



# **LANCASHIRE ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING FRAMEWORK**

**Updated October 2017**

## POLICY INFORMATION SHEET

<b>Name of Document</b>	Lancashire Assessment and Planning Framework
<b>Service area</b>	Children and Young People
<b>Target Audience</b>	All staff working with children and families
<b>This document was approved by</b>	Start Well Leadership Team
<b>Date policy is effective from</b>	April 2014
<b>Date policy updated</b>	12 October 2017
<b>Date review due</b>	March 2018
<b>Status:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Mandatory (all named staff must adhere to guidance)</b></li> <li>• <b>Optional (procedures and practice can vary between teams)</b></li> </ul>	Mandatory
<b>Location of Document</b>	<a href="#">CSC Procedures Manual Local Resources</a> ; <a href="#">Lancashire Safeguarding Children Board Resources</a>
<b>Related document(s)</b>	Children's Social Care Procedures; Pan Lancashire Policy and Procedures for Safeguarding Children
<b>Responsible officer(s)</b>	Director of Children's Services
<b>Any other relevant information</b>	At the next scheduled update for the Children's Social Care Procedures Manual (due March 2018), request that Tri.x add this document to section 1.2 Children's Social Care - Assessment and Planning; remove from CSC Local Resources; advise LSCB of change of location.

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## 1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Lancashire Continuum of Need and Thresholds Guidance sets out the importance of early support for families, ensuring they receive help to address issues and problems as soon as they arise. It highlights and supports the emphasis on both assessment and planning when working with a family and focuses on empowering families by working alongside them to build resilience. The Lancashire Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is a shared assessment and planning tool for use across all children's services in Lancashire. It helps in the early identification of needs for children, young people and families. The CAF promotes a co-ordinated approach on how these needs should be met. This should lead to fewer children and young people in need of specialist assessments and support as detailed in the Lancashire Assessment and Planning Framework.

[Click here for the Continuum of Need and Thresholds Guidance](#) (on the LSCB website)

1.2 The Lancashire Assessment and Planning Framework sets out how, in Lancashire, we will assess, plan and manage cases when there are concerns about a child and where it is recognised that there is a need for social work assessment and intervention. This framework is equally applicable to all open cases, for example, children subject to a CAF, children with a child in need plan or child protection plan and children looked after, where ongoing assessment and planning is essential to informing plans for children, avoiding drift and ensuring timely decision making based on effective, evidence based assessment.

1.3 If children and families are to receive the right help, everyone who comes into contact with them – midwives, health visitors, GPs, early years' professionals, teachers, youth workers, police, voluntary and social workers – has to play a role by identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action.

1.4 Concerns about a child's welfare may arise in many different contexts and the nature of these concerns will vary greatly from child to child. What is important is that support is provided quickly so that a problem does not escalate.

1.5 Understanding families and the experiences of children within them can be complex. Professionals working in universal services – health, education, police and early years – have a responsibility to identify the early signs of need, abuse and neglect, to share that information and work together with families to provide children with the help they need.

1.6 Assessment should be a continuous process which has the needs of the child at the centre. The assessment completed by a Social Worker will therefore build on information already known as a result of early help to the child and their family and previous or ongoing involvement with Children's Social Care.

## 2.0 The Purpose of Social Work Assessments

2.1 The purpose of an assessment is to gather information and evidence about a child and their family and to identify whether a child has unmet needs. An assessment is not an end in itself but the means of informing the delivery of effective services for children and families. An assessment must be completed by a qualified Social Worker. The assessment must be based on a sound knowledge of child development and be seen in the context of the child's family and their environment. The Social Worker leads the assessment which must be informed by the child and their family members and by other professionals who know them, including teachers, health visitors and the police.

### **3.0 Statutory Assessments under the Children Act (1989)**

- 3.1 A statutory assessment under the Children Act (1989) will inform decisions about whether a child is a child in need or is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm as defined in section 17 and 31 of the Act.
- 3.2 A child in need is defined under Section 17 of the 1989 Children Act as a child who is unlikely to reach or maintain a satisfactory level of health or development, or their health and development will be significantly impaired, without the provision of services, or children who are disabled. In these cases, assessments by a social worker are carried out under section 17 of the Act. The purpose of these assessments is to gather information about a child's developmental needs and the parents' capacity to meet these needs within the context of their wider family and community. This information must be used to inform decisions about the multi-agency help needed by the child.
- 3.3 If the social worker believes that the child is suffering, or likely to suffer significant harm, then the local authority under section 47 of the Act is required to make enquires to decide what action must be taken, with partners, to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child. There may be a need for immediate protection whilst the assessment is carried out.
- 3.4 Following an application under section 31A of the Act, where a child is the subject of a care order, the local authority, as a corporate parent, must assess the child's needs and draw up a care plan which sets out the services which will be provided to meet the child's identified needs. Where a child is accommodated under section 20 of the Act, the local authority also has a statutory responsibility to assess the child's needs and draw up a care plan which sets out the services to be provided to meet the child's identified needs.
- 3.5 Where a child becomes looked after, the assessment will trigger other assessments to plan the long term care of the child, including the possibility of returning home. The single assessment will be the means by which to decide whether the necessary changes and improvements have been made to ensure the child's safety when they return home.

### **4.0 Risk Assessment and Analysis**

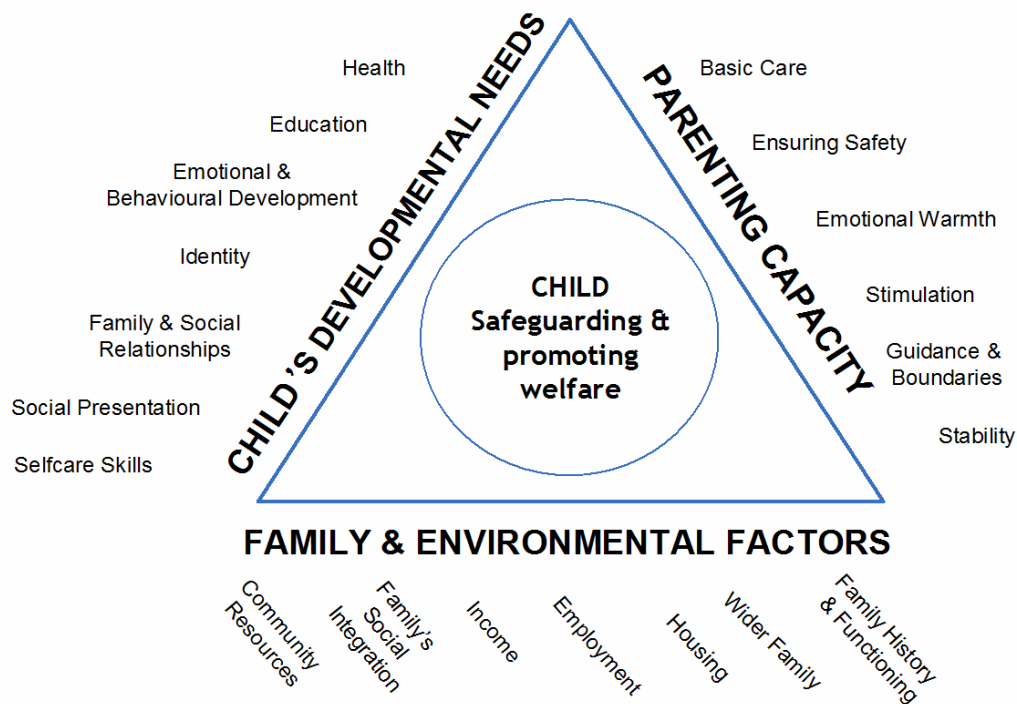
- 4.1 It is incumbent on practitioners to analyse the information collected during the assessment to identify the factors that may place a child at risk of significant harm. No system can fully eliminate risk. Understanding risk involves judgement and balance. To manage risks, Social Workers and other professionals must make decisions with the best interests of the child in mind and within a timescale which has the child's safety as its paramount concern.
- 4.2 Consideration must be given to the findings of any specialist assessments being undertaken alongside the single assessment (eg SEN, EHC plans, CAMHS, youth justice, young carers,); these must be considered and inform the outcome of the assessment. Use of Lancashire's Multi-Agency Risk Sensible Framework will assist in the analysis of risk and protective factors for the child. Female Genital Mutilation must also be considered, where appropriate, and the LSCB guidance followed.

Click on the following links for the Risk Sensible Framework and FGM Guidance:

[Making assessments and referrals](#) (LSCB website)

[Female Genital Mutilation](#) (LSCB Procedures Manual)

## 5.0 The Assessment Framework



### Social work assessments must always:

- Use the above conceptual framework to gather information;
- Include good analysis:
  - Of the child's developmental needs. The child's development should be recorded so that progress can be monitored against baseline information to ensure their outcomes are improving;
  - The parents' or carers' capacity to respond to the needs of the child;
  - The impact and influence of wider family, community and environmental circumstances;
  - The impact of what is happening to the child, including whether they are suffering significant harm;
- Be informed by the views of the child and their family. Children should, wherever possible be seen alone to ascertain their wishes and feelings;
- Record any differences in views about information;
- Provide clarity on the contributions of all agencies and professionals that will be undertaking assessments and providing services;
- Be informed by, and inform, other specialist assessments such as: the assessments for children with special educational needs and disabled children, Education, Health and Care Plans, assessments by adult services;
- Ensure that any specialist assessments are coordinated so that the child and family experience a single assessment and planning process;
- Seek to ensure that each child and family understand the type of help offered and their own responsibilities for being involved in the assessment and the help being provided – so as to improve the child's outcomes;

- Draw on the most up to date research when considering risk and the impact of neglect and abuse on the child;
- Be evidence based and clearly recorded within the child's social care record. Judgements should be revised as the case progresses and new information comes to light;
- Be borne of the principle that assessment should be followed by a plan>do>review approach to our intervention, and Social Workers must continually review the impact of the resulting plan in terms of improving the child's outcomes.

## **6.0 The Role of Planning**

6.1 The Lancashire Assessment and Planning Framework ensures that the child and family experience a single assessment and planning process. Active planning with families at the earliest opportunity should identify and put in place services or interventions which will deliver the right help to children and families at the right time. This framework should develop a robust understanding of the child's journey to date and evidence the impact of existing plans in place at the point of referral and during subsequent assessments. The use of chronologies should inform planning, interventions and the approach to assessment. Early planning will complement and inform a process of robust assessment, but changes in circumstances should prompt a proportionate review of current interventions and not lead to 'open-ended' assessment. Professional judgement and management oversight should identify when reassessment or a change in plan should be triggered. Examples where a reassessment may be considered include:

- When entering a pre-proceedings process;
- When required by Public Law Outline in respect of children in proceedings;
- If the child has come into care or is at risk of coming into care;
- If in the Practice Managers / Team Managers or Independent Reviewing Officer's professional judgment further assessment is required;
- If a S47 Enquiry is instigated;
- If there has been a significant change in the child's circumstances or living arrangements, including a change of placement for a child looked after or if they return home from care to live with their families;
- If there has been no assessment in the past twelve months for open cases including children looked after.

**(See Appendix 2 Flow Chart)**

6.2 Planning and assessment should deliver an agreed plan, with clear outcomes which can be measured as part of formal review and performance management arrangements.

## **7.0 Assessment - Timely, Transparent and Proportionate to Need**

- 7.1 How quickly an assessment is carried out after a child's case has been referred to Children's Social Care, will be determined by the needs of the child and the level of any harm being suffered. This will require judgments to be made by the Social Worker in discussion with their manager on every case and should be clarified by the manager at the point of allocation.
- 7.2 Assessments must be transparent and open to challenge by professionals and by children and families; complaint procedures must be accessible.

## 8.0 Assessment Checkpoints

In Lancashire the following timescales have been set as 'checkpoints' in the children's social work assessment process:

### 8.1 Within 1 Working Day

- Within one working day of a referral being received, the Social Worker and their manager must make a decision about the type of response that is required.
- The Practice/Team Manager will set a timescale at the outset of the assessment process for its completion. This date will be shared by the Social Worker with the child/family and relevant partners.
- Where a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm the child must be seen by a qualified Social Worker immediately (within a maximum of 24 hours) to assess their welfare.

### 8.2 Within 10 Working Days

- Managers must review the progress of the assessment by day 10. **This is Checkpoint 1.** The manager must enter the date they reviewed the assessment and any comments on the child's case record. The manager and Social Worker should agree at this point the date by which the assessment should be completed, (if not already completed) and if the case is to remain open as a Child in Need, the date for the Child in Need meeting must be agreed.
- The child must be seen by a qualified Social Worker as soon as possible following a referral. Professionals involved with the child and family must make a decision on the timing of this visit, based on their assessment of the child's needs. In all cases this will not exceed more than 10 working days.

### 8.3 Within 30 Working Days

- Where it is identified that assessments will take longer than 10 working days to complete, the assessment and understanding of the child's needs will be discussed with the Social Worker by the manager prior to the 30<sup>th</sup> working day and the timescale for completion will be agreed. **This is Checkpoint 2.**

### 8.4 Within 45 Working Days

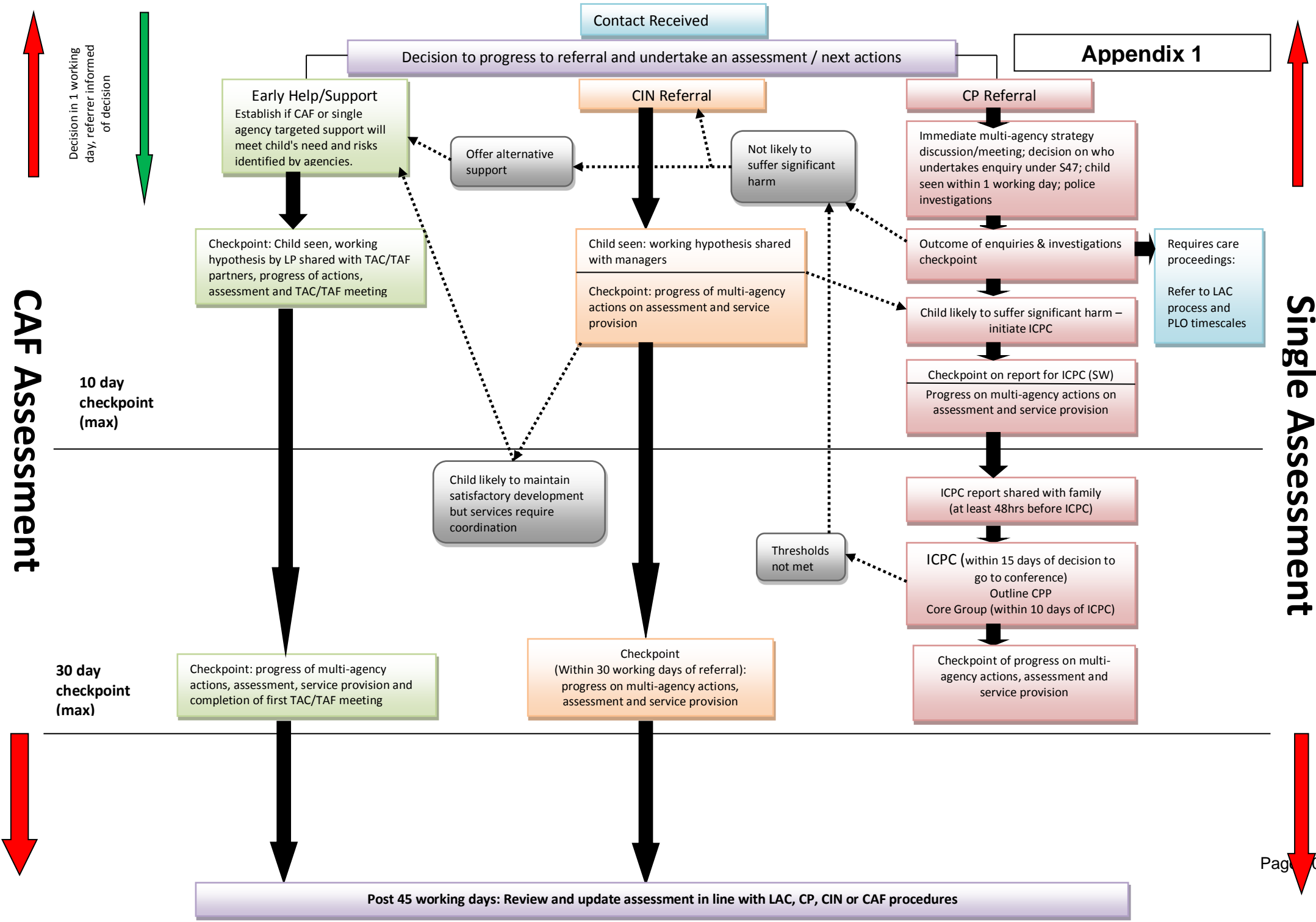
- No social work assessment should take more than 45 working days to complete.
- If in exceptional circumstances the assessment is likely to take more than 45 working days, this must be approved by the Senior Manager.
- For Child in Need cases a planning meeting will always be held between the 15th and 45th day.

## 9.0 Practice in all Assessments

- 9.1 Feedback must be given to the referrer on decisions made and the action being taken. The child and family must be informed of the action to be taken.
- 9.2 The child's wishes and feelings must be taken into account when deciding what services to provide.



- 9.3 Where a case is referred that may constitute a criminal offence, the local authority must discuss it with the police at the earliest opportunity. The police have a duty to carry out a criminal investigation.
- 9.4 Delay in providing services, or initiating care proceedings when this is required, has a detrimental impact on a child's development. It is vitally important for their development that children have their needs met at the right time throughout their lives. Professionals must not wait until the assessment reaches a conclusion before providing services to support the child and their family.
- 9.5 The Social Worker must discuss the child's case with other professionals – teachers, health and early year's staff, police - and agree how quickly meetings should be convened so that children are kept safe and help is provided which meets the needs of the child and their family.
- 9.6 It is the responsibility of the Social Worker to make clear to children and families how the assessment will be carried out and when they can expect a decision to be made on next steps. The conclusions of any assessment must be shared with the child and their family and parents must always be given a copy of the assessment documentation.
- 9.7 It is important that children and families understand their role within the assessment and that the assessment will be completed with them in order to ensure their needs are identified and that they along with other partners, were it is safe to do so look at solutions to meet the identified needs and improve outcomes.



**Process for all Children and Young People Currently Receiving a Service from Children's Social Care - Flow Chart**

