**Covid-19 Guidance for developing Parenting Assessment with families**

Continuing with instructed and every day practice during the Covid-19 crisis is a challenge for many frontline services. Creativity in maintaining essential functions is imperative to ensure that key objectives are completed, and are done so as meaningfully as possible.

Some of the functions, where appropriate, can be temporarily replaced with the use of technology such as Facetime/WhatsApp Video Messaging and Skype, and it is these functions that can assist your every day practice.

Update April 2021 – With the current situation it is noted that Parenting Assessments should be undertaken face to face, however there may be some situation remaining where during the assessment period face to face visits may not be possible, this could be due to families isolating. During this isolation time virtual visits can be adopted but this would only be for this period of time. Good practice and safe practice would support face to face parenting assessments.

Below is an example of a Parenting Assessment Schedule and Plan which has been prepared to assist you in offering a proposed alterntative to the usual process, during this crisis. Some elements of an assessment will likely be delayed, such as contact observations, however, during the unprescedented times we must reflect our practice by adapting our methods to achieve as little delay as possible.

Assessment plans are an important tool of social work and even more important during the COVID -19 crisis. The purpose of this specific planning tool below is to demonstrate how the assessment will/would normally be completed including visiting families in their homes following social distancing. If families have tested positively for Covid19, are displaying symptoms or have received a “shielded” letter then the assessment will need to be adjusted to manage the risk on Covid19 infection.

This tool should help to identify how those changes will influence/impact the assessment process and demonstrate how we plan to minimise or mitigate the impact of changing the assessment process.

The recommendation is that before the assessment commences you plan alternative process (if you had planned face to face, make sure you have the virtual process ready to go also and vice versa) so the plan is in place should families or worker becomes symptomatic during the assessment. The plan is shared with families (and legal representatives where they are in place) so they are aware and agree to the assessment plan before the assessment commences.

The below example is very specific to the needs of a particular set of assessment criteria, so you would be expected to adapt the process to reflect the needs of the family you are assessing; adding or reducing the sessions as appropritate.

**1. Qualifications and Experience**

My name is social worker and I hold a BA Honours Degree in Social Work and qualified from the University of ………………. in ………….. I have been employed by Northamptonshire County Council in the Children in Care Team since ………….

**2. Parenting Assessment Plan**

The schedule below outlines the work that will be completed by the Local Authority with parents, to assess their ability to meet child’s physical, social and emotional needs. The parenting assessment is structured around the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need (Department of Health). In addition to this the assessment will also draw on elements of Signs of Safety, and the Salford Family Assessment tool, research and elements from Fowler, J (2002) A Practitioner’s Tool for Child Protection and the Assessment of Parents, and Assessing Risk using Calder, M (2003) will also be used during this assessment.



There will be a particular focus on history, relationships, mental health and parenting ability and skill. It is expected that the parents (use names) will work closely and openly and honestly with the social worker and other professionals throughout the assessment period. If there are three consecutive sessions missed with no valid reason the matter will be restored to court to discharge the parenting assessment.

**Possible Outcomes of the parenting assessment**

a) The parenting capacity is good enough and there are no recommendations for further parenting work with a recommendation that the child (use name) returns to the parents’ care. There may be other issues that require assessment/attention.

b) The parenting capacity is not far short of being good enough and there are recommendations for further parenting work with a timescale with a recommendation so the child (use name) can return to the parents’ care.

c) The parenting capacity is not good enough and there is a detailed plan of recommendations that could reduce the risk to an acceptable level, with an opinion as to how far this programme is feasible given the motivation and capability of the parents within available resources, and the timescales of the children.

d) The parenting capacity is not good enough and the Local Authority recommend that the child does not return to the parents’ care.

**Parenting Assessment Schedule mitigate**

Update April 2021 – if there is a need to undertake virtual visits as part of an assessment, then it would be good practice to identify the session that is most appropriate for virtual communication. For example, a session considering the parents own experiences of being parented is more appropriate to be completed virtually than a session where observations of the home environment is required. It would recommend that if virtual visits are required, then practitioners discuss with the family and their supervisor which sessions will be virtual. This can be agreed in the planning as a contingency if virtual visits need to be implemented.

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| **Date and Time** |  **Venue**  | **Impact if a change of venue and how is this mitigated?** | **Undertaken by** | **Attendees**  | **Session Details**  |
| Include specific date and time (not just duration) | Where or how is this taking place? | Describe how you are going to continue an assessment if completing part of it virtually – how will you engage with resources, plan for any challenging conversations, ensure it remains meaningful and impactful? | Name the individuals completing the assessment sessions. | Who needs to attend? | Provide an overview of the session detail, and what it will cover, include the planned area sessions, and additional areas you may cover if sessions take you further. |
| 2 hours  | Skype Call/ Video Call / Face to face |  | Social WorkerConsultant Social Worker  | Both Parents  | **Introductory session to explain purpose of the assessment**What are the parents understanding of Local Authority concerns. Why are we worried about the child? |
| 1 and a half hours | Skype Call/ Video Call / Face to face | E.g.Before the session, I will provide an example of a family genogram using a cartoon programme family and ask the parents to have a go before our session to begin to identify their own network of support. The parents should take a picture of this and send it to me so we can explore this in the session together. | Social Worker  | Both Parents | **Family Support Network and Structure** What support is available from immediate family members and is available to support with the parents with the care of the child.  |
| 1 and a half hours  | Skype Call/ Video Call / Face to face | E.g. There will be an emphasis on information gathered from wider professionals and LA database.  | Social Worker  | Mother  | **Drugs, Alcohol, violence and Criminal History** Session seeks to gain information into any current and historic substance misuse or criminal history.  |
| 1 and a half hours | Skype Call/ Video Call / Face to face |  | Social Worker  | Father  | **Drugs, Alcohol, Violence and Criminal History**Session seeks to gain information into any current and historic substance misuse or criminal history. |
| 2 and a half hours  | Skype Call/ Video Call / Face to face |  | Social Worker Consultant Social Worker | Mother | **Self-Identity and Perception and perception of Parenting** Exploration into the parents’ identity, self-esteem and perception of themselves.What is the parents understanding of their role as a parent. Exploration of their strengths, weaknesses and experiences of parenting so far. |
| 2 and a half hours  | Skype Call/ Video Call / Face to face | E.g. Purposeful activities with movement through the house will be planned for the session to understand each individual’s style of parenting, and gain a picture of the household in different parts of the house. | Social Worker Consultant Social Worker | Father  | **Self-Identity and Perception and Perception and perception of Parenting**Exploration into the parents Identify, self-esteem and perception of themselves. What is the parents understanding of their role as a parent. Exploration of their strengths, weaknesses and experiences of parenting so far. |
| 2 hours  | Skype Call/ Video Call / Face to face |  | Social Worker Consultant Social Worker | Both Parents | **Perception of Children**How is the child perceived by their parents; an exploration into the parents relationship with him. **Parenting and the needs of Children** What is the parents understanding of child’s physical, emotional and developmental needs both now and in the future?  |
| 2 and a half hours  | Skype Call/ Video Call / Face to face |  | Social Worker | Mother  | **Experiences of Childhood and Previous relationships and Perception of Partner.** What are the parent’s experiences of being parented? Their life history and experiences, and their understanding of how this has impacted on their own parenting. |
| 2 and a half hours  | Skype Call/ Video Call / Face to face |  | Social Worker  | Father  | **Experiences of Child hood, Previous relationships and Perception of Partner.** What are the parent’s experiences of being parented? Their life history and experiences, and their understanding of how this has impacted on their own parenting. |
| 2 hours  | Skype Call/ Video Call / Face to face |  | Social Worker  | Both Parents | **Current Relationship**Insight into how child’s parents function in a relationship and the impact their relationship can have on him.  |
| 2 hours  | Skype Call/ Video Call / Face to face |  | Social Worker  | Both Parents | **Parental Mental Health** To explore the parents’ current mental health, support services involved and the impact this could have on meeting their child’s needs.  |
| 1 hour  | Skype Call/ Video Call / Face to face |  | Social Worker | Both Parents | **Finances and Home Conditions** Is the home environment suitable for the safe care of their child? |
| 1 and a half hours | Skype Call/ Video Call / Face to face |  | Social Worker | Both Parents | **Overview of Assessment** Review any potential gaps, or clarify understanding and identify any areas of ongoing need.  |

The parenting assessment will include case discussions with the team manager and consultant social worker. The parenting plan reflects some sessions may be taking place over skype/telephone conference calls due to the impact of COVID-19, however should changes take place with government guidance then these sessions will take place fact-to-face. In addition to this I will endeavour to supervise three contacts in the community or children’s centre to observe the parent’s, although with the current restrictions on face-to-face contact due to COVID-19 this is likely to be delayed.

Signed:

Position:

Dated: