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| **AGE ASSESSMENT OF**  **UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKING CHILD** |

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| **NAME OF UASC:** |  |
| **CLAIMED AGE / DOB:** |  |
| **NATIONALITY:** |  |
| **DATE(S) OF ASSESSMENT:** |  |
| **NAME OF LEAD ASSESSOR:** |  |
| **NAME OF SECOND ASSESSOR:** |  |
| **NAME OF APPROPRIATE ADULT:**  Please also make a note of the agency for which the appropriate adult works. |  |
| **NAME OF INTERPRETER:** |  |
| **LANGUAGE USED:**  Include here a statement that the UASC and the interpreter are able to understand each other. |  |

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| **1. SUMMARY OF PROCESS OF ASSESSMENT**  Set out the circumstances in which the assessment has been conducted including confirmation that the process has been explained to the person being assessed, the details of the people present and their role. Ensure you name the people who have been present at each meeting in the event that the assessment takes place over more than one interview. |
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| **2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**  Give brief details of any background information available to the assessors, including the source of this information. |
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| **3. PHYSICAL APPEARANCE AND DEMEANOUR**  All assessments begin with initial impressions made from visual presentation. |
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| **4. INTERACTION OF PERSON DURING ASSESSMENT**  The manner in which the person interacts with the assessor (or others present during the assessment) will provide an indication of whether or not the person is responding in an age appropriate manner. |
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| **5. SOCIAL HISTORY AND FAMILY COMPOSITION**  Establishing as detailed as possible a family tree will help the assessor to identify the likely age of the person compared with the stated age. Ages of parents, siblings and extended family should be established. In the case of deceased family members, the year and age at the time of death should be recorded. Drawing a graphic family tree is useful where names of family members and ages can be included, which may help the person to be more accurate whilst also allowing the person to feel involved. The information gained may indicate discrepancies or impossibilities which need to be clarified. |
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| **6. DEVELOPMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS**  Questions about the types of activities and roles that the person was involved in prior to arriving in the UK can often give an indication of age. |
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| **7. INDEPENDENT / SELF-CARE SKILLS**  Understanding the level of ability, experience and confidence that a person has in being able to care for themselves can be an indicator of age. The assessing worker may wish to ask the person directly how they feel about living in an independent setting and observe their reaction. |
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| **8. EDUCATION**  Obtaining a detailed account of the person’s educational history is a valuable source in the age assessment process. |
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| **9. HEALTH AND MEDICAL ASSESSMENT**  Information regarding the young person’s medical history will be of assistance. A medical opinion as to age can be helpful but the assessing worker should have regard to the ADCS Guidance in respect of medical assessments of age. |
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| **10. INFORMATION FROM DOCUMENTATION AND OTHER SOURCES**  Documentation, when available, should always be carefully checked. Authenticating documents, however, is a specialist task. If the assessment is an ongoing process, it is important to obtain the views of other significant figures involved with the young person. Ensure you make contact with other agencies who may be involved with the young person and from whom information could be obtained to either corroborate or refute what is being said. |
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| **11. ANALYSIS OF INFORMATION GAINED**  Set out here your opinion on the information obtained, the weight you have given to it and why. |
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| **12. ADVERSE INFERENCES**  If you make any adverse inferences, set out here what those inferences are even if you have addressed them in other areas of the report. You must put those adverse inferences to the young person and ask for an explanation. You can then also set out here what their response is. |
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| **13. PRELIMINARY DECISION**  Set out here the decision you are minded to come to with respect to the young person’s age. Confirm that you have informed him / her of this decision and its implications for him / her. Set out here what you have said about why you are minded to come to the decision you have. |
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| **14. DETAILS OF ANY FURTHER REPRESENTATIONS BY YOUNG PERSON AND ASSESSOR’S RESPONSE TO FURTHER REPRESENTATIONS**  Set out here any response the young person has made to the decision you are minded to make. You should give the young person another opportunity to address any issues you may have raised with respect to any adverse inferences made. You should set out with respect to each representation made, what your view is of it and whether, and if so how, it affects your preliminary decision. |
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| **15. FINAL DECISION**  Set out here what your final decision as to age is and why. |
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**SIGNED BY:**

This report has been prepared in accordance with the joint protocol between local authorities and the Home Office.

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| **LEAD ASSESSOR:** |  |  |
| **SECOND ASSESSOR:** |  |  |

**GUIDANCE FOR COMPLETING ASSESSMENT FORM**

A local authority has a responsibility under the Children Act 1989 to assess whether a young person is in need and to provide services to safeguard and promote their welfare. A young person’s age is a key part of the information needed when making an assessment of need and subsequently for the appropriate provision of services.

There is no prescribed way in which local authorities are obliged to carry out age assessments. You will need to be familiar with relevant statutory guidance including 'Care of Unaccompanied Migrant Children and Child Victims of Modern Slavery: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (DfE, 2017).

The courts have also provided some general guidance to local authorities in a case involved Merton Council (B v London borough of Merton (2003) EWHC 1689 (Admin). Some of the key points noted by the court are:[[1]](#footnote-1)

* The decision maker must explain to an applicant the purpose of the interview.
* Except in very clear cases, the decision maker cannot determine age solely on the basis of the appearance of the applicant.
* In general, the decision maker must seek to elicit the general background of the applicant, including the applicant’s family circumstances and history, educational background, and the applicant’s activities during the previous few years. Ethnic and cultural information may also be important. If there is reason to doubt the applicant’s statement as to their age, the decision maker will have to make an assessment of the applicant’s credibility, and he will have to ask questions designed to test the applicant’s credibility.
* If the decision maker forms the provisional view that the applicant is lying, the applicant must be given the opportunity to address the matters that have led to that view.
* Adequate reasons must be given for a decision that an applicant claiming to be a child is not a child (though these need not be long or elaborate).
* Cases vary, and the level of inquiry required in one case may not be necessary in another.
* A local authority may take into account information obtained by the Home Office, but it must make its own decision, and for that reason must have adequate information available to it.

Another useful source of information regarding the different aspects of conducting age assessments can be found in the ADCS Age Assessment Guidance.

**SUMMARY OF PROCESS OF ASSESSMENT**

Here you should set out the circumstances in which the assessment is to be conducted, including confirmation that the process has been explained to the person being assessed. You should include details of the people present and their role, in particular the appropriate adult, ensuring that the young person is comfortable with the person acting in this role. You should explain that the purpose of the assessment is to determine their age and what services / support they may require. It is not an interview on behalf of the police or the immigration authorities but information may be shared between the local authority and these agencies. You should ensure that they understand the interpreter clearly and the interpreter completes the form that includes a statement to this effect. You should ensure that the young person and the circumstances within which the assessment is being conducted are comfortable. When conducting an age assessment, it is essential that you be sensitive to the past experiences of children and young people, to display empathy and build rapport. Adopting a sensitive approach to the interview process may assist you in gathering more detailed information from children and young people.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Here you should insert details of any background information that is available to you. You should try to get as full a picture of the person’s history and past experiences as possible, including dates, names of significant persons (family / friends) and details of significant life events.

**PHYSICAL APPEARANCE AND DEMEANOUR**

All assessments begin with initial impressions made from visual presentation but you should remember that this will not be determinative of age. An initial view of a person’s age is based on their height, weight, stature, skin texture, whether they have any lines around their eyes or mouth and any other distinguishing marks / scars. You should also consider their physical appearance such as whether they have recently had their hair cut or whether their hands look as if they have been doing manual work. Secondary sexual characteristics could include hair on the back of hands, the pitch / tone of voice and whether (for males) their Adam’s apple is visible. You may also consider whether they are wearing any jewellery and the significance of this for them.

It is important to consider racial differences and that it is normal in some cultures for boys to have facial hair at an early age and for girls to develop at different ages. Life experiences may impact on the aging process.

It is essential to take into account how the person presents themselves in style and attitude to authority and relate this to the culture of the country of origin and the events proceeding the interview, journey and experiences. It is useful to establish the length of time that the person has taken to arrive in the UK from the time they left their country of origin and to include this in the age calculation.

**INTERACTION OF PERSON DURING THE ASSESSMENT**

The manner in which the person interacts with the assessor will provide an indication of whether or not the person is responding in an age appropriate manner. You should note the verbal and non-verbal behaviour of the person being assessed. Are they nervous or confident? What does their body language say about their attitude towards the assessment? Does the person appear to be uncomfortable when speaking to an adult? You should remember however that some people may believe it impolite to make direct eye contact with those who they consider to be their elders. You should also bear in mind that your position will be seen as one of power which may influence the way the person interacts with you.

How the person has responded to being challenged (if at all) in respect of any inconsistencies in what they may have said, may also be of useful assistance when determining age.

**SOCIAL HISTORY AND FAMILY COMPOSITION**

Establishing as detailed as possible a family tree will help the assessing worker to identify the likely age of the person compared with the stated age. Ages of parents, siblings and extended family members should be established. Drawing a graphic family tree may assist the person to be more accurate in describing family members. This may also assist in them feeling involved in the assessment. You should acknowledge to the young person that you are aware that talking about their family may be painful and difficult for them but doing so will assist in the assessment process. You should try to establish whether they are in contact with any family member who may assist in providing information but it is not proposed that contact be made with family / friends of the family unless it is safe for the young person to do so as family / friends of the family may pose a risk to the young person such as being involved in trafficking them.

It is also important to gather as much information about the person’s community and their life at home.

**DEVELOPMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Questions about the type of activities and roles that the person was involved in prior to arriving in the UK can often give an indication of age. You should be aware of the needs to take into account that in some cultures it could be normal for a young teenager to be working full time. You should remember to relate answers to what would be appropriate in the person’s country of origin. It would be important to gain information about peer relationships at school, work or in the neighbourhood. Questions about age related rituals should be asked including marriage and sexual relationships. You will then be able to consider whether what the person is describing is age appropriate. A young person’s life experiences will affect how they have developed for example they may have been involved in armed conflict or involved in sexual exploitation and they may have experienced a number of traumatic events.

**INDEPENDENT / SELF CARE SKILLS**

Understanding the level of ability, experience and confidence that a person has in being able to care for themselves can be an indicator of age. Where and with whom the person spent their childhood will be of interest. Whether and how they became separated from their family and how they managed to obtain food and shelter will be required.

The person’s experience of managing money, paying bills, arranging appointments, buying food and clothing will also assist in assessing age but regard should be had to it not being the case in every culture that these are indicative of independence. It may be of use to explain to the young person that if they are believed to be under the age of sixteen years, they will be placed in foster care where they will be expected to comply with certain rules including about where they go and what time they should be home. Their reaction to this may provide valuable information. Asking the person what their expectations are now of living in the UK and how they will manage that would also be useful.

**EDUCATION**

Obtaining a detailed account of the person’s educational history is a valuable source in the age assessment process. You should establish the age at which they started school. You should establish the number of completed years spent at school and their age on leaving school. You should establish if there are any gaps in their education and the reasons for this. This information can then be used in conjunction with any information gathered about the manner in which they travelled to the United Kingdom in order to assist in establishing age.

It would be of assistance if the young person can remember the names and addresses of schools that they attended and subjects they studied. Information regarding school activities and school friends will also be of assistance.

**HEALTH AND MEDICAL ASSESSMENT**

The Royal College of Paediatricians have stated that ‘in practice, age determination is extremely difficult to do with certainty. Moreover, for young people aged fifteen to eighteen, it is even less possible to be certain about age’. It has also been established, that dental records will only assist to a certain degree. Invasive methods and medically unnecessary examinations should not be used. However, opinions on age from a Paediatrician, GP, Dentist and / or Optician can be helpful in assisting in the process of establishing age.

Information regarding childhood illnesses and immunisations will be of assistance. Information regarding diet, sleep patterns, appetite, whether they smoke / drink or allergies may be of assistance. Do they have any sight or hearing impairment?

You should establish their physical, mental and emotional wellbeing during the assessment and whether they are currently taking medication, and if so what for.

**INFORMATION FROM DOCUMENTATION AND OTHER SOURCES**

Documentation, when available, should always be carefully checked but you should remember that authenticating documents is a specialist task and you are not expected to do this. If the assessment is an ongoing process, it is important to obtain the views of other significant figures involved with the young person. You should endeavour to obtain information from any other source that may assist in making the decision such as the Home Office. Does the young person have any documents with them that may assist in establishing age, such as birth certificate, I.D., travel documents? If they do, you should establish when they were issued, how they were obtained and whether they are in an original or photocopy. However, the assessing worker should never make contact with the Embassy of the country of origin as this may put the young person at risk, particularly if they are making a claim for asylum based on adverse treatment from their Government.

Information from the official website of the young person’s country of origin may be of use. However, it should not be solely relied upon when making decisions but should be considered alongside information from other sources which may include the following websites.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/country-policy-and-information-notes>

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/>

<http://www.refworld.org/publisher,UNHCR,COUNTRYPOS,,,0.html>

If other assessments have been completed, does the account in this assessment reflect the account in those other assessments? It should be noted however, that if it is discovered during the assessment process the young person has had an assessment by another local authority, whether that is a decision that he / she is clearly an adult or a full assessment to determine age, the current assessment should immediately cease.

**ANALYSIS OF INFORMATION GAINED**

This process is not an exact science. The lead assessor should draw together all the information provided in the assessment and any further information obtained from other sources such as the police, referring agency, foster carers, teachers, medical professionals etc.

**ADVERSE INFERENCES**

If, during the assessment, any information appears to be inconsistent or it comes to light after the assessment that information provided is inaccurate, the assessor should put those views to the person being assessed and seek an explanation for the inconsistencies / inaccuracies before reaching a conclusion about their credibility. If the credibility of the person being assessed is to be called into question, clear reasons for doing so must be provided.

**PRELIMINARY DECISION**

The assessors should come to a preliminary decision that they are minded to reach as to the approximate age of the person being assessed based on the information contained in the assessment. Clear reasons for reaching this preliminary decision must be given, though these need not be elaborate or long. The preliminary decision should be explained to the person being assessed who should be given a further opportunity to make any representations he wishes to make. The assessors should explain to the person being assessed what the decision will mean for them, including what the next steps would be.

If the person being assessed indicates that they do not agree with the decision, it should be explained to them that they have the right to challenge the assessment.

**DETAILS OF ANY FURTHER REPRESENTATIONS MADE BY THE YOUNG PERSON AND THE ASSESSOR’S RESPONSE**

If further representations are made as to the factual content of the assessment, these must be given timely consideration to decide whether they affect the analysis and / or preliminary decision. You should set out clearly what the representations are. You should then set out, for each representation, whether you consider it affects the analysis and / or preliminary decision made.

**FINAL DECISION**

You must set out here what your final decision is by either affirming your preliminary decision or making a new decision. You must provide reasons for your decision.

1. Home Office Guidance on Age Assessments 2015 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)