

# **Isle of Wight Council and Hampshire Council Protocol for Assessment April 2014**

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013 sets out that – ‘Local authorities, with their partners, should develop and publish local protocols for assessment. A local protocol should set out clear arrangements for how cases will be managed once a child is referred into local authority children’s social care. The detail of each protocol will be led by the local authority in discussion with their partners and agreed with the relevant LSCB.’

Under the Children Act 1989, local authorities are required to provide services for children in need for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting their welfare. Local Authorities undertake assessments of the needs of individual children to determine what services to provide and action to take.

## **Single Assessment Process**

The Isle of Wight and Hampshire Councils have developed a single assessment process (Child and Family Assessment) in line with the requirements set out within Working Together 2013. This replaces both the Initial and Core Assessment and includes pre-births and unborns. The Child and Family Assessment incorporates the Assessment Framework Triangle and considers the 3 areas of child’s developmental needs; parenting capacity and family and environmental factors.

The timescale for completing any assessment of a child or young person’s needs will reflect their individual circumstances, but in any event will not exceed 45 working days. All assessments will be completed within 15 days if a decision is taken to proceed to an Initial Child Protection Conference.

## **Children in Need**

A child in need is defined under the Children Act 1989 as a child who is ‘unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health or development, or whose health and development is likely to be significantly impaired or further impaired, without the provision of services; or a child who is disabled’.

In these cases, assessments are carried out under section 17 of the Children Act 1989. Children in need may be assessed in relation to a range of needs (for example their special educational needs, disabilities, as a carer or because they have committed a crime). The assessment process will also be used for children whose parents are in prison and for asylum seeking children.

## **Children in Need of Protection**

Concerns about maltreatment may be the reason for a referral to Children's Social Care or concerns may arise during the course of providing services to the child and family. In these circumstances, children's social care will initiate enquiries to find out what is happening to the child and whether protective action is required.

Local authorities, with the help of other organisations as appropriate, have a duty to make enquiries under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 if they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, to enable them to decide whether they should take any action to safeguard and promote the child's welfare. There may be a need for immediate protection whilst the assessment is carried out. The duty also applies to children in police protection, those subject to emergency protection orders or a child who has contravened a ban imposed by a curfew notice.

Where children are considered to be at risk of or suffering significant harm, the 4LSCB child protection procedures will be followed (<http://4lscb.proceduresonline.com/>). The Child and Family Assessment will be undertaken alongside any protective action or service provision.

## **Specialist Assessments**

There are occasions when children and young people may require more specialist assessments. Where possible, these will be co-ordinated so that the child and family experience a coherent process and a single, outcome focused, action plan.

Any specialist assessments already in place (i.e. for those with specialist education needs; disabled children etc) will be considered and inform the Child and Family Assessment as appropriate.

## **Recording and Reviewing Assessments**

Recording of the child's needs as identified in the assessment and any actions and services being provided to address needs will be recorded on the child's plan. (Dependant on the outcome of an assessment and age of child, this will be either; a child in need plan, my plan, child protection plan, care plan or pathway plan). The action/service plan will include outcomes to be achieved, how these will be measured; and within what timescales. The plan should be reviewed on a regular basis and at least every 6 months to ensure the child's needs are being addressed and appropriate services are being provided. Regular reviews will also reduce the need for repeat assessments.

## **Involving child, young people and parents/carers**

Children and young people are central to the assessment process. Their views, wishes and feelings should be sought and reflected in the assessment

and any plans. Culture, ethnicity and diversity issues must also be considered in all assessments as they impact on the child and their experience.

**Parents and carers should be fully involved and informed in the assessment of their children;** and in identifying appropriate services or resources that will help support them in their parenting role. Parents need to be informed of any risks identified during the course of the assessment and be clear on how they can contribute to improving their children's circumstances as well as the help they can expect from social care and other agencies.

### **1. Referral to Children's Social Care**

Where a referral made to Children's Social Care requires further assessment, a Child and Family Assessment will be initiated.

For a *child in need* the Child and Family Assessment will be undertaken alongside provision of services.

For a *child at risk of suffering significant harm* the Child and Family Assessment will be undertaken alongside the child protection process i.e. strategy discussion; Section 47 enquiries and child protection conference.

### **2. Agency Involvement**

Where a social worker is undertaking a Child and Family Assessment, all agencies (statutory and otherwise) working with or providing services to children and their families should be invited to contribute to the assessment. This will include provision of information and reports; attendance at meetings; and agreeing actions and services to be provided to support the child and their family.

Agencies and professionals should wherever possible contribute fully to the assessment process and any subsequent action plan to reduce risk and promote the welfare of the child.

### **3. Review of the Assessment**

The Line Manager will review the progress of a Child and Family Assessment with the social worker at day 7 when a decision will be made regarding the timescale for completion of the Child and Family Assessment - see the flowchart on page 6.

A child in need planning meeting will be held at day 15 for all cases where the Child and Family Assessment either identifies the child is in need after a 10 day assessment, or where the assessment will take 25 or 40 days to complete. A Child in Need review meeting will take place at day 55 and then at least every 6 months if the child is subject to CIN plan. Reviews will include the child and family and other professionals as appropriate.

Where a child becomes looked after or subject to a child protection plan the Child and Family Assessment will inform and be reflected in the plans and reviews that take place within these processes.

#### **4. Planning and Review Mechanism**

A planning meeting will be held to develop a plan within one month of the assessment being initiated. This will be based on the agreed outcomes for the child, with the family and all relevant professionals. The purpose of the meeting is to develop a multi-agency plan, and subsequently to review that plan. The plan will include details of who, what, when and how things will be done, and specific actions for all members including the family.

The allocated social worker from Children's Social Care will be the lead professional. They will take responsibility for coordinating services however it is a shared responsibility between all agencies to contribute to and undertake the tasks identified in the plan.

The review points should be agreed by the social worker with other professionals and with the child and family to continue evaluating the impact of any change on the welfare of the child. Dates for the review meetings should, wherever possible, be set at the end of the last meeting.

Visits should take place with a frequency as set out in the multi-agency. The visiting frequency of each individual professional should be agreed and specified within the plan. Where the plan is in place for less than 6 months, the social worker or children and families support worker will visit 3 weekly. Where the plan last for 6 months or longer, the visiting frequency can be reduced to 6 weekly

After each review meeting the updated child's plan will be sent to all professionals who are party to the plan, and all relevant family members within 15 working days

#### **5. Disabled children, young carers and children involved in the Youth Justice System**

Children who are disabled, or who are identified as young carers or who are involved with the youth justice system are particularly vulnerable and as such will have an assessment of their needs to ensure timely and appropriate service provision. In each case a Child and Family Assessment will be initiated to identify any needs or risks and the support, services and intervention required to address these.

Where a child is disabled the Child and Family Assessment will be undertaken within the Children and Young Peoples Disability Teams. These teams work with children up to the age of 18.. The teams will usually use the same process and format for assessments as all other Isle of Wight Social Care Teams. However, in addition to this the teams are also developing "My Plans", (Education and Healthcare Plans) a holistic, child centred assessment and plan that considers the child or young person's social care, education and health needs all in one place.

Children who are young carers must be assessed if it appears that they may have need for support or where the Local Authority receives a request from the young carer of their parent(s) to assess. The assessment will consider the young carer's wishes to participate in education, training or recreation, or to work. The assessment can be carried out in conjunction with the assessment of the person cared for if both the carer and cared for person agree. The

assessment will identify whether there are any needs for support, if so, whether those needs can be provided under section 17 and, if so, whether to provide them.

In the case of children involved with the Youth Offending Team (YOT), all will be assessed by YOT under the Youth Justice assessment framework (currently known as Asset). Where a Child and Family Assessment is also completed, these processes will support and complement each other. This will include consultation between allocated workers in both services to ensure all relevant information is appropriately shared.

## **6. Children returning to live with their families**

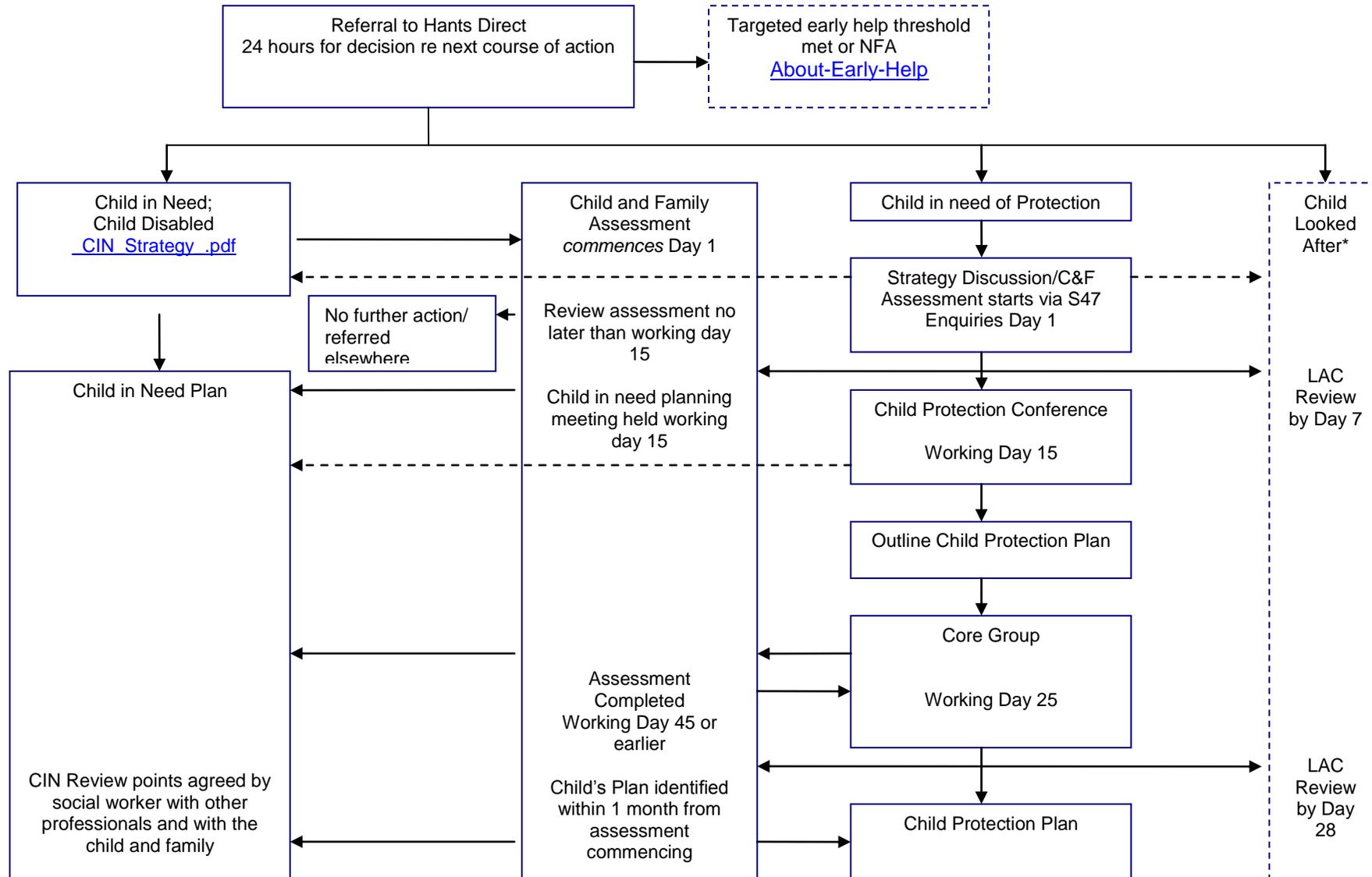
Where children have been living away from their families in residential or foster care or with relatives, whether by consent or court order and there is a plan to return the child or young person home a Single Assessment will be initiated, involving the parents, child and professionals to inform the assessment. The assessment will identify any needs and actions/services required to enable the child to return home safely with appropriate supports and safeguards. The assessment should also consider the needs of any other child living in the home and initiate any further assessments as appropriate.

The Single Assessment process will utilise and be informed by the Looked After Children review and child protection process as appropriate to the child's circumstances. Independent Reviewing Officers will be consulted as necessary to inform the Assessment and Plan in order to support the child returning home.

## **7. Complaints Process**

Any parent, carer or young person who is dissatisfied with the service they receive from Children's Services/Social Care has the right to make a complaint. In the first instance parents/carers and children should request a copy of the complaints procedure from their social worker, if they have one. If not a copy of the complaints procedures can be accessed via [complaints@iow.gov.uk](mailto:complaints@iow.gov.uk) (for Isle of Wight Council) and [childrens.services.complaints@hants.gov.uk](mailto:childrens.services.complaints@hants.gov.uk) (for Hampshire Council)

## Flowchart of Assessment Process



Review Date: July 2015

\*Child may become looked after at any point within this process so review dates may not coincide with Child and Family Assessment timescales.