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Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Board

POLICY FRAMEWORK

FRAMEWORK FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF CHILDREN IN NEED AND THEIR FAMILIES

**Section SOT A 05
Staffs 1G**

Version 5

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The Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families

The Assessment Framework

The Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (DoH, 2000) provides a systematic basis for collecting and analysing information to support professional judgements about how to help children and families in the best interests of the child. Practitioners should use the framework to gain an understanding of:

- a child's developmental needs;
- the capacity of parents or care givers to respond appropriately to those needs, including their capacity to keep the child safe from harm; and
- the impact of wider family and environmental factors on the parents and child.

Each of these three main aspects of the framework is outlined in more detail in the paragraphs entitled Dimensions of Child's Developmental Needs, Dimensions of Parenting Capacity and Family and Environmental Factors respectively.

The framework is used within Children's Social Care Services (Staffordshire LSCB), for the assessment of children who may come within the definition of a child in need (section 17 of the Children Act 1989), including those children where there are concerns that they may be suffering significant harm. For further information about how the Assessment Framework relates to the Staffordshire 'Accessing the Right Help at the Right Time' guidance, please go to www.staffsscb.staffordshire.gov.uk/Professionals/Procedures/Section-One/Section-1-Policy-Framework-and-Principals.aspx

In Stoke-on-Trent, this framework is also used within Children's Social Care Services for the assessment of children who may come within the definition of a child in need (section 17 of the Children Act 1989), including those children where there are concerns that they may be suffering significant harm.

For further information about how the Assessment Framework relates to Stoke-on-Trent *Guide to Levels of Need*, please go to:

[Stoke-on-Trent Safeguarding Children Website / Early Help page](#)

The process of engaging in an assessment should be viewed as being part of the range of services offered to children and families. Use of the framework should provide evidence to help, guide and inform judgements about children's welfare and safety according to the nature and extent of the child's needs. The provision of appropriate services should be determined according to what is required, and when, to promote the welfare and safety of the child.

Evidence about a child's developmental progress, and his or her parents' capacity to respond appropriately to the child's needs within the wider family and environmental context, should underpin judgements about:

- The child's welfare and safety
- Whether, and if so, how, to provide help to the child and family members; and
- What form of intervention will bring about the best possible outcomes for the child, and
- What the intended outcomes of intervention are.

Dimensions of a child's development needs

Health: Includes; growth and development as well as physical and mental wellbeing. The impact of genetic factors and of any impairment needs to be considered. Involves receiving appropriate health care when ill, an adequate and nutritious diet, exercise, immunisations where appropriate and developmental checks, dental and optical care and, for older children appropriate advice and information on issues that have an impact on health, including sex education and substance misuse.

Education: Covers all areas of a child's cognitive development which begins from birth. Includes: opportunities for play and interaction with other children and to have access to books; to acquire a range of skills and interests; to experience success and achievement. Involves an adult interested in educational activities, progress and achievements, who takes account of the child's starting point and any special educational needs.

Emotional and Behavioural Development: Concerns the appropriateness of response demonstrated in feelings and actions by a child, initially to parents and care givers and, as the child grows older, to others beyond the family, includes nature and quality of early attachments, characteristics of temperament, adaptation to change, response to stress and degree of appropriate self control.

Identity: Concerns the child's growing sense of self as a separate and valued person. It includes the child's view of self and abilities, self image and self esteem, and having a positive sense of individuality. Race, religion, age, gender, sexuality and disability may all contribute to this. Feelings of belonging and acceptance by family, peer group and wider society; including other cultural groups.

Family and Social Relationships: Relates to the development of empathy and the capacity to place self in someone else's shoes. Includes: a stable and affectionate relationship with parents or care givers, good relationships with siblings, increasing importance of age appropriate friendships with peers and other significant persons in the child's life and response of family to these relationships.

Social Presentation: Concerns child's growing understanding of the way in which appearance, behaviour, and any impairment are perceived by the outside world and the impression being created. Includes: appropriateness of dress for age, gender, culture and religion; cleanliness and personal hygiene; and availability of advice from parents or care givers about presentation in different settings.

Self Care Skills: Concerns the acquisition by a child of practical, emotional and communication competencies required for increasing independence. Includes: early practical skills of dressing and feeding, opportunities to gain confidence and practical skills to undertake activities away from the family and independent living skills as older children. Includes encouragement to acquire social problem solving approaches. Special attention should be given to the impact of a child's impairment and other vulnerabilities, and on social circumstances affecting these in the development of self care skills.

Dimensions of parenting capacity

Basic Care: Providing for the child's physical needs, and appropriate medical and dental care. Includes: provision of food, drink, warmth, shelter, clean and appropriate clothing and adequate personal hygiene.

Ensuring Safety: Ensuring the child is adequately protected from harm or danger. Includes: protection from significant harm or danger and from contact with unsafe adults / other children and from self-harm. Recognition of hazards and danger both in the home and elsewhere

Emotional Warmth: Ensuring the child's emotional needs are met giving the child a sense of being specially valued and a positive sense of own racial and cultural identity. Includes: ensuring the child's requirements for secure, stable and affectionate relationships with significant adults, with appropriate sensitivity and responsiveness to the child's needs. Appropriate physical contact, comfort and cuddling sufficient to demonstrate warm regard, praise and encouragement.

Stimulation: Promoting child's learning and intellectual development through encouragement and cognitive stimulation and promoting social opportunities. Includes: facilitating the child's cognitive development and potential through interaction, communication, talking and responding to child's language and questions, encouraging and joining the child's play, and promoting education opportunities. Enabling the child to experience success and ensuring school attendance or equivalent opportunity. Facilitating child to meet challenges of life.

Guidance and Boundaries: Enabling the child to regulate their own emotions and behaviour. The key parental tasks are demonstrating and modelling appropriate behaviour and control of emotions and interactions with others, and guidance which involves setting boundaries, so that the child is able to develop an internal model of moral values and conscience, and social behaviour appropriate for the society within which they will grow up.

The aim is to enable the child to grow into an autonomous adult, holding their own values, and able to demonstrate appropriate behaviour with others rather than having to be dependent on rules outside themselves. This includes not over protecting children from exploratory and learning experiences. Includes: social problem solving, anger management, consideration for others, and effective discipline and shaping of behaviour.

Stability: Providing a sufficiently stable family environment to enable a child to develop and maintain a secure attachment to the primary caregiver(s) in order to ensure optimal development. Includes: ensuring secure attachments are not disrupted, providing consistency of emotional warmth over time and responding in a similar manner to the same behaviour. Parental responses change and develop according to child's developmental progress. In addition, ensuring children keep in contact with important family members and significant others.

Family and Environmental Factors

Family History and Functioning: Family history includes both genetic and psycho-social factors. Family functioning is influenced by who is living in the household and how they are related to the child; significant changes in family/household composition; history of childhood experiences of parents; chronology of significant life events and their meaning to family members; nature of family functioning, including sibling relationships and its impact on the child; parental strengths and difficulties, including those of an absent parent; the relationship between separated parents.

Wider Family: Who are considered to be members of the wider family by the child and the parents? This includes related and non-related persons and absent wider family. What is their role and importance to the child and parents and in precisely what way?

Housing: Does the accommodation have basic amenities and facilities appropriate to the age and development of the child and other resident members? Is the housing accessible and suitable to the needs of disabled family members? Includes the interior and exterior of the accommodation and immediate surroundings. Basic amenities include water, heating, sanitation, cooking facilities, sleeping arrangements and cleanliness, hygiene and safety and their impact on the child's upbringing.

Employment: Who is working in the household, their pattern of work and any changes? What impact does this have on the child? How is work or absence of work viewed by family members? How does it affect their relationship with the child? Includes children's experience of work and its impact on them.

Income: Income available over a sustained period of time. Is the family in receipt of all its benefit entitlements? Sufficiency of income to meet the families needs. The way resources available to the family are used. Are there financial difficulties which affect the child?

Families Social Integration: Exploration of the wider context of the local neighbourhood and community and its impact on the child and parents. Includes: the degree of the families integration or isolation; their peer groups, friendship and social networks and the importance attached to them.

Community Resources: Describes all facilities and services in a neighbourhood, including universal services of primary health care, day care, day care and schools, places of worship, transport, shops and leisure activities. Includes availability, accessibility and standard of resources and impact on the family, including disabled members.

The assessment framework, practice guidance, questionnaires and scales, assessment recording forms

The development of the Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (jointly issued by the Department of Health, the Department for Education and Employment and the Home Office, 2000) was informed from evidence based practice, a wide range of research and accumulated practice experience about the developmental needs of children.

The aim of the Assessment Framework practice guidance and its tools is to provide professionals undertaking assessments with children and their families, with a transparent evidence base that can be used to inform their analysis and decision making in respect of the child and their family's strengths, needs and risks.

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