

Joint Protocol: Working with Parents with a Disability or Impairment: 1 Minute Guide

Protocol Aims and Principles

The protocol is a guidance document for all Devon County Council social care staff to improve working together between Adult and Childrens services where a parent/carer of a child has a disability or impairment which may affect their capacity to parent to a good enough standard.

When Should it be Used?

When a parent/carer's **learning or physical disability; long term illness; sensory impairment or Autism/Asperger's Syndrome** affects or is likely to affect their capacity to meet the needs of children in the family and requires assessment or services in relation to their disability/impairment.

Key Messages:

- There are no separate referral pathways for parents with disability or impairment.
- Children and Adults Services should start working together to plan and coordinate assessments and actions as soon as it is recognised both the child(ren) and an adult in the family are open to Devon Social Care.
- Parents with a disability/impairment have the same rights as all parents regarding consultation where it concerns their child.
- It is essential all workers involved are mindful of the need for reasonable adjustments and the time needed to facilitate effective communication with these individuals as part of an assessments and any planning/actions that follow. Helpful information on facilitating communication can be found [here](#).
- Practitioners working with parents with a learning disability should consider the [good practice guidance](#) on working with parents with a learning disability.

Assessments:

Each service will continue to undertake assessments according to their required procedures. When doing so, the following principles apply;

- Adult's Services have responsibilities for assessment and care planning when there are no safeguarding concerns and where the parent needs assistance with the routine tasks of looking after children.
- Adult's and Children's Services should jointly coordinate assessment and care planning where parents need support for the medium to long-term to enable them to meet their children's developmental needs.
- Children's Services lead assessment and planning (with specialist input from Adult's Services) where intervention is required to prevent children suffering significant harm or where children's needs are complex and/or there is a disabled child in the family.

Information Sharing Between Services:

- Chronologies of both child and adult
- Previous assessments (e.g. risk, single, specialist, parenting)
- Identification of any disability/impairment of parent(s) and their support needs to ensure capacity issues are identified and/or appropriate assessment tools are used
- Communication needs of the parent(s)
- Identification of the advocate or unmet need for an advocate.
- Any information pertaining to the risk of harm to child(ren) from the parent(s)
- The need for joint meetings with parents to support them in understanding processes.

Resources and Funding:

Where funding for support may be required the plan will be specific about the purpose, source and timescale and any other relevant aspect. Under the Joint Working Protocol, clear individual agency responsibilities and eligibility thresholds will continue for their respective service users.

Capacity and Other Psychological/Psychiatric Assessments to Formally Diagnose Learning Disability/Impairment of Functioning

It may be necessary for a person to have an assessment regarding their level of learning disability, including capacity to agree to Section 20 Children Act 1989, voluntary care arrangements for a child and capacity to conduct proceedings before or during care proceedings.

Requests for such an assessment will be considered by the Children's Locality Panel. Such assessments are not within the remit of the Devon Partnership Trust (DPT) Learning Disability specialist health teams, and therefore alternative arrangements must be made for these assessments to be commissioned by Children's Services. DPT Learning Disability services only conduct such assessments if there are clinical reasons.

Where a psychological/psychiatric assessment is required, the adult worker is to be consulted regarding any relevant information they may hold and the letter of instruction.

Legal Advice:

Adult Services will not provide any statement to the court or opinion to the parent's solicitor without:

- Being directed to do so by the court and
- Taking legal advice from Devon County Council's Legal Department
- Sharing their draft statement with their manager for quality assurance and with the social worker in children's social care.

Referral Pathways to Adult Services

CDP North: 01392 381208 (option 1)

Email: cdpnorthernassessmentreviewteam-mailbox@devon.gov.uk

CDP South: Tel 01392 381211 option 1

Email: cdpsouthernassessmentreviewteam-mailbox@devon.gov.uk

CDP East: Tel 01392 381206 option 1

Email: cdpeasternassessmentreviewteam-mailbox@devon.gov.uk

Devon Adults Sensory Team (DCC) 01392 383000 ask for *Sensory Team* or through [Care Direct Plus](#)

Devon Autism & ADHD Team (DCC) 01392 383000 ask for *Autism / ADHD team*

Devon Autism & ADHD Team (Diagnostic team: Devon Partnership Trust (DPT) 01392674250 - e-mail: dpn-tr.ASC@nhs.net

Royal College of Psychiatry – free information leaflets www.rcpsych.ac.uk

UK NICE Guidelines on ADHD in children, young people and adults and www.adders.org

ADDISS The National Attention Deficit Disorder Information and Support Services www.addiss.co.uk

ADHD Foundation www.adhdfoundation.org.uk

Sensory staff can also signpost to appropriate agencies for further help and advice. <https://new.devon.gov.uk/care-and-health/disabilities/physical-sensory/sensory-disability-services/>

RNIB: <http://www.rnib.org.uk/information-everyday-living-family-friends-and-carers/resources-blind-or-partially-sighted-parents>

Visionaware – American organisation but has some useful info on all aspects of parenting: <http://www.visionaware.org/info/emotional-support/for-family-and-friends/introduction-to-blind-parenting-series/123>

The **Communication toolkit** on DCC website can provide information on how to produce other formats, such as Braille: <https://inside.devon.gov.uk/task/providing-alternative-formats-and-communication-support/suppliers/>

Action On Hearing Loss (formally RNID) A source of information about Hearing loss and Deafness including benefits, communication support and assistive technology
<https://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/live-well/products-and-technology/>