

Listening to You: Information on Children's Safeguarding and Family Help Assessments

Introduction

Children's Safeguarding and Family Help (CSFH) have a duty to provide services and support to children who are in need. To do this, we will carry out an assessment to find out what help you need and how we can support you. If you and your child are being assessed by CSFH, this leaflet will explain what an assessment is, why it is being done and how it will be carried out.

What is an assessment?

An assessment involves meeting with you and your family to get as much information about you, your child and your family's situation as possible so we can find out what we need to do to help you.

Why is an assessment being carried out?

CSFH are usually approached by families themselves asking for support, or by professionals such as health visitors or teachers asking for support for the family. These requests for help are called referrals. When we receive a referral, we must carry out an assessment to find out your child's needs and what services are needed to meet these needs.

If someone is thinking about referring your family to CSFH, they should discuss it with you first but they do not need you to agree to the referral if there are concerns about your child's welfare.

How will the assessment be done?

A social worker will meet with you and your child on one or more occasions, normally in your own home but sometimes at our office or in other places like your child's school,.

They will talk to you about your child, your family and any difficulties you may be having. This is an important opportunity for you to discuss any issues with the social worker and talk about what sort of help you think you may need.

The assessment will look at whether your child has any developmental needs and whether you need support to look after them. The assessment will also look at your own strengths as a parent and any help you get from your own family to care for your child. We will always take your culture and religion or any disability in the family into account when we carry out the assessment.

Your social worker will work with you to make sure all the relevant information is collected and that you have an opportunity to explain what is happening in your life and what difficulties you are experiencing.

When the social worker has written up the assessment report, you will be given a copy so that you can check the facts for accuracy and have your say, especially if you do not agree with the report. Your child will also have a chance to give their views if they are old enough to understand, normally when they are over the age of 12.

How long will it take?

The assessment can take a few days or a few weeks depending on how complex your family situation is and what level of need your child has. We aim to complete all our assessments within 35 working days from the date you were referred to CSFH.

Confidentiality and sharing information

To make sure the assessment has all the relevant facts about your child and family, we may need to get information from other professionals who know you and your child such as your health visitor or a teacher. This way we can make sure you get the right kind of help as quickly as possible.

Under the Children Act 1989, CSFH is legally allowed to ask other professionals for information about you and your child without your agreement if we have concerns about your child's welfare. However we prefer to work in partnership with you and will generally let you know which professionals we will be speaking to and what information we will be seeking. The only time we may not tell you we are seeking information is if we believe it may put your child at risk of harm or cause delays in helping your child.

If English isn't your first language

We can arrange for an interpreter to be present when the social worker meets with you to gather information for the assessment. We can also provide a translation of the assessment report once it is written.

What happens next?

Part of the assessment report will include recommendations by the social worker for what action should be taken and any services that should be provided in order to meet your child's needs and support your family. Your social worker's manager will then decide whether to accept their recommendations. Sometimes, CSFH aren't the right service to help you, and if we feel this is the case, we will make sure you are referred to an Early Help service that can provide the right kind of help.

If CSFH decide to take any action or provide services and support to help your child and family, your social worker will arrange a special meeting with you and all the professionals who work with you to draw up a plan that can provide support.

Usually, the families we work with need help and support and their child will be a child in need. However, in some cases, we may be concerned about your child's safety and may decide to take action under child protection procedures to ensure they are safe. If this is the case, your social workers will explain what will happen next.

What you can do

We know parents want the best for their child, so it is important to get involved with the assessment and share information and views with your social worker. This way, CSFH will be able to work with you to solve any difficulties you have and help your child to develop and reach their full potential.

Your social worker is:

Name:

Contact details: