Completing a family assessment

**Read me first!**

This is a guide for how to do a decent basic assessment. How you do assessments will change depending on the type of assessment you are doing/circumstances, and as you gain experience as a social worker, and you will find your own ways of working, tools, questions and more.

Throughout this document there are references to tools. Most of these are stored in the practice guidance alongside this guide. The rest are either from Research in Practice or Community Care Inform. We’ve provided links to both but you will need to create an account and log in to access them. You can create free accounts if your local authority has subscribed to them (most have).

Remember that the success of the assessment you complete and any intervention that follows will have much to do with the relationship you manage to form with the family. You need to strive to be fair, firm and friendly – respectful, polite, reliable, clear and honest. There will be reasons why this family are struggling (if they are) and if you have gone through what the family members have gone through, you would likely be struggling too – perhaps even more than they are.

Don’t wait for the end of your assessment to put support in place to address things you have found out about – don’t just focus on the presenting concern. Think about referring to parenting courses, reducing isolation, helping children and parents into hobbies/clubs, counselling, getting wider family involved, dealing with domestic abuse or drugs/alcohol or mental health etc. as you go.

Don’t rely on self-reporting. If a parent tells you they do something, ask to (or try to) see it, or think how you can test and triangulate what you are being told.

Try and end each session well, on a positive note pointing out strengths and with asking if they have any questions for you or things they’d like to add.

If you are concerned that the parent has signs of a learning disability (especially struggling to understand what’s being said or to explain themselves, difficulties concentrating or paying attention or recalling information, struggles in picking up on cues, or the pace at which they can learn or react seems very slow) then speak to your team manager for advice on what to do. It’s especially important to make sure parents understand what you are saying by asking parents to repeat things back to you in their own words. A high proportion of the parents we work with have learning difficulties or a learning disability and we work with people when they are vulnerable, distressed or struggling, so it’s a good rule of thumb to keep things as simple as possible and check understanding.

As with any social work assessment, it’s also really important to acknowledge that we aren’t just setting out to identify problems and to present our conclusions to managers or courts. We need to do assessments collaboratively with parents as far as we can, and to see not only what insight parents may have into their problems and what services they may want to help them, but to try and help them develop insight into their children and their own challenges and difficulties and the causes and impacts of these, and then see what we can put in place to help them move on and change. Assessments should be as much about collaborating with parents as it is identifying problems. If they have been brave enough to open up to us, we need to ensure we try and honour that courage and make it lead to something positive for them if we can.

Doing a family assessment – the process

1. Read and print off the referral and details of all household/family members we already know about. If the family are from a community or background you don’t know about, research this in advance or ask a colleague for support. [Community Care Inform](https://www.ccinform.co.uk/?s=culture+and+customs) has a series of guides to different cultures for social workers (or you can google this issue).
2. Read the lateral checks already received and send off for any additional ones. Think about the police, probation, prisons, mental health, health, housing, voluntary sector, drugs/alcohol services, domestic abuse, family support worker, children’s centre, education, other local authorities (if the family have lived in other areas) etc. This will need to be kept under review throughout the assessment process.
3. You need to understand the history of this family. Firstly, read the previous assessments/any chronology/summary of the history on the file. Depending on your assessment, you will then need to either update the chronology/summary of the history, or make one. If one already exists, you will need to read the file, check when it was written, and update it. If there is none, you’ll need to read the file and make one. The important thing to do is to read the previous assessments, any significant reports, minutes of child protection meetings, referrals (which didn’t lead to assessments) and case closure notes. You also should check if the parents have been known to us as children themselves. Remember to check the eRecords archive and recall paper files (if appropriate/necessary).
4. Decide what you need to explore with the family. This means that you need to cover each area of the Framework of Assessment of Children in Need and their families (FACIN for short, see Practice Guidance Tool 1), the concerns that have brought about the referral, any worries or issues raised by your lateral checks and any specific things your manager (or the court etc.) have told you to look at. One way of doing this is to use the questions below which go through each area of FACIN as a conversation. Prepare first by reading through them. Delete any that aren’t needed/add in or replace them with questions you have found more useful. Using scenarios can be really helpful – tell them about a situation and ask them what they would do. Remember too the TED questions – tell me, explain, describe. Add in additional areas you need to cover, for example things from the history and the referral. In your questions, make sure you see how far they agree and accept the referral concerns, how far they have reflected on what happened and get their views on how they acted/would do things differently. You also need to tailor your assessment to the situation – sometimes a brief assessment is appropriate that mostly focusses on areas of concern, sometimes it will need to be in depth and explore every area of FACIN in detail. You should be left with a list of what you need to ask/find out for the purpose of this assessment. Over time you will develop other questions you like. The Southwark guide to assessments is helpful further reading (and has other suggested questions) as are some of the resources on the Practice Hub webpages. If this is a pre-birth assessment, see the ‘pre-birth assessment process’ in practice guidance and the ‘assessing unborn children’s parents tool’ (Tool 4) which shows you which areas to consider.
5. Plan the assessment – when and where will you see the child and the parents? How will you engage with the child(ren)? Plan which sessions to do together/alone/where etc. Which other people do you need to see (e.g. wider family members/other checks – remember checking information/not relying on self-reporting is important)? When will you look around the home? Which tools should you use (lots are referenced below)? Print off and take the ones you may need. Each family is different and you will need to choose the order in which you explore the areas. You also need to think about how many sessions you need - this will depend on the parent’s own circumstances (e.g. childcare, ability to concentrate, distress, how much they talk, etc.) and what assessment you are doing. Do you need an interpreter? Can you set tasks during earlier sessions and measure change/progress of interventions in later sessions? How will you include the fathers/absent parents? Do you need to know more about or consider the family’s culture?
6. Book to see the parents. Think about when to see them (is it better with the children at school so they can concentrate?), where to see them and in what combination (generally at home, but if there are issues of domestic abuse you might need to see one of them somewhere else), and whether or not to pre-book your visit (if neglect is a concern, or if you think they may hide things you would see on a home visit if you pre-book, generally you would want to go unannounced). If you are unsure, ask your TM especially if there are issues of domestic abuse. You also need to think about booking an interpreter if that’s an issue.
7. See the guidance on how to write up assessments when you are at that stage (also in Practice Guidance, Tools 19 and 20).

Interview questions

*The order in which you complete your assessment will entirely depend on the family and the situation. You may need to do quite a short introduction and go straight to the presenting concern (this will generally be the case in initial assessment teams where the family will be anxious to know why you are there – but they still need to know the context to you being there before you begin), or it may be better to explore the concerns later after you’ve been able to explore some strengths and built a relationship and explored more problem-free areas (this may be the case for a safeguarding assessment or a parenting assessment where the children are in care). If it’s a brief assessment you will need to pick and choose your questions – if it’s a longer one, you’ll probably use them all.*

INTRODUCTION

- Introduce yourself and give your contact information.

- Explain what you are doing, why, the process, the timescales and the possible outcomes including if the assessment is not completed. If this is a longer assessment, outline what you will cover in your sessions, how many sessions there will be and who else you will talk to as you are expected to check out what every family says. Try and book in the sessions.

- If there are any other meetings (e.g. an ICPC), talk through what happens, who is there, how decisions are made etc.

- Inform them that you know this is/ can be a worrying and confusing time so encourage them to ask if any questions come up, and tell them that the Family Rights Group (www.frg.org.uk) can also give advice and have lots of helpful advice sheets on their website.

- Ask them if they have any questions so far.

- Check spellings, DOBs, GP, health visitor, all household members, phone numbers etc.

PRESENTING CONCERN

- Discuss what you have been told/the concerns that have brought the assessment about. Get their views on this.

- How far do they accept this? How far do they have a different account? [If the accounts differ consider how you can check these out?]

- How do they feel about what’s happened/been said, the situation and having social workers involved?

- What do they think the problem is and why is it/did it happen? How did it start? Explore who or what they think caused it and is to blame.

- What needs to happen to change it and how? What support do they want to change it?

- Explore and discuss their understanding of the impact of what happened on the child. Ask how the child feels about the situation.

- How worrying would they say the situation is/was from 0-10? What would they say the harm on the child was 0-10? And why, If there has been scoring already done by professionals, do they think others scored it as they did? (If appropriate, you may share how you would score at this stage and explore why.)

- If appropriate, explore the options for making things safe. What would “good enough” and/or “safe” look like for the children? What do they think of the various proposals to change things? What do they think is realistic or not? What proposal or option do they prefer and why?

You may need to inform, explain or challenge throughout your assessment. You need to think throughout about their capacity to change – you will find the ‘assessing capacity for change’ tool helpful when thinking about this, but the questions you ask below will help.[[1]](#footnote-1) There are a number of other tools available too.[[2]](#footnote-2)

If you are assessing the ability of a parent to protect a child from an abuser, see the ‘risk matrix ability to protect’ tool.

If you need to do a risk assessment, see the ‘risk assessment framework’ worklist/form on Eclipse.

Throughout your assessment it’s helpful to ask parents how they think their child feels about the things you’re talking about, or how their child sees those things.

THE CHILD - BASICS

- Ask them to describe the child/ren to you. What are they like? What is their personality? What do you like doing together? What are their likes/dislikes? Talk briefly about their behaviour (how is it compared to another child?).

- How are they raising their child in terms of religion/language etc. Are they part of any community groups to do with religion, culture or language? How far do they feel safe, accepted and part of things and how far do they feel at a disadvantage due to this?

- Do they have/have had specific health needs – if so, explore these. If there have been missed health appointments, explore why. When did they last see a dentist? Have they had their immunisations? Any hospital admissions? Explore any speech and language or development worries or other health/disability issues.

- Ask them about some scenarios to see how they would respond, especially ones that relate to any significant concerns. E.g. if the concerns are about unmet health needs, you might give them a scenario that their child told them they had an upset stomach, what would you do? If concerns are acting on risk or danger appropriately, you might ask, “If your child was bitten by a dog, what would you do?” How appropriate is their response?

- If there are siblings, how do they get on with them?

STRESS AND SUPPORT

- What do they feel they are and have been good at in how they’ve raised their children, or what are they proud of?

- Acknowledge that everyone finds parenting hard – who supports them? How? Which professionals are involved and what difference are they making? Which professionals have tried to help you before – which have/haven’t helped and why?

- What support do they want? What do they think the main challenges they face as parents are?

- Are you glad you’re a parent? Why/why not?

- How do you deal with stress and what do you like to do to relax?

- It’s a really good idea to use the Adult Wellbeing Scale (see Practice Guidance Tool 2). It’s quick to do and will flag up any problems with depression or anxiety etc. they may be having – you may do this with them or ask them to do this as homework and go through it with them at the next session.

- Draw a simple family tree/genogram with them of their immediate family. [RIP have a good tool to help.](https://www.researchinpractice.org.uk/children/publications/2021/february/using-genograms-in-practice-practice-tool-2021/)

- Apart from parenting, what or who do they find stressful? Use scaling for each of these areas:

* Housing (repair – is the home dangerous?, is rent up to date, is it suitable for the children’s needs, it is it overcrowded and what’s the impact if so etc.). Look at the house and the garden and talk about their feelings about it with them. In general, you are looking to see if the home meets the need of the child. Your home observation should match your concerns so will differ depending on each situation. Specifically, consider is it clean (including if bedding is clean and on the beds as this is often a good indication); does the child has appropriate clothing and toys/books/games/stimulation; is the home safe and free of obvious hazards; who sleeps where and lives here (counting the number of toothbrushes, particularly adult toothbrushes may give another sign); how is the garden; is the house in good repair. If neglect hasn’t been ruled out, you will also be looking for evidence of food and washing. Look for any signs of violence too, e.g. holes in doors or damaged furniture.
* Finances (ask about debt, financial problems and income) – scaling is very useful here. How much money is coming in and going out? How much is left for toys/trips etc.? How stressed does money make them feel and what’s the impact of this on the parenting they’d like to give? How do they feel about the amount of money coming in? Is there debt/impact of this on the child and their parenting? How is money managed – do they have a bank account? You may use the ‘Financial Details Form’ here to look at their finances with them if there is a problem. You should complete an online benefits checker with them if you have time as many families do not claim all they are entitled to – see entitledto.co.uk then click on “start calculation” – it takes 5-10 minutes. Discuss a credit union or help from a debt referral agency if appropriate, and make these referrals immediately[[3]](#footnote-3). There are a range of things we can do to help families living on low incomes (see the Anti Poverty Toolkit in Practice Guidance Tool 3)
* Life in their community/on their street - what’s it like? Do they like it? How safe do they feel? Do they know what services there are in the community/what services do they know about, and do they feel able to use them? Do they think it’s a safe or risky community and why?). Are they registered with a GP and when did they last see them/how healthy are they? What clubs and activities do they or their children go to? Do you think your family is isolated – if so, why?
* Employment – who works, impact on the child, previous work, barriers to work (confidence, childcare, skills), what’s the meaning of work or lack of work to them?

- What and who supports and helps them? Explore their wider family from the family tree. Who can give emotional support? Practical? Financial? Good advice?

- Who else is important to the child?

At this stage, talk together about what support may help them – reducing isolation, housing, community services etc. Make these referrals now or help them to know how to.

THEIR CHILD/REN

- Ask them what a typical day in their family’s life looks like, or what happened yesterday. Who did they see, what did they do. What were the routines in terms of getting up, washing, playing, eating – explore all these things in terms of how often/how they happen and who does what. What did they feed themselves and their child yesterday?

- How do they think life for their child has been/is different or the same compared to life of a child of the same age? Why has it been different? What has the impact of this been?

- What do they do at home as a family inside and outside the home? You might like to use the Family Activity Scale (Tool 6).

- School – how does the child find this? Explore attendance, their relationship with the school, their view of the importance of education and the impact of a good education on a child.

- Community resources – which do they use, why/why not?

- How does the child respond to stress? What does the child do when upset or how does the child show they are happy? How do you comfort your children?

- Tell me about last time they really misbehaved and what you felt. What did you do? How successful do you think this was? Why do you think they child acted as they did – what are they communicating or trying to say when they behave that way? Try and assess how far they are able to see things from their child’s perspective and understand their child’s thoughts, feelings and motivations. If they struggle to do this, they will find parenting much harder.

- How much influence do you think you have over how a child turns out? Why do you think this?

- Do you have rules for them? Why or why not? In general, how have you tried to help them to learn good behaviour? [[4]](#footnote-4)

- What do you think are the most important things for a child to learn of (his/her) age?

- What do you do to help him/her learn these things? Can you tell me about a time when you tried to do that?

- You might explore what to expect from children at different ages (the descriptions of what to expect at this stage [here](https://www.cambscommunityservices.nhs.uk/advice/staying-safe/childhood-development/milestones) will be really useful). You could also explore if their child is not doing what they would expect at this age, why this is and what they are doing about it. Are their expectations realistic?

- What do you think children need from parents?

- How do you show your child you love them? How good at this do you think you are? How important is it for a child to feel loved and why? Do you think your child feels loved – why/why not?

- What do they worry about for their child? How do they keep them safe?

- On a scale of 0-10, how much do they know about the internet and social media? What does their child use? How do they monitor this? What risks are they aware of from social media?

- You may need to explore issues around CSE, organised crime groups/gangs if the child is old enough.

HISTORY/FAMILY FUNCTIONING

*See Tool 5 ‘Assessing parental history and it’s meaning for children’ for details of how to interpret and use the information you have gathered here and for a more in-depth version of this section. This is really important as many families struggle to provide the parenting a child needs due to their own experience of trauma and using this tool will help your assessment be trauma informed. If you are pushed for time, you can use below instead.*

- Firstly, get an understanding of their history. You might do this via a genogram, drawing their life story on wallpaper, a conversation, or by getting them to write a basic chronology of their lives. If this is a longer assessment, doing this together on a roll of wallpaper as a long timeline can be really effective and allow them to start where they wish to. In general, you might do this with them, or you might ask them to complete this as homework and look at it on the next session. If this is a short assessment, you might just ask them if anything significant has happened in their past that they think impacts on their parenting now, and focus more on the “3 to 5 words” exercise below as this can be done fairly quickly.

- Explore this with them. What was the meaning or significance of these events for them? Which do they feel they dealt with, and which do they feel they haven’t? Notice how they appear when talking about them – are they angry, very upset/tearful, quiet, reluctant to talk? Are there any gaps in their chronology where they can’t remember what happened?

- Next, focus on their experience as a child. Ask them for 3 (or 5 if you have time) words to describe each parent/carer. Then ask them for a real story or example from their childhood that illustrates that word. Notice how they present when they are talking about this. Do the words they have picked or the stories indicate that they may have difficult childhood experiences? If appropriate, explore with them how they felt at the time the stories happened, and how they feel about them now. Do they think what their parent/carer did was right or wrong? What do they think someone else would make of it?

- Also consider asking them what happened on birthdays/at Christmas/Eid etc.? What are the happiest and least happy memories from their childhood? How did their parents respond when they were ill/upset/hurt?

- Ask them to rate their own parents 0-10 in terms of how they raised them.

- What has been the impact of all of this on them? What has the impact of this been on the parenting they have given? What have they tried to do the same and differently (and why)?

- Next, explore the area of the chronology that shows the child’s history from pre-birth to now. Explore this. How often has the child moved or changed school or seen partners or carers come and go? What was the impact of this on the child? Were they premature and what was the impact of this? How did they pick the child’s name and who did this?

RELATIONSHIPS

*You will need to do this session separately if there are two parents/carers being assessed as part of one situation. If domestic abuse is a concern, make sure you complete the DASH (tool 11). There is also a document detailing the different domestic abuse services available in* [*Practice Guidance*](https://birminghamcs.proceduresonline.com/local_resources.html) *(click on “Specialist Services” then “Domestic Abuse”).*

- Looking at the chronology, ask them about their relationships before their current partner, if any. What was good/bad about the relationship, what did they learn from it, how was conflict handled and caused, how did it start and end, current contact now and how this is.

- How did they meet their current partner? How has the relationship been?

- Ask them to describe their current partner. What are they good at? Why are they with them? How do they help you? What do they struggle with? What are they good at and struggle with as a parent? What would you change about them if you could? Have there been any periods apart and why? How do they resolve conflict and disagreements and what causes it (ask for a recent example/story)? Is there someone who is usually right? Who controls the finances and how? How has life changed since being with this person? How are decisions made?

- Have you ever talked about the best way to raise children? When there are two people to share the job of raising children they usually divide it up in some way. Are there some things that each of you is responsible for?

- Every couple has times when they disagree about the kids. How does that go for you?

- What does your partner do that makes you especially glad that you have him/her?

- If any signs of domestic abuse and it’s safe to do so, explore it. Have either of them been on any programmes for domestic abuse and how did these change them? Have they experienced: threats, intimidation, name calling, physical abuse, forced sex, financial control, isolation from friends/family. If there is violence, when did this start? How often? When? Where? What do the children do when abuse happens? Where do they go? If domestic abuse is a concern, make sure you complete the DASH tool.

- Do they often feel lonely? Who can they talk to? Where do they feel safest?

- Do they have any other caring responsibilities e.g. for a parent – impact of this on them and their parenting?

- What’s the impact of all of this on the child? What’s the impact of this on the parenting they provide?

SELF

- Ask them to describe themselves to you in 3 words.

- What do they think they are good at? What do they struggle with?

-How would your best friend or partner describe you?  
-What is your plan for the next 5 and 10 years?

OTHER AREAS YOU MAY NEED TO COVER

*You may need or want to ask them about these areas first, then talk about what others or the file have told you.*

Drugs/alcohol

* Explore their drug use, past and present – how started/the cause, what used, where, when, how much, with whom, how funded, where stored (check this is safe), impact on parenting and the child.
* Is there a safety plan for drug/alcohol use?
* Has there been any past/current treatment and what was the response to this?
* What are/were the views on the people who have tried/try to help them?
* Insight into triggers and how to stop or manage drug use.
* See the ‘drug use risk assessment tool’ (Tool 12) and the ‘alcohol screening tool’ (Tool 13) for more.

Mental Health/emotional wellbeing

* Any diagnoses past or present?
* What medication and treatment have they had, past and present? How did they find this and what are their views on the people who have tried/try to help them?
* Impact on their parenting of their mental health?
* If they seem to be struggling or if you think mental health may be a problem, consider using the *Adult Wellbeing Scale* (Tool 2).

Criminality/gangs/organised crime groups involvement for parents

* Any involvement for them/what is their previous criminal history?
* Causes of this/how it began, circumstances, if there is gang involvement, what were they made to do/what is their role?
* Impact on them and on their parenting?
* If it ended, how, and what was their response to services?
* Lessons learnt and current issues/remaining links/areas which are a problem.
* Any current police involvement and outstanding police investigation?
* If exploitation of the child is a concern, seek advice from EmpowerU and use the combined exploitation screening tool on Eclipse.

Neglect

* It is really important to try and understand why a parent is struggling. This will often be because depression, stress, poverty, or trauma is getting in the way of their ability to think and behave as they’d like to which stops them giving their children the care they need. Use the ‘Adult Wellbeing Scale’ (Tool 2) in every neglect situation to try and pick up on underlying problems and make sure you have a serious conversation about how they are coping with the finances they have and how they feel about this.

Sexual abuse

* For assessing the risk of a young person who has sexually abused another person abusing again, use ‘Assessing the risk of reoffending for a young person’ (Tool 14) to help you reflect. You should also consult the Healthy Safe Behaviours Team.
* If you are assessing the ability of one parent to protect against the sexual abuse offending of their partner/the other parent, use ‘Asking about a partners sexual abuse offending’ (Tool 15).
* If you need to complete a risk assessment, see the Risk Assessment form on Eclipse.

Address any other problem areas that have been identified/go back and explore in greater depth any areas you need to. Use Research in Practice/Community Care Inform if you need more help/ideas/tools to explore any individual areas.

CONCLUSION AND PLANNING

*This will be done at the end of your assessment, after you have spoken to the child, other professionals, read the files etc.*

See the separate guide to writing up your assessment (Tool 19) and the example write up (Tool 20 and the guide to writing up a full assessment, both in Practice Guidance).

You will need to have an honest discussion about your assessment with the people you have assessed and share your conclusions with them. What do you think is happening and why is it a problem – what is the impact on the child now and in future? What exactly needs to change. Spell this out.

You will then need to try and plan with them for how any issues you have identified will be addressed. Ask them what they think would work and for suggestions. You need to explore with them which services/help may work for them to solve the problems – offer choices and make sure the actions are do-able. You should explore involving wider family with them, for example through an FGC or family meeting. Explore how you can build on strengths, how you can address things that make parenting and life harder for them in general (e.g. finances, lack of support), and how to increase resilience for the child (Tool 16).

You will need to be clear with them what your safety bottom lines are, what you are worried about, and what the possible consequences will be if things don’t change – both in terms of the impact on the child, but also in terms of what children’s services may need to do.

LATERAL CHECKS

The following things will be useful to ask other professionals.

Questions for school/Nursery

* What has been their experience to date – have they had any cause for concern or have things gone well for/with this child and their carers?
* Does the child look clean and tidy in school?
* What is the attendance and lateness situation?
* How are their relationships with other children and how do they react to them – do they have any friends, are they a bully or bullied?
* What is their attainment compared to another child of their age?
* How are their relationships with teachers and other adults?
* Tell me about their behaviour including problems with concentration, and what they do when stressed?
* What are their observations about the child’s confidence and self-esteem?
* What is the engagement of parents with school like – do they come to parents’ evenings and special assemblies etc.?
* Have any services been offered to the child or the parents and what was the result?
* You could also ask the school to complete the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire.

Questions for school nurse/health visitor/health

* -Any known A+E attendances for this child?
* Are immunisations up-to-date and development checks, and what were the outcomes?
* What has the engagement with the family/of the family been like?
* Are they registered with a GP?
* Details of any missed appointments, diagnoses, treatment, health issues, disability, etc.

Consider which other professionals you should talk to.

You should also consider who in the wider family you may need to speak to (you should usually discuss this with your manager or the person holding case responsibility first).

ENGAGING WITH THE CHILD

Obviously, you will need to adapt how you engage with the child to each circumstance, more so than you will with adults. You will need also to consider where you will see the child and how.

It’s really important to introduce yourself to the child, to explain why you are there and who you are, and to be clear about confidentiality and what will happen to the information they tell you. It’s also important to try and build some rapport before you start exploring their life if appropriate, perhaps through a quick game or some problem-free chatting (although if you are interviewing the child about a specific concern, they will likely be scared and it may be more appropriate to calmly explain your role and then start your exploration). Much will depend on what type of assessment you are completing with them and how long you have, and if you have any pre-existing relationship with this child and if you have more than one session.

The following is essential to find out in each assessment:

* Routines - when get up/go to bed, meal arrangements, washing arrangements, sleeping arrangements, what they do for leisure in and out of the house and what toys they have, what their bedroom is like, how school is for them, where they go outside of the house.
* Relationships – how do they interact with other household members, school relationships, who they see outside of the house, their views on their mother/father/partners, who is important to them apart from their parents.
* Their views on the presenting issue/worries and how they experience their life.

For longer assessments and where relevant in shorter assessments, you should complete an observation of the child interacting with their parent (see Tool a7)

You may find that a helpful plan is:

1. To introduce yourself and why you are there etc. (see above)
2. To play/ask some easy questions to build some rapport
3. To complete an ecomap/genogram to explore their relationships
4. To complete a daily routines timeline to explore one weekday and one weekend
5. To do any other activities that will explore how the child is experiencing the specific concerns.
6. To specifically look at things that make them happy/sad/worried etc. and to get them to talk about themselves.
7. To end on a positive and neutral topic.

If they are an older child and you are worried about their welfare, you might want to use the ‘Adolescent Wellbeing Scale’ (Tool 18).

The [CAFCASS Diversity Wheel](https://www.cafcass.gov.uk/professionals/our-resources-professionals) is also a helpful tool to support children and young people to talk about their identity and what is important in their life.

If you are unsure about what tools are available or other options, ask for help.

1. You can find this in the SWET Resource File in [Practice Guidance](https://birminghamcs.proceduresonline.com/local_resources.html) – click on ‘Pre-proceedings and court work’ then ‘Care Proceedings’. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. You could also consider using the *RIP* [*assessing risk of further maltreatment tool*](https://www.researchinpractice.org.uk/children/publications/2013/june/assessing-risk-of-further-child-maltreatment-a-research-based-approach-practice-tool-2013/) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Advance Credit Union – [www.advancecu.org.uk](http://www.advancecu.org.uk) - 0121 350 8883 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. There are a number of other tools you might find useful here - You might want to present different scenarios to them and ask them how they would respond/what they think the child is thinking or feeling, or you might want to use Tool 7 ‘*Understanding parenting knowledge and style’* questions with young parents or with people who have been abused. The ‘parenting scale’ is also useful when thinking about how a parent responds to the behaviour of a child. You can also consider, if the child appears to be presenting with very challenging behaviour, Tool 8, the *Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire*. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)