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**Practice Guidance**

**When to complete a Single Assessment**

**for Looked After Children**

**Purpose of the guidance**

This guidance clarifies when a practitioner should complete a Single Assessment for a Looked After Child.

The aim of completing a Single Assessment for a child or young person in care is to facilitate a process to systematically gather information review and develop a better understanding of the CYP’s needs.

Assessments are an important tool that can be used to collate and analyse information about children in care, help to understand their situation and determine recommendations for any further intervention. The Single Assessment should be seen as a tool to gather evidence to understand a presenting problem, to evaluate progress and outcomes, assess the effectiveness of interventions and programmes and it enables the care plan to be formulated.

**Practice Guidance – Key messages**

1. It is important when completing an assessment to ensure the child and young person is involved.
2. All agencies and professionals involved with the child, young person and the family, have a responsibility to contribute to the assessment process. This contribution will vary depending on the circumstances of the child; it can include the provision of information and services. Agencies who contribute to the assessment should be involved in its planning, review and analysis.
3. Careful assessment and consideration should be given when children are to be returned from care to live with their families. Assessments to inform transition and contingency plans should specifically address risk and danger statements to ensure the safety of children and sustainability of the plan.
4. The social worker / lead professional should determine whether any specialist assessments should be undertaken to assist them in their assessment and decision making. This includes such assessments as for children with special educational needs, disabled children, and specialist health assessments such as CAMHS, consultant paediatrician or Occupational Therapy.
5. Reference should be made to previous assessments from any of these agencies to help the social worker understand the child’s needs, to improve assessment analysis and outcome decision making.
6. Examples of circumstances when a Single Assessment for a Looked After child needs to be considered :

* Unexpected placement move-when a placement ends unexpectedly
* Disruption - when a permanent placement ends
* S47-when there has been a safeguarding incident
* CUAB – when there has been a CUAB incident
* Missing - when there has been a change in behaviour patterns
* CSE - when a Risk Assessment is completed and the risk is deemed to be medium/high.
* Transitions - when there is a transition point in a child or young person’s life such as a move to/from secondary school,
* Secure - when there is a decision to consider secure accommodation under welfare grounds
* Discharge from care
* Placement With Parent Regulations
* Key life changing events-Loss/bereavement
* Pregnancy- both as a mother and a father to be
* When considering revocation of an order
* When an offence has been committed
* When cyp has had a significant health issue, eg admitted to psychiatric unit/serious diagnosis

1. The timescales for completion of a Single Assessment will be agreed between the social worker and team manager but must not exceed 45 days.
2. In the current pathway, when completing a report for a LAC Review, there is an option to update the assessment - this does not trigger a full Single Assessment but leads the worker to complete a CLA review (updated) assessment report.
3. The Independent Reviewing Officer will scrutinise the child’s care plan – that it is up to date and in the best interests of the child/young person. The IRO may determine, prior to or in the LAC/Pathway Review meeting, if an updated assessment is in progress or needs to be completed as part of the child’s plan, particularly in relation to the areas outlined in section 6 and ensure when any action needed this is recorded in the decisions of the LAC Review Outcome form.

**For all children in care there should be an updated assessment annually in order to review progress and to ensure the care plan meets the continuing and future needs of the CYP.**

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