**Why are you having an assessment?**

Either you, or someone else on your behalf, has asked for help with an issue which affects your child (children) or they may be worried about you and / or your child (children).

**What is a Child and Family Assessment?**

To help us in our work with you, we need to know more about you and your family. A social worker, with help from you, your family and other agencies, will gather information about you.

In most cases your family’s written consent will be needed before we speak to your children, other people or other agencies. If we go ahead without your consent, we will explain to you why we have done this and under which section of the Children Act 1989 we are allowed to do this. This process of getting to understand the situation, needs and wishes of your child and family is called a ‘Child and Family Assessment’.

A Child and Family Assessment helps to identify with you what support you and your family might need and who could best give this help.

**How long will it take?**

A Child and Family Assessment is completed when there is enough information to make a decision about what support you may need and must not take more than 45 working days. However, the length and depth of the assessment will be agreed by your child’s social worker with their manager and this will be discussed with you.

If we are going to continue with the assessment beyond 10 days, a meeting will be arranged for us to discuss with you, and all the other agencies who are involved what additional information is needed to complete a more in depth Child and Family Assessment. This meeting will also agree on a plan of action and support to complete the assessment and provide support you may already require.

During our involvement with your family, we may need to update the Child and Family Assessment to reflect the current situation.

**How can you help us?**

Most parents want to do their best for their child (children). Completing the assessment will help your child’s social worker recognise the strengths you and your family have, as well as any areas of difficulty.

**How is a Child and Family Assessment carried out?**

Your child’s social worker will meet with you, your child/children and other family members a number of times. They will also talk to other people and professionals to gather and share relevant information to complete the Child and Family Assessment. They will always do this in a way that helps you to have your say and encourages you to take part. Where children are old enough to take part in the assessment, the social worker will help and encourage them to do so.

The social worker will work with you to make sure you are able to be involved in the assessment, making arrangements and adaptations to enable you to be involved. Whether that is by arranging an interpreter to help us communicate with you in your first language or by ensuring visits or meetings are at a venue that is accessible for you. Should you have any concerns or worries about being able to take part in the assessment please speak to your child’s social worker who will do all they can to support you.

Once the Child and Family assessment is written you will have the chance to read it and add your comments before it is then signed off by the manager of your child’s social worker. You will then receive a copy of the Child and Family Assessment. If you need it translated into another language or any other help to be able to read and understand the assessment this can be arranged for you.

**What can you expect of us?**

We will listen carefully to what you have to say, offer advice and, if appropriate, support you to care for your children and deal with any areas of difficulty.

We will keep you informed about what we are doing and thinking.

With a little help most families can sort out their difficulties and our aim is to help you do that.

**What happens after the assessment is completed?**

After the assessment has been completed a decision will be made as to what happens next. This could be:

* No further action is needed by Northampton Children’s Trust and our involvement will close
* Your family may be referred to another agency for some support or advice, this could be Northampton Children’s Trust Early Help Service or an external agency.
* You may need a further period of social work support under either a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan. Your child’s social worker will explain this to you

**What do you do with my information?**

Your written consent to share information about you with other relevant people and agencies is important. Your child’s social worker will discuss this with you. You will be asked to sign a consent form and you should be given a copy of this to keep.

We will record any relevant information we gather on computer records. Under data protection legislation, parents, carers and children have the right to request access to information that we hold on them. To make a request for your personal information please contact:

FOI/Data Protection Team
Northamptonshire Children’s Trust
One Angel Square
Northampton
NN1 1ED

Email: Dataprotection@westnorthants.gov.uk

Phone: 01604 368 360

We treat any information you give us in confidence within the Trust, among those needing to know. If we need to discuss it with anyone else, we will usually ask your permission. The only exception is if we get information that suggests there are child protection issues. Your child’s social worker will discuss this with you.

**Compliments and Complaints**

We welcome your feedback on the service we give to you and your family, all feedback is read and used to improve the services we provide to children and families.

You may want to compliment a service which has really helped or an individual staff member who has made a difference and helped you and your family. We welcome comments on how the service can be improved.

If you have a complaint about a service or a member of staff, we hope you can speak to them or their manager to address the issue however if you are not satisfied with the response or are unable to do this please contact the team who will support you in the complaints process and ensuring your voice is heard.

**Telephone us**

0300 126 7000

**Write to us**

Compliments, Comments and Complaints Team

West Northamptonshire Council

One Angel Square

Angel Street

Northampton

NN1 1ED

**Email us**

myfeedback@westnorthants.gov.uk

**Contact Details**

Social Worker Name …………………………………………………………………………………………

Team …………………………………………………………………………………………………………………

Phone Number …………………………………………………………………………………………………

Team Manager Name ………………………………………………………………………………………

**Emergency Duty Team Contact Details** (for emergencies outside of normal working hours) 01604 626938

Working Hours are Monday – Thursday 9am – 5.30 pm, Friday 9am – 5pm