

Disabled Children and Young People Service: Our pledge for a good assessment

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DISABLED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SERVICE:

Our pledge for what a good assessment looks like

This document outlines the Disabled Children and Young People Service (DCYPS) pledge for what a good assessment looks like for a disabled child and their family. This has been produced as a service and further developed with the input of the Greenwich Parent Carer Participation Forum. This pledge is important as an assessment is the gateway to support and, in the words of one parent, “assessments make a huge impact on our children’s lives”.

An assessment includes a social work assessment known as a Child and Family Assessment, as well as assessments undertaken by the Children’s Occupational Therapy Service and the Short Breaks Team. These principles and practice should be consistent in a family’s experience of our service, regardless of the reason for accessing the service.

Assessments for children and young people should be dynamic and flexible, considering the ever-changing nature of a child's development and circumstances. Assessments should consider the following principles:

1. **Voice of the child or young person:** Focus on the child's needs, wishes, and feelings. Ensure their voice is heard, reflected and considered in the assessment process in line with their age and capacity.
2. **Clarity of Objective:** Be clear from the outset about the purpose of the assessment, the method of assessment and the intended outcomes of the assessment. Revisit this with the family and give them the opportunity to ask questions.
3. **Holistic Perspective:** Consider various aspects of the child's life, including their physical, emotional, social, and educational well-being. Consider their family dynamics, culture, and community context. Consider the role of the carer and their own support needs. Ensure there is a fair balance of the information gathered with an attention to detail – and ensure that we are curious and asking ‘why’ to understand the situation better. Don’t allow forms to be a tickbox exercise – allow families to elaborate and have the opportunity to expand on their experiences.
4. **Strengths-Based Perspective:** Identify the child’s and family’s strengths, resilience, and available resources within their family and community. In most circumstances, parents of disabled children are best-placed to judge the well being of their disabled child.
5. **Communication:** Be clear on the purpose of your assessment. Parents should be informed of what to expect in the assessment and what happens next including how the information will be used. Share assessment record, findings and recommendations with professionals, including the child and their family, in a clear and empathetic manner.
6. **Developmental Considerations:** Consider the child's age, developmental stage, and individual needs. Assess how their needs change over time. Focus on the child or young person’s needs and not the diagnosis.
7. **Family Assessment:** Understand the family's dynamics, history and functioning, as this greatly influences a child's well-being. Consider parents' capacity to meet their child's needs and how this may be impacted by the needs of the parent and the needs of the child. Ensure that the lived experience of the family is heard and understood. Keep an open eye and think hard about the child or young person’s environment and day-to day practicalities for the child and family. Completion of a systemic genogram will assist with this greater family understanding. Consider what additional information is needed where families are divided between homes – think about how the child or young person’s needs change between homes.
8. **Collaboration:** Include relevant professionals involved and supporting the family, such as education, health, housing and community colleagues etc. Gathering a variety of perspectives helps build a full picture of the child and their family. Think about who the family trusts and who is advocating for the family. Be invested in wanting to achieve the best outcomes for the family and be pro-active.

9. **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion:** Recognise, seek to understand and respect the child's cultural background and identity. Assess how culture impacts their wellbeing and support needs. Seek to challenge oppression or discrimination experienced by the family. Ensure accessibility issues and reasonable adjustments are made in your assessment and wider work with the family.
10. **Safety and Risk Assessment:** Be proportionate to presenting needs and why we are involved. Evaluate immediate safety concerns and potential risks to the child's well-being in the context of the individual child and family circumstances. Identify protective factors and risk factors in their environment.
11. **Promote individual choice and control:** consider the young person's mental capacity to participate in the assessment process. Consider an advocacy service if they lack capacity and the young person does not have an appropriate adult to advocate on their behalf. Support families to make informed choices by providing information and advice on options available to them.
12. **Recording:** Record assessment findings accurately and comprehensively – use the parent and child's words where appropriate. Use clear, non-judgmental language that parents will understand. Avoid the use of jargon or acronyms and don't make any assumptions about what people do or do not understand. Ensure families have access to information that explains terminology.
13. **Ongoing Review:** Continuously monitor and review the child's situation, adjusting interventions as needed to meet their evolving needs. Consider if the support and expectations for families continue to be realistic.

For more information on completing social care assessments for disabled children, please read the [Draft Guidance: Assessing the Needs of Disabled Children and their Families \(July 2023\)](#). Below, we provide the common assessment framework, which Social Workers use when undertaking a Child and Family Assessment. This outlines the areas which would typically be explored during any assessment, although different assessments would focus on some areas more than others, dependent upon the presenting need.

