

APPENDIX F: Social Services Assessment and Care Planning Aide-Memoire

Days

The reference in this appendix to “**DAYS**” is independent of the “**DAYS**” referred to in The 6 Steps

Recommended Guidance	Recommended timetable
<p>1 Referral A referral to a Council with Social Services Responsibilities (CSSR) in England and a Local Authority in Wales (i.e. a request for services including child protection) triggers the following Government guidance:</p>	<p>On DAY 1</p>
<p>2 Initial Decision Within 1 working day of a referral social services should make a decision about what response is required including a decision to take no action or to undertake an initial assessment. The parents or carers (the family), where appropriate, the child and (unless inappropriate) the referrer should be informed of the initial decision and its reasons by social services</p>	<p>On DAY 2</p>
<p>3 Initial Assessment An initial assessment (if undertaken) should be completed by social services within a maximum of 7 working days of the date of the referral (i.e. 6 working days from the date of the decision about how to respond to a referral)</p>	<p>By DAY 7</p>
<p>4 As part of an initial assessment social services should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain and collate information and reports from other agencies • Interview family members and the child • In any event, see the child 	
<p>5 At the conclusion of an initial assessment social services will make a decision about whether the child is a child in need and about further action including whether to undertake a core assessment. It will inform the family, the child and other relevant agencies of the decision and its reasons. Social services will record the response of each person and agency consulted</p>	

Recommended Guidance	Recommended timetable
<p>6 Initial Assessment Record Social services will make and keep a record of the initial assessment and decision making process. The Department of Health (DH) and Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) publish an ‘Initial Assessment Record’ for this purpose.</p>	
<p>7 Child in Need Plan Where social services decide that the child is a child in need they will make a plan which sets out the services to be provided to meet the child’s needs.</p>	
<p>8 Strategy Discussion/Record Where social services has evidence that the child is suspected to be suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm it should ensure that an inter agency strategy discussion takes place to decide whether to initiate an enquiry under section 47 of the Children Act. This should also result in the child in need plan being updated. A record of the strategy discussion will be made.</p>	
<p>9 Achieving Best Evidence in Criminal Proceedings Where a child is the victim of or witness to a suspected crime the strategy discussion shall include a discussion about how any interviews are to be conducted with the child. These may be as part of a police investigation and /or a section 47 enquiry initiated by social services, These interviews should be undertaken in accordance with Government guidance ‘Achieving Best Evidence in Criminal Proceedings’.</p>	
<p>10 Complex Child Abuse Investigations Where a complex child abuse investigation has been initiated by social services or the police there will be inter agency strategy discussions to make recommendations relating to the planning, co-ordination and management of the investigation and assessment processes in accordance with the guidance given in ‘Working Together’, ‘Complex Child Abuse Investigations: Inter Agency Issues’ (England only – to be published in Wales, Summer 2003)</p>	
<p>11 Section 47 Enquiries If during a strategy discussion it is decided that there is reasonable cause to suspect that the child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, section 47 enquiries will be initiated by social services. This means that a core assessment will be commenced under section 47 of the Children Act 1989. It should be completed within 35 working days of the completion of the initial assessment or the strategy discussion at which it was decided to initiate section 47 enquiries.</p>	<p>By DAY 42 or within 35 days of the last strategy discussion</p>

Recommended Guidance	Recommended timetable
<p>12 Core Assessment Where social services decides to undertake a core assessment it should be completed within 35 working days of the initial assessment or the date of the subsequent strategy discussion. A timescale for completion of specialist assessments should be agreed with social services</p>	<p>By DAY 42 or within 35 days of the last strategy discussion</p>
<p>13 At the conclusion of a core assessment social services should consult with the family, the child and all relevant agencies before making decisions about the plan for the child. Social Services will record the response of each person and agency consulted.</p>	
<p>14 Core Assessment Record Social services will make and keep a record of the core assessment and decision making process. The DH and WAG publish a ‘Core Assessment Record’ for this purpose.</p>	
<p>15 Child Protection Conferences Where social services undertakes section 47 enquiries and it is concluded that a child is at continuing risk of suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, social services will consider whether to convene a child protection conference. A child protection conference determines whether the child is at continuing risk of significant harm and therefore requires a child protection plan to be put in place when determining whether to place the child’s name on the child protection register. It agrees an outline child protection plan. An initial child protection conference should take place within 15 working days of the last strategy discussion (i.e. by day 22) in accordance with the Government guidance given in ‘Working Together to Safeguard Children: a guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children’</p>	<p>By DAY 22 or within 15 days of the end of the last strategy discussion</p>
<p>16 Decision to Apply for a Care Order At the conclusion of the core assessment which may have been undertaken under section 47 of the Children Act and where no earlier decision has been made social services should decide whether to apply for a statutory order and should be able to identify by reference to the conclusions in the core assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The needs of the child (including for protection), • The services that will be provided, • The role of other professionals and agencies, • Whether additional specialist assessments are to be undertaken, • The timetable and • The responsibilities of those involved. 	

Recommended Guidance	Recommended timetable
<p>17 Plans At the conclusion of a core assessment social services will prepare one or more of the following plans:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A children in need plan • A child protection plan for a child whose name is on the child protection register • A care plan (where the child is a looked after child) <p>The DH and WAG publish formats and / or guidance for each of these plans.</p>	
<p>18 Interim Care Plans Where social services decide to make an application to the Court it will be necessary to satisfy the Court that an order would be better for the child than making no order at all. An interim care plan should be prepared, filed and served so as to be available to the Court for the CMC in accordance with steps 3.4 and 4.1 of the protocol.</p>	
<p>19 In cases where no core assessment has been undertaken (e.g. because the interim care order had to be taken quickly before one could be begun/completed) it should be begun/completed as soon as possible. The interim care plan should be developed from the initial assessment information</p>	
<p>20 Care Plans Care Plans should be written so as to comply with the Government guidance given in LAC(99) 29 in England and <i>Care Plans and Care Proceedings under the CA 1989 NAFWC 1/2000</i> in Wales. While interim care plans will necessarily be in outline and contain less comprehensive information, the plan should include details of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The aim of the plan and a summary of the social work timetable • A summary of the child’s needs and how these are to be met including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • placement • contact with family and other significant persons • education, healthcare and social care services • the role of parents and other significant persons • the views of others • Implementation and management of the plan 	

Recommended Guidance	Recommended timetable
<p>21 Emergency Protection Where at any time there is reasonable cause to believe that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, an application for a child assessment order or an emergency protection order may be made (among others) by social services. The child may be removed or remain in a safe place under police powers of protection. In each case agency and/or court records of the application and reasons will exist.</p>	
<p>22 Adoption Government guidance is given on the assessment and decision making process relating to adoption in England in LAC (2001) 33 which from the 1st April 2003 incorporates the ‘National Adoption Standards for England’. The processes and timescales of assessment and decision making for a child for whom adoption is identified as an option are set out in detail in the Standards.</p>	

Days

The reference in this appendix to “**DAYS**” is independent of the “**DAYS**” referred to in The 6 Steps