



Oldham's Local Protocol for Assessment

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015 states:

"Local authorities, with their partners, should develop and publish local protocols for assessment. A local protocol should set out clear arrangements for how cases will be managed once a child is referred into local authority children's social care and be consistent with the requirements of this statutory guidance. The detail of each protocol will be led by the local authority in discussion with their partners and agreed with the relevant LSCB ... The local authority is publicly accountable for this protocol and all organisations and agencies have a responsibility to understand their local protocol."
(Chapter 2, paragraphs 62 and 63)

1. Local Protocols for Assessments

Chapter 2, paragraph 63 of Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015 sets out a number of pre-requisites which should be contained in a local protocol for an assessment led by Children's Social Care. These are outlined below and form the basis of the Local Assessment Protocol in Oldham.

1.1 Ensure assessments are timely, transparent and proportionate to the needs of individual children and their families

Assessments in Oldham are completed in a timely manner. Timeliness is monitored in performance meetings with the Director of Early Help and Social Care twice per week. This

has assisted the service in achieving over 95% within timescale since June. 2017, by a suitably qualified and experienced social worker who leads the multi-agency process.

The child and their family have the most vital role to play in the process, that they must agree to the assessment, understand its purpose, who is involved and what is expected of them especially in terms of what change is required and how this is going to be measured. The involvement of wider family and friends should be highlighted.

Consent to complete an assessment is required when assessments are conducted under s17 Children Act (1989). For those conducted under s47, consent is requested; however, if consent is not forthcoming, the welfare of the child is considered paramount and an assessment will be conducted if 'significant harm' is suspected. Legal advice will be ascertained if the process is frustrated and 'significant harm' is suspected.

The child must be seen by the social worker seen alone, wherever possible, as part of the assessment process. If the child is not seen alone, this should be recorded along with the reasons why. The views and wishes of the child should be heard and recorded.

It is the needs of the child which should drive the assessment; delay is not in the child's interest. The period in which the assessment is conducted should not exceed 45 working days from the point of referral, unless an extension is approved by a manager who records the reasons and identifies new time limits. Some assessments will be completed more quickly.

Where particular needs are identified at any stage of the assessment, the social worker should not wait until the assessment is concluded before commissioning services to support the child and their family. It should also make very clear that if at any point in the process of the assessment, where there is a suspicion a child is suffering **Significant Harm**, the child's immediate safety must be considered and a **Strategy Meeting** convened.

Where there is a pre-existing assessment conducted by a partner agency such as an Early Help Assessment, this should be used to inform the assessment, although it should be clear that the information must be up-to-date and the child seen, wherever possible. If not, the reasons why the child has not been seen should be included in the early help assessment.

Every assessment should be focused on outcomes, including deciding which services and support to provide to deliver improved welfare for the child and reflect the child's best interests. In the course of the assessment the social worker and the line manager should determine:

- Is this a Child in Need? (Section 17 Children Act 1989);

- Is there reasonable cause to suspect that this child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, Significant Harm? (Section 47 Children Act 1989);
- Is this a child in need of accommodation? (Section 20 or Section 31A Children Act 1989).

The assessment by the Local Authority should determine whether any specialist assessments should be undertaken to assist them in decision making.

It is the social worker's responsibility to analyse all the information gathered from the enquiry stage of the assessment, decide the nature and level of the child's needs and the level of risk, if any, they may be facing. The line manager should provide regular supervision, and challenge the social worker's assumptions as part of this process.

Assessments conducted as part of a Section 47 Enquiry:

- The assessment should always be initiated by a **Strategy Meeting** between the police, children's social care, health, YJS (where appropriate) and education and any other agencies who are involved with the child and who can provide relevant information. This meeting must consider any steps that need to be taken immediately to protect the child's welfare;
- The conduct of the assessment and the information and analysis may be kept from a parent or carer if, in passing on the information, the child's safety would be compromised. The principle of working in partnership with the parents and the child should, however, be upheld wherever possible;
- If one child in a household is being assessed as part of a Section 47 Enquiry, any other children living there may also become the subject of child protection enquiries if they may have had contact with the alleged perpetrator.

The Local Authority must provide feedback to referrers, including members of the public, within 72 hours.

Assessment of children with disabilities and Youth Justice

Disabled children: Children with disabilities are children **In Need** and the Local Authority defines this as

- a child with Physical, learning, mental health with no or inadequate support
- Children with chronic ill health, terminal illness or severe disability

Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans

Any child or young person that currently has a statement will have an EHC Plan. Any young person between the ages of 16 and 19 who currently have a LDA may also have an EHC Plan.

The trigger for the new EHC Plan will be education. This means that if a young person has a health or social care need, they will not get an EHC Plan unless these needs impact on their education.

Requesting an EHC Assessment

The following people have the specific right to ask the LA to conduct an EHC needs assessment for a child or young person aged between 0-25:

- the child's parent;
- a young person over the age of 16 but under the age of 25;
- a person acting on behalf of a school or post-16 institution (ideally with the knowledge and agreement of the parent or young person where possible);
- CYP under 19 in youth custodial establishments – or their parent or a professional working with them (being introduced from April 2015).

Other people can bring a child or young person who has, or may have SEN, to the attention of the LA – e.g. foster carers, health and social care professionals, early years practitioners, youth offending teams, probation services, educational professionals from custody placements, school or college staff or family friends.

- [New workflow and application process](#)
- [G1 Oldham guidelines checklist and referral form for EHCP Guidelines for needs assessment V2](#) - Guidelines to be applied when considering whether to carry out an Education, Health and Care needs assessment
- [G3 Criteria for education settings to commence a statutory assessment of SEND](#) - Outline of the EHC assessment process

If you have any questions about submitting a request for assessment please contact the Access Service:

- Phone: 0161 770 1839
- Email: ehcinfo@oldham.gov.uk

Young Carers:

Oldham Young Carers define a young carer as: 'A child or young person who, without payment, provides help or support to a parent, sibling or other family member, who could not manage without their help. This could be due to age, physical or mental illness, addiction or disability.'

The adult or young person they care for may:

- Have additional needs
- Be an older person
- Have a physical disability
- Have mental health needs
- Have issues with drugs or alcohol

'The level of care they provide would normally be undertaken by an adult, therefore impacting adversely on their childhood.'

Under the Care Act 2014, local authorities will have a duty to consider the needs of children living in households where there is a family member with a disability or impairment that requires help or care as part of a "whole family assessment". This assesses why a child is caring, what needs to change and what would help the family to prevent children from taking on this responsibility in the first place.

All young carers under the age of 18 have a right to an assessment regardless of who they care for, what type of care they provide or how often they provide it.

Following a referral, unless support is already in place, an assessment is completed which sits within a 'whole family' assessment pro forma. The assessment is undertaken to ensure that sufficient support is in place for both the young person and the family. Alongside family support services and/or social workers, we work together in partnership to reduce inappropriate caring roles and the impact of this. The needs of the young carers should be assessed in the whole family assessment with ongoing support. This assessment would consider the young carers work, education and leisure need.

Young carers are entitled to request a separate carer's assessment under the Carers (Recognition and Services) Act 1995 and, if they are over 16 years, under the Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000. Services to support such children can be offered to help them to grow up in their own families.

Children and young people who commit offences

The current Youth Justice Service framework for assessment is ASSET+. This is used to determine a young person's likelihood of re-offending, addresses safety and wellbeing concerns and focuses on reducing their risk of harm to others. The ASSET+ framework

includes a pathways and planning section and a suitable intervention plan is devised with the young person and their parent or carer/s. All ASSET+ assessments and plans must be completed within 20 working days as set out in the Youth Justice Board National Standards.

For young people referred to Pre-court services any intervention below Youth Caution is assessed using the Greater Manchester Out Of Court Disposal Framework. For Conditional Caution and above a Pre-court ASSET + is completed.

For young people who present with sexually harmful behaviour, there are a number of routes to being assessed. For all those that come via the criminal justice route they will receive an ASSET+ assessment alongside a specialist assessment based on the Assessment, Intervention, Move-on (AIM) principles. For young people referred through non-criminal justice agencies a consultation takes place with the referrer and children's social care and then an assessment completed based on AIM principles. Following the completion of an AIM assessment the lead agency must produce a report detailing proposed interventions and/or actions. The whole process must not exceed six weeks.

For young people who are at risk of exploitation by radical ideologies, the service is responsible to assess and provide programmes to reduce vulnerabilities in the young person.

Contribution of other agencies to assessments

Whilst Children's Social Care retains the responsibility for the completion of the assessment, it is the duty of any agency who knows the child and the family to contribute to the 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. Contribution from the following agencies should always be considered:

- Police (whether or not an offence has been committed);
- Health, especially in relation to the child's development and the family history;
- Education, including where relevant, pre-school and further/higher education.

Other agencies and organisations may need to be asked to contribute to the assessment process, depending on the circumstances of the child and their family. This may include agencies which work with adults, for example where parents or another adult living in the household have drug, alcohol or mental ill health problems or learning difficulties. Professionals who are primarily providing a service to the child's parents or carers have a vital

role to play in developing an understanding of the parent's capacity and capability and they have a duty to participate in the process of assessment.

Specialist Assessments

Specific groups of children (in addition to Children with Disabilities, young carers and children who commit criminal offences. may require particular care. These groups of children include those with special educational needs, unborn children where there are concerns, asylum seeking children, children in hospital, children with specific communication needs, children considered at risk of gang activity, children who are in the youth justice system. Additional guidance in relation to issues affecting these groups of children can be found in Local Safeguarding Children Board Procedures.

During Specialist assessments the Local Authority is responsible for collating information from other pre-existing assessments such as a Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), or a consultant paediatrician in relation to a child's specific health needs. Including information from such assessments should be considered to avoid the child and the family having to provide the same information on a number of different occasions. Collating such assessment information will help the social worker understand the child's needs, improving understanding, assessment analysis and outcome decision making.

Monitoring of Assessments

Records should document the key decision or review points during the assessment process, which involve the child, family and relevant professionals, and actions by the social worker. These should be agreed by the Local Authority, in conjunction with partner agencies. The review points will be used to monitor the progress of the assessment and to ensure it is completed within the 45 working days timescale.

All assessments are reviewed by a team manager with the allocated social worker within 10 – 30 days dependent upon the nature of the issues

Review points may include, for example:

- At the point the social worker should have seen the child alone, and their views and wishes have been heard and recorded. The child's home address has been visited and the child's bedroom has been seen;
- At the point all the children in the household have been seen and their needs considered;

- At the point the parents have been seen and their views and wishes have been recorded and taken into account;
- At the point early findings may indicate whether no further action is required, a child is in Need, or a Section 47 Enquiry should be initiated;
- At the point the need for an inter-agency plan is indicated
- At the point the assessment analysis and evaluation has been completed.

Review points provide assurances that help will be given in a timely and appropriate way, and that the impact of this help will be analysed and evaluated in terms of the improved outcomes and welfare of the child.

Assessment for children who are returned from care to live with their families

An updated assessment is required when considering the placement of children with their parents; whether within or outside legal proceedings. The assessment will follow the guidance set out within the National Assessment Framework and will involve the gathering and analysis of information from pertinent partner agencies. A 'Looked After' Children Review of Arrangements will take place prior to any child returning to the care of their parents to which all relevant parties/agencies will be invited.

Ensuring the child and family understands the type of help offered and their own responsibilities, so as to improve the child's outcomes

Assessment outcome should be decided by the social worker and line manager, who should also agree a plan of action, setting out the services to be delivered, how and by whom. The outcome of the assessment should be discussed with the child and family and the outcome also provided to them in written form. Exceptions to this are where this might place a child at risk of harm or jeopardise an enquiry.

Partner agencies who have been involved in the assessment should also be informed of the outcome in writing. Where they are involved in providing services to the child, this information should clearly state action points, review dates and intended outcomes for the child, as agreed between them and the social worker.

Complaints procedures

If members of the public are unhappy with the service they have received or wish to make a formal complaint about a Local Authority service, this can be done either on line, in writing, by telephone or in person.

In the first instance the person should contact the manager of the service they would like to complain about, and most concerns and complaints can be resolved this way. If however the person does not know who the manager of the service is, if there are any questions regarding the complaint process, or if the person need some support to make a complaint then they are able to contact the Senior Children's Complaints Officer who can assist them. They can be contacted in the following ways:

By telephone: 0161 770 1129

By email: cypf.complaints@oldham.gov.uk

In writing:

Senior Children's Complaints Officer
Oldham Council
Level 12, Civic Centre
West Street
Oldham
OL1 1UT

Some services like Children's Homes are inspected and regulated by Ofsted, and comments, compliments or complaints about a Home can be made direct to the Manager of the Home, to the Senior Children's Complaints Officer or to Ofsted.

Ofsted can be contacted in the following ways:

- By telephone: 08456 40 40 45
- By email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

Where the complaint is about a partner agency's role in the assessment process, the social work manager or other local authority personnel receiving the complaint should refer it to the relevant manager in the partner agency, or the agency's complaints department.

Recording of Assessments

Assessments will be recorded within the assessment template stored within the Local Authorities electronic case management system (Mosaic). Records of assessment will be

recorded within 45 working days of the referral (or for open cases, when the need for an assessment was triggered electronically).

2. Local Protocol for Contact and Referrals to Children's Social Care

http://www.oldham.gov.uk/lscb/info/4/referrals_and_assessments

A referral can be made by the child themselves, a friend or relative including a parent or someone with **Parental Responsibility**, or other member of the public. Referrals from a professional who knows the child should include:

- Information on the child(ren)'s developmental needs;
- The capacity and the capability of the parents or carers to meet these needs.

Pre-existing assessments that have already been completed by professionals should be included. This could include any early help assessment such as an Early Help Assessment Tool or equivalent local assessment completed in universal services. Such early help assessments should identify what services the child needs and why the child and family require further support to prevent the concerns from escalating to the child needing statutory services.

Where the referral relates to a child who is already an open case to Children's Social Care, the information should be passed on to the child's social worker.

The social worker responsible for dealing with the matter should establish whether the enquiry can be dealt with by the provision of information and advice or re-direction to other agencies or services. If this is the case, the way the matter is being dealt with should be conveyed to the person who made the contact. In the event that an agency does not agree with the response and decisions about the referral by the Children's Social Care Services, the referring agency should discuss their concerns directly with the line manager of the social worker in the first instance to seek resolution. The LSCB's escalation policy can be found here: http://www.oldham.gov.uk/lscb/downloads/file/97/resolving_professional_disagreements

Criteria for referral

Professionals working with children have a responsibility to refer a child to Children's Social Care where it is believed or suspected that a child:

- Has suffered **Significant Harm**;
- Is likely to suffer significant harm;
- Has developmental and welfare needs which are likely only to be met through the provision of family support services;
- Is a **Child in Need** whose development would be likely to be impaired without the provision of services.

This is identified in Threshold doc which can be found here:
https://www.oldham.gov.uk/lscb/downloads/file/18/thresholds_for_assessment

Referral Process

The duty social worker will contact the referrer and obtain as much of the following information as possible:

- Full names, dates of birth and gender of children;
- Family address and, where relevant, school/nursery attended;
- Identity of those with **Parental Responsibility**;
- Names and dates of birth of all members of the household;
- Ethnicity, first language and religion of children and parents;
- Any special needs of the children including the means in which they communicate;
- Any significant recent or past events;
- Any known parental or household issues of drug or alcohol use, mental ill health, learning disabilities or domestic abuse;
- Cause for concern including details of allegations, their sources, timing and location;
- The child's current location and emotional and physical condition;
- Whether the child needs immediate protection;
- Details of any alleged perpetrator;
- Referrer's relationship with and knowledge of the child and his or her family;
- Known involvement of other agencies;

- Information regarding parents' knowledge and agreement to referral.
- The child's wishes and feelings as far as they are known.

Once received, all referrals must be written up and a decision made about their disposal within one working day and this should be communicated to the referrer.

The following process applies to new cases of children previously unknown to the authority, and to closed cases.

The process of Referrals must include screening against to the [thresholds_for_assessment](#)

Other pre-existing referrals should be provided and the details of the child and the family must be checked against the databases of the Local Authority to establish whether the family is previously known, and whether there is a [Child Protection Plan](#) in relation to the child and/or whether the child is [Looked After](#) or if the family are receiving other services.

The screening process should also establish:

- The nature of the concern;
- How and why it has arisen;
- What the child's needs appear to be;
- Whether the concern involves Significant Harm;
- Whether there is any need for urgent action to protect the child or any children in the household.

This process will involve:

- Discussion with the referrer;
- Involving other agencies as necessary.

If there are indications that a child may be at risk of Significant Harm, the manager may authorise whatever actions are necessary to protect the child or others in the household which may result in the immediate provision of services. In such circumstances a [Strategy Meeting](#) must be convened.

If there is suspicion that a crime may have been committed including sexual or physical assault or neglect of the child, the Police must be notified immediately.

Personal information about non-professional referrers should not be disclosed to the parents or other agencies without the referrer's consent.

The parent's consent should usually be sought before discussing a referral with other agencies unless this may place the child at risk of Significant Harm, in which case the manager should authorise the discussion of the referral with other agencies without parental knowledge or consent. The authorisation should be recorded with reasons.

Outcomes of Referrals

The immediate response to referrals may be:

- No further action from Children's Social Care. Feedback should be given to the child, family and referrers including why the case might not have met the statutory threshold and suggestions for other sources of support. In the case of referrals from members of the public, feedback must be consistent with the rights to confidentiality of the child and their family. The escalation policy is in place for professional referrers to be able to challenge such decisions;
- Signposting to other agencies and services;
- Provision of services;
- An assessment of need with stated timescales including regular reviews;
- Emergency action to protect a child;
- A Section 47 **Strategy Meeting**.
- Referral to Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) where there are concerns regarding risk to children from a professional

The decision about the outcome must be discussed with and approved by a manager from Children's Social Care.

Where agencies or individuals anticipate that prospective parents may need support services to care for their baby or that the baby may be at risk of Significant Harm, a referral to Children's Social Care Services must be made as soon as the concerns are recognised.

If the referral relates to a child who is temporarily visiting the area of another local authority or in a hospital or Looked After outside of the local area, the local authority/Police -for the area where the child actually is at the time have prime responsibility for an initial response to the referral.

The referral should be passed to that authority immediately for them to follow the necessary procedures and to undertake a Section 47 Enquiry and/or take any immediate protective action that is necessary. They will be responsible for liaising with any other Children's Social Care Services as necessary.

Before undertaking such enquiries, the child's home authority must be consulted and agreement sought on who is best placed to undertake the enquiries. Where this is consistent with the child's immediate protection needs, it may be agreed that the child's home authority will respond to the referral. For those children from other local authority areas, who are the subject of Child Protection Plans, there must be consultation with the responsible Lead Social Worker.

End