Putting Children First
A Parent’s Guide to the Assessment of Children in Need and their families
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In other cases someone who is concerned about the child may contact us. The leaflet tells you how Social Services will work with you and what you can expect to happen.

All children have a right to develop in a healthy and safe way. Parents and families want to do their best for their children, but sometimes they need some extra help or support. We know that with a little help most families can sort out their own problems, and our aim is to help you to do that.

When you are first referred to Social Services we will work with you to see what help and support your family might need, and who could best give that help. We do this by carrying out an assessment.

What is this leaflet about?

This leaflet is for parents whose child has been referred to Social Services.

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What is an assessment?

An assessment is a way of finding out:

- How your child is doing in terms of education, health, learning about getting on with other people, and so on.
- What support you, as a parent, are able to give your child.
- What other things may be helping you with bringing up your child, or may be making your life more difficult.

Although we recognise that some families find the assessment process difficult we also know that many families do find that life starts to improve as a result of the assessment.

What happens during an assessment?

The assessment is carried out by a Social Worker.

They will:

- Meet with your child.
- Meet with you and members of your family, maybe a number of times.
- Talk to other people who work with you and your family, such as your child’s teacher or your family doctor. In most cases, we will ask for your consent, in writing, to do this. The only exception would be when we are concerned about the child’s safety.
- Write down all the information they gather, and use it to help them work out what strengths and difficulties your family has.
How long does the assessment take?

There are two types of assessment:

- **An Initial Assessment**, which can take up to 7 working days.
  There may be a wait between us getting the referral and starting the assessment, depending on how urgent your situation seems to be.

- **A Core Assessment**, which can take up to 6 weeks

  Some families just have the Initial Assessment.

  We go on to do a Core Assessment when it seems that the family’s difficulties or circumstances are quite complicated.

What happens after the assessment?

After the assessment one of two things might happen:

- We decide that there is no need for our support services. We will let you know this in writing. However we may recommend other organisations who may be able to provide the support you need.

- We decide that we can offer support services which your child and you would benefit from. In this case, we will write a Plan explaining what will happen and what difference the support services should make. We will let you have a copy of the plan and will discuss it with you.

You will be able to see a copy of the assessment and will be encouraged to make comments on it.

Safety and protection of children

We do what we can to support families to stay together whenever this is best for the child. In a very small number of cases, there are serious concerns about a child’s safety. Making sure the child is safe will be our first priority.

We may need to carry out child protection enquiries. If this happens we will give you more information, including our leaflet *A Parent’s Guide to Child Protection Enquiries*. 
What can you expect of us?

We will listen carefully to what you have to say, offer advice, and, if necessary, support you to help you bring up your children and resolve your difficulties. The support services we offer may help you through a short-term crisis, or work with you longer-term.

We will try our best to offer you any services you need as soon as possible. Occasionally there may be delays in providing you with the service(s) you need. As far as we can, we will keep you informed about what we are doing and planning.

We will also let you know about other organisations who may be able to provide information, advice or support. Some suggestions are included at the back of this leaflet.

We will keep information you give us confidential, unless you give us permission to share it with other people, or unless we need to share the information to protect your child.
What we expect of you
We know that almost all parents want to do their best for their children, and completing the assessment will help the Social Workers recognise the strengths you and your family have, as well as your difficulties.

We can help you best if you tell us about your difficulties and what you do well in your family. Do not be afraid to ask questions or tell us what you are concerned about.

Swansea Social Services and personal information
When you are in touch with Social Services, we will keep information about you in written records and computer files. We will keep this information confidential, and if there is a need to discuss this information with anyone else, we will normally ask for your permission.

The only exception to this is if information comes to light which, in the Social Worker’s view, may indicate a serious threat to the welfare of your child. If this is the case, you will be told what your rights are in this new situation.

You have a right to ask to see records we keep about you, including the assessment record. If there is anything in it which you disagree with, you can ask to have your views written down on the record.

We can give you more information about how we handle personal information. Phone 01792 636693 for our factsheet Your Personal Information.

Comments and complaints
We welcome any comments about our services – good or bad. We are interested to hear how we could do things better, and we like to know when we are doing well. If you are unhappy with the services you receive, we encourage you to make a complaint. Full details are given in the factsheet Making a comment, complaint or compliment about Social Services.
There is also a procedure for children who receive a service from us to make a complaint, and a leaflet *How do I complain?* written for children.

For more advice or information about making a complaint, you can contact our Complaints Officers on **01792 637345**.

**Other information from Social Services which you may find useful**

We also produce a leaflet about the assessment process written for children and young people called *Why is a social worker here?*

If your child has not been given a copy of this please ask your Social Worker or phone **01792 636693**.

**How to contact Social Services**

Children's Central Advice, Referral and Assessment Team

Directorate of Social Services, PO Box 603, Swansea, SA1 9HT.

📞 **01792 635700**

**E-mail:** access.information@swansea.gov.uk

**Text phone for hearing impaired callers:** 07917 200431

This information is also available in alternative formats, such as large print, audio format, in Braille, or electronically.

Please phone **01792 636693** for copies.
Other organisations who provide information, advice or support for parents

Swansea Family Information Service  
Information, advice and guidance about a wide range of childcare and related issues.  
📞 01792 517222  
www.swansea.gov.uk/fis

Team Around the Family  
Co-ordinated advice and support for families who need a little extra help  
📞 01792 635400  
www.cypswansea.co.uk/index.cfm?articleid=33634

Info Nation  
Swansea's information and advice service for young people.  
📞 01792 484010 or 07930 328607  
www.info-nation.org.uk

Abertawe Alcohol and Drugs Advisory Service (AADAS)  
📞 01792 642759

BAYS Project  
Support for young people who are homeless or in housing need and also those leaving care, run by Barnardos.  
📞 01792 455105 or 0800 521448  
www.barnardos.org.uk/yhsbays

Women’s Aid  
Support for women and children experiencing domestic abuse  
📞 01792 644683 (24 hours)  
www.welshwomensaid.org.uk