

What to expect: Single Assessment



Children and Family Services have a legal duty to investigate all contacts, where it is judged that a child protection concern might exist.

Investigations are carried out using an assessment called The Single Assessment.

This assessment can take up to the statutory limit of **45 days working days**.

Many assessments can be completed more quickly than this. Following the first visit, or by day 10 after a referral has been received, the Social Worker and a Manager will agree the length of time necessary to carry out the Single Assessment.

During this assessment the Social Worker will need to see the person or people who are caring for the child or children and the child or children themselves.

The Social Worker will also want to talk to any parent who does not live with the child or children.

Each child will need to be seen alone. The child will usually be seen in a separate room in the family home at the time of a home visit or at school. Where a child is seen will depend on the age of the child and the Social Worker's professional judgment.

The Social Worker will usually talk to you about this before seeing your child or children. However, if a Manager considers that a child or children might be put at risk if a parent or carer is contacted before a visit takes place this will not happen.

If the decision not to talk to a parent or carer before a visit is taken, the Social Worker will speak to these adults after having seen the child or children.

During the assessment period the Social Worker will **usually meet with you and the child or children, 2 or 3 times**. More visits will be arranged if the social worker believes this is required. The number of visits will depend on your family's availability and the complexity of the discussions required.

You will be asked to sign a consent form giving us permission to speak to other professionals who are involved with your family, for example, a class teacher or doctor. Any discussions with other professionals will be handled sensitively and will only include information relevant to the referral.

The Single Assessment is a working document which reflects the information which has been shared with the Social Worker by the time the assessment is signed off by the Manager.

By the time the Single Assessment is signed off, the Social Workers will always have met with the child or children. They will also have made every effort to talk to those with Parental Responsibility or those who are caring for the child or children.

If you have been unavailable or unwilling to meet with the Social Worker by the time the assessment is signed off, **it will not be possible to reflect your views in the assessment document**.



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As part of the Single Assessment the Manager and allocated Social Worker will **make recommendations about how Children and Family Services will support you to minimize any potential risk to your child or children and/or how to ensure that the needs of your child or children are being met.**

The Assessment and the recommendations will be discussed with you during the assessment period **and should not come as a shock.**

Nevertheless some of the information which Children and Family Services have to share with families can still be upsetting and difficult to hear.

Following the completion of the assessment every effort is made to share this document with you in person, this is to help ensure you understand the conclusions reached and recommendations. If this is not possible, or if you prefer then the assessment document will be posted to you.

The Social Worker will ask you to fill in a feedback form about your experience of the assessment process and your involvement with Children and Family Services.

What to do if you disagree with information in the assessment.

If you believe that the information which has been recorded about you or your family is wrong or incomplete you can have your comments added to the record next to the information you disagree with. This means that your comments can always be read alongside the original information in future. Once added to the record an item cannot be removed. This is to make sure that if there are any questions about what has taken place this can be checked easily.

What Happens Next

The outcome of the Single Assessment could be;

- There is no further need for Children and Family Services to be involved.
- You are offered or continue to use further support from other agencies.
- You are offered additional support from the Family Resources Services.
- There is an on-going Assessment from a Social Worker – If this happens you will be invited to a Child In Need meeting.
- You enter the Child Protection Process, which often starts with a Child Protection Conference

Children and Family Services want you to understand how we can best work together to put the needs of your child or children first.