**Summary of Guide to Parenting Assessments**

**Preparation**

Consider how you wish to gather the information you need about the care being provided by the person being assessed. Set out in a schedule the topics to be covered with the parents in interviews. When planning the sessions you should pay particular attention to how you will determine where the parents are within the change cycle and the realistic goals/targets that you feel they need to reach in order for concerns to be reasonably addressed.

**Assessment**

Assessment is the process of gathering information and organising the information gathered according to the dimensions of the Assessment Framework. This is a necessary beginning to the process of analysis. The information you use must be obtained from the chronology, your knowledge of the child and the family, your sessions with parents, and observations of the family.

For each entry in the chronology, note at the side which elements of the framework are impacted by that particular concern. Conduct a similar process for the sessions and again for the observations. Issues and themes will repeat depending on the seriousness of the concerns. The guidance to the framework for assessment contains descriptions for each dimension (attached).

**Analysis**

Analysis using the framework aims to uncover how the different domains impact upon each other by recording how they interact across the triangle. It is a representation of cause and effect.

Taking each thematic concern or hypothesis you have identified, draw these onto the triangle creating a process flow. You will know which areas of the triangle are relevant as you have noted these alongside the chronology and in your notes. It may assist your analysis to record the facts which are relevant to your analysis alongside the headings in the triangle.

Stepping through cause and effect on the triangle performs the analysis. To identify a next step ask yourself ‘What does this cause?’ or more simply, ‘So what?’. To identify an earlier step ask yourself ‘why is this happening?’ Do not be disheartened if the analysis leads you to discovering a gap in your knowledge of the family. This is still a helpful outcome.

Many of the difficulties when plotted on the triangle route through ‘Emotional & Behavioural Development’ – see for example ‘Neglect’ in the attached areas of concern document. Be alive to the question of whether the child is displaying internalising or externalising behaviour.

Repeat this for all the main themes arising in this family. Consideration of the main areas of concern (DV, Substance misuse etc) that often arise in care proceedings has been undertaken. It will also be important to note the ways in which each of these particular concerns influence and impact upon each-other and compound the level of concern. These generalised analyses are attached. They are a representation of what is commonly seen by these areas of concern. Not all elements will be applicable in every case however you may find them a helpful point of reference. If there are multiple areas of concern then you may need to complete more than one and compare/overlay them.

**Impact**

You will have already identified the dimensions of need which are impacted and have explained how and why. You now need to consider the significance of the impact and how ingrained the impact is. In discussing impact it will be vital that you evidence all concerns, or make reference to themes/concerns that are highlighted in the chronology.

**Pervasiveness** – in how many situations/areas of the family lifestyle do the concerns arise or affect? **Intrusiveness** – how deep is the impact of the concerns ? (severity); **Frequency** – how often does it happen? (likelihood) **Modifiability** – extent to which other factors impact? **Duration** – how long has it happened / will it happen? **Unusualness** – Exceptional factors should be seen as a major factor in their own right regardless of the above as they may indicate a severe need, e.g. suicide attempt.

You should note how many dimensions of need are impacted as this will be significant. You may wish to have further sessions after conducting the analysis to inform your considerations of the carer’s ability to change and support required.

**Ability to Change**

An understanding of Prochaska & DiClemente’s comprehensive model of change is required. See Jan Horwath’s ‘A Child’s World’.

In relation to any of the areas of concern you have identified as relevant to the harm that the child is suffering (i.e. needs) you will need to determine where the parent is within the change cycle, and the likelihood of them moving forwards. You will need to consider the likely duration for the parent to make change. It is likely that this arises through ‘Family History & Functioning’, i.e. it is happening as this is how the parents are.

If the parent is within the “contemplation” stage then Morrison’s 7 steps of contemplation will assist in identifying more precisely their level of acceptance and understanding. You will also need to consider the link between the commitment to change and the effort made, to decide whether there is genuine commitment to change or disguised compliance.

You will need to consider which of the lines within the process can be broken by support being provided. You will need to comment on the suitability and availability of any such support. It may be that although the parent is unable to change that the principal concern can be met by provision of support.

**Conclusion and Write-Up**

Having completed your analysis the process of writing up your conclusions should be straight forward. There is a template provided.

You only need to provide information relevant to your decision making process within the document and whether that information supports or undermines your conclusion. This should also assist in determining the information relevant to include in your Court chronology.

It is not sufficient to conclude simply that the parent cannot provide good enough care. The impact on the child of the parenting that they are likely to receive will need to be explained, leading to a description of the likely future development of that child. A balance sheet approach should be included in your conclusion setting out the pros and cons of continuing to live with the parent.

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