A Guide to Children’s Assessments
Introduction to assessments

A parent, schoolteacher or neighbour might contact Children’s Social Care because they are concerned about your child. When we get involved we need to find out things like:

- Is there a problem?
- How is it affecting your child?
- What exactly is causing the problem?
- What help would make things better?
- How will everyone know when things are better?

To find the answers to questions like these, we must carry out an assessment. This leaflet will explain how social workers carry out an assessment.

What is an initial assessment?

An initial assessment is a short assessment that will help us decide, with you, things like if your child needs support or protection, and what services they need. We also use the initial assessment to decide if we need to make a core assessment, which is a more detailed assessment of the child’s needs.

We will need to work closely with you to carry out the best assessment possible. The social worker will need to speak to your child alone if they are old enough to understand. The social worker may also need to contact other workers who know your family.

Sometimes the Police Child Abuse Investigation Team may need to be involved if there is a chance that someone has committed an offence against your child.
What does the social worker need to know?

When carrying out the assessment the social worker will need to consider the following:

- What are your child’s needs?
- Are you meeting those needs?
- How do your family circumstances affect you as a parent?

Try and share as much information as possible with the social worker. This will help them carry out a more effective assessment, and identify the best possible services to improve you and your family’s situation.

The assessment should take approximately seven days. We will give you a copy of the completed initial assessment.

What happens next?

After the initial assessment, we will decide with you what happens next. We will agree either:

- that you don’t need any more of our help;
- that you need to be referred to someone else who can help; or
- that you need more help from us.

If you need more help from us, we will probably give you a named social worker. This process is referred to as ‘allocation’. During the allocation process the social worker will try and see what help is available to you immediately. They will also need to do a more detailed assessment, referred to as a core assessment, as mentioned above.
What is section 47?

Section 47 of the Children Act says the council has a duty to make further enquiries if we believe your child is at risk of ‘significant harm’. This means that your child is either not being treated properly, or neglected in a way that affects their health and development when compared to other children of their age.

If we think your child is at risk of significant harm we may hold a child protection case conference. We normally hold the conference within three weeks of deciding that a Section 47 enquiry is required. For more information about child protection conferences you can ask us for a copy of the leaflet titled Child Protection Conferences – A guide for parents.

What are my rights?

A social worker cannot take away your child without your consent unless there is an order from the court. However a police officer can take your child away immediately for up to 72 hours in an emergency situation. They will be allowed to go home as soon as it is safe.

What if my child or I cannot speak English or have a disability?

If English is not your or your child’s first language, we will bring an interpreter to all meetings with you.

If you or your child has a disability, we will arrange to help you or your child give your views and have as much say as possible in the enquiries.
Where can I get further information?

**Citizens Advice Bureau – Mitcham**
Kellaway House
326 London Road
Mitcham
CR4 3ND
Tel: 020 8288 0450

**Citizens Advice Bureau – Morden**
7 Crown Parade
Crown Lane
Morden SM4 5DA
Tel: 020 8715 0707

**National Association of Citizens Advice Bureau at www.nacab.org.uk**

**Merton Children’s Information Service**
Telephone: 020 8545 3800
A telephone information service for parents, carers and workers caring for children.

**Family Rights Group Helpline**
Advice for families whose children are in contact with Children’s Social Care Services.
Open Monday to Friday,
10am – 12 noon and 1.30pm – 3.30pm
Freephone: 0800 731 1696
Sharing Information

As we work in partnership with the Health Service and other organisations to provide a package of services, we often need to share your personal information. We may ask you to sign a form giving us permission to share your personal information with other organisations.

To protect people we may, on rare occasions, share information without your permission. We will tell you if this happens and explain the reasons why.

The council has a policy on gaining access to information we hold about people on our files. To get this information you normally have to pay a £10 administration charge unless you receive certain social security benefits.

If you would like to see the information we hold about you, you can write to:

Customer Services Manager
Children, Schools and Families Department
10th Floor
Merton Civic Centre
London Road
Morden
SM4 5DX

Telephone: 020 8545 3263
Fax: 020 8545 3443
Email: children@merton.gov.uk
Data Protection

Any personal information you provide on forms will be treated as confidential and handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. It will only be used for the purposes we have told you about.

Helping us to help you

We welcome feedback about our services from the people who use them. If you have any comments, complaints or compliments about Children’s Social Care, or would like to see a copy of any records we keep about you, please contact:

Customer Services Manager
Children, Schools and Families Department
10th Floor
Merton Civic Centre
London Road
Morden
SM4 5DX

Telephone: 020 8545 3263
Fax: 020 8545 3443
Email: children@merton.gov.uk

You can get more copies of this leaflet by telephoning 020 8545 3263 or by emailing children@merton.gov.uk
If you would like more information in your own language, please contact us at the address shown in the box below.

Nese deshironi me shume informacion ne gjuhen tuaj, ju lutemi te na kontaktoni ne adresen e dhene ne kurite me poshte.

Hadii aad u baahan tahay faahfaahin intaa kabadan oo ku soobsan afkaaka hooyo ama Af Somali fadlan lana soo xiira cinwaanka hoos ku qoran.

Si usted desea más información en su propia lengua, por favor contactenos en la dirección al pie del formato.

You can also get this information in large print, in Braille and on audiotape.