**PARENTING ASSESSMENT OF**

*Name of parent/s assessing*

**IN RESPECT OF**

*Name of child/ren*

**Author of Assessment:**

**Occupation of Assessor:**

**Date Assessment completed:**

Introduction

1.1

I am a qualified social worker employed by……. within its children’s services department. I obtained my social work qualification in ………. and have been employed by……….. since……….

1.2

I am authorised to carry out this assessment on behalf of the applicant and I do so from facts within my knowledge, information obtained from my colleagues or from children’s services department records.

1.3I have been asked to complete an assessment of the ability of *Child/ren’s name* to provide good enough care. In particular:

[*List specific areas of need, risk that have been identified as being key for the assessment i.e. substance misuse, domestic abuse, neglect. Be specific but also include considering all aspect of the Framework for Assessment of Children and Need and their Families]*

1.4 In so doing I have considered the following materials:

[*List the documentation considered and any other sources of information such as discussions with contact workers, school, health, guardian, third parties*]

Background

2.1

*Outline here the purpose of the assessment. You should explain who is being assessed and the children that the assessment relates to, current circumstances i.e. are the child/ren in the care of the parents, family placement or foster care and include timelines i.e. with Maternal Grandmother since xx/xx/xx and under what arrangements. Limit to no more than one page.*

2.2

*You should also include the context of the assessment, during child protection planning, pre proceedings or care proceedings. You should include a brief history of the family and reasons for current and historical involvement*

Method of Assessment

3.1

*Here you should explain how you have gone about collecting the information that has informed your assessment. You should detail how many visits you have carried out the dates and duration(this should be as described on you parenting assessment plan). Were there individual meetings, group sessions, observations, direct work etc? Were the parents given work to take away and reflect on/read/complete on their own?*

*Generally parenting assessments should be a mixture of observationsand interviews but the ratio can vary case by case. Interviews are an important opportunity to understand parents understanding of risk and their insight to what needs to change therefore interviews are a crucial part of the assessment. Observations are still required and depending upon the issues needing to be assessed will depend on the level of observations i.e. neglect concerns may require more observations then domestic abuse concerns.*

*If you worked alongside a colleague (either fellow SW, SW Assistant or another professional), explain who they were, their professional role and how the work was divided.*

*You should also outline what other sources of information you have used. E.g. case files, direct/indirect meetings with other family members, or other professionals.*

*If you have used particular tools when working with the parent, e.g. the PAMS manual for parents with learning difficulties, Daily hassles, HOME inventory etc then explain this here.*

*It is important that you are able to illustrate you have considered the parents’ ability to learn and whether there have been any external assessments of the parents cognitive abilities. If so, what were the outcomes? How have you tailored your approach and style to ensure the best opportunity for affecting change in this parent?*

*Are there questions of racial/cultural/religious issues that you have considered? How have you taken these into account?*

*If you have completed a parenting assessment plan then reference can be made to this.*

*As part of the assessment, you should be considering the documentation available to you from children’s services records.*

Family / Environmental Factors *(use framework for assessment sub headings)*

4.1

*Consider here the side of the DoH triangle that relates to ‘Family and Environmental Factors’.*

*Family functioning and history is key to your parenting assessment. What are parents experiences of parenting? Does this link to how they view themselves as parents? Are there patterns/ cycles of abuse? How do parents perceive their experiences i.e. do they reflect they had neglectful experiences or do they justify being exposed to harm? It is useful to ask parents about their memories, positive and negative and how relationships with family members have evolved over time.*

*This section should be completed with information that is relevant to your analysis. If it is not relevant to your analysis then why would the Court want to know about it? You also need not include every example of every behaviour which is relevant to your analysis – try to refine it further to that which is material to your analysis.*

*You may not need to write lengthy notes under each of the headings, but ensure you show that you have considered and analysed each of the sub-domains.*

*If there are strengths in the wider family/network then note what they are, as with risks posed by the wider family/community. Ensure you have considered what support you have tried to bring in from the wider network and how successful or not this has been, and why.*

*You may describe the information you have discovered.*

*In each section you need to include information from the parents i.e. what you have discussed in interviews as well as information held on children’s services files and cross reference- is it consistent? Is it different?*

Child’s Developmental Needs (*Use the framework for assessment)*

5.1

*It is important that you outline here, for each of the children what their stage of development is and what their needs are likely to be from any carer they are placed with. You will also need to consider the child’s needs throughout their minority, i.e. the needs that they are likely to develop in light of the difficulties that they have experienced to date.*

*It is not appropriate to simply list a collection of facts. This section should be completed with information that is relevant to your analysis. If it is not relevant to your analysis then why would the Court want to know about it? You also need not include every example of every behaviour which is relevant to your analysis – try to refine it further to that which is material to your analysis.*

*You will comment parenting and the environment later in the report so you don’t need to focus on this here. Referring to certain aspects of the history of the child’s care may be unavoidable.*

*You may find reference to Sheridan’s development stages, Chichetti’s key stages of child development, and any other developmental materials of assistance.*

*Consider each dimension under the domain of the DoH triangle ‘Child’s Developmental Needs’. You may not need to write a lengthy amount under each domain, but ensure you have considered each aspect for all the children involved.*

*You may describe the information you have discovered.*

*You could also talk about the “child’s resilience”. Two children can be exposed to similar issues and respond in very different ways. A child who has a strong level of resilience may not be so affected by parental arguments, and a child with very low levels of resilience may suffer greatly from parents’ inconsistencies.*

*You need to explore historical development needs as well as current. Have things improved? Have things deteriorated? Why do you think that is? What is the impact on the child?*

*In each section you need to include information from the parents i.e. what you have discussed in interviews as well as information held on children’s services files and cross reference- is it consistent? Is it different?*

Parenting Capacity *(Use framework for assessment sub headings)*

6.1

*Consider here the side of the DoH triangle that relates to ‘Parenting Capacity’.*

*This section should be completed with information that is relevant to your analysis. If it is not relevant to your analysis then why would the Court want to know about it? You also need not include every example of every behaviour which is relevant to your analysis – try to refine it further to that which is material to your analysis.*

*You may not need to write lengthy notes under each of the headings, but ensure you show that you have considered and analysed each of the dimensions. There will be some dimensions which require much more focus than others, depending on the parent/case in question.*

*Do not just focus on the limitations and detriments. If there are strengths to the parenting then do not ignore these.*

*You may describe the information you have discovered.*

*In each section you need to include information from the parents i.e. what you have discussed in interviews as well as information held on children’s services files and cross reference- is it consistent? Is it different?*

The Wishes and Feelings of .....

7.1

*Children are able to articulate their wishes and feelings and often do this in a variety of ways. You may have used the following tools to gather their wishes and feelings:*

*• Wizard/Fairy*

*• Three Houses*

*• Ecomap*

*These can be exhibited to the Court and allow the child to present their views in their own words.*

*Children and young people should be given choice about how their views are represented. Social Workers should talk to them about this beforehand and facilitate them preparing something if they want to with someone that they trust.*

*Young children are particularly vulnerable to having their views dismissed within care proceedings. All children, regardless of age, can express a view. Winter (2011) states:*

*“Even pre-verbal children can express fear or confidence, affection or mistrust vividly in their body language, and the body itself graphically records and expresses children’s experiences, for example, of injury” (p.403).*

Analysis

8.1

*The purpose of the analysis section is to explain the impact and interrelation of the three domains on the child.*

*You should have in mind that the report is about the parenting capacity. You should also have in mind that a failure to meet the needs of the child is the same as harm. You are answering the question ‘Can this parent provide good enough care?’ and to do so you need to explain what the effect of the parent’s care is upon the child, and whether and to what extent the care provided is harmful – i.e. attributable to the care provided.*

*A method of analysis is set out in the guide to completing parenting assessments. It is a method of describing the interaction of the three domains and of describing the impact upon the domains from that interaction. By carefully explaining the processes at play you will be able to articulate the concerns which you believe are present.*

*It is not sufficient to simply state that the parents cannot provide good enough care. You have to explain what the impact is of that upon the child and why.*

*This is the most important section of your report.*

*Look at sections 4, 5 and 6 above and ask “SO WHAT?” Ask yourself this question over and again. If you ever become stuck in following the analytical process this will help in moving your thinking forward.*

*Look at how the different sides of the triangle interact with each other. E.g. So what does the parent’s inability to provide consistent boundaries mean for the child’s development under ‘emotional/behavioural issues’? So what does the drug misuse mean for the child’s health?*

*So what does it mean for both the parenting capacity and the child’s development if the environmental factors are considerable, e.g. no family support, or historic family dysfunction.*

*Look at the three sides of the triangle and how they interact both ways, e.g. the child’s development might impact on the parent’s capacity and also on the environmental factors, e.g. wider support. And vice versa.*

*At this stage you are considering the analysis of the parent’s ability to care as it is now. You are not yet considering their ability to change, this is considered in the next section.*

Ability to Change

9.1

*By considering the above you will have come to a clear and reasoned description of those areas which you consider are most significant, i.e. most harmful, and in turn have identified those areas where change is most required.*

*In the guide accompanying this assessment you will have considered the section on the change cycle and will have been consciously considering the parents position within the change cycle in respect of those areas of most significant concern.*

*You should describe which stage you believe the parent is at in the change cycle and why.*

*You should describe the progress that the parents have made within the change cycle during the assessment, and the rate of change of that progress.*

*You should comment upon the parent’s commitment to change and efforts made to effect change, drawing on previous involvement, why things haven’t changed and why the may or may not change now*

*You should draw these strands into a conclusion as to whether the parents are likely to make change and if so the duration for these changes to be made and for the changes to stick. You should have regard to how engrained the behaviours are.*

*If you are to conclude this assessment positively, you would hope that there has been evidence of the parent making changes in those areas which have direct bearing on the risks posed to the child, e.g. exposure to substance misuse, domestic violence etc.*

*If the parent is able to make change then you will need to comment on any support services necessary to assist with the change and the availability of such services locally.*

*You should comment here on your analysis of the child’s resilience and how the parent’s changes may impact on the child’s future wellbeing.*

Support

10.1

*This section follows from the above in that if the parent is not able to provide good enough care nor able to make change then is the Local Authority able to bridge the gap with practical support. The support will need to be directed at the areas of specific concern described within the analysis section.*

*There is little point in providing support which does not address the issue which is causing harm to the child. It may be however that the parental difficulties result from an environmental factor which the Local Authority are able to provide assistance with. If this is the case this will have emerged from the analysis conducted earlier.*

*The Local Authority are expected to provide that support which is practicable rather than separate a child from their family. Any support package which is thought sufficient must be attainable in reality.*

*You may also include what support has been provided, has this been effective? If not why not? If yes how is that evidenced? Why would further support work or not work to ‘bridge the gap’ in the parenting capacity.*

Conclusions

11.1

*This needs to be short, around one page. Do not start describing new things here or repeating things in depth. It does not need to be in detail as this is contained in the sections above. It should be a real distillation of the above.*

*You should summarise the overall findings of your assessment. Make sure that you consider the strengths as well as the difficulties and set out the impact upon the child. You need to state, in 1 or 2 sentences whether or not you feel that the assessment concludes that the parent can look after the children or not.*

*If your assessment is negative, then explain what you feel the main risks are to the child and summarise why you don’t think the parent will protect against these. You may have identified areas of strengths in their parenting, and your negative conclusions will be stronger if you are able to recognise these and explain why they still do not outweigh your concerns.*

*If your assessment is positive, you should state this and give your overall reasons for why. If there are residual concerns about certain areas of their parenting, explain what they are and why you feel they can be safely managed.*

*If you feel that the parent may be able to parent the children safely with specific support structures in place, explain what they are and the likelihood of them being sufficiently available.*

*The conclusion should include a balance sheet which can then be used in the final statement.*

*Example:*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *Benefits* | *Detriments* |
| *The child's Family & Social Relationships will be maintained.* |  |
| *The child will develop a stronger sense of his identity within the family structure* | *The identity developed is likely to suffer poor self-image and self-esteem and lack a sense of belonging in both a peer group and wider society.* |
|  | *Moderate adverse impact upon Health* |
|  | *Significant on-going impact upon Education.* |
|  | *Significant adverse impact on Emotional & Behavioural Development with lifelong impact.* |
|  | *Significant adverse impact on Selfcare Skills, Social Presentation, and consequently on the social relationships.* |

*NB In this document you are only assessing the capacity of this individual parent to care for their children. You are not expected to make recommendations about who else may be able to care for them, nor what alternative orders might be made by the court. This discussion should be left for the Connected Persons Assessments and your final evidence.*

I confirm that I have made clear which facts and matters referred to in this report are within my own knowledge and which are not. Those that are within my own knowledge I confirm to be true. The opinions I have expressed represent my true and complete professional opinions on the matters to which they refer.

Signed ………………………………………. Dated …………………………..

Name:

Social Worker