**** **Short Assessments**

**Practice Guidance**

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**Introduction**

Short assessments have been introduced in the Strengthening Independence Service for some families to have their needs assessed in a more proportionate way. This approach is in line with the new Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 guidance which also supports the use of staff who have qualifications other than social work undertaking assessments as the lead practitioner.

This guidance is aimed at helping practitioners understand what a short assessment is, in what circumstances it should be used and what to include.

# Principles

The guiding principles of the work with families and children are:

* Building on families’ existing resources with a culture of high aspiration and empathy.
* Building family wellbeing and resilience that leads to sustained change.
* Listening to the voice/communication of children and families and using their voice/communication to shape our support.
* Joining up services to support families at the right time, in the right way and in the right place.
* Supporting families to work together in the child’s best interest.
* Working with consent.

**What is a short assessment**?

A short assessment will assess need and the best way for this to be met.

A short assessment is a scaled down assessment that requires only key information to be gathered in order to determine a child and their family’s needs for specific resources. Should a more holistic assessment be required, or where there are parenting or safeguarding concerns, then a Child and Family Assessment will be undertaken. The short assessment encompasses the following.

* A move away from ‘one size fits all’ C&F assessments to professional judgement based on needs and outcomes desired
* Encourages the use of the wider family network, existing community support and use of the Local Offer
* Focuses on IMPACT of needs on the child and in their family context, rather than the diagnostic label
* Enables families to access the support they need through a proportionate, tailored assessment approach
* Involves a wider group of staff, not just social work qualified undertaking assessments
* A short assessment is intended to be concise with a focus on key information. If detailed information needs to be gathered and considered a decision should be made to undertake a Child and Family Assessment instead.

**Decision to undertake a short assessment**

The decision to undertake a short assessment will be made by a Team Manager following a referral from the Front Door Service or as an updated assessment following review for an open case where appropriate.

A short assessment can be undertaken by a Social Work Assistant and will be overseen by a Senior Social Work Assistant, Senior Practitioner or Team Manager.

If circumstances change or new information comes to light, the Team Manager can decide to change to a Child and Family Assessment.

The short assessment template is found in the Forms section on Liberi.

Strengthening Independence Service

Short Assessment

**Some examples of situations where a short assessment would be completed**

**Some examples of situations where a short assessment would not**

 **be completed but a Child and Family Assessment would be completed**

**What to include in a short assessment**

Clear rationale for undertaking a short assessment

* An example being that there are no current parenting concerns that require a Child and Family Assessment.

Genogram

* It can include hand drawn genogram which can be uploaded on to Documents.

Link to guidance about genograms [Guidance for the use of case summaries, chronologies and genograms](https://www.proceduresonline.com/trixcms2/media/20457/case-summaries-chronologies-and-genograms-final-oct.docx)

Chronology

* To begin with from birth of eldest child
* Summary of child and family history
* Include previous or current professional involvement

Link to guidance about genograms [Guidance for the use of case summaries, chronologies and genograms](https://www.proceduresonline.com/trixcms2/media/20457/case-summaries-chronologies-and-genograms-final-oct.docx)

What is going well and what is the impact (strengths to be built on)

* Link to strengths based practice information in the Appendix and Core Skills Section on Delta <https://www.delta-learning.com/course/view.php?id=1910>

Desired outcomes

* Be really clear about the outcomes that the child and their family would like from any intervention or support, and what resources will be needed to meet the outcomes, which will help to inform the Plan. The resources may be community resources, people, services, or finance.
* What changes need to take place (including any worries, what they scaled and impact) in order to meet the outcomes.

Case summary

* Significant information about child and family, including:
* Professional network and contact details
* Updated every 6 months or if any significant changes, transfer of worker or closure (This divergence of timescale from usual practice will bring it into line with the 6 monthly review cycle and is proportionate to the level of intervention).

**What not to include in a short assessment**

Information that is not relevant to determining the needs and desired outcome.

For example, parents’ history including their experiences of being parented.

**Who to include in a short assessment**

**Child** - the child’s voice/communication is key and remains important for this to be heard, understood and influencing their plan. The assessment should be written to the child. For further guidance see Writing to the Child Guidance on KPON

Direct Work and Communication Resources can be found on Kent Academy

**Parents** - ensure the views of both parents are included, particularly if the child is not resident with both parents. There is a helpful Practice Bulletin for information about working with fathers, that can be found on Kent Academy.

** Education** - although a short assessment is intended to be proportionate in terms of information gathering children spend most of their time when not at home in education and the education provider may be noticing things which are important to understand and can provide access to resources and support with communication. Therefore, the information they provide needs to be gathered and considered.

<https://www.proceduresonline.com/trixcms2/media/18945/conducting-visits-to-children-during-school-hours.docx>

**Health**

Information from health professionals involved with the child may be key to understanding the child’s needs eg diagnostic letters from a paediatrician or specialist consultant, therapists’ involvement, children’s nursing.

**Other Support**

There may be other support already in place, either from the wider family network, or community resources, and it will be important to understand what support or resources are already available to the child and their family.

**Timescales for a short assessment**

**Management Oversight of a short assessment**

The key elements of management oversight of a short assessment include the following.

The Child in Need Plan should be used following the Short Assessment, and request for support processed in the usual way if required. The review of the plan will be carried out on a 6-monthly basis unless circumstances change and an earlier review is required,

On completion of the assessment, ensure there is a Case Summary completed and a record of involvement as outlined below.

# Purposeful Case Notes

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| --- |
| **Reason for CONTACT:**Identify the aim and purpose of the home visit.Is the AIM of the home visit LINKED to the PLAN? |
| **DETAILED NOTES:**Who was present, seen and where?Was the child seen, seen alone and if not, why not?Wishes and feelings obtained.What did you discuss and observe in the home visit?Progress of the plan |
| **ANALYSIS:**This is the “making sense of” or drawing out the “meaning” of all the information available for the child or young person and their family.The critical thinking involved in analysis enables you to move beyond a list of issues to examine the interaction between them, any cumulative effect and the protective factors and determine the challenges and needs to be addressed. |
| **ACTIONS:**What action is to be taken?By whom, by when and how is this to be measured.Any changes to the agreed plan? |

# Cancelling a Short Assessment

The guidance for cancelling a short assessment is the same as that for a Child and Family Assessment. If a Short Assessment needs to be ended before completion use the appropriate outcome option and note that it is cancelled and the reason, such as withdrawal of consent, or need to step up to Child and Family Assessment.

# Short Assessment Flowchart

 