

## **Children and Young People Directorate**

### **South Birmingham Duty and Assessment Service**

#### **Information for Professionals**

##### **Introduction:**

The following information provides an overview of the purpose and function of the Duty & Assessment Service and aims to assist professionals / agencies in: -

- Determining when to refer a child/family
- The referral process
- Expectations and responsibilities during this process
- General advice and support that may assist agencies

Please note that the information provided is only intended to act as a tool for professionals and is not a definitive guide, as each situation will be unique to any given child / family you are working with.

##### **Duty & Assessment Service**

The Duty and Assessment Service is part of the Specialist Services Section of the Children, Young People and Families Directorate. Its main function is to undertake assessments, either under the 'Framework of Assessment of Children in Need and their Families' or 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' where it appears that a child be suffering significant harm or is at risk of family breakdown.

In order to do this, South Birmingham has six duty and assessment teams in operation, each comprising one Team Manager, one Senior Practitioner, five Social Workers and one Social Work Assistant when fully staffed.

The teams are split across the two areas with three teams based at Selly Oak Area Office, and three at Edgbaston Area Office. The teams take referrals from the following areas:

**Selly Oak Area Office:-** Billesley, Bourneville, Kings Norton, Brandwood, Hall Green, Fox Hollies, Moseley, Selly Oak.

**Edgbaston Area Office:-** Edgbaston, Frankley, Rubery, Northfield, Woodgate Valley, Harborne, Kitwell, Weoley Castle, Rednal, Quinton, Bartley Green, Longbridge.

**(Please note the Children with Disabilities Service has its own duty and assessment service and the contact details can be found at the end of this guide alongside a full list of contact details for all the Area Offices across the city.)**

Each Area is supported by a dedicated duty screening team that consists of at least two dedicated Referral and Advice officers and is overseen by a Duty-Screening Manager.

**The Referral and Advice Officers act as the main contact point for all referrals during office hours and operate a service Monday to Thursday 8.45am to 5.15pm and 8.45am to 4.15pm on a Friday.**

**Their role is to: -**

- Screen and process referrals in consultation with the Duty Screening Manager.
- Offer support and advice to service users / professionals if they are unsure whether a situation meets the criteria for referral.
- Signpost to alternative services where appropriate.

The Referral and Advice Officer's welcome any queries you may have about the referral process / duty service. As part of this service they also operate **dedicated referral lines for professionals** who wish to contact them directly to make a new referral or want to discuss a situation. (Please refer to useful contacts).

### **When to make a referral:-**

In 2004 the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) was introduced as part of the Every Child Matters: Change for Children programme and is intended to be used by all agencies to co-ordinate early assessment of children with less significant needs who would benefit from short term targeted intervention but in most cases would fall short of the thresholds for specialist services.

The guidance describes a continuum of needs and services, beginning with children with no identified additional needs, and going on to include those with 'additional needs', who are judged to be at risk of poor outcomes and thus in need of extra support from services.

At the end of this continuum are children whose needs are defined as significant and complex because they meet the threshold for statutory assessment and require a specialist service.

The duty and assessment service is one of these services and its key service priorities are: -

**Children who appear to be suffering, or are at risk of suffering significant harm and are in need of protection.**

**Children who are at risk of family breakdown and being looked after by the Local Authority.**

The Duty and Assessment service will apply these service priorities to the referrals they receive to ensure that resources assist those children who are most in need.

If you are unsure if a child meets the criteria for referral then please do not hesitate to contact the Referral and Advice officers to discuss further.

### **How to make a referral: -**

All referrals should be made in writing using the Inter Agency Referral form, however in urgent child protection situations or if you are unsure if a situation is a child protection concern please do not delay in contacting the duty team via telephone using the dedicated lines for professionals. A written inter agency referral form should follow as soon as possible in all cases.

In most cases you should seek to talk over your concerns with the family and seek their agreement and / or make them aware that you are making a referral to the duty assessment service. This **should not be done** where such discussions and agreement seeking will, in your judgement, place the child(ren) at risk of significant harm.

The child's **home address** will determine which office you refer to, however in some instances it may be necessary for the Referral and Advice officer to check that the post code is within the boundaries and if necessary redirect you to an alternative team. If this is the case and your referral has already been received the Referral and Advice officer will forward the referral to the appropriate office and ask them to contact you.

If you are making a child protection referral and whilst taking the referral it becomes clear that responsibility lies with another area office or Local Authority you **will not** be asked to contact another office.

The Referral and Advice officer will take the basic referral information and your contact details and forward them to the correct office, inviting them to contact you. In these instances responsibility lies with the Referral and Advice officer until receipt of this information is confirmed by the respective office.

### **Completing the Inter Agency Referral form:**

The format for the inter-agency referral form is based on the Framework of assessment for Children in Need and their Families and a copy of this form is attached for your reference.

The information received on the inter agency referral form forms the basis of the decision making process therefore it is important it is accurate, relevant and evidence based.

Alongside the guidance provided on the form, below is a list of general pointers to consider / include when completing the form. This is not an exhaustive list and will clearly be determined by the circumstances in which you are referring.

- Clearly outline the nature of the concerns/reason for referral.
- How and when they have arisen and what appear to be the needs of the family.
- What support is already in place / has been offered and the outcome of this support, including your involvement with the family if appropriate.
- What difference would duty and assessment intervention make to the outcomes for this child / family at this time.
- What are the family's expectations in making the referral.
- Are there concerns about abuse of a child and if so what is their foundation.
- Supporting information can be extremely useful, however it is important to ensure it is relevant to the referral and is in addition to the information already outlined in the referral form. For example minutes of a family support meeting or inter agency professionals meeting may be of benefit.

- In complex situations where concerns have arisen over a period of time and / or there are several children in the family you may find it useful to attach a chronology of events / support offered

Referrals can be sent by post or faxed to the relevant office. Please address the referral for the attention of the Referral and Advice Officer, Duty and Assessment.

**The next step:**

Once your referral is received it is logged and checks are undertaken where appropriate. However there may be instances when the Referral and Advice officer will need to come back to you to request further information before a final decision can be made as to the next step, if any.

Ordinarily a decision will be made, based on the current service priorities, within one working day and a letter will be sent within 48 hours confirming one of the following outcomes:

- Does not meet the referral criteria and no further action will be taken.
- Signposting to another agency or service.
- Meets criteria and will be allocated for assessment.

If a referral is made that is not progressed a letter will be sent to the family advising them of the fact a referral has been made and that although no action will be taken it will be a matter of record.

If the referral meets the criteria, this will be passed to the duty and assessment Team Manager who will allocate a worker to undertake an initial assessment to identify whether the child is in need, the nature of that need and make a recommendation as to what support / further assessment is required if any.

If the criteria for a Child Protection enquiry is met then we will always discuss the situation with the police and a joint social worker / police assessment will be undertaken.

As the referrer your involvement and support in this process is crucial and the allocated worker will contact you to gather further information and discuss your assessment of the situation.

## **Glossary of Terms**

### **Initial Assessment**

As defined by the Framework of Assessment an initial assessment is a brief assessment of each child referred to Duty and Assessment with a request for services to be provided. It should address the dimensions of the framework, determining whether the child is in need, the nature of any service required, from where and within what time scales and whether a further more detailed core assessment is needed.

This should be undertaken within a maximum of seven working days.

### **Strategy discussion**

If there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, the Duty and Assessment team will arrange a strategy discussion. This may take the form of a meeting or a telephone discussion and will always involve the police. The purpose of a strategy discussion / meeting is to determine if a child protection enquiry should be initiated, should be continued if already begun and determine who is going to do what. Key agencies involved with the family will be invited to share information where appropriate. i.e. Schools

### **Child protection Enquiry**

Sometimes known as a section 47 enquiry due the specific section it relates to in the Children Act 1989, a Child Protection enquiry is initiated when there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer significant harm.

## **Child Protection Conference**

An initial child protection conference is convened if a child protection enquiry concludes that the child is likely to be at risk of significant harm through the actions or inaction of parents or other carer. The conference should take place within fifteen working days of the previous strategy discussion.

It brings together family members, the child where appropriate, and professionals with relevant knowledge and expertise to decide what action is needed to safeguard the child and promote her / his welfare, how that action will be taken forward and with what intended outcomes.

The conference will decide whether the child's name should be placed on the child protection register. If this is the case an outline child protection plan should be drawn up detailing key actions required and which agency will be responsible for this.

## **Core Assessment**

As defined by the Framework of Assessment a core assessment is an in-depth assessment, which addresses the central or most important aspects of the needs of the child and the capacity of his or her parents or caregivers to respond appropriately to these needs within a wider family and community context.

The core assessment is deemed to have commenced at the point the initial assessment ended if further action is required and should be completed within 35 working days. A core assessment is always undertaken when a child's name is placed on the Child Protection Register.





**Referral and Advice Officers Direct Lines:** 0121 464 8066  
0121 464 8064  
0121 464 8032  
0121 464 8032

Direct Fax No: 0121 675 1113

**Areas Covered:**

Erdington, Sutton, Stockland Green, Sutton New Hall, Kingsbury, Kingstanding, Sutton Four Oaks, Sutton Vesey, Oscott, Perry Barr

**Yardley**

Silvermere Centre  
Silvermere Road  
Sheldon  
Birmingham  
B26 3XA

Tel No: 0121 303 6541  
Fax No: 0121 675 1113

**Referral and Advice Officers Direct Lines:** 0121 464 5324  
0121 464 5323  
0121 464 6374

**Areas Covered:**

Acocks Green, Yardley, Sheldon, Hodge Hill, Shard End, Washwood Heath

**CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL TEAM**

Switchboard (preferred) 0121 303 9944

**Referral and Advice Officer Direct Line:** 0121 333 8906  
Fax No: 0121 333 8904

**DISABLED CHILDREN'S TEAM – HARRIS HOUSE**

<b>Referral and Advice Officer Direct Line:</b>	0121 303 4499
Fax No:	0121 464 9227

**Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service – SPAR (single point of access) 0121-243-2000**

**Neighbourhood Care Scheme (City Wide) – 0121-464 -1300**

**Youth inclusion & Support Team (City wide) –0121-464-1827**

# Duty and Assessment Service

(To be read in conjunction with the guide for professionals)

## When to make a referral

If a child/children appear to be suffering or is/are at risk of suffering significant harm & are in need of protection.

If a child/children are at risk of family breakdown and being looked after by the Local Authority.

## How to make a referral

- All referrals should be made in writing using the inter-agency Referral form, & can be sent by post or fax. NB. In urgent Child Protection situations the inter-agency referral form can be sent retrospectively.
- The child/children's home address will determine which office you refer to/contact.
- If you are unsure if a situation meets the criteria for referral then please do not hesitate to contact Referral & Advice Officers to discuss further.

### Selly Oak

Areas covered: Billesley, Bournville, Kings Norton, Brandwood, Hall Green, Fox Hollies, Moseley, Selly Oak.

### Edgbaston

Edgbaston, Frankley, Rubery, Northfield, Woodgate Valley, Harborne, Kitwell, Weoley Castle, Rednal, Quinton, Bartley Green, Longbridge.

### Direct Lines

0121 464-6917  
0121 464-6918  
Fax: 0121 303-9689

### Direct Lines

0121 464-5613  
0121 603-9583  
Fax: 0121 303-9587

## What happens to your referral

- Your referral is logged and checks undertaken where appropriate.
- A decision is made within one working day and a letter sent within 48 hours confirming one of the following outcomes.

- Does not meet the referral criteria and no further action will be taken.
- Signposting offered to another agency or service.
- Meets criteria and will be allocated for assessment.

## Next Step

If the referral meets the criteria an initial assessment is undertaken to identify whether the child is in need, the nature of that need, and recommendations made as to what support/further assessment is required if any.

If the criteria for a Child Protection enquiry is met then we will discuss with the police and joint assessment will be undertaken. Your support in this process will be required.