

1. Introduction

In 2014 over 4400 children in Dorset were referred to our children's social care services by individuals who had concerns about their welfare. For children who need additional help, every day matters. The actions taken by professionals to meet the needs of these children as early as possible can be critical to their future. Children are best protected when professionals are clear about what is required of them individually, and how they need to work together. Professionals help best when all local agencies have carried out a thorough assessment and drawn up a plan for support. Ultimately, effective safeguarding of children can only be achieved by putting children at the centre of the system, and by every individual and agency playing their full part, working together to meet the needs of our most vulnerable children.

This protocol aims to secure the cooperative working that is essential for the effective assessment of needs and the identification of the services to be provided. It sets out how we, the local authority and its partner agencies along with parents/carers and young people, will assess, plan and manage cases when there are concerns about a child and where the threshold for a children's social care assessment (under the Children Act 1989) is met.

It also aims to explain the journey that children will take through the assessment process, providing support to them and their families on the way.

2. The Local Protocol for Assessment

What is a Local Protocol?

- 2.1 The Local Protocol is a 'handbook' that describes what the Local Authority (LA) will do when a child¹ is referred to the LA for support (in Dorset this is DCC). It is a map that guides the child's journey through assessment and planning.
- 2.2 The main purpose of the Local Protocol for Assessment is to set out the arrangements for how cases will be managed once a referral has been received by Dorset County Council's Children's Services.
- 2.3 The Local Protocol will also explain what help a child receives before the thresholds are met for statutory assessment, such as when children and families require early help known as the Common Assessment Framework (CAF)².

¹ *In this document a child is defined as anyone who has not reached their 18th birthday, including unborn children. 'Children' therefore means 'children and young people' throughout. The fact that a child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently or is in further education, is a member of the armed forces, is in hospital or in custody in the secure estate, does not change his/her status or entitlements to services or protection. (Definition provided by Working Together 2013)*

² *Common Assessment Framework. DfE, updated October 2013. - www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/strategy/integratedworking/caf*

What is an assessment?

- 2.4 An assessment is a process of collecting information that allows somebody to understand what is happening to a child so the child can be helped. It is the story of the child's life, who they are, who they know and what is happening to them. Whilst it is the parents' responsibility to bring up their children, they may need assistance from time to time to do so³. The assessment will normally be completed in partnership with parents and will involve a range of professionals who will contribute in order to keep the child safe and help them if they have needs, such as a disability.

Why have a Local Protocol for Assessment?

- 2.5 In April 2013, the Department of Education published "Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013. A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children". Working Together (WT)⁴, as the document is commonly called, explains what the LA and other organisations should do to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The government has asked all LA's with their partners to write and publish 'Local Protocol for Assessment'. Appendix Attached
- 2.6 The Local Protocol allows children, young people, their families and everyone who works with them to understand exactly what process they can expect whilst children are being helped by the LA.

³ *Part III Children Act 1989*

⁴ *Working together to safeguard children – guidance. DfE, 2013. www.education.gov.uk*

Who is the Local Protocol for Assessment for?

2.7 The Local Protocol for Assessment is required reading for professionals or volunteers working in any of the agencies involved in the assessment process. It is also aimed at helping children and families understand the assessment process. The Local Protocol for Assessment is a requirement made of LA's in WT and will be considered by regulators and inspectors.

Who was asked to write the Local Protocol for Assessment?

2.8 The Local Protocol for Assessment has been developed by Dorset County Council (DCC) with help from partner agencies, including Health, Schools, Youth Offending Service, Police and Voluntary Organisations. It has been approved by the Dorset Safeguarding Children Board (DSCB) and will be reviewed through their Policy and Procedures sub group.

3. Context

What is a Local Protocol?

3.1 When being assessed every child has a different story. That story might show they have individual and differing needs and so they may need different support to help them. In 2014 Dorset launched the Early Help and Support – Partnership Working Model. This describes the four levels of need and support for children, young people and their families and the type of intervention or help they can expect. The guidance is fundamentally about working better together and intervening earlier with children and young people to provide services at the earliest opportunity to meet their identified needs

3.2 This Local Protocol describes the statutory intervention (help) for children and young people who, when assessed, may come under Universal Plus, Universal Partnership Plus or clearly come under “Specialist Services”

See [Threshold Tool - Continuum of Help and Support](#)

3.3 Research has given a consistent message that in cases involving harm to children, it is important to identify problems early and take rapid action to address these problems before they get worse. We also know that no single professional can have a full picture of a child's needs and circumstances.

3.4 If children and their families are to receive the right help, everyone who comes in contact with them - midwives, police, health visitors, GPs, early years' professionals, teachers, youth workers, voluntary and social workers⁵ must play a role by

identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action.

⁵ This is not an exhaustive list and all professionals who work with children have a responsibility to be aware of their role in safeguarding.

- 3.5 Assessment and understanding families and the experiences of children within them can be complex and signs of abuse and neglect may be misleading. Professionals working in the universal services – education, health, police and early years’ professionals- have a responsibility to identify the early signs of abuse and neglect, to share information and work together to provide children with the help they need.
- 3.6 Information may be included in an assessment which may have been carried out prior to a referral into children’s social care, such as a CAF (Common Assessment Framework -‘early help assessment’), ASSET (Young Persons Assessment Profile), SEN (Special Educational Needs), Portage (disability assessment) or Young Carers assessment⁶. An assessment should be a continuous process, which has the needs of the child at the centre.
- 3.7 This protocol sets out how we will assess, plan and manage cases when there are concerns about the child and where the threshold for a children’s social care assessment is met, as laid out in the Multi-agency Threshold Tool, see [Threshold Tool - Continuum of Help and Support](#) and Partnership Working Model (Windscreen) called a statutory assessment under the Children Act 1989 and referred to in Dorset as a CIN Assessment.

⁶ This is not an exhaustive list of assessments

4. What is a Statutory Assessment under the Children Act 1989?

- 4.1 A statutory assessment is an assessment required by law 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. The full set of statutory assessments can be found in WT pg 17.
- 4.2 A children’s social care assessment is a multi-agency assessment carried out under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989, this requires working together with children, young people and families and it will require their consent to progress. A Local Authority social worker is responsible for leading the assessment and has a duty to ascertain the child’s wishes and feelings and take account of them when planning the provision of service.
- 4.3 If information gathered during an assessment (which may be brief) results in the social worker suspecting that the child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, then the Local Authority, under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 is required to make enquiries to decide what action must be taken, with partners, to safeguard and promote the welfare of the child. There may be a need for immediate protection whilst the assessment is carried out.
- 4.4 Following an application under Section 31A of the Children Act 1989, where a child is subject of a care order, Dorset County Council must assess the child’s needs and draw up a care plan which sets out the services which will be provided to meet the child’s identified needs.
- 4.5 Where a child is accommodated under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989, Dorset County Council has a statutory responsibility to assess the child’s needs and draw up a care plan which sets out the services to be provided to meet the child’s needs.
- 4.6 Where a child becomes looked after, the assessment will be the baseline for work with the family while the child is away. Any needs which have been identified must be addressed before decisions are made about the child’s return home.
- 4.7 An assessment by a social worker is required before the child returns home under the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review England Regulations 2010. This will provide evidence of whether the necessary changes and improvements have been made to ensure the child’s safety when they return home.

5. Multi Agency Statutory Assessment in Dorset

- 5.1 A children’s social care (statutory) multi-agency assessment in Dorset is called ‘A Child In Need Assessment’ (CIN Assessment). The CIN Assessment has replaced what was previously known as Initial and Core Assessments.
- 5.2 The Government assesses the effectiveness of all LAs through 4 critical elements -
- Timeliness;
 - Focus on need;
 - Views of the child;
 - Outcomes

The LA will use these 4 critical elements to measure the effectiveness of the CIN Assessment.

- 5.3 The timeliness of an assessment is a critical element of the quality of that assessment and the outcomes for the child. The timescale in which an assessment is completed will be determined by the needs of the individual child, the nature and level of risk of harm experienced by the child and the degree that parents and family are engaging with the process.
- 5.4 A judgement will be made by the manager, in discussion with the allocated social worker on each individual case but an assessment will not exceed 45 days (as required by WT). There will be a progress review by a manager at not later than 10 days following the start of the assessment, which will ensure the assessment is undertaken in a timely way and any immediate intervention that may be required is in place as soon as possible. At this point the manager will set a date by which the assessment should be completed.

How it works; implications for partners and parents

- 5.5 Within 24 hours the relevant Integrated Duty Team (IDT) will make a decision as to whether a contact requires a statutory response and becomes a referral to LA Children's Services (Section 17 or Section 47). A social work manager will make a decision about the type of response that is required. In some situations the social work manager may not have sufficient information to make the best decision as to whether the contact requires a statutory response. In these circumstances the 24 hour decision will be that a statutory response will be initiated; however if further information gathered indicates that this is not warranted, the CIN assessment can be a proportionate one which is ended quickly. The child may not have been seen in these circumstances, but the social worker and the manager will document the full reasons for the decision in the progress review section of the assessment document.
- 5.6 In urgent and very serious cases (mostly Section 47) the decision will be made immediately and will be prioritised without delay.
- 5.7 For less urgent cases (Section 17) the child must be seen by a social worker within 10 working days of the referral decision.
- 5.8 For children who require immediate protection, action must be taken by the social worker (or the police if removal is required), as soon as possible

after the referral decision has been made (Section 44 and 46 of the Children Act 1989).

- 5.9 The manager, in discussion with the social worker will set the timescale for completion of the assessment at the Progress Review point (within 10 days). The maximum timeframe for the assessment to conclude, such that it is possible to reach a decision on next steps, should be no longer than 45 working days from the 24 hour decision point.
- 5.10 It is the responsibility of the social worker to make clear to the child and their family how the assessment will be carried out and shared with the child/family and relevant partners within the agreed completion date.
- 5.11 The child/children MUST be seen and spoken to alone by the Social Worker for every CIN Assessment (unless a proportionate assessment has been agreed with the manager as detailed in 5.5. above). The voice of the child must be the focus the assessment and their wishes and feelings ascertained and accurately reflected.



- 5.12 The social worker will evaluate the type and seriousness of risks of harm to the child; in doing so all current 'risk assessments' provided by partner agencies will be considered. The evidence base of any risk assessments should be made available to the assessing social worker by the relevant agency so this can be discussed with the family, as is appropriate in each case.
- 5.13 Whatever the timescale for assessment and where particular needs are identified at any stage of the assessment, the social worker will not wait until the assessment is completed before co-ordinating services to support the child and their family. In some cases the needs of the child will mean that a quick assessment will be required.
- 5.14 Providing services or initiating care proceedings should not be delayed until the assessment is completed, as this can have a detrimental impact on the child's development. It is important for the child that they are able to reach their full

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developmental needs at the right time throughout their lives.

5.15 For cases where child protection concerns arise, the assessment will be completed in accordance with Section 47 of the Children Act 1989. The assessment must be completed within 13 days of the strategy discussion to enable the assessment report to be available to an Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC). The ICPC must be held within 15 working days of the strategy discussion.

5.16 The social worker will go through the assessment/report with the child and family at least 2 days prior to the Initial Child Protection Conference.

5.17 For cases where there are no child protection concerns but where the child is believed to be a Child in Need, the assessment will be completed under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989. At the start of the assessment, the social worker will see the child, discuss with the team manager and agree with the family the length of time it will take for the assessment to be completed. This discussion will be reflected in the Progress Review section of the CIN Assessment form.

5.18 Where child protection concerns become evident in the course of a S.17 assessment, the manager will conduct a multi-agency strategy discussion.

6. What makes a good assessment?

6.1 In Dorset, the agreed method will follow the National Framework for Assessment⁷ and will be used in all statutory assessment processes, and focus on the 4 critical elements:-

- Timeliness;
- Focus on need;
- Views of the child;
- Outcomes



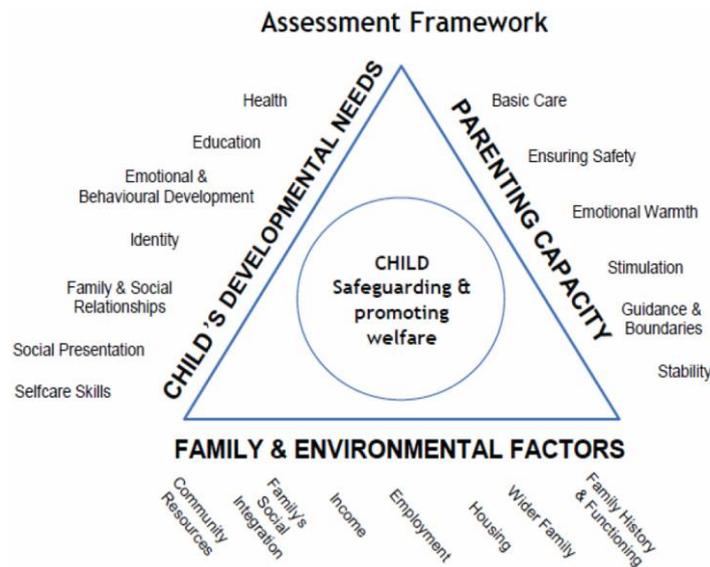
will

6.2 The National Assessment Framework investigates three 'domains' (headings for carrying out the assessment) - parenting capacity, child's developmental needs and family and environmental factors. The findings are balanced with a judgement of the likelihood of harm and the severity of any harm on the child over a specific period of time.

⁷ National Framework for Assessment of children in need and their families, DoH 2000.
<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/>
<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DH-4014430>

The diagrams below set out the domains of the National Assessment Framework.

National Framework for Assessment



6.3 It is important that practitioners analyse the information collected during the assessment to identify the factors that may place a child at risk of significant harm. Undertaking this analysis to determine risk is complex. Not all decisions taken in the context of risk can be guaranteed to prevent a hazard from occurring. However, planned and informed risk assessment and risk management based on research will better predict outcomes than unevaluated information collection.

6.4 Assessments for some children – including those with complex needs - will involve a number of different agencies and so will require a greater

Timelines

6.6 Decision points and review points involving the child, family and relevant professionals should be

co-ordination and planning with the child, their family and all professionals involved. The assessment should be built on any other work already carried out by the professionals involved, such as Special Educational Needs, any Health, Youth Offender Services, disability assessment.

6.5 Where a child has other assessments it is important that these are, referenced coordinated and inform the statutory assessment. A child must not become lost between the different agencies involved and their different procedures. A statutory assessment can trigger other assessments. See Section 7.

used to keep the assessment on track. This is to ensure that help is given in a timely and appropriate way and that the impact of this help is analysed and evaluated in terms of the improved outcomes and welfare of the child.

- 6.9 Attention will be paid to 'drift and delay' and all parties contributing to the assessment will be responsible for timely completion. If drift or delay is having an impact on the outcomes for the child, there is accountability for all agencies to the DSCB. (Link here to the DSCB website)
- 6.10 Where there is a delay, or any other issue of concern, the DSCB Conflict Resolution process or individual agency complaint processes are available for professionals, parents and children.
- 6.11 All agencies contributing to the statutory assessment process will have a responsibility to ensure that their staff will work within the Protocol.
- 6.18 All assessments will be informed by the child's views as well as those of family members. The child will be seen alone and the social worker is responsible for ensuring that the child's views and wishes are sought, heard and recorded and that they contribute to the assessment and planning meetings.
- 6.19 When a child is seen alone, the social worker is responsible for ensuring that the child's views and wishes are sought. The social worker must ensure that the environment the child is heard in is safe and away from potential abusers.

Outcomes

Focus on need

- 6.12 It is a social worker's responsibility to analyse the information collected during the assessment process, to identify the factors that may place a child at risk of significant harm, and to ensure that the actions that have been identified are undertaken by both professionals and others who may be responsible. The assessment and analysis of risk is complex. Circumstances may change and this necessitates ongoing review of how to manage the potential risks and improve the life experiences of a child.
- 6.13 Where there is also an allegation of a crime, the police have a duty to carry out a criminal investigation.
- 6.14 Where the outcome of the assessment is for ongoing involvement with Dorset County Council Children's Services Social Care, the social worker and their manager must agree a plan of action with the other professionals and discuss this with the child and their family. The plan should set out what services are to be delivered and what actions are to be undertaken, by whom, by when and for what purpose.
- 6.15 Where the case is to be 'stepped down' back into the local agencies, the statutory assessment and plan will form the basis for this continued intervention and support for the child and the family.
- 6.16 Where no further action is required the reason for this must be recorded and made clear to the child and family.
- 6.17 The Referrer will be notified of the outcome of any assessment with the family's knowledge and consent.
- 6.20 Interplay between an early assessment and statutory assessment should be seen as a continuum of the assessment and planning process for the child and their family. In situations where the assessment and plan have been initiated at the early help stage, it may be necessary to 'step up' the assessment into a statutory assessment and plan. (This is at the crossover point between "Universal Partnership Plus" and Specialist Services). Conversely an assessment and plan established within the statutory assessment process may no longer be appropriate at that level and should be 'stepped down' from Specialist Services. Further information about the 'stepping up' and 'stepping down' process can be found in the Multi-agency Threshold Guidance (Link here to the guidance when completed).
- 6.21 The early assessment should be incorporated into the statutory assessment and should be the starting point with the family and the most appropriate lead agency when beginning a statutory assessment. The child's plans should flow from one level of intervention to the next.
- 6.23 An assessment must lead to a clearly evidenced view about what needs to happen next in order to help the child, by promoting their welfare within the context of their circumstances and environment. Plans emerge from an understanding of the child's needs and must be firmly rooted in addressing the identified needs, in a timescale that is appropriate for the child. In some cases plans will need to achieve improvements in the child's circumstances very quickly in order to reduce on-going adversity and in some cases the needs of the child will require urgent action to protect the child from unacceptable risk and severe adversity that is damaging them.
- 6.24 Any plan following an assessment should be clear about the following:

- What type of multi-agency plan it is e.g. 'early help' Common Assessment Framework plan,

Views of the child

- Child in Need statutory assessment plan, Child Protection Plan, Care Plan or Leaving Care Plan;
- What are the needs that should be addressed and the likely impact on the child if their circumstances are not addressed;
- What the intended outcomes for the child are;
- What services and work will be provided in order to achieve the identified outcomes;
- Who is responsible for each aspect of the service/work to be provided;
- The period of time-linked to the identified needs of the child and timescale to reach the desired outcome;
- The expectations and responsibilities placed on family members.
- The Outcomes Chart tool has been created to track progress towards intended outcomes for children. The tool is flexible and can be used by social workers, with families and within multi agency groups

6.25 The plan will be subject to regular reviews to ensure that it is achieving what is required in the timescale agreed as appropriate for the child. Child protection reviews are held 3 months from the Initial Conference and then six monthly, with regular Core Group meetings held between Conference meetings. Drift is something that professionals should be wary of, particularly as other family events are likely to distract from and/or complicate the focus of the work.



7. Other Specialist Assessments

The CiN Assessment is informed by other specialist assessments, it may trigger another agency assessment or contribute to them:

- 7.1 When a CiN Assessment is triggered, the social worker will ensure that any other current or ongoing assessments by other agencies are identified and requested from partners. This means that all relevant information, assessments and plans, made by professionals with the child and family informs the CiN Assessment. Professionals who have contributed to the Child and Family Assessment will be recorded on the assessment form and their analysis of the main

strengths and concerns of the current circumstances for the child and family will be explicitly taken into account throughout.

Court related assessments

- 7.2 If a Court has concern for the welfare of a child during the course of proceedings in a private law application then they can ask a social worker to conduct a Section 37 assessment. The information gathered during this assessment will assist in the decision making and care planning for the child.

- 7.3 Where a child is currently in receipt of or has received a service from Dorset County Council Children's Services in the month, the court may ask the Local Authority for a Section 7 Assessment when they are considering any private law application under the Children Act 1989. Otherwise social workers from Child and Family Court Advisory Support Service (CAFCASS) may produce such reports for the court.
- 7.4 A Private Fostering Assessment must be completed when a child under the age of 16 years (18 years if the child has a disability) has been cared for by someone who is not a close relative for longer than 28 days. The statutory assessment is to ascertain the carer's suitability to care for the child/young person and must also consider the child's needs to ensure the carers are able to provide suitable day to day care of the child/young person. This assessment must be completed within seven days.
- 7.5 Assessment of prospective adopters including step parent adopters are different from a statutory assessment of a child's needs, but the child's need must be considered when completing these assessments to ensure the adopters are able to care for the child and meet their needs.
- 7.6 An Assessment of Suitability of Connected Persons will be carried out in respect of friends or family capacity to become Special Guardians or exercise parental responsibility for a child via a Child Arrangement Order. This is different from a statutory assessment of a child's needs, but the child's need must be considered during any relevant private law or public law proceedings to ensure the carers are able to care for the child and meet their needs.

Health related assessments

- 7.7 Health assessments provide valuable input and insight into the wider assessment process and should be considered for all children where a Section 47 assessment is being considered. Health assessments should be performed in a timely manner by health professionals who have the experience and capacity to undertake a comprehensive medical and developmental history and perform an appropriate physical examination. In the majority of cases this will be a Consultant Paediatrician. Sexual abuse requires a different level of experience and competence which the majority of paediatricians will not have.
- 7.8 All cases where physical abuse or neglect are considered should be discussed with the local on call Consultant Paediatrician and a timely appointment arranged for assessment. This may in some cases be a planned appointment within

24-48 hours. Urgent cases, where there are concerns about medical wellbeing, should be seen as soon as possible. Inter-agency procedures are available on the DSCB Website (Put the DSCB Link in here again)

- 7.9 All cases where sexual abuse (historical or recent) is considered should be discussed with police and health assessments will usually be dealt with at the Sexual Abuse Referral Centre (SARC) in Bournemouth.
- 7.10 Any limitations of a parent or older adolescent (16 plus) to consent and contribute to a statutory assessment under the Children Act 1989 may be assessed under Mental Capacity Act or Mental Health Act by health or adult professionals.

Additional needs assessments

- 7.11 An Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan is a single plan that includes all the child's assessed needs from Education, Health and Social Care. It sets out the desired outcomes for the child and the particular arrangements and provision required to deliver those outcomes.
- 7.12 EHC Plans replace Statements of SEN and Post-16 Learning Difficulty Assessments, giving a more complete picture of all the arrangements and support the child needs to make the best progress.
- 7.13 Like Statements, EHC Plans are legally binding and extend up to the age of 25 for young people who remain in education or training.

Youth justice assessments

- 7.14 Where the Youth Offending Service, Youth Inclusions Support Programme (YISP) or Family Information Programme (FIP) teams are involved, the case manager will be expected to contribute to the statutory assessment; they may also have completed an assessment using the Common Assessment Framework. Any youth justice assessment must take account of any current Children Act 1989 S17 or S47 assessments and plans.
- 7.15 Youth Justice ASSET Assessment is a structured tool used by all Youth Offending Teams when working with young people who come into contact with the Criminal Justice System. It aims to look at the young person's offence and identify factors or circumstances which may have contributed to such behaviour. The information gathered from ASSET is used to inform court reports and help formulate plans of intervention to address needs, vulnerability and risk.

7.16 Under section 3 of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 a child becomes looked after by the Local Authority when they are remanded into Local Authority Accommodation by a Criminal Court or made subject of Youth Detention Accommodation. The statutory guidance for care planning and eligibility for services therefore also apply in these circumstances.

8. Common Assessment Framework-CAF

8.1 Children and their families who receive coordinated early help are less likely to develop difficulties that require intervention through a statutory assessment under the Children Act 1989. An Early Intervention (CAF) assessment is therefore completed with the agreement of parents so that local agencies can work with the family to identify what help the child and family might need to reduce an escalation of needs that could require statutory intervention.

8.2 A CAF assessment can be undertaken by any professional who knows the child in liaison with any other agency who is or may need to be involved with the child and family. The lead professional role can be held by the G.P., Health Visitor, School Nurse, Teacher, Teaching Assistant, Youth Worker or Voluntary Organisation's Family Support Worker¹¹ and should be informed by the views of the child and family. They should know the child and act as an advocate for the child and family and coordinate the delivery of support services

8.3 The assessment should be undertaken with the agreement of the child and family, it requires honesty about the reason for completing the assessment as well as clarity about the presenting concerns. Should the child or family decline the offer of an assessment, the professional who identifies the concerns should discuss the case with the IDT to determine if circumstances warrant a statutory assessment by Children's Services Social Care

8.4 The Lead Professional should ensure that the circumstances of the child improve as a result of coordinating the delivery of services through a plan that focuses on the desired outcomes for the child. Where improvements do not occur, in a timescale appropriate to the child, a consultation discussion should be considered with a social worker in the IDT. However, where the situation is judged to have deteriorated and the child is felt to be suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, a formal written referral the IDT should be made immediately.

8.5 The 'early intervention' assessment (CAF) domains should include those identified in Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2013 (Chapter1, Section 33) and will form the platform upon which the plan of intervention will be based. Where the provision of services under early help does not result in an improvement for the child and a statutory assessment is deemed appropriate, the 'early intervention' assessments will provide useful information upon which the statutory assessment and plan will be based.

8.6 Dorset staff working in the Early Intervention Teams use the format of the Social Care CiN Assessment for assessing the needs of children and families rather than the Dorset CAF tool.

9. How do I make a complaint, a comment or a compliment?

- 9.1 Working Together 2013 states that there needs to be a clear process for challenge by children and families through an accessible Complaints Procedure. Dorset County Council Children's Services Complaint procedure can be found on the Dorset County Council website: <https://www.dorsetforyou.com/390320>
- 9.2 Section 26 of the Children Act 1989 requires local authorities to publish procedures for considering any representations (including any complaints) made to them. Complaints and representations relating to children and young people and their carers under the Children Act are dealt with by the Children's Services Complaints Officer.
- 9.3 This role is undertaken by the Quality Assurance/Complaints Manager. The Complaints Manager oversees the complaints procedures within Children's Services including that of children in care and ensures that it takes into account a young person's age, understanding and need for a timely and safe response.
- 9.4 Direct complaints from children and young people have additional support of the specific children's complaints officer role which is combined with the Complaints Manager role as determined in the Children Act Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006.
- 9.5 Children in need under the Children Act have a statutory right to independent advocacy where they wish to consider or make a complaint. The Care Matters: Time for Change policy document from Central Government (2007) reinforces the importance of the right of independent advocacy as part of the 'offer' of services for Looked after Children and Young People.
- A leaflet detailing this information for children can be found on the Dorset County Council website: <https://www.dorsetforyou.com/390441>

Acknowledgement. *This document is a modified version of that created by the Cumbria LSCB. Used with thanks.*

Appendix 1 - Glossary

Term	Definition
Abuse	A form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them or, more rarely, by others (e.g. via the internet). They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children. (Definition provided by Working Together 2013)
Accommodation	Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 enables a local authority to provide accommodation for a child who has no person with parental responsibility for him/her, is lost or abandoned or whose parent cannot provide suitable accommodation and care.
Achieving Best Evidence Interview	An investigations interview with a child who is a witness to a crime. "Achieving Best Evidence in Criminal Proceedings: Guidance for Vulnerable or Intimidated Witnesses" was issued jointly by key government departments led by the Home Office.
Allocated case	A case that has been made the responsibility of a named social worker or other key worker until such time as the case is closed transferred or managed in such other way that the named worker no longer has responsibility for it.
Assessment	The assessment of developmental needs of a child within their family and wider environmental context to determine, if the child has needs and what services they require. The assessment may be general in nature (e.g.,) CAF, or relate to a specific developmental need (e.g.,) health or education.
ASSET	A youth justice assessment tool comprising a main assessment, a serious harm risk assessment and a young person's self-assessment. It is used to assist in planning interventions and review progress and outcomes.
Care order	A court order under s.31 of the Children Act 1989 placing a child in local authority care to protect the child from harm they are suffering or may suffer, whilst under the care of his/her parent (and/or being beyond a parent's control).
Child in need (CIN)	Section 17 (10) of the Children Act 1989 defines a child in need as a child who, without the provision of local authority services: a) Who is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or to have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision of services to them by a local authority b) Whose health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision for them of such services; or c) They are disabled, and "family", in relation to such a child, includes any person who has parental responsibility for the child and any other person with whom they has been living.
Child protection (CP)	Part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. This refers to the activity that is undertaken to protect specific children who are suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm. (Definition provided by Working Together 2013)

Term	Definition
Child protection enquiry	Where a local authority: (a) are informed that a child who lives, or is found, in their area (i) is the subject of a emergency protection order, or (ii) is in police protection; and (b) have reasonable cause to suspect that a child who lives, or is found, in their area is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm Section 47 of the Children Act 1989 gives children’s social care a duty to make enquiries to decide whether they should take action to safeguard or promote the welfare of a child who is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm.
Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)	The sexual exploitation of children and young people under 18 involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive “something” (e.g., food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of their performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities.
Child and Family Assessment (C&FA)	A statutory assessment of the developmental needs of each child referred to the local authority where the evidence is s 17 applies and there is a request for services to be provided. This should be undertaken within the maximum of 45 working days of the initial referral decision, but could be very brief depending on the child's circumstances.
Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)	The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) helps employers make safer recruitment decisions and prevent unsuitable people from working with vulnerable groups, including children. It replaced the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) and Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA). The DBS is responsible for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • processing requests for criminal records checks • deciding whether it is appropriate for a person to be placed on or removed from a barred list • placing or removing people from the DBS children’s barred list and adults’ barred list for England, Wales and Northern Ireland
Duty children's social worker	Professional from the Children's Social Care team that receives and responds to all child concern referrals – in office hours.
Emergency duty team (EDT)	A social work team providing an emergency social care response for the county contactable on 03332401727 and operating between 5pm – 9am weekdays and weekends.
Early Help	This describes the process or act of providing support or services when a child or young person, of whatever age, shows signs of having difficulties. Early help aims to ensure that individuals receive the help they need as soon as possible, thereby preventing the problem escalating and becoming more difficult to deal with. It can refer to prompt action at any point designed to address emerging difficulties
Emergency Protection Order (EPO)	A court order under Section 44 of the Children Act 1989 giving Children's Social Care and the Police the power to protect a child from harm by removing the child to suitable accommodation or preventing a child from being removed (e.g. from hospital).

Term	Definition
Emotional Abuse	The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone. (Definition provided by Working Together 2013)
Enquiry checks	Checks made of agencies involved with a child for Section 47 child protection investigation purposes.
First line manager	The manager with responsibility for supervising the frontline professional with case or immediate responsibility for the child, adult or family.
Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (a.k.a. the Assessment Framework)	The Assessment Framework is a systematic way for professionals to assess a child's needs and whether s/he is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, what actions must be taken and which services would best meet the needs of the child and family. All professionals should be competent to contribute to an assessment, usually led by children's social care under the Children Act 1989.
Gillick competence / Fraser Ruling	The competency test resided by Lord Fraser, 1985 (known as Gillick Competence), which laid down criteria for establishing whether a child, irrespective of age, had the capacity to provide valid consent to treatment (by health professionals) in specified circumstances.
Impairment of health and development	Where professionals are seeking to judge whether a child's health and development have been significantly harmed, the Children Act 1989 (s31 (10)) directs them to make a comparison with the health and development which could reasonably be expected of a similar child.
Integrated Children's System (ICS)	Case management system for case recording within Children's Social Care. Introduced in 2008, this is a government sponsored system with national criteria for local software providers to adhere to. It ensures that there is consistency of practice across all social work teams, improves transparency and accountability.
Integrated Working	Integrated working is where everyone supporting children, young people and families works together effectively to put them at the centre, meet their needs and improve their lives.
Key worker	The key worker has an important role that involves administration, information, coordination and the professional management of a case. Their prime responsibility is to maintain a child protection focus to the work being undertaken with families and to maintain and co-ordinate the core group, who will ensure the progress of the Child Protection Plan.

Term	Definition
Lead professional	The practitioner who has the most on-going contact with a child at the time and who is in a position to co-ordinate the professional network to support the child.
Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB)	Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) are statutory bodies established in each local authority area under Section 14 of the Children Act 2004. The purpose of LSCBs is: a) to coordinate what is done by each person or body represented on the Board for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the area; and b) to ensure the effectiveness of what is done by each such person or body for those purposes.
Neglect	The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment); • protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; • ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or • ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs. (Definition provided by Working Together 2013)
Outcome	What has changed (and ideally improved) for children and young people as a result of taking action.
Parental Responsibility (PR)	All the duties, rights, powers, responsibilities and authority which by law a parent of a child has in relation to the child and their property. A Care Order confers the responsibility to a local authority but it does not remove it from the child's parents.
Prevention	Services or strategies put in place to stop something happening or to stop someone from doing something that might affect the outcomes of a child or young person.
Physical Abuse	A form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child. (Definition provided by Working Together 2013)
Police Powers of Protection Order (Section 46), (PPO)	Section 46 of the Children Act 1989 giving the police powers to protect a child from harm by removing the child to suitable accommodation or preventing a child from being removed (e.g. from hospital).
Private Fostering	An arrangement made directly by a parent for their child to be looked after for 28 days or more by an adult who does not have parental responsibility for the child and is not a close relative/step parent.
Referral	A request for services to be provided by a local authority. A case can become current only after a referral has been made.

Term	Definition
Regulated Activity with Children	The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012) defined Regulated Activity with Children as: a) Unsupervised activities - Teaching, training or instruction, care for or supervise children, provide advice / guidance on wellbeing, drive a vehicle only for children b) Work for a Limited Range of Establishments (Specified places) – Where there is an opportunity for contact, for example schools, children’s homes, childcare premises (but not work by supervised volunteers) c) Healthcare / Relevant Personal Care - for example washing or dressing; or health care by or supervised by a professional, even if done once d) Registered Child-minding and Foster-Carers
Risk to child	Description of an adult or child who has been identified (by probation services / Youth Justice Service, Police or health services, individually or via the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements) as posing an on-going risk to a child (replaces the term Schedule 1 Offender).
Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children	Defined for the purposes of this guidance as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • protecting children from maltreatment; • preventing impairment of children’s health or development; • ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and • taking action to enable all children to have the best life chances. (Definition provided by Working Together 2013)
Section 17	Section 17 of the Children's Act 1989 imposes on every local authority a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in the area who are in need.
Section 47 Enquiry	Section 47 of the Children Act requires every local authority to make enquiries about children thought to be at risk, enabling them to decide whether they need to take further action to safeguard and promote the child's welfare.
Senior Manager	Manager in any agency above first line manager.
Serious Case Review (SCR)	Chapter 4 of Working Together to Safeguard Children (2013) sets out the purpose and process of serious case reviews (SCRs) as defined under Reg. 5 of the Local Safeguarding Children Boards Regulations 2006. SCR's are undertaken when: (a) abuse or neglect of a child is known or suspected; and (b) either — (i) the child has died; or (ii) the child has been seriously harmed and there is cause for concern as to the way in which the authority, their Board partners/ other relevant persons have worked together to safeguard the child.
Sexual Abuse	Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children. (Definition from Working Together 2013)

Term	Definition
Significant Harm	There are no absolute criteria on which to rely when judging what constitutes significant harm. Consideration of the severity of ill-treatment may include the degree and the extent of physical harm, the duration and frequency of abuse and neglect, the extent of premeditation, and the presence or degree of threat, coercion, sadism, and bizarre or unusual elements. Each of these elements has been associated with more severe effects on the child, and / or relatively greater difficulty in helping the child overcome the adverse impact of the maltreatment. Sometimes, a single traumatic event may constitute significant harm (e.g. a violent assault, suffocation or poisoning). More often, significant harm is a compilation of significant events, both acute and longstanding, which interrupt, change or damage the child's physical and psychological development. Some children live in family and social circumstances where their health and development are neglected. For them, it is the corrosiveness of long-term emotional, physical or sexual abuse that causes impairment to the extent of constituting significant harm. In each case, it is necessary to consider any maltreatment alongside the family's strengths and supports.
Social Worker or Child's Social Worker	Social work qualified professional with case responsibility.
Staff / staff member	Any individual/s working in a voluntary, employed, professional or unqualified capacity, including foster carers and approved adopters.
Multi Agency Triage Team	Multi agency team who receive concerns regarding a child and make a decision regarding the best course of action.
Working day	Timescales in these procedures relate to the working day i.e. from 09:00hrs to 17.00hrs on Monday to Thursday, 09:00 to 16:30 on Friday, unless otherwise expressed (e.g. 24 hours).
Working Together (WT)	Working Together to Safeguard Children (2013) is a guidance document produced by the DfE setting out how all agencies and professionals should work together to safeguard children and promote children's welfare.
Young Carers	Are children and young people who assume important caring responsibilities for parents or siblings, who are disabled, have physical or mental ill health problems, or misuse drugs or alcohol. (Definition provided by Working Together 2013)