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**Parenting Assessment including Pre-Birth, Support and Intervention Practice Guidance**

1. **Foreword**

A parenting and pre-birth assessment should be a holistic assessment which explores a parent(s), or primary carer’s ability to provide safe care for their child/ren and meet their immediate and long-term care needs. The right approach and intervention at the right time can strengthen relationships for children and minimise the possible impact of trauma.

This guidance aims to promote the Trust’s over-arching practice model through relationship-based and trauma informed practice. Relationship-based practice promotes a strengths-based, systemic approach to working in partnership with children, young people and their families.

This practice guidance is relevant to unborn children or at any point in the child’s journey. An assessment must be seen by all as an opportunity to provide timely and effective help and support (intervention) to improve the child’s current and future lived experience. The identification of needs and provision of help and support should happen as soon as possible during the assessment.

1. **Preparation for a parenting assessment and planning at child in need, core group and care planning meetings.**

Once it has been identified that a parenting assessment is needed for a child or young person, it is important that everyone involved with the child; parents, extended family/friends, family support services and other professionals are able to contribute to the plan of assessment, intervention and support. To achieve this the following steps are recommended:

* There should be a reflective discussion in supervision with your team manager regarding any parenting assessment and intervention.
* A family group conference should have been held, or a referral should be made at the beginning of the assessment.
* Parenting assessments should be completed during periods of child protection planning, prior to legal planning meetings and before entering pre-proceedings, or care proceedings.
* You must consider if the parents are presenting as a couple or individually.
* Child in need, core group or care planning meetings should be used to support the planning of the assessment and intervention.
* You need to consider equality, diversity and inclusion throughout your intervention. You must consider if there are any communication needs, learning needs, or capacity issues that need to be considered in the work with the family. Is a PAMS assessment more appropriate to the family’s needs.
* A separate child impact chronology needs to be completed which provides key incidents, significant events, support and interventions that have been offered to the family. Outcomes also need to be recorded.
* Draft some key questions that the assessment should cover, to guide your overall assessment.
* Assessment planning should ideally take place at child in need, core group and care planning meetings.
* Both parents can attend the same meeting if safe to do so. Use separate meetings if not.
* The child or young person where appropriate can attend, if not, ensure their wishes and feelings are gained for this meeting and throughout the assessment.
* Key agencies e.g. education, health, family support services etc. need to be in attendance and contribute to the assessment and provision of help and support.
* At least two to three child in need, core group or care planning meetings should be scheduled over a 12 – 14 week period whilst the assessment and intervention is completed. This will allow enough time for change in parenting capacity to be measured by the multi-agency group.
* Safety planning needs to be considered at each stage of the intervention.
* A copy of the assessment plan should be made available to the family and the multi-agency group involved in the assessment and provision of help and support at the earliest opportunity.

1. **The planning and intervention conversations to be had with children, young people, families and professionals:**

* What the family feel they are doing well.
* The issues identified by all as needing to be assessed.
* What areas of family life the family need support in changing?
* How would the family like the assessment workers to work with them?
* What have the family appreciated in the past from workers who they have found supportive / helpful?
* All to agree on which elements of the assessment will be the responsibility of the social worker, which elements are the responsibility of the other professionals and which aspects will be covered jointly.
* Agreement on expected behaviour of all involved.
* Assessment and intervention tools that will form part of the intervention should be recorded and explained to the child’s family and form part of the child’s plan.
* There should be regular communication between the family, the social worker and the other professionals throughout the assessment and intervention.
* Dates, times and venues of sessions should be agreed, to include unannounced visits and visits that cover the lived experience of the child e.g. early mornings, bedtime/ evening routines, daytime behaviours observations will be needed. This should be recorded and form part of the statutory visit requirements and contribute to the child’s plan.
* It should be made clear to the family what the consequences could be if the intervention is not completed or is not working.
* The family should be informed how they can report their own concerns if intervention is not being completed how they thought it was going to be.

1. **Reviewing and finalising the assessment and intervention.**

* At the halfway point. All involved in the assessment and intervention should meet to discuss and review the progress and discuss the support and adapting the plan if needed to resolve any difficulties.
* It is the responsibility of all professionals to bring together their own analysis from the information they have gathered from their own interventions.
* The **draft analysis should be summarised by all the professionals and** **be recorded in the child in need, core group or care planning meeting**. It should be evidenced that there has been a discussion with child and the family.
* The **midpoint review** should be finalising the next stage of assessment, intervention and planning with clear aims and objectives. The family will be clear on what support and assistance they need to make changes and reduce the risk to the child/ren
* **Any further extensions** should be agreed whilst keeping in mind the child’s permanency plan, timescales and safety. The maximum length for a parenting assessment should be 12 weeks.
* The **outcome of the final meeting** should be making clear recommendations on the next stages to inform the child’s plan.
* The family should have a final copy of the assessment 2 weeks after the final child in need, core group or care planning meeting.
* The family should be able to understand your conclusions and recommendations.

1. **The recording of the assessment and interventions**

Ensure that recordings from assessment interventions are accurately captured on Eclipse. This is a child’s story and assessment sessions may contribute to significant decisions about their life. The child should be able to understand, if they were to view their file later, what the concerns were, what the intervention was and what decisions were made by whom and why.

1. **Further Reading and Practice Guidance – Use the Links Below**

* [*Conform: Conducting a Parenting Assessment to Safeguard Children*](https://www.ccinform.co.uk/practice-guidance/parenting-assessments/)by Jon Symonds. (A detailed understanding of what parenting assessments should cover, and the models and frameworks of ‘parenting’ used in statutory and court assessments).
* [*Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and Their Family*](https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130404002518/https:/www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/Framework%20for%20the%20assessment%20of%20children%20in%20need%20and%20their%20families.pdf)
* [*Guided Parenting Tasks: Assessment Tool*](https://www.ccinform.co.uk/practice-guidance/tool-guided-parenting-tasks/)
* [*https://proceduresonline.com/trixcms2/media/4738/pre-birth-assessments-v4ld-020221.pdf*](https://proceduresonline.com/trixcms2/media/4738/pre-birth-assessments-v4ld-020221.pdf)
* [*https://intranet.birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk/downloads/file/2156/director\_of\_practice\_webinar\_-\_pre-birth\_assessments\_6\_october\_2020*](https://intranet.birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk/downloads/file/2156/director_of_practice_webinar_-_pre-birth_assessments_6_october_2020)

1. **Parenting and Pre-birth Assessment Template can be found here:**



1. **A supervision tool - Assessment checklist for social workers and team managers when quality assuring their assessments and interventions.**

