



## **Age Assessment Model Information Sharing Proforma – Home Office and Local Authorities**

### **Home Office Introduction**

Accurate age assessments are important to protect properly those who are genuinely children and to prevent abuse of the asylum system and the children's social care system. The process of assessing age is made more difficult by the fact that many asylum applicants who claim to be children are not in possession of any documentary or other evidence which supports their claimed age.

If the Home Office has any doubt about whether an individual is a child or an adult, the individual will be given the benefit of the doubt; and will be referred to the relevant local authority for a careful assessment of their age. In recognition of the particular expertise local authorities have developed through working with children, it is the Home Office policy to give prominence to an age assessment by a local authority; as long as it is compliant with key case law, including Merton (B v London Borough of Merton [2003] EWHC 1689) and subsequent case law. This may be referred to as a "Merton compliant age assessment" or "case law compliant age assessment".

The Home Office is committed to improving the age assessment process and works closely with the Department for Education, which leads on the relationship with local authorities, and with the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS). The Home Office worked collaboratively with ADCS in the production of the information sharing proforma which sets out the minimum standard of information to be provided in order to convey the outcome of age assessments to the Home Office. This level of information is crucial in helping the Home Office to carry out its necessary immigration functions whilst fulfilling its duty to safeguard children.

This proforma sets out the minimum information required to inform the Home Office of the outcome of the age assessment. Local authorities can continue to provide information which goes beyond the requirements of this proforma, particularly if this is in the interests of safeguarding or for the court arena.

## **Age Assessment Information Sharing for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children: explanation and guidance**

This guidance note, model information sharing proforma and information sharing consent form have been drafted by the ADCS Asylum Task Force in consultation with Home Office (then UKBA) and other stakeholders.

These documents are offered as practice guidance, by way of assistance to local authorities and their partners. The use of the proforma and consent form is voluntary. The content does not, nor does it seek to, be binding on local authorities. It is simply a recommended approach.

The Information Sharing Proforma (Point 1 below) supersedes section 8 of the *Joint Working Protocol between UKBA (formerly IND) and ADCS (formerly ADSS) 2005*. Since 2013, UKBA has become part of the Home Office (*the term used below*) with functions shared between UK Visas and Immigration and Immigration Enforcement directorates.

### **1 Information Sharing Proforma:**

- 1.1 This deals with sharing the contents of the report and provides an update in line with current practice and has been agreed by the Home Office, after wide consultation.
- 1.2 The Information Sharing Proforma introduces an 'abridged' or 'summary' version of the substantive report. It is set out much more like a witness statement than the substantive report. It **replaces the single sheet 'back page'** used to notify the Home Office of the outcome of an age assessment and is all that is generally required within the existing arrangements. It also requires a supervising manager's signature.
- 1.3 The 'back page' has not, for some time, met Home Office requirements for case owners to be assured that an age assessment has been carried out in a thorough and lawful way (Merton compliant).
- 1.4 It should help resolve the debate that often arises between Home Office staff and social workers. This should enable the requirements of both parties to be met by Local Authorities sharing sufficient information, without including aspects which may touch on credibility, for example, or raise other issues of data protection.
- 1.5 This proforma has been piloted in several areas of the country in various forms over the last three years and has been shown to be a welcome initiative in this complex area of practice for Local Authority social workers, case owners and presenting officers.

### **2 Information Sharing Consent Form**

- 2.1 This form reflects the requirements of case law to ensure that persons undergoing age assessments have the process explained to them and as far as possible develop an understanding of its purpose and significance.
- 2.2 One of the requirements is for an *appropriate adult* (sometimes referred to as a *responsible adult* or an *independent observer*) to be present. It is expected that assessing social workers will be able to assist with arranging this. If the person undergoing assessment decides to go ahead with out this facility, the reasons should be clearly stated.
- 2.3 Some Councils may use their advocacy service for looked after children or make specific arrangements for age assessments.
- 2.4 The appropriate adult role is defined as follows:
- *Providing support, advice and assistance during interview process*
  - *Ensure fairness and to point it out if they think this is not happening*
  - *Not an interpreter but should form a view on whether effective communication is taking place*
  - *The person understands the process and what is happening to them.*
- 2.5 The form should assist practitioners in establishing a sound basis at the outset of an age assessment.
- 2.6 It is also suggested that this should form part of the record surrounding an age assessment and may also be shared with the Home Office.

Both documents are in a Word format which will enable them to be copied and saved as required.

### AGE ASSESSMENT INFORMATION SHARING CONSENT FORM

The purpose of this assessment is to assess your age in order to establish if you are considered a child as defined by the Children Act (1989 & 2004).

**Name**.....  
**Address**.....  
.....

The full age assessment will be shared with your legal representative if requested. The summary and conclusion will be made available to Home Office (UK Visas and Immigration) through an agreed proforma. There may be circumstances in which the full age assessment will be shared with the Home Office for example in the event that your case enters the court arena or in the interest of safeguarding.

As part of the age assessment process I agree to the assessors contacting any person / agency in order to request information that might assist this process.

Please specify any individual/agency that you do not wish assessors to contact if any, as part of this age assessment.

.....

You are able to have an Independent Observer (adult) present during the age assessment and the Council will facilitate this.

I wish to proceed with an independent person present      Yes/No \*

The name and status of the independent person/ If \*No, state reason:

.....

The assessment took place in..... language.

This form has been interpreted to me in .....language.

I confirm that I have understood the interpreter clearly      Yes /No

Signature:.....      Date:.....

Person does not wish to sign consent form      (Please tick)     

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**Model Information Sharing Proforma**

**(Insert YOUR Local Authority)**

**and the Home Office**

regarding

**OUTCOME OF AGE ASSESSMENT**

**FOR**

*' full names and any aka',  
country of origin (delete grey text)*

**Claimed Date of Birth :**

**Names of Assessing Workers:**

**Date Assessment Completed:**

**1. The assessment was undertaken by :**

*Worker A –Status, qualifications, experience– state if differential roles assigned eg lead worker.(delete grey text)*

*Worker B- Status, qualifications, experience (delete grey text)*

**2. Outline of dates of interviews, venue, who present: including interpreter and any independent person**

**3. Summary of process:**

*(should include)*

- *Informed of reasons for interview*
- *Advocacy*

*Demonstrate that it has been conducted in a way that conforms to Merton and other relevant case law/guidance –(delete grey text)*

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**4. Other sources of information, including other age assessments that have been taken into consideration.**

**5. Conclusion on age issue**

*conclusion taken from substantive report. Should briefly summarise and analyse information and should concur with substantive report. (delete grey text)*

**6. Outcome – how shared and opportunity provided to check or challenge information included**

*Note whether copy provided to solicitor - attach copy of consent document (delete grey text)*

**7. Assessed Date of Birth:**

**8. Date new age/DoB effective from:**

**9. Signed by both assessing workers**

**10. Endorsement of Manager/Supervisor:**

*I am in agreement with the conclusion of the assessment and confirm that the assessment process has been lawfully conducted and complies with guidance arising from the Merton Judgement and subsequent case law.*

Name:

Status:

Signed:

Date:

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