

Children's Services

Procedure for commissioning alcohol, substance and DNA testing

1. Purpose

This guidance sets out when testing for alcohol or substance use and DNA testing should be used, and the steps to be followed when commissioning a test.

2. When should alcohol or substance tests be used?

Alcohol and/or substance use testing may take place:

- i) where a child's Social Worker is concerned that the child's parent(s) or others with significant unpaid carer roles in their lives are using alcohol or substances in a way that may lead to significant harm for the child.
- ii) Where the child's Social Worker seeks assurance that a parent whose use of alcohol or substances previously posed a risk of significant harm to their child has now reduced their use to safe levels and is successfully managing any dependency they may have.
- iii) Testing may only be carried out under paragraphs i) and ii) above where the child is a Child in Need or is subject to a Child Protection Plan.
- iv) Where this is ordered by the Court in the course of proceedings concerning the child.

3. When should DNA tests be used

DNA testing should be used:

- i) Where there is dispute or uncertainty about the child's natural parents, and certainty is required in order to implement the correct plan for the child.
- ii) Where there is dispute or uncertainty about the natural parents of a child in the care of Dorset Children's Services.
- iii) Where this is ordered by the Court in the course of proceedings concerning the child.

4. Commissioning a test

4.1 Unless the test has been ordered by the Court, the child's Social Worker should agree the need for a test with their Team Manager and record the Team Manager's agreement in the child's case notes.

4.2 Once the team manager has given their agreement (or the Court order has been received), the child's Social Worker should submit the request for testing to the next Line of Sight meeting. If the Line of Sight meeting declines the request, the child's Social Worker will discuss and agree next steps with their

Team Manager. If the Line of Sight meeting approves the request, the child's Social Worker will notify the Children's Commissioning team via childrenscommissioningreferral@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk of the approval.

- 4.3 Children's Commissioning will send the child's Social Worker a link to the provider's online request form, and the Social Worker will complete this form. The provider will then send a quote for the test(s) to Children's Commissioning, childrenscommissioningreferral@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk copied to Line of Sight.
- 4.4 Children's Commissioning will determine whether the provider's quote is acceptable. If it is not, Children's Commissioning will liaise with the provider and the child's Social Worker to reach agreement. If it is accepted, Children's Commissioning will instruct the provider to carry out the test, pending confirmation of consent from the person(s) to be tested.

5. Consent

The child's Social Worker should then seek the consent of the person(s) to be tested, and record this in the child's case notes. The test cannot proceed without the documented consent of the person(s) to be tested. Once this consent has been gained, the child's Social Worker should share this with the provider, who carry out the test.

6. Sharing the test result

The provider will share the test result with the person(s) being tested, the child's Social Worker, and with Children's Commissioning. The provider will then invoice Children's Commissioning for their services. The child's Social Worker will record the test result in the child's case notes.

7. Further information

Further information on testing can be found at

[Parental substance misuse: working with children, parents and carers - Childrens \(ccinform.co.uk\)](#) (subscription required)

Appendix 1: Summary procedure for commissioning alcohol, substance and DNA testing

