

RE: STANDARDS OF PRACTICE GUIDANCE

Working Together 2015 guidance sets out statutory requirements regarding social work practice under the Children Act 1989. This includes assessments under Section 17 Children Act 1989 to determine if a child is a child in need; under Section 47 where there are concerns about the maltreatment of a child; Section 20 where a child may be in need of accommodation and Section 31A where the child is subject of a care order.

The guidance states that, “an initial assessment is deemed to be completed once the assessment has been discussed with the child and family (or caregivers) and the team manager has viewed and authorised the assessment”. The guidance also says that the initial assessment period may also be very brief, i.e. when the criteria for undertaking S47 enquires are met.

1. Assessments - Agreed Standards of Practice:

Decision to progress or end a contact	Within 24 hours of receipt
Decision to progress or end a referral	Within 24 hours of referral creation
Decision as to focus of single assessment	Within 10 working days of starting the assessment
Completion of a single assessment	Within 45 working days

- Local Authorities are being measured against a **maximum** 45 day timescale for the completion of all Assessments.
- Within Bradford we will continue to work on the overarching principle that there should be minimum delay in identifying the needs of any child for whom it has been determined that an assessment is required.
- The decision to progress or end a Contact should be made within 24 hours. No contacts should be held open unnecessarily, where it is clear that a Referral is required.
- Within one working day of a referral being created, a Team Manager must make a decision about the type of response that is required and acknowledge receipt to the referrer.
- The decision to progress or end a Referral should be made within 1 working day.



- Assessments are intended to gather important information about a child and their family, analyse the child's needs, determine whether the child is in need under Section 17 Children Act 1989 or likely to suffer significant harm under Section 47 Children Act 1989 and to provide support to address those needs to improve the child's outcomes and to remain safe.
- Assessments need to be timely and proportionate and must always involve the child, family members and involved agencies.
- The first ten days of the assessment should be to collate the initial evidence in accordance with the commissioning and assessment agreement. By the tenth working day the Social Worker and Manager must make and record a decision about whether the assessment is to continue or whether it is to be closed. This should not happen without seeing the child and taking account of the direct wishes and feelings of the subject child.
- Assessments are led and managed by the qualified Social Worker with the active input and oversight of the Team Manager who has the capacity to provide critical challenge at all stages. Assessments require input from other people dependent upon the circumstances of the case and may involve for example, asking a children's assistant to complete specific tasks. However a qualified Social Worker is always responsible for the assessment. Children's Advisers do not undertake Initial Assessments.
- There is a 10 day alert for managers on ICS, alongside an alert at 35 days, i.e. 10 days prior to the end of the maximum assessment period.
- All Assessments that proceed beyond 10 working days must be completed and authorised by a Team Manager.
- Team Managers must authorise all case decisions, i.e. from Referral > Assessment > Plan. Case decisions must record the rationale behind the decision making, the relevant legal Section under the Children Act 1989 for the assessment, i.e. S17, 47, 20 or 31A and the plan.
- Referrers must be informed of the outcome of the Referral.
- All activity and enquiries during an Assessment should be recorded on the Assessment and not on case records.
- Further demographic details that are obtained during the assessment must be recorded, with service user contact details kept up to date.
- Agreed actions and recommendations at the end of the Assessment must be recorded as a plan, with all relevant professionals, family members and young people informed of the outcome.

2. Updating of single assessments for LAC, CP and CIN cases

Within a long term team an assessment is, essentially, a continuous process. The extent to which the actual assessment will be updated or, indeed, done anew will vary from case to case. However there should always be explicit consideration by Team Manager and case holder, in context with each forthcoming review or major life events for the child, as to the extent of updating that is required.

Looked After Children (LAC) teams, for example, will deal with children and young people whose circumstances and needs change considerably over time, not just simply with growing older but in the light of e.g. placement challenges, developments within the extended family, child health issues etc. Likewise, the risk profile for children on child protection plans changes over time. If there isn't explicit consideration of the current assessment every 6 months or so there is a real danger that the assessment stagnates and ceases to reflect the current needs of the child and how those should be met.

Agreed Standards of Practice – Looked After Children & Child Protection Conferences and Reviews and core groups:

- No Child Protection or Looked After Children Reviews will take place without an updated Single Assessment.
- Completed Single Assessments must be available on LCS by 12pm 3 working days prior to the meeting date.
- An up to date Family Tree must be available for all Child Protection Reviews.
- The CLA Review and Proposed Plan sections **MUST** be completed for Looked After Children Reviews
- Single Assessments will be shared with parents and children, with their views represented, before the day of the meeting.
- Initial Child Protection Case Conferences must take place within 15 working days of the strategy discussion that initiated the Section 47. The allocated Social Worker must make every effort to be available/attend on the available date. Only where this is impossible should they liaise with their line manager for a manager to attend in their place.
- Bradsafe the Child Protection (CP) version of Viewpoint will be allocated during the CP conference by the CP coordinator to an agreed professional. Arrangements should then be made to complete this 1:1 with the young person before the next review. The CP coordinator will follow this up at each subsequent CP review.
- All involvements relating to a child must be kept up to date on LCS, to ensure that full details of all people to be invited to the Case Conference are available to Child Protection Unit Admin upon request.
- Reviews will be booked on a 2.5 and 5 monthly cycle for reviews due at 3 months and 6 months, in order to ensure Reviews can take place within timescales in the event of any unforeseen problems.
- For any child age 4 or above at the point of becoming looked after, a log on for Viewpoint is created and their login details will be sent out to them by post by the Safeguarding and Reviewing Unit. This document is uploaded on to the child's file on LCS available for the Social Worker for if the child misplaces their letter. No reminders to complete Viewpoint will be sent out to the child by the Unit. Allocated worker to discuss the completion of Viewpoint and offer support if required..
- Also at the point of a child becoming looked after, an Introduction Letter is sent out by post to parents and family and friend carers with a paper Consultation paper enclosed. Parents and family and friend carers are to communicate with the Unit on future ways to complete Consultation papers as outlined in the introduction

letter. No reminder to complete Consultation Paper will be sent out to parents / family and friend carers by the Unit

- Child looked after statutory visits – the child, or young person, must be seen alone and this must be recorded on the child’s file.
- Meetings may be adjourned in the absence of relevant and accurate information, as set out in the Single Assessment. Meetings may also be adjourned if not quorate. For a Child Protection meeting to be quorate a meeting must be attended by a minimum of Children’s Social Care and 2 other agencies.
- Reports are completed using the relevant sections of the Bradford Single Child Assessment form. Stand alone “Word” documents are no longer used.
- There must be an up to date Placement Plan on the child’s file; placements should not be made without an up to date Placement Plan. This must be fully completed within 5 working days of the placement and must be updated annually. Where it is not possible to draw up a placement plan in advance of the placement, a placement plan must be made within five working days of the start of the placement
- The Safeguarding & Reviewing Unit must be immediately informed of any child becoming looked after.
- Safety Plans, decisions and recommendations of Child Protection Case Conferences and Reviews must be recorded on LCS within 24 hours.
- Decisions and recommendations of LAC Reviews must be recorded on LCS within 7 days.
- Minutes of CP and LAC meetings will be recorded on LCS within 28 days.
- All key decisions and plans must be authorised by a Manager.
- Change of legal status/change of status must be immediately recorded on LCS.
- If a child on a Child Protection becomes Looked After, an IRO is allocated and will Chair the initial LAC review within 20 working days (booking at 2.5 weeks), this Review will consider the Child Protection Plan and whether it is to cease or continue. The Child Protection Co-ordinator must be in agreement of the decision from the meeting and their involvement will end if the Child Protection Plan ceases.

For any child who has been subject to a Child Protection Plan, has been looked after or subject to Children’s Social Care involvement beyond a Single Assessment, no case will be closed without an agreed multi agency step down plan.

Underlying core standard: All children and young people should know they have and be aware of their Care Plan/Child Protection Plan and, according to age, should be provided with a copy of it.

Issue	Standard
Looked After children	
1 st LAC review	Within 20 working days of becoming

	Looked After (BLA)
Second LAC review	2.5 months from the 1 st review
Subsequent LAC reviews	Every 5 months
Child Protection	
Initial Child Protection case Conference (ICPCC)	<p>Within 15 working days from the strategy discussion that initiated the Section 47.</p> <p>If the S47 and subsequent ICPCC was initiated via an assessment team, the incoming C&YP Social Worker or Team Manager must attend the ICPCC.</p>
ICPCC Pre meeting report submission	By 12pm 3 working days prior to ICPCC
1 st core group	<p>Within 10 working days from the ICPCC.</p> <p>To be chaired by the Team Manager.</p>
Subsequent core groups	Every 6 weeks minimum
1 st Child Protection review	2.5 months after the ICPCC
Subsequent Child Protection reviews	Every 5 months
Children in Need	
1 st Child in Need (CIN) review	Within 6 months of the CIN Plan being initiated
Subsequent CIN reviews	Minimum every 6 months
Children Placed for Adoption	
First review following placement with adopters	Must take place not more than four weeks after the date on which the child is placed for adoption
Subsequent reviews	The second review should be within three months of the first review and subsequent reviews should take place at least six monthly until an Adoption Order is made

4. Visits to children

The overarching principle is that children must be seen on each visit. If the child is not available, return visits must be made within each subsequent 24 hour period until the child is seen. Children not seen within 5 working days of the original visit must be the subject of a strategy discussion with the Team Manager and, where relevant, the CP Co-ordinator or Independent reviewing Officer.

Each visit which is recorded as one to a child on a CP Plan, or to a child who is Looked After, must be made to the child's placement (LAC) or care address (CP). Clearly these children may be seen at other venues (school etc) but these should not be seen as visits which would meet statutory requirements.

Issue	Standard
Looked After children	
Visit to a LAC by the case holder from BLA or changing placement	Within 5 working days of placement
Subsequent visits to a LAC by the case holder until placement confirmed as permanent	Minimum every 4 weeks
Visit to LAC by the case holder if placement is permanent, including long term residential	Minimum 3 monthly. This minimum visiting schedule would be exceptional. Visiting schedules for all children in authorised permanent / long term placements need to have been confirmed within the care plan and the LAC review.
Children subject to a Child Protection Plan	
First visit by the case holder to a child made subject to a CP Plan	Within 5 working days of the ICPCC
Subsequent visits by the case holder to a child on a CP Plan	Minimum every 15 working days
Children subject to a Child in Need Plan	
Visits to a child subject to a CIN Plan by the case holder	Minimum every 4 weeks from the start of the CIN Plan
Children Privately Fostered	

Initial visit to a Privately Fostered child	Within 7 days of notification
Subsequent visits	Minimum every 4 weeks
Children Placed for Adoption	
Immediately following placement with adopters	The child and the prospective adopter should be visited within one week of the date of placement and thereafter at least once a week until the first review.
Subsequent visits	After the first review the frequency of visits should be determined at each review but should be no less than once every four weeks.
Shared visiting	<p>Adoption guidance indicates that it is good practice for visits to be shared between the child's Social Worker and the adopter's Social Worker.</p> <p>If visits are to be undertaken by the adopter's Social Worker the child should be seen and this recorded appropriately on the child's file.</p> <p>Such a visiting pattern, if employed, would normally be alternating visits. It is not appropriate for the adopter's Social Worker to undertake a greater share of visits than the child's Social Worker.</p>
Post adoption	Once an Adoption Order is made any visits are at the discretion of the adoptive family and should be for the purposes of completing any outstanding tasks e.g. delivering the life story book

5. The Health of Looked After Children

Issue	Standard
Initial health assessment when a child becomes Looked After	Within 20 working days of BLA
Subsequent health assessments	Every 6 months whilst under 5yo. Annually for LAC aged 5yrs+

Initial dental check for LAC aged 6 months+	Within 20 working days of the 'initial health assessment' but no later than 40 working days from BLA
Subsequent dental checks	Every 6 months, regardless of age

6. The Education of Looked After Children

Issue	Standard
Initiating a Personal Education Plan (PEP) for a child who has BLA	Initiated by the long term case holder within 10 working days of BLA
Completing the first PEP	Completed by the 1 st LAC review i.e. within 20 working days of BLA
Update of PEPs	Updated within 2.5 months from 1 st LAC review and every 5 months thereafter

7. . Agreed Standards of Practice – Children in Need (CIN)

There should be no differential in the assessment, planning, intervention and reviewing activities for children in need. The timescales for assessing and the frequency of visiting and reviewing children in need is the same as for children who are subject to formal child protection plans. The frequency of contact will be stipulated in the Child in Need Plan but must never exceed intervals of more than 4 weeks. This must include seeing the child alone or a baby when awake at least every 4 weeks between each Child in Need Review. Child in Need Plan Reviews will be conducted at intervals agreed with the manager, but at least every six months, by the child's social worker, who should invite or seek the views of the child, parents and any service providers.

7. Case Summary and chronologies

- All case files must have a Case Summary that is updated monthly which summaries the child's journey, their needs and how/who is meeting these.

Chronologies

- All open cases must to have an up to date chronology on ICS.
- All re-referred cases are to have a chronology created in ICS, including pulling historic information which is not in ICS, at the point of assessment.

It is important that children and young people who are referred to us and receive our services are responded to in a timely and consistent way, irrespective of where they live in the district and, to receive the very highest quality services.

These agreed Standards of Practice are the bedrock of excellent practice