

## Social care assessments and duties: Children & young people under 18

Children's Services have a duty to provide support and services to children in need in their area to safeguard and support their welfare. The legal definition of a child in need includes a child with a disability. In order to find out whether a child is in need and what services are required to support them they need to carry out what is known as a "section 17" assessment.

In this article we will explore:

- How to get an assessment
- What happens during an assessment
- Child in need plans
- The type of support that could be provided to children in need

### How to get an Assessment

We would recommend that you make a request for a section 17 assessment in writing and include a detailed list of your child's needs and the type of support is required. This will mean that you have a paper trail from the outset setting out exactly what you are asking them to help you with and why.

You will find the details of your local authority's children's services team available online. Many social services have a "children with disabilities team". You can also ask another professional such as a teacher, doctor, GP or health visitor to contact them on your behalf.

### What happens during an assessment?

Assessments are an opportunity for social care services to gather important information about your child and their family in order to analyse their needs and to establish what support is required to address them. The statutory "Working Together to Safeguard Children" Guidance sets out the procedure that must be followed.

A social worker will usually come to the family home to meet the child and talk to their parents and/or carers. They may also meet them at their school and speak to their teachers. They will ask for information that relates to your child's needs such as their communication, nutritional needs, personal care routine and risky behaviours. It may be helpful for you to prepare a diary of a "typical" day for your child so that they can build up a clear picture of how often and how much support your child requires to address their needs.

An assessment should take no longer than 45 working days and must focus on your child and the outcomes they wish to achieve. It should be a transparent and open process.

Where there is an EHC plan the assessment should form part of that in order to avoid your child having to endure multiple assessments where the same information is provided.

# Boyes Turner Newsletter Article

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## Child in need plans

Once the assessment has found that a child is eligible and in need of support, a care plan should then be agreed between social services, the child and their family. The plan should give details of:

- The services to be provided
- The length of time the services will be funded for
- The aim of providing each service, i.e. what outcome your child should achieve from it
- What everyone working with your child is required to do for them
- The date of the next review

The care plan will need to be regularly reviewed.

## Types of support

Under the Children Act local authorities have a general duty to provide support, so this can mean anything that will support both the child and their family. There is no specific list of services that could be provided, some examples include:

- Access to community activities
- Home help
- Assistance with travel
- Access to information, guidance or counselling
- Short breaks

Your child may also be entitled to additional services specifically for children with disabilities.

This support includes:

- Practical assistance in the home
- Equipment
- Support to access leisure activities
- Home adaptations
- Holidays
- Meals

You may be offered direct payments, this is where a budget is allocated for you to spend as you see fit on meeting your child's needs. This allows family a certain amount of flexibility so that their child's care needs can be met at the most appropriate time for them from people they know and feel comfortable with.

## How can we help?

For further information and advice about social care assessments please contact our specialist team by email on [cop@boyesturner.com](mailto:cop@boyesturner.com)