***For your parenting assessment use the format below. If it is not being filed in court yet, leave off the first two pages. Simply insert the information required where indicated. No text should be in italic or colour on completion – ensure all guidance notes are removed. All paragraphs should be numbered.***

# STATEMENT OF :

STATEMENT NO :

EXHIBIT(S) :

DATED :

FILED :

# Case No:

IN THE *[insert Court name]* COURT

IN THE MATTER OF *[insert child’s name and DoB]*

AND IN THE MATTER OF THE CHILDREN ACT 1989

BETWEEN:

South Gloucestershire Council

Applicant

- and -

First Respondent

- and -

Second Respondent

- and -

(By their/his/her Guardian)

Respondent(s)

PARENTING ASSESSMENT OF

Name :

Occupation :

Professional Address:

I make this statement from my reading of the Social Care records and from my own personal knowledge. I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

This statement is confidential and must not be disclosed without the consent of the court, unless Rule 12.72-12.75 of the Family Procedure Rules 2010 and Practice Direction 12G of those Rules apply.

**NB: The use of this template and accompanying guide is as a structure for your professional judgment. The methods of analysis used including the ability to change are *a* method of analysis, they are *not the only* method of analysis. If you wish to take a different approach please do so, however please ensure that the methodology is sufficiently explained to the reader (Parents / Children’s Guardian / Courts). If you wish to depart from the structure of this template and believe this will assist the document, again, please do so as long as each of the areas are covered (e.g. you can move where you write about the ability to change – as long as you write about it!)**

*The guidance contained within this template is only part of the guidance available. There is full guidance available for social workers when completing parenting assessments, and you should use this when planning, undertaking and writing up your assessment.*

*Please see the “Introductory Guide to Completion of Parenting Assessments’.*

1 Introduction

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

1.2 I am authorised to make this statement 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.

1.3 I have been asked to complete an assessment of the ability of …. to provide good enough care. 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, Guardian, third parties*]

1.4 This report focuses primarily on the following key issues and how they impact on the parent’s ability to provide care sufficient to meet the child’s needs:

[*List key issues*]

2 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, and provide a short narrative history of the significant events. Limit to no more than one page.*

2.2 *You should also include the context of the assessment, which will invariably be as part of the Pre Proceedings process. You may wish to add a photo to the end of the section however you will need to ensure that you have the relevant permissions to do so.*

3 Method of Assessment

*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 and ideally the dates. 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?*

*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, 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.*

4. Child’s Developmental Needs

***[When considering sections 4, 5 and 6 you may wish to change the order in which you comment upon them to make the report more readable.]***

*Section 4 isn’t an assessment of the child – it’s only to explain to the reader who this child is and what this child needs from a carer. Don’t spend ages writing about every part of the triangle under ‘Child’s Needs’.*

*You will need to consider, however, the child’s needs throughout their childhood, 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 the Court will not want to know about it. You also need not include every example of every behaviour which is relevant to your analysis, maybe just the first/latest/most extreme.*

*You will comment upon parenting and the environment later in the report so you don’t need to focus on this here but of course referring to certain aspects of the way the child’s been cared for may be unavoidable.*

*Consider each dimension under the domain of the DoH triangle ‘Child’s Developmental Needs’ but only write about those aspects which are specific to this child. You do not need to write lots, nor about every single dimension.*

*You may describe the information you have discovered.*

*If relevant, you could also talk about the “child’s resilience”. Two children can be exposed to similar issues and respond in very different ways. E.g. 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.*

5 Parenting Capacity

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

*Write about the facts (evidence you have) of how the parents are able to care. You’ll talk about the* ***impact*** *this has on the child in the analysis* ***later****, so try to limit this section to a few pages of evidence. Think about what information you have gathered over the course of the assessment. Describe what you have found out from the different contexts of assessment, especially contact (or observations of parent and child-ren).*

*This is the step before analysing what it means for the child (you’ll do this later).*

*This section should be completed with information that is relevant to your analysis. If it is not relevant to your analysis then the Court will not 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 as you did with the child’s behaviours. The first / most recent / most serious, but explain that there are more, if this is the case.*

*You may not need to write lengthy notes under each of the headings, but ensure you show that you have considered 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 you should include these.*

6 Family / Environmental Factors

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

*This section should be completed with information that is relevant to your analysis. If it is not relevant to your analysis then the Court will not 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.*

7 Analysis

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

*To assist the reader you should separate the analysis into subheadings. There are different ways of doing this and they are equally acceptable. You may use subheadings as to the type of harm being shown [neglect, emotional harm etc]; you may want to sub-divide into the themes involved [e.g. domestic violence, mental health, substance abuse]; or you may want to sub-divide into the key dimensions from the triangle and look at how the sides of the triangle interact [e.g. emotional warmth, education, stability, housing etc].*

*The report needs to explain what the short- and longer-term impact will be on the child (i.e. the Child’s Needs) from the care that the person assessed is likely to provide. Distinctions need to be drawn between harm which is attributable to the care of the parents and other organic causes.*

*You should have in mind that the report is about the parenting capacity. 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 the care upon the child and why.*

*This is the most important section of your report. A good analysis will contain:*

* *Clear, structured thinking.*
* *Identify which of the child’s developmental areas are impacted in particular by the care provided, i.e. the most significant concerns.*
* *For each impacted area explain how/why the impact is attributable to the care of the person assessed, or what any other cause may be. You will inevitably describe patterns of behaviours. Examples will support demonstrating patterns.*
* *Describe the significance of the impact – likelihood, severity, how ingrained the pattern is, and how many life circumstances the pattern will occur in. Is there a behaviour which is particularly unusual which triggers particular concern?*
* *Consider the interplay of positive factors on the areas of triangle being discussed. Do the positives within that area of concern outweigh the negatives? The positives should be balanced against the negatives and a view expressed on how the outcome will affect the child.*
* *Set out the likely impact on the child’s short- and long-term future linked with real world examples for the child.*
* *Remember that a combination of factors that negatively impact on parenting will have a cumulative impact as the number of factors increases.*

*Look at sections 4, 5 and 6 above and ask “WHY IS THAT HAPPENING?” and then in section 5 and 6, “SO WHAT? WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THIS CHILD?” Ask yourself these questions over and again. If you ever become stuck during the analytical process this will help to move 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. Use the ‘Introductory Guidance to Parenting Assessments’ provided for further information about how to complete your analysis.*

*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.*

8 Ability to Change

*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 parent’s 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 may wish to discuss the stage that other professionals believe the parent is at in the cycle. For instance, drug/alcohol recovery agencies regularly work with this model and may have their own view about a specific area of the parents’ changes. Similarly, the parents themselves may have a view about where they are in the change cycle. Even if you don’t agree with them, this might be a useful jumping off point for discussion with them.*

*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.*

*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, and also that you believe this change is likely to be sustained.*

*If the parent is able to make change then you will need to comment on any support services necessary to assist and sustain 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.*

9 Support

*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.*

*NB – when considering support, throughout your assessment remember that parenting capacity can sometimes decrease through the process of support, especially therapeutic as they deal with a range of complex personal challenges. This is to be expected and contingency plans may help to bolster parenting temporarily, and in itself may not necessarily indicate an inability to provide good enough parenting. Advice can be sought from the relevant professionals who can help safety plan and manage possible deteriorations in the parent which may need temporary mitigation.*

10 Conclusions

*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.*

Balance Sheet:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Benefits** to child of being cared for by [parent] | **Detriments** to child of being cared for by [parent] |
| *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.* |
|  | *Likely moderate impact upon his/her health* |
|  | *Significant on-going impact upon his/her Education.* |
|  | *Significant adverse impact on Emotional & Behavioural Development with lifelong impact.* |
|  | *Significant adverse impact on Selfcare Skills, Social Presentation, and consequently on future 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