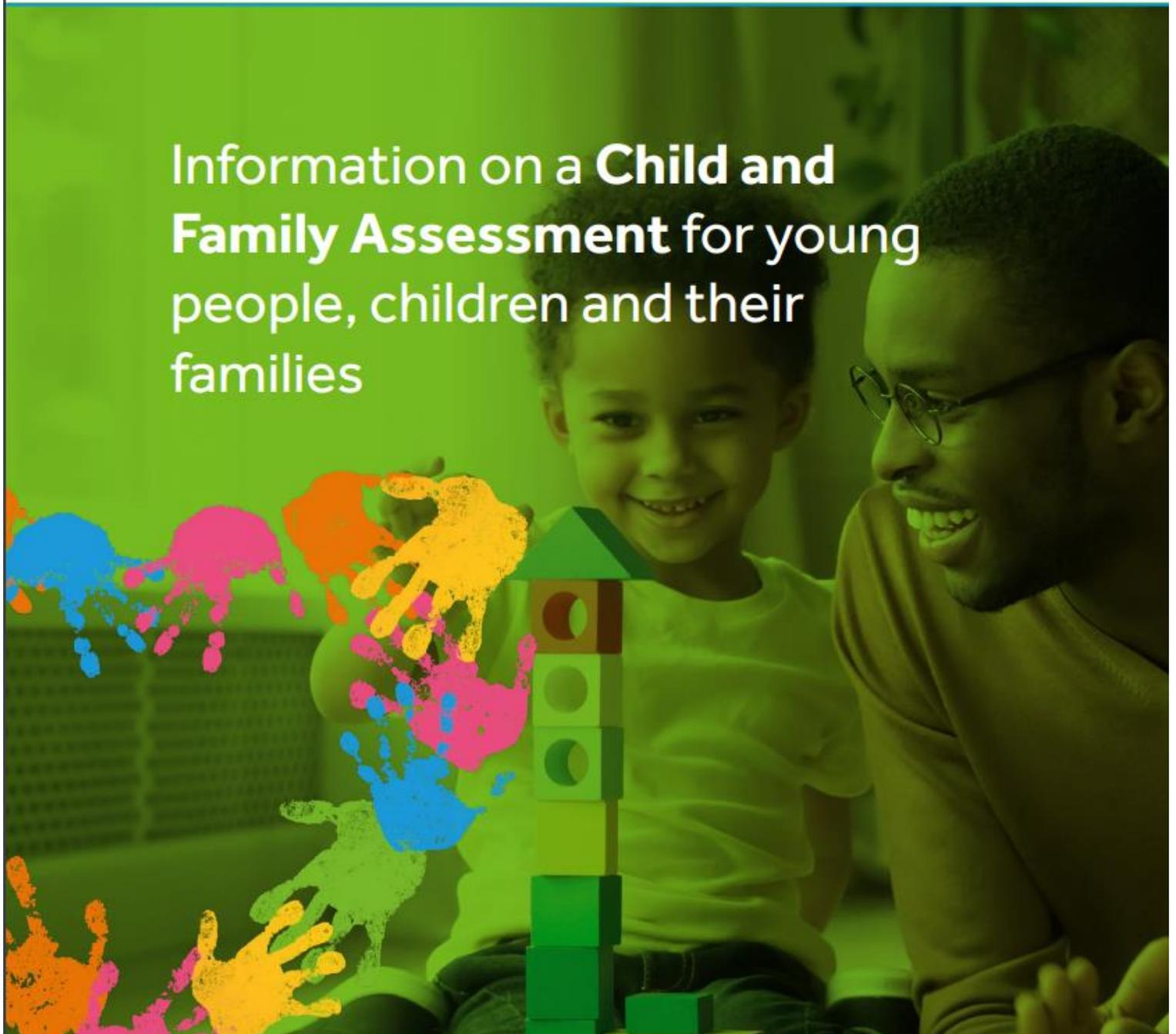




Information on a **Child and Family Assessment** for young people, children and their families



## Why is an assessment needed?

We carry out an assessment to make sure your child and family receive the help and support they need.

Either you or someone else on your behalf, has asked for help with some difficulties you or your child/ren are having which affects your child/ren. This is called a referral to Children's Social Care.

Sometimes this referral is made by you, someone in your family, a friend, teacher, doctor, health visitor or someone in the neighbourhood. This is nothing to be worried about. An assessment is required because you or someone else, feels that you and your family need more help.

The referral is considered by Brent Family Front Door (BFFD). The BFFD team brings together a group of professionals to decide what help is needed next and this could include an assessment.

## What is an assessment?

The Children Act 1989 says that there are certain things we must do for children in need and their families. Doing these things is our priority.

Before we can help you, we need to know more about you and your family. This will involve collecting information, talking the issue through with you and agreeing what needs to be done. We call this a child and family assessment. The assessment will help us to look at your situation and see what help you and your family need, and who could give that help. Usually with your agreement we seek the views of other professionals so that we have a comprehensive understanding of your child/ren's needs.

## Where does the information for the assessment come from?

Information is gathered from:

- You and your family – the worker will talk to you, your children, and perhaps to other members of your family.
- Other professionals and those who know you and your child - some include teachers, health visitors, doctors, housing officers and voluntary groups.
- Records that may be held by children's social care.

## What will happen during my assessment?

During your assessment, information will be gathered and written down by the social worker and other professionals. You will always be encouraged to take part and provided the opportunity to say what you think might help your family.

We know that almost all parents want to do the best for their children and completing the assessment will help the social worker to see the strengths you and your family have, as well as some of the difficulties you and your family may be experiencing.

When children are old enough to take part in the assessment, the social worker will encourage and help them to do so. Listening to children's experience is important. The assessment will take into consideration your ethnic and cultural background. If required, assistance will be provided in your first language or a communication style that you most feel comfortable with.

## What will the assessment cover?

When completing the assessment, the social worker will look at a number of issues that may be affecting your child/ren and family. The worker will find out about the strengths and difficulties in the family by asking questions about:

- Your family's situation - including who is employed, money issues, housing, relationships within the family and those who support the family.
- How your children are - including their health, behaviour, school and friends, as well as their social and emotional well-being.
- The care of the children - including how well parent(s) or carer(s) are offering basic care, keeping the children safe, helping them learn, offering guidance and a stable home. Sometimes to assist you the social worker will recommend a Family Group Conference or a Family Network Meeting.

## Are my views taken into account?

Yes. There is an expectation that any assessment completed includes and reflects your wishes and feelings as well as those of your child/ren.

Your views will be considered in deciding how help is to be provided, but it may not always be possible to meet your preferences.

## What can I expect?

When you or someone on your behalf contacts our department, a decision about whether or not to offer an assessment will be made within 24 working hours. This decision is taken by a team of professionals in the Brent Family Front Door Safeguarding Hub.

A professional contacting our department on your behalf will have talked to you and obtained your agreement to involve us, unless the professional has significant concerns about your child.

We will usually seek your consent before talking to other people and sharing information about you and your child, unless we have concerns about the safety of your child.

A worker will be identified to do the assessment and you will be given the name of the worker within 7 working days of the assessment being allocated.

## How long will it take?

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 is clear that assessments should be undertaken within a maximum of 45 days.

It is a priority for Brent Council and its partners that children and their families receive a timely assessment and you will be kept informed about the progress of your assessment and the likely timescale for completion.

## The assessment has been completed, what happens next?

Once the assessment has been completed, the decision may be:

- That no further action is needed and that will be the end of the assessment
- You may be referred to another agency for some support or advice under Early Help
- You will be offered continuing support under a Child in Need Plan
- If there are sufficient concerns a multi-agency meeting called a Child Protection Conference will be arranged

## What if I do not agree with what the social worker and other professionals say?

You will be able to correct any factual errors, and, if you do not agree with what the social worker says in the assessment, there will be an opportunity for you to record your point of view on the assessment record.

## What happens next?

Following the assessment, if it is decided that services should be offered, then a new worker will be allocated to your family from one of the other teams within Children's Social Care.

## Care Planning

The purpose of the Child and Family Assessment is to draw up a plan of action to address the needs of your child (or children) and how you might need to respond to these. This is called care planning.

The care plan will set out what services are to be provided and who is responsible for providing them. It will also say what changes are expected and how long this will take.

We offer a free independent advocacy service carried out by CoramVoice to help young people who wish to complain about social care services. CoramVoice can be contacted on 020 7833 5792 or by e-mailing [info@coramvoice.org.uk](mailto:info@coramvoice.org.uk).

## Glossary of terms

### **Assessment**

The process of gathering information to work out what services are needed and who should provide them.

### **Child in Need Plan**

A detailed multi-agency plan setting out what must be done to promote the child's health, well-being and development.

### **Child Protection Conference**

The conference is a meeting between the child (if old enough), family, the social worker and other professionals in the child's life. The purpose of the conference is to discuss why people are worried about the child, what's going well for the child and their family, and what's not going so well. The aim is for everyone to agree what is called a Child Protection Plan to improve the things that are or may be causing harm to a child/ren.

### **Children's Social Care**

A service in the London Borough of Brent that has a responsibility alongside other agencies for ensuring children are safe and well.

### **Early Help**

Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges. The Early Help Service provides targeted help to address the assessed needs of children and families to improve outcomes.

### **Brent Safeguarding Partnerships**

There are many agencies in Brent supporting children and families, and they all work together as a partnership to ensure they are keeping children safe.

### **Multi Agency**

The working together of different agencies who provide services for children and their families, young people, children and their families.

## **Brent Family Front Door**

When anyone is worried about a child, they can make a referral to BFFD. BFFD is a team which brings together agencies in order to identify help and support needs of children and families at the earliest possible point.

## **Parent**

This is a term that may include birth parents, stepparents and carers of children.

## **Referral**

A referral is a request for help to keep a child/ren safe and ensure their welfare needs are met. Anyone can make a referral including a parent, wider family member, friend, doctor, teacher, or health visitor.

## **Safeguarding**

Keeping children and young people safe from harm is Everyone's Business. Safeguarding also means supporting parents and carers to ensure their child/ren's needs are met and that they are safe in the community and homes that they live.

## **Section 47 enquiry**

A section 47 enquiry might also be referred to as a Child Protection enquiry, a Child Protection Investigation, or a S47. These investigations are carried out to ensure there is no harm to a child/ren. As part of the investigation professionals will consider what needs to happen to help ensure that a child/ren are safe.

## **Social worker**

A professional who supports children and their families through difficult times and helps, where possible, to find solutions to problems.

## **Well-being and Professionals working together**

Section 10 of the Children Act 2004 requires local authorities and other specified agencies to work together to improve the well-being of children.