment with the social worker at day 7

A child in need planning meeting will be held at day 20 for all cases where the Single Assessment either identifies the child is in need after a 10 day assessment, or where the assessment will take 25 or 45 days to complete. A child in need review meeting should take place 3 months after the first CIN meeting and every 6 months as a minimum.

Where a child becomes looked after or subject to a child protection plan the Single Assessment will inform and be reflected in the plans and reviews that take place within these processes and will be updated at least annually.

## **4. Other Assessments**

### **a) Children with Disabilities**

The Single assessment sits alongside a number of other assessments which may already be in place when a single assessment is begun or may run alongside a single assessment

The Children and Young People's Disability Service provides a range of assessments and services for disabled children in Wiltshire who have needs arising from their impairment which cannot be met by services available to all children. The service works with children and young people who have a substantial learning disability, physical impairment or a diagnosed life limiting or serious health condition that will impact significantly on their development and day to day life. The team works with children and with some young people up to 25 years The Social Work teams retain responsibility for all looked after children and Child Protection work.

The Social Work teams for Children with Disabilities will usually use the same process and format for assessments as all other Wiltshire Children's Social Care teams. The Single Assessment is the usual format for assessments, although other activity may take place alongside this.

The SEND service also undertakes Education Health Care Plan Assessments. A referral for an assessment will usually be made by the setting, school or post 16 colleges. However, parents (or an advocate on their behalf) and other professionals can also make a referral. In order to meet the threshold for starting an EHC needs assessment the young person must have special educational needs or a disability that significantly impacts on their ability to access education. Education, Health

and Care Needs Assessments are combined with other social care assessments where appropriate.

The Children with Disabilities Social Work teams also carry out Mental Capacity Act assessments as set out under the Mental Capacity Act 2005 (Care Act 2014 and part 3 of the Children & Families Act 2014) for disabled young people aged 16 years or over who may lack capacity to make decisions for themselves. The act sets out safeguards to empower and protect a person assessed as lacking mental capacity. These assessments are on a decision-specific basis with capacity based on a single decision at a single time. It is assumed a person has capacity unless proved otherwise.

Transition assessments are also carried out by the Children with Disabilities Social work teams not only for young people receiving children's service but for anyone likely to have needs for adult care and support needs post 18 years.

This initially should be undertaken as part of an annual review of EHC to inform a plan for transition to adult care and support.

## **b) Youth Justice**

In the case of children involved in the youth justice system the Single Assessment will inform the ASSET Plus assessment and will be undertaken in consultation with the Youth Offending worker, where the child/young person is already working with the Youth Offending Team.

Asset Plus is the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales's (YJB) comprehensive end-to-end assessment and planning framework which replaces the Asset framework previously in use by YOTs. It aims to:

- identify strengths
- identify needs and problems
- facilitate planning of appropriate interventions for children and young people who have offended or are at risk of offending, both in custody and the community

A new Asset Plus assessment will be completed at the start of every new order and for every new pre-sentence report. It should then be reviewed at six monthly intervals and more frequently if there is a significant change in the young person's circumstances. A variety of sources, including the young person, parent/carer, partner agencies (particularly Social Care) and past assessments must inform the information within the assessment. All children/ young people subject to statutory YOT involvement or intervention will have an Asset Plus assessment completed. Assessment and plans need to be completed within 15 working days from sentence.

## **c) LAC Children returning to live with their families**

The Single Assessment process will utilise and be informed by the LAC review Independent Reviewing Officers will be consulted as necessary to inform the Assessment and Plan in order to support the child returning home.

The assessment will identify any needs and actions/services required to enable the child to return home safely with appropriate supports and safeguards. The assessment should also consider the needs of any other child living in the home and initiate any further assessments as appropriate.

## **5. Complaints process**

Any parent or carer of a young person who is dissatisfied with the service they receive from Children's Services/Social Care has the right to make a complaint. In the first instance parents/carers and children should request a copy of the complaints procedure from their social worker, if they have one. If not a copy of the complaints procedures can be access via [complaints@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:complaints@wiltshire.gov.uk)

