

INITIAL REFERRAL & ASSESSMENT FORM GUIDANCE NOTES [Revised Sept 2008]

The more information received by Social Services at the first point of contact, the more likely it is that appropriate services will be delivered at the earliest opportunity to help children and families in the best interests of the child. Please ensure the form is fully completed and contains some analysis of both the problems and needs of the child/ren as this will inform Social Services initial assessment of the child.

Child protection referrals – if there are concerns that a child may be suffering **significant harm**, the information must be **telephoned** directly through to Social Services County Duty Service (08458 247 247). The Initial Referral Form must then be completed and forwarded to County Duty Service within two working days. If a Child Protection referral results from a professional consultation with a Children and Families Duty Team, the Team will act on the information presented to them, but an IAR Form must be sent to County Duty Service in the usual way within two working days.

Children In Need referrals – referrals of children with high levels of need should be forwarded to County Duty Service without prior telephone discussion with County Duty Service or Children and Families Team, unless a professional consultation is considered necessary or useful (see section 4).

Consent and Confidentiality – the parent(s) / legal guardian(s) must sign Section 13.

Consent – in most circumstances the agreement of the parent / legal guardian of the child must be sought before a referral is made, providing this will not place the child at an increased risk of harm. **If a professional has any concern that informing a parent may place a child at risk or may compromise Police evidence, immediate advice must be sought from either the Social Services or Police.** Should a parent or guardian refuse their agreement to a referral being made consideration should be given to the impact this may have on the level of concern for the child's welfare, and the parent's or guardian's ability to meet the child's needs.

Common Assessment Framework (CAF) - The aim of the CAF is to identify, at the earliest opportunity, a child's or young person's additional needs. Written consent is given by the parent(s)/carer(s) and/or young people before the CAF process is undertaken.

Sufficient information – every effort must be made to complete the form as fully as possible as this will make it easier to make decisions about the eligibility and urgency of the referral. The reasons for referring to Social Services must be clearly stated (section 6) and the form should contain as much information as possible about the child being referred (section 7). Information about family members gathered during interview or known by the referrer should also be included (section 8).

Reports – any additional detailed reports should be attached to the form. If reports are attached please ensure that the consent of the author has been obtained.

Observation of the child – when completing this form it is important to record your observations of the child. If you have specific expertise in a given area this should be clearly stated.

Third parties – information about third parties should only be included if it is directly relevant to the referral and there is consent.

Parents' and child's views – may be included if they are volunteered but care must be taken not to interview either parents or children about the substance of any concerns where it is possible that a criminal offence may have been committed.

Legal Proceedings – those completing the form should be aware that the contents of the form may be used in legal proceedings should proceedings follow.