



# A Good Practice Guide for Social Workers

## *ASSESSMENT, PLANNING AND INTERVENTION*

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This guidance is written for social care practitioners setting out the principles of effective assessment, planning and intervention; how we will work with families who need help and protection and how this help should best be delivered.

### What is a Good Assessment?

Assessment is at the centre of good social work practice. Its purpose is to understand a child and family's situation and identify areas where help or protection is needed. This process is on-going, as the practitioner will continually reconsider the nature of the issue and the effectiveness of the approaches chosen to address it. In this respect assessment, planning and intervention co-exist.

It is important from the outset to be clear why an assessment is necessary. When assessments are undertaken without adequate preparation and without a clear sense of purpose and direction they are unlikely to produce good quality information and analysis on which the planning and intervention will be based.

The core approach to assessment and intervention in Birmingham is a **strengths-based approach**. This approach treats all family members, whatever the concerns, with respect and unconditional positive regard and recognises that the families are the experts in their own experience. The practitioner aims to work alongside the family to agree what the issues are and what needs to be done to address them. It is important to be clear about the changes and outcomes that are to be achieved. This approach to assessment seeks to understand a family's resilience both from their personal resources and from the wider networks and communities in which they live, always being mindful of the safety and welfare of the child. Working with a family's strengths helps ensure that an enabling focus on help is maintained and that the values of social work are promoted.

A good assessment will:

- Pay attention to what children and family members say;
- Be informed by the family's history and social context;

- Be critically reflective and evidence based, forming hypotheses and testing them against the evidence;
- Contain full, concise, relevant and accurate information;
- Consider multiple sources of information;
- Take a holistic view and not be solely preoccupied by the most visible or pressing incident or presenting problem;
- Ensure that the strengths (protective factors) and difficulties (potential dangers) within the family are understood;
- Recognise the risks of harm and make proportionate and balanced recommendations in response to them;
- Be rooted in an understanding of child development.
- Lead to open problem-solving dialogue with family and where necessary a clear plan.
- Be timely.

### **What is a Good Plan?**

A good plan is based on a good assessment. Planning for children and their families is a critical part of the intervention. For a plan to be effective, all those involved in it should understand and accept it. The plan therefore needs to be clearly written so that everyone understands their role and how this will be evaluated. A plan should also be dynamic; each review should consider what has changed in the family situation since the previous review, what support and direct social work has been carried out and to what extent this has taken forward the aims of the plan.

A good plan will set out:

- The changes/outcomes to be achieved;
- What needs to be done to achieve them;
- How this will be evaluated;
- Who will be responsible for what;
- What the time frame for the plan will be and how often it will be reviewed;
- What will happen if the plan does not work.

## How to Intervene

Arguably the most important skill when intervening with a family is the use of self. The capacity of a social worker to relate to others and their problems is their most valuable asset; it is the quality of relationship between the social worker and the family that has been proven to be the strongest predictor of good outcomes. Good helping relationships are ultimately about good human relations in general – treating others with kindness, showing respect, empathy and positive regard; being honest and appropriately challenging; striving to understand and work collaboratively; persevering and being creative to overcome barriers and mistrust.

Our core values are based on good partnership working. The core values that underpin an effective helping relationship are as follows:

- People can change.
- Interventions are a *partnership* between the social worker and the family.
- Recognising the significance of culture and how personal values and history can impact upon the helping relationship.
- Families will very often possess the resilience and resources necessary to overcome the problems at hand.
- The misuse of power will always undermine the quality of a helping relationship.

## Further Reading

[Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018](#)  
[HCPC Standards](#)  
[Framework for Assessment](#)  
[Munro Review of Child Protection 2011](#)  
[No Recourse to Public Funds Network](#)