

## **Foreword.**

This publication has been developed within the framework of the EU Project 'Development of Integrated Social Services for Exposed Families and Children'.

The materials and methodology have been prepared in association with Kyiv oblast rayon and city administration Centres for Social Services for Children Family and Youth and the Training Centre of the Department of Family and Youth of Kyiv oblast State Administration.

The guidance, instructions and forms for assessment were piloted during a nine month period in 2006 and were approved by a resolution of Kyiv oblast Coordination Council for Child Protection on 12 May 2006.

The commitment of the government of Ukraine to development of family based services for vulnerable children is evidenced by the Presidential Decree "On priority measures for child protection" № 1086/2005 11th July 2005. This practice guidance has been produced in acknowledgement of that commitment to help policy makers, managers and practitioners who have responsibility for responding to the needs of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children.

Assessment is a fundamental building block of social work. Without the tools to identify need, policy makers, managers and practitioners cannot provide effective interventions. Assessment can provide critical information for decision making about resource allocation on a national and local scale as well as planning for individual interventions.

Assessment concerns populations of adults, children and families and the identification and analysis of their needs as a basis for planning services; it also focuses on issues of assessing individual need as a basis for more effective action planning.

It is hoped that this publication will be a valuable resource for use in direct work with children and families but also in training and continuing staff development.

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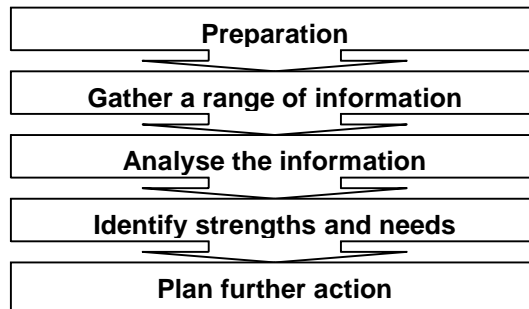
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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. This guidance is a general statement of action which should be taken in relation to assessment. It is intended to influence and determine the decisions taken by professionals in the social care sector; including those working with children and families.
- 1.2. It has been prepared in response to the rapid developments in social care in Ukraine and will provide common guidelines for the implementation of assessment in social care which will enable Managers and Practitioners to understand the mechanism and know how to implement it appropriately.
- 1.3. The guidance is based on international and European best practice models and aims to support a standard national approach to assessment which will improve joint working and communication.

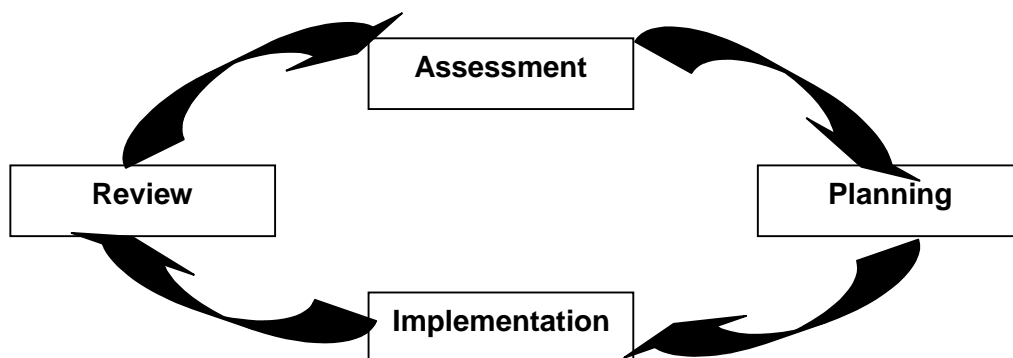
## **2. What is Assessment?**

- 2.1. Assessment supports local and national authorities in identifying children and families in need and in planning appropriate services for them.
- 2.2. Assessment is a process by which judgements are made about a person or a family and their environment, in deciding what their needs are.
- 2.3. Assessment can be further defined as a systematic process of gathering a range of information relating to an individual adult, child or family to help identify their strengths and needs, in order to decide on appropriate further action (or to confirm that no additional help is required). Assessment can provide a baseline of information against which a person's future development can be measured. The information may be gathered from a wide range of sources.



**Figure 1. A General Outline of the Assessment Process**

2.4. Assessment must be part of a cycle. The assessment must inform planning, the plan must then be implemented, the implementation must then be reviewed, which may lead to further assessment. Assessment on its own – for its own sake – will not achieve effective change and support for individuals and their families.



**Figure 2. The Assessment Cycle**

### **3. Why Do We Need Assessment?**

3.1. Assessment is inextricably linked to the planning and development of services and to the efficient use of limited resources.

3.2. It allows agencies to respond to the needs of an individual or a given population accurately, and ensures the protection of vulnerable adults and children.

3.3. It supports earlier intervention, allowing problems or issues to be dealt with before they become complex, improves joint working between agencies and supports the sharing of information.

3.4. Assessment can identify if someone needs social work intervention. It can decide if an adult, child or family meet the criteria to receive a service.

#### **4. Basic Standards Of Effective Assessment**

4.1. Each child or family who is referred to a social care organisation is entitled to an immediate initial assessment.

4.2. All agencies (including both governmental and non-governmental organisations) that provide social care services are required to have an assessment format and guidelines for implementation in place.

4.3. All practitioners with responsibility for undertaking a social care assessment must receive appropriate training which is regularly updated.

4.4. Assessment should focus on person's strengths and needs, rather than their weaknesses, as this has been shown to lead to more positive outcomes. However, issues and problems also need to be considered.

4.5. The assessment process should be a positive experience and the practitioners should work **with** the child, their family and other

agencies, to gather information to establish the issues that need to be addressed and assess the most suitable response.

## **5. Values And Principles Of Effective Assessment**

5.1. The views of the person being assessed should be included and they should be kept at the centre of the assessment to ensure their needs are met.

5.2. It is always important to involve family members and carers in the assessment since they can provide valuable information, however it is also important that the person at the centre of the assessment is given the opportunity to speak to the professional undertaking the assessment in private. This will allow the person or child to express them selves freely and to be observed in interactions away from people who may be exerting undue influence.

5.3. Work with children and families should be honest and open. Everyone should understand the purpose and should have access to the information which is held about them.

5.4. Professionals involved in assessment must maintain an awareness of the confidentiality of the information gathered. It should not be shared with a third party, unless the adult or the child's parent/guardian has given explicit written permission or in circumstances where not to share the information would be to endanger an individual.

5.5. Information should be valid and reliable. Assessment is a continuous process; it is an evolving picture growing with the person rather than a snapshot at one fixed point in time. It should be updated regularly to ensure accuracy.

5.6. One person should co-ordinate a multi-agency approach for information gathering and the provision of services.

5.7. An equal approach should be taken with everyone. The assessment and its outcomes should not be affected by discrimination against someone because of their age, disability, gender, sexuality, culture or race.

## 6. Methods Of Assessment

6.1. There are a range of methods that can be used for assessment. Some may be objective and quantifiable, for example an assessment of a household income and expenditure can be made objectively on the basis of income for earnings and social benefits and costs of living whilst others may be subjective and qualitative, for example based on the opinion of the assessor when evaluating someone at a job interview. The quality of the results produced may vary according to the method used.

<b>Objective</b> An assessment which is not influenced by personal feelings, interpretations, or prejudice and which is based on facts.  E.g. an assessment of income and expenditure.	<b>Subjective</b> An assessment in which the impression or opinion of the assessor determines the evaluation of performance.  E.g. a job interview.
<b>Quantifiable/Quantitative</b> These are results that can, usually, be expressed in numbers.  E.g. amount of earnings or benefits received or cost of living	<b>Qualitative</b> These are results that can, usually, not be expressed directly in numbers.  E.g. an improvement in performance following training

**Figure 3. Methods of Assessment**

6.2. Structured and purposeful discussions with children and their families are the most common approach in gathering information. They can be

very effective but this depends a great deal on the skill of the practitioner. In addition, discussions are inherently subjective so are prone to bias. However, some form of interaction with adults, children and their families is essential for any effective assessment.

6.3. It is also important to gather information from a wide variety of sources. This involves getting information from other people and organisations that are involved with the adult, child or young person or have been involved with them in the past. It is important to gain as much information as possible from other sources. However, it is also important not to rely purely on information from other sources, as it may be out of date, or written from a perspective that may be misleading or out of context.

6.4. Specialist assessment tests which are usually administered by psychologists, psychiatrists or medical personnel (physiotherapists, geriatrician, addiction specialists etc.) can also provide important information. The information gathered from these formalised assessment tests should be collected when gathering information from a wide variety of sources (above) and considered as part of a multi-agency assessment.

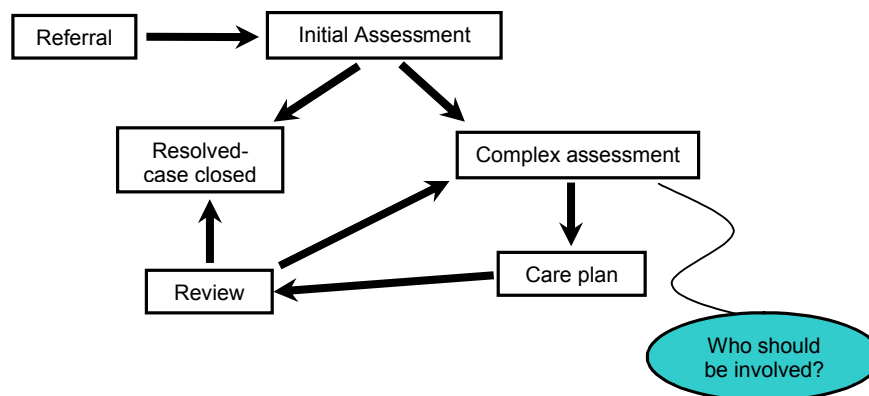
6.5. Observation can provide important information for future discussion and goal setting. For example observation is important during the assessment of adults who wish to adopt children and is equally important for assessing the skills of an elderly person living on their own who might need additional care and support.

## **7. Assessment Formats.**

7.1. It will be necessary to collect different information for different reasons however in the social sector when a referral is received by the relevant agency they should undertake an initial common assessment.



- 7.2. If following this initial common assessment the reason for the referral is resolved the case can be closed.
- 7.3. However if the initial common assessment identifies a concern or need then a complex assessment should be completed which gathers and analyses information on strengths and needs.
- 7.4. Based on the information gathered from a wide range of sources including the child and their family, the relevant professionals will decide what intervention is needed and will develop a plan of care and support to meet those needs.
- 7.5. A 'lead professional' should be appointed with responsibility for coordinating the multi-agency approach.
- 7.6. The plan of care and support should be reviewed regularly, the information should be updated and the intervention revised if necessary.
- 7.7. If the review identifies that the needs have been met the case can be closed.



**Figure 4. Assessment Process**

## **8. Conclusion**

8.1 The assessment should determine with each child and family referred to social services whether a child is 'in need' and how that child and family might best be helped.

8.2 The assessment of need should be done systematically and be linked to a plan of care and regular review.

8.3 The assessment should use the same underlying structure for all children and families but should be able to respond to different types of need where it arises.

8.4 Effective assessment of children in need and their families should consider the developmental needs of the child and the capacity of the parents to act and function responsibly and other environmental factors including the family's history and functioning, income, housing and employment and social and community supports.

8.5 The person carrying out the assessment should make sure that

- The information is gathered and recorded carefully and precisely
- The information is checked and discussed with parents and where appropriate the child
- The strengths as well as the difficulties within the family are identified and recorded
- The impact on the child of what is happening is identified

