



Stronger Families Safer Children

**Derbyshire Children's Services
Parenting Assessment
Guidance**

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PARENTING ASSESSMENTS

1. Parenting Assessment Process

Once it has been identified that a parenting assessment is necessary for a particular family and that Early Help services are going to be part of this assessment process, a **pre-assessment planning meeting** should be held. The overarching operating model is Stronger Families, Safer Children and the process is systemic. This process is relevant either in a pre-birth situation or at any point in a child's life and must be bespoke to meet the family's needs. The parenting assessment process is an intervention model to support the family to change. Good practice is that parenting assessments would be completed in a timely way and prior to initiating court proceedings, wherever possible.

2. Pre-assessment Planning Meeting

This meeting should be between the Parent(s), the Social Worker (SW), the Family Support Worker (FSW), and their manager. Consideration should be given as to whether the Social Care Team Manager(SM) or Social Work Senior Practitioner (SP) should also be included in the meeting.

2.1 The meeting

The meeting should discuss:

- What the family feel they are doing well.
- Where aspects of the family life the family feel need to be included in the assessment.
- The issues identified by agencies as needing to be assessed for that particular family / child.
- What areas of family life the family would like to be supported to change.
- How would the family like the assessment workers to work with them.
- What have the family appreciated in the past from workers who they have found supportive / helpful.
- An analytical chronology needs to be available to inform the parenting assessment plan and throughout aspect of the work.
- All to agree on which elements of the assessment will be the responsibility of the SW, which elements are the responsibility of the FSW and which aspects will be covered jointly.

- Timescales for the assessment. The overall duration can be determined overtime but the initial plan should be for the bulk of the assessment to be completed within 6 -12 weeks with sufficient time for change work to take place. A review meeting should be held between the parties involved in the Assessment after 6 weeks to determine the progress of the assessment and any outstanding areas to be explored or support needed, which could form a 'Child's Plan' and a further timescale for completion agreed.
- Any assessment tools which may need to be used as part of the process e.g. elements of PAMs, Graded Care Profile, Needs Jigsaw.
- Any specialist advice which may need to be sought to support the assessment e.g. Adult Social Care, Learning Disabilities, Drugs Alcohol, Community Mental Health Team, Probation.
- Partner Agencies should be included and evidence from other professionals should be included in the assessment.
- Dates, times and venues of sessions should be agreed to include unannounced visits and visits that cover the whole life of the child e.g. early mornings, bedtime evening routines, daytime behaviours and weekends.
- Professionals will give consideration to whether specific health & safety risks will need to be included in the assessment work.
- Assessment work will take place with parents, caregivers and children on a one to one basis. The work will also include observations of family life.
- Arrangements for provision of any additional contact, which is necessary but not facilitated during the assessment.
- How will everyone know if things are working well or not working well.
- What the consequences could be if the assessment is not completed.
- The assessment plan will also include agreements on expected behaviour on behalf of all parties.

2.2 Recording the discussion

The discussion should be recorded on a word document uploaded onto the case file. In the FWi section for parenting assessment a note should be made that parenting assessment is being undertaken and refer to the separate documents.

An assessment plan agreement can then be finalised and signed by all parties.

3. The Parenting Assessment

In the following sections any headings and subsections are designed to be asked as open ended questions in order to draw out information from families. The issues raised in the bullet points are designed to act as pointers to the worker for areas that need to be considered within the assessment. These pointers are not exhaustive and can lead to other avenues that need to be explored. The worker needs to be open to going down unexpected avenues in order to allow parents to talk about issues that may not be included in the lists below. Support and guidance can be given to parents during the assessment (video equipment can be used to support parents in this) but it is important to record in the assessment what support and guidance has been given and then to comment on to what extent parents took on board and maintained this advice.

Throughout the assessment process a record needs to be kept by SW and FSW of how the assessment was carried out.

- Date the assessment started.
- Date the assessment ended.
- Dates of the individual sessions.
- Sources of information; paperwork read – chronology of assessment, court paperwork, reports.
- Reason for the assessment & areas covered and considered within the assessment.
- Any research, theories, methods, specialist tools (pictorial aids) used as part of the assessment.
- Supporting evidence such as observation notes should be retained.

4. Profile of the parent(s)

To be completed by SW, unless joint sessions are felt necessary for the purposes of assessment. It would be envisaged that each party in a relationship is assessed separately; issues of confidentiality can be discussed when planning the assessment and if all parties are

comfortable to progress together then the assessment can proceed. We need to be mindful that if parties are seen together and disclosure of information is therefore impaired this could undermine the assessment.

The assessment should begin with the family's **genogram**. This can initially be populated by FWi but should be enhanced with information from the parent(s) to include such things as significant others and pets in the household. This should be shared with the FSW ASAP.

4.1 The profile should also address:

- Any identified, diagnosed or considered learning need or disability. (including referral to Adult Care for a S47 Community Care Assessment)
- Parent's first language, are there any issues in relation to understanding English (written and verbal).
- Any other communication needs, sight impairment, deafness, speech difficulties.
- Are they able to read/understand written information?
- Early life experience parent's history, siblings, position in the family, parentage, number of house moves, number of schools attended, behaviour management techniques used by own parents, family involvement/attitude towards professionals.
- Was the parent involved with social care, in the care system?
- Education; schools attended, attitude of parents' family to education, school attendance, academic achievements, any bullying issues.
- Does either parent have a connection with the armed forces?
- Employment; Parent's employment record.
- Friendships – parent's experiences of friendships throughout childhood, adolescence and adulthood.
- Adolescence and early adult relationships. Ability to build and maintain long standing stable relationships
- Any defining events, births, deaths, parental separation, absent parent (reason), abuse, adoption.
- Any criminal history, conduct a Police check; any current Court proceedings or Orders; probation, ASBO etc.
- Any violent behaviour; consider ability to regulate emotions, responses to stress factors, understanding of impact of violence on children.

- Any physical or mental ill health issues, current or previous, including post-natal depression.
- Does the parent have an assessment of personality disorder?
- Any substance misuse, current or recent.
- Attitude towards professionals & willingness to engage (historically and currently).
- Parent's own presentation and personal hygiene.
- Overall skill and knowledge base that the parent possesses – generally and in relation to parenting.
- Parent's own confidence levels and self-esteem.
- Current relationship; is it supportive, nurturing, is it abusive – physically or psychologically
- Would the parent choose the partner or the child if asked to make a choice?
- Understanding of and attitude towards the concerns of the local authority; parent's insight into the impact of their behaviour on the child; level of responsibility accepted & desire to change.
- Level of understanding that the parent shows regarding their responsibility to provide the child with a safe environment.
- Full exploration of the parent's perceptions of what works well and their worries within the family.
- Ability to recognise the positives and negatives in their own experience of being parented and a willingness not to mirror negative behaviours in their own parenting.
- Parent's previous experience at being responsible for children.
- Who takes on main carer role for children and what is their expectation of partners role in caring for children.
- Ability to take responsibility for own actions and life skills budgeting, organisation etc.
- Any other children not part of this assessment if so any contact orders or restrictions in place.

5. Profile of the child(ren)

Primarily to be completed by FSW but with reference to HV, School, Nursery etc. for relevant sections. Some parts may be completed jointly with the SW.

Based on the fact that aside from the basic needs, children have different needs according to and depending on the child's personality, personal experiences and resilience. Therefore a parenting assessment needs to explore a parent's ability to meet the needs of the individual child as well as a collective sibling group.

5.1 Consequently, the social worker needs to assist in providing a profile of the child in order to understand whether a parent can meet their needs.

- Providing an outline of each individual child – age, gender, cultural background.
- Clear definition of what this particular child's needs are and consideration of whether 'good enough' or 'better than good enough' parenting required. Consideration needs to be given to what the child's internal resilience is.
- Developmental stage of the child – is this age appropriate/any developmental delay (diagnosed? Considered to be environmental?).
- Any disabilities.
- Any additional physical health needs.
- How many times has your child been presented to GP or Hospital?
- Any additional educational needs.
- Evidence of and information about significant harm experienced; age of the child at the time of abuse; impact on the child of the abuse.
- Any behavioural issues.
- Any identity issues; considering also the community they live in.
- Any relationship issues – with parents, siblings, is the child a 'young carer'.
- Position of the child in the family and parentage.
- Any idiosyncratic connection that the child and parent has (for example is one child favourite or scapegoated).
- Child's Voice, capturing the child's thoughts, feelings, and their wishes.

- Consideration to all the above needs to be analysed to understand, how this impacts on the child's life and how this affects short and long-term outcomes.

6. Parenting capacity

Primarily to be completed by FSW to address the issues identified at the planning meeting. Some parts may be completed jointly with SW.

Parents need to show that they understand the needs of their child, that meeting the needs of the child is the primary concern of them as a parent and must come above their own needs.

- Understanding of and attitude towards the concerns of the local authority; parent's insight into the impact of their behaviour on the child; level of responsibility accepted & desire to change.
- Level of understanding that the parent shows regarding their responsibility to provide the child with a safe environment.
- Ability to recognise the positives and negatives in their own experience of being parented and a willingness not to mirror negative behaviours in their own parenting.
- Consideration needs to be given as to the parents' understanding of the child's needs.
- Whether they are realistic in their expectations of the child – some of this may be a reflection of their understanding of child development or it may be about their deficits in terms of parenting ability.
- Can parents manage the children's behaviours and how are they going to do this – need to draw out from them, how they are going to practically.
- Parents to identify their own strengths and weaknesses so that these can be addressed within the assessment.
- Consideration to be given in the assessment as to the level of motivation of each parent to accessing support, implementing change and maintaining change.
- Ability to meet the child's changing needs as they progress through childhood into adolescence.

7. Basic Care

- Ability to meet physical needs of child including proper sleeping arrangements.
- Ability to attend all health and dental appointments.
- Ability to understand and implement professional advice on health issues.
- Provision of food and drink.
- Provision of appropriate physical warmth and shelter.
- Provision of clean and appropriate clothing.
- Ensuring adequate personal hygiene including cleaning teeth.
- Establishing and maintaining appropriate routines through childhood – adapting to the changing developmental needs of the child.

8. Ensuring Safety

- Being aware of safety in the home and accepting advice around the same.
- Understanding the need to supervise internet usage and computer games.
- Show an understanding of what constitutes a risky adult and an ability to put strategies in place to protect their child from such adults
- To be aware of potentially risky situations (e.g. situations that would expose the child to alcohol misuse, violence or drug misuse).
- If parent(s) are substance users what are their arrangement for obtaining supplies – are they brought to the house by a dealer, do the parents go somewhere to collect – are the children present. Do both parents use at the same time.
- Understanding that children are led by example so adult behaviour needs to project a positive role model
- Instilling self protection strategies in the children throughout their childhood – by example, by teaching good/bad touching for example
- Fostering an open and honest household where secrets are not kept to enable the child to feel able to talk about any worries, concerns etc.
- Understanding the need for children to grow up in an environment free of violence and aggression and understanding the emotional impact this has and how it teaches children to respond in particular ways.
- Understanding that it is the parents' responsibility to provide the child with a safe environment – including the abusive parent.

- Understanding that it is the parent's responsibility to provide safe sleeping methods.

9. Emotional Warmth

- Explore with parents, their understanding of what emotional warmth is.
- Explore what they believe children need in terms of emotional warmth.
- Explore with parents how emotional warmth is exhibited in their family.
- Considering the presenting emotional needs of the child – explore with the parent whether they feel they meet the needs and if not, how the deficit can be filled.
- How do they feel about each child – do they like / love them, feel attached.
- How would they describe each child – appearance and characteristics
- What does the child like best Toys, activities, food etc.?
- What does the child do well?
- Is there anything they particularly like about the child? What is most rewarding?
- What does the parent find most difficult about this child; behaviour, feeding, sleeping etc. When did any difficulties start?
- How would the parent describe the child's behaviour, usually well behaved, have tantrums, act aggressively to parents or others or destructive. Have there been any changes in behaviour – if so when.
- How does the parent get the child to do what they are told? How does the child respond? How successful does the parent feel they are with getting the child to do what is asked?
- Does the parent punish the child and if so how.

10. Stimulation

- Considering what parents see as stimulation – not just about expensive games, TV or DVD.
- Spending time with children reading, doing homework, playing games.
- Ensuring school attendance and achieving the best they can – being interested in their education, including provision of appropriate space for children to do homework.
- Not relying on television to occupy the children – spend time to talk about the day to encourage discussions around school but also to promote confidence, the opportunity to discuss concerns, showing parents are interested in their children's lives.

- What opportunities are there within the family for discussion? – shared meal times at a table etc.
- Providing children with social opportunities to teach them how to interact appropriately and learn socially. Have parents accessed Children's Centres, play groups, taken up nursery places etc.?
- By encouraging children in school – they learn to accept a challenge which helps them to take on challenges throughout their lives but knowing they have the safety net of parents there to support them if they don't go according to plan.

11. Guidance & Boundaries

- Parents need to instil basic rules of sharing, kindness, consideration for others. This teaches children to develop internal models of values and conscience.
- Parents need to show an understanding that their own behaviour and responses to stress impact on the way that the child learns to cope. Aggressive or violent responses will teach children that this is the appropriate way to behave.
- Children need to learn the rules of life and society and to cope with things not always going their way – that this is normal and they need help in understanding that disappointments can be overcome.
- If parents do not teach children about acceptable behaviour, they need to understand that this impacts on the child's ability to make friends, maintain relationships, remain out of trouble with the authorities, and get along in school and the workplace with teachers or employers.
- Parents need to understand that by providing children with clear and consistent boundaries gives children security – children do not want to control everything (even if that's how they present) because it makes them feel unprotected. Boundaries provide them with a security blanket where they can learn safely, ready to face the world as they grow older.
- Similarly, overprotecting children does not assist them – they need to experience new situations in a way that is safe and to allow them to learn and grow in confidence ready for independence and autonomy.
- Would the parents be willing to attend a parenting course? If possible test this out during the assessment period.

12. Stability

- The need for a stable home life is what roots the child when they are out of the home.
- Parents need to show that they understand that lots of different partners, house moves and school moves, prevents the child from feeling safe and secure at home, prevents them from putting down roots, building lasting relationship and learning the ability to remain consistently involved with anything throughout their lives.
- Children need to develop a secure attachment with a primary care giver and lots of changes or inconsistencies can lead to insecure attachments and behavioural problems as a consequence.
- The need for consistent emotional warmth and positive responses but for these to be adaptable as the child grows and their needs change – but driven by developmental changes in the child rather than inconsistency in the parents' response.
- Awareness of the impact that adult relationship stresses has on children and can lead to a sense of insecurity.
- Consideration of the family's lifestyle and whether there is a level of chaos attached to it as this adds to the insecurity and uncertainty felt by the child.

13. Family and environment

Primarily to be completed by the SW but could be conducted jointly with FSW if felt appropriate for the assessment.

13.1. Family History and Functioning

- Profile of each parent's early life experiences; family history & background.
- Exploration of how parents experienced family festivals and celebrations (parents to indicate which of these were appropriate to their culture).
- Education history – school attendance, bullying, educational attainment.
- Employment history.
- Experiences which have shaped attitudes and beliefs (deaths, separation, parental abandonment for example).
- Parental health, health care needs and engagement with health service provision, any mental health issues – how long have there been issues, what treatment, what engagement.

- The parent's relationships.
- The influence of the parent's relationship(s) to parenting.

13.2. Wider Family

- Looking at the support or stress that can be provided by wider family.
- Considering any possible risk factors including the role wider family have had in creating some of the difficulties within the presenting parent.
- Considering with the parent, the risk that a family member may pose and how they are going to protect their child.
- Are the parents willing to engage with support from their wider family
- Would any support offered be consistent and over a meaningful time
- Are there opportunities for viability assessments and contingency planning with members of the wider family?

13.3. Housing

- Is the accommodation suitable for the family?
- Does the housing situation add to the stress within the family and how can this be alleviated.
- If there are issues, what actions has the parent taken to alleviate these themselves?

13.4. Employment

- Employment history (may already be compiled). Current situation/future aspirations for employment.

13.5. Income and Debt

- Financial situation of the family and consideration of the impact that this has on the family.

13.6. Family's Social Integration

- Relationship with neighbours and members of the community.
- Are the family targeted and bullied?
- Is there any anti social behaviour exhibited by the family or towards the family?
- Do they have reliable, safe, appropriate friends in the local area?
- How do the family fit into the local community?

13.7. Community Resources

- What resources are available in the local area and to what extent do the family access these.

13.8. The future for the family

- How does the parent see their family's future?
- What are their wishes, feelings and aspirations for the family / each child in the family?
- What do they feel needs to change, what do they want to change, what help do they need to enable these changes to happen.

14. The 6 week review

The assessment up to this stage should be completed in the initial 6 weeks. There should have been regular communication between the family, the FSW and the SW throughout the process to this stage. At this point all parties need to meet and identify how the assessment has progressed and whether any (small) areas need more support / assessment.

The FSW then needs to analyse the information they have gathered.

The SW needs to analyse the information they have gathered.

The draft analyses by the FSW and SW needs to be brought together, discussed with each other and the family. The assessment should be finalised and a plan for the family developed with clear recommendations that will support and assist the family to make change. The analysis, risk assessments and recommendations should follow the guidelines below.

15. Analysis, risk assessment & recommendations

Primarily the responsibility of the SW but working closely with the FSW

The assessment report should include:

- Concerns/themes identified within the assessment. What are the main issues?
- Is the child at risk of significant harm? If so, from what or whom?
- Strengths within the family that can alleviate the concerns or the impact of the concerns.

- Changes made during the assessment period as a result of the support accessed.
- Comment on parent's ability to meet the child's needs and protect them now but also as the child's needs change. Does the parent show the ability to be flexible as the child grows older and becomes more independent? Comment on the risk that the child may or may not be exposed to at different age stages in their lives.
- If there is a continuing risk; what needs to change or improve in order to alleviate this risk and to optimise the well being of the child? What needs to happen for the risk to be manageable and the care to be acceptable (considering whether the child has been identified as needing 'good enough' or 'better than good enough' care).
- Understanding on the part of the parent of the concerns. An understanding of the impact of the concerns on the child.
- Assess the willingness, motivation and capacity to actively change things.
- What is the potential for the success of such change in terms of the parents' ability to maintain such change?
- What is the timescale for such a change – is this within the child's timescale?
- Outline all of the possible outcomes – return home; live with family; permanency outside of the family. Provide an analysis of the impact of the child on each of these options.
- Then a clear recommendation.

16. Appendices

Appendix one – Initial request for parenting assessments guidance for social workers

Appendix two – Parenting assessment agreement

Appendix three – Parenting assessment

Appendix 1

INITIAL REQUEST FOR PARENTING ASSESSMENTS GUIDANCE FOR SOCIAL WORKERS

When requesting a Parenting Assessment you must have key information available for the Family Support Worker and be clear about the key areas of assessment:

- What are the risks around parenting capacity and parenting behaviour? E.g. child development, bonding & attachment, neglect, ability to protect etc.
- How can FSW help with reducing the risk?
- Can the parenting support be provided within the Child Plan or do we need a parenting assessment?

In light of capacity within the workforce managers could consider prioritising the requests for a parenting assessment and review whether it's appropriate at this stage to undertake a Parenting Assessment.

Priorities should include consideration of these factors:

- Legal advice for Parenting Assessment including the beginning of PLO
- Edge of care recommendation including legal advise
- CP Manager recommendation in CP Plan.
- Line Manager approval for a parenting assessment.



Family Support Worker	Social Worker	Court Requests
<p style="text-align: center;">Parenting Assessment using New guidance: Inc. PAMs, Graded care Profile etc. if appropriate.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Feasibility Assessments: Inc.; assessment of either or parental options if appropriate.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Drug or Alcohol testing Psychological or Medical Assessment</p>

When setting out the requirements for a Parenting Assessment it is the social workers role to draw together the evidence from a range of assessments, (see attached table as an example) and draw together the final analysis of parenting capacity for the court report.

Legal services have recommended that the sections completed by the Family Resource Worker are clearly stated as such within the body of the report with the author of each section being clearly identified. This agreement however does not provide licence for a parenting assessment to be shared by social workers and each parenting assessment should have one allocated social worker.

Appendix 2

DERYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL CHILDRENS SERVICES PARENTING ASSESSMENT AGREEMENT

The purpose of this agreement is to outline Children's Services expectations of (parents' names) whilst undertaking a Parenting Assessment in respect of their child (name and DOB)

Adults to be assessed:

Name – relationship to child – DOB

Worker's undertaking the Parenting Assessment:

Name – Social Worker

Name – Family Support Worker

Reasons for undertaking a Parenting Assessment:

The aim of the Parenting Assessment:

Other people to be consulted and other sources of information to be included in the assessment:

Health professionals

Core Group members

Historical and current information held within Social Care records

(Please add, this is an example)



Dates, times and facilitators of the sessions:

The parenting assessment will take place over (how many weeks):

The dates of the first 6 sessions will be:

(Name of FSW) will complete the following sections:

Profile of the child

Parenting capacity

Housing

Community resources

(Name of SW) will complete the following sections:

Profile of the parents

Family history and functioning

Wider family

Employment

Income and Debt

Family's social integration

The future of the family

It is expected that:

(Parents' names) will

Contribute in all sessions in an open and honest way.

Answer all questions posed to them.

Be available for all pre-arranged sessions.



If they have to cancel a session for exceptional reasons then they should contact.

(Worker's name and contact details) at the earliest opportunity.

Act respectfully to all workers involved within the assessment. Any aggressive behaviour will result in the sessions being ended.

Children's Services will:

Inform (parents' names) as soon as possible if for any exceptional reason a session needs to be cancelled.

Support (parents' names) during the assessment.

Respect confidentiality and only share information gained during the assessment with those professionals it is deemed appropriate.

Treat (parents' names) with respect.

Signed:

Name Date

Name Date

Name Date

Appendix 3

DCC CHILDREN'S SERVICES PARENTING ASSESSMENT



In respect of: (Names of Parents)

Subjects:

(Names of Children)

DOB: (Date)

Address:

(List addresses of individuals mentioned in plan)



Family Composition

Mother to: (List Children)

Name of Mother: _____ **DOB (Date):** _____

Address: _____

Father to: (List Children)

Name of Father: _____ **DOB (Date):** _____

Address: _____

Significant Others

(List other significant adults involved in Children's lives – Step Parents, Biological Parents etc. state their relationship)

(Name)	(Relationship to Child)	(Child's Name)
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Workers Completing Assessment

(Name)

Social Worker for the Children

(Name)

Family Support Worker

Reason for Parenting Assessment

A Parenting Assessment was requested by:

(Insert Social Worker name)

(Insert reason for Assessment given by Social Worker)



Agencies involved and consulted with as part of the Assessment

(E.g. School, GP, Police, Adult Services)

Information assessed whilst completing the assessment

(E.g. previous Parenting Assessments including: workers name and date, Health Assessments, Chronology, Genogram, Single Assessment, Social Care Records, Police Records)

Profile of Authors

(Name, Job Roles, qualifications and length of service in the past e.g. FSW must have Level 3 qualification which includes modules of child development)

'I make this statement believing it to be true and understand that it may be placed before court'

(Repeated for each author)

Profile of the Parent: Completed by (Social Worker name)

Social history is provided by _____

Date/Age	Details



(Reference any information relating to Mental Health/Alcohol/Drugs/Behaviour etc.)

Profile of Children: Completed by (Social Worker)

Parenting Capability

Basic Care

Ensuring Safety

Emotional Warmth

Stimulation

Guidance and Boundaries

Stability

Family and Environment

Please refer to guidance on all these sections. The family Support Worker completes these areas.

Analysis, Risk Assessment and Recommendations

(Social Worker completes a summary of the evidence, highlights risks and clarifies the LA recommendations for court)