



**Protocol for integrated working between
health professionals and social care
professionals to safeguard children where
parental learning disability / difficulty is a
factor in parenting ability.**

June 2010

Learning Disability Team contact details and consultation request form
updated December 2011

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Safeguarding work with parents for whom learning disability or learning difficulty is a factor requires good collaborative work between professionals and family to ensure the wellbeing of children. These parents, in common with all parents, will need help and advice from specialists in parenting, such as school nurses, health visitors and midwives. The family and the parenting specialists themselves may also need the help of the community learning disability team (CLD), to ensure that the advice and support that is provided is appropriate and accessible.
- 1.2 The CLD team is a multi agency team of professionals from a variety of disciplines, who work with individuals with a diagnosed learning disability. Professionals in this team include social workers, occupational therapists, psychologists, and nurses.
- 1.3 Individuals who have an IQ of 70 or below qualify for help and support from these multi disciplinary teams. The teams do not provide parenting assessments, but are able to provide knowledge and expertise to support other professionals with their assessment and intervention work.

2. Collaborative work

- 2.1 Collaborative work between professionals in health and social care and professionals in CLD must take place at an early stage when concerns arise that a learning difficulty or learning disability may be a factor for an adult who is a parent or carer, and this factor is felt to be compromising or is likely to compromise their parenting ability.
- 2.2 The initial purpose of collaborative work between CLD and other professionals is to facilitate the access of individuals with a learning difficulty or learning disability to universal services that are being provided by other agencies. The CLD role is to provide other professionals with expert advice about how information and services can be provided in a manner that is likely to be accessible to a person with a learning disability or difficulty, and to suggest assessment strategies which will help determine the impact of learning disability on current and future parenting capacity.

3. Assessment and Consultation Request Form

- 3.1 Collaborative work must be underpinned by a written assessment of the parent's skills and abilities by the professional who is seeking advice. The assessment must clearly identify the factors which indicate a possible learning disability/difficulty. The assessment must also indicate how service delivery is being compromised by the perceived learning difficulty, and the areas where the professional is seeking help. The consent of the client for this professional consultation is not essential at this stage, but is preferable in order that professional work with the family is based on an open and honest dialogue. Wherever possible the view of the client should be expressed in this initial written contact with the CLD.
- 3.2 The 'Consultation Request' form (attached) should be used to make this request and must be sent directly to the team.
- 3.3 Consultation request forms will be considered at the CLD weekly allocations meeting, and a professional will be identified to make contact with the referrer and initiate a discussion about possible assessment tools and interventions that could

be used. It is important that a record is made of the actions that are agreed by both professionals during the course of this discussion, and that it is also documented how evaluation work will subsequently take place, in order to evidence whether implementing the advice provided by CLD has had any impact on parenting capacity.

- 3.4 Further discussions between CLD and the professional seeking advice must take place in order to evaluate the success of any advice given, and to consider whether further work is necessary.
- 3.5 West Yorkshire Safeguarding Children procedures must be followed should assessment work indicate the presence of child protection concerns.
- 3.6 Lack of progress when advice from CLD is implemented may result from a number of factors that are unrelated to an individual's learning capacity, for example mental ill health or substance misuse may also be influential factors on an individual's parenting ability. Where it is assessed that there is a substantial negative on children's health and wellbeing, and work under child protection procedures or the common assessment framework is taking place, the consultation process can be underpinned and strengthened by joint assessment visits to the family home. The purpose and expectation of these joint approaches, must be agreed, and documented by both professionals, and any interventions subsequently agreed must be subject to agreed methods of evaluation.

The following case study illustrates how the consultation process could work:

Case Study

Dawn aged 26 years, and her first baby Tyler aged eight weeks, are visited weekly by their health visitor. Tyler has had recurrent 'thrush' infections in his mouth, and the health visitor is concerned that feeding equipment is not correctly sterilized. The home environment is very disordered, and cluttered. Dawn is always very welcoming when the health visitor calls, and listens carefully to advice about infant feeding, and preparation of feeds. Dawn tells the health visitor that she will certainly follow the advice she has been given. The health visitor has however observed that feeding bottles are not sterilized prior to use, and Tyler's mouth continues to be sore. Dawn is seen to be very attentive to Tyler, who is now beginning to smile and respond positively to his mother. Dawn's mother lives nearby and is a regular visitor to the family home. The health visitor feels that it is possible that Dawn may have some learning difficulty. Dawn has told the health visitor very little about her time at school.

The health visitor seeks the advice of the community learning disability team (CLD) about the problem she is encountering, by completion of the consultation request form. On the form the health visitor identifies the factors which lead her to believe that Dawn has a learning difficulty, and the consequence that this is having on the accessibility of health visiting advice in respect of sterilization of feeding equipment. The completed form is sent to the CLD and is allocated to the occupational therapist at the weekly allocations meeting.

The occupational therapist contacts the health visitor, by phone, and suggests strategies that may make advice about sterilization of equipment more accessible to Dawn. The health visitor and occupational therapist both document the discussions they have in respect of this matter, and agree to review progress by a telephone conversation in two weeks time.

It is likely that further collaborative work will be needed as Tyler grows and develops, and his needs become more complex. Regular conversations will need to take place between the health visitor and the occupational therapist. Good records will need to be maintained by the health visitor and the occupational therapist about the work, informed by the collaboration, that takes place, and Dawn's capacity to respond and provide appropriate parenting for Tyler. It is possible that as knowledge about Dawn's abilities is widened, direct work may be offered to her by the occupational therapist.

It is hoped that this early collaborative work between the health visitor and occupational therapist will both ensure that there is an early response to possible compromised parenting, that structured work to ensure a child's wellbeing begins at the earliest opportunity, and that good quality parenting assessment, informed by discussions with the CLD takes place promptly with a good structure for review and evaluation.

References

West Yorkshire Consortium Safeguarding Children Procedures

<http://www.proceduresonline.com/westyorksrb/>

HM Govt (2006) Working Together to Safeguard Children. London TSO

Department of Health (2007) Good Practice Guidance on Working with Parents with a Learning Disability. London TSO

HM Govt (2009) Valuing People Now: A new 3 year strategy for people with learning disability.

CONSULTATION REQUEST FROM A PRACTITIONER/ PROFESSIONAL TO THE LEARNING DISABILITY TEAM

The following points should be considered when using the Consultation Request Form:

- This form should be used when practitioners or professionals working with a family believe the parent/carer may have a learning disability/difficulty.
- It is hoped that this consultation form will encourage collaborative working and develop knowledge and awareness of learning disability/difficulty and the role of the Learning Disabilities Team.
- All the relevant information which is leading the practitioner/professional to believe that the parent/carer have a learning disability/difficulty should be documented.
- Document what effects the learning disability/difficulty is having on the children and the family.
- This form is not a referral to the Learning Disability Team. Eligibility criteria for the service state that a person must have a learning disability.
- On receipt of the form a member of the Learning Disability Team will contact the professional/ practitioner.
- The parent/ carer may already be known to the Learning Disability service.
- Due to the complexity of learning disability and in the absence of attendance at special school and/or a formal intellectual assessment the Learning Disability Team member may ask the practitioner/professional to gather more information about the individual's specific difficulties.
- If a practitioner/professional is struggling with a particular problem, and/or this is affecting them carrying out their specific role in the family, advice may be given to assist with this e.g. communication difficulties, cognitive difficulties.
- The Learning Disability Team member may meet with the practitioner/professional and other service providers to gather more information and/or offer professional advice.
- If a referral to the Learning Disability Team is requested and it is thought that the individual has a learning disability the Learning Disability Team member will discuss with the practitioner/professional specifically what the referral is for.
- The Learning Disability Team do **not** do parenting assessments, however collaborative work may be of help to practitioners/professionals who are carrying out specific parenting assessments and can inform decision making.

CONSULTATION REQUEST FROM PRACTITIONER/PROFESSIONAL TO LEARNING DISABILITY TEAM

On completion send to:

Community Learning Disability Team
Folly Hall Mills
3rd Floor (Small Mill)
St Thomas Road
Huddersfield
HD1 3LT

Tel: (01484) 434678

Fax: (01484) 434679

(note that this one team now covers both North and South Kirklees)

Name and contact details of professional requesting consultation:

Date of request:

Learning Disability/Coping Ability Assessment

<i>Name of client</i>	<i>Address</i>	<i>Date of birth</i>
<i>Partner's name</i>		

Home circumstances

Health history

Name and address of GP

Names and dates of birth of children in the family, and other adults resident at client's address.

Names and contact details of other agencies who are working with the family.

What school did the client attend?

What are your concerns about the children? Please indicate what is being done for the children, what is not being done, how does the client manage routines, schooling appointments?

Does the client receive support from anyone else, for example family or neighbours? Please give details.

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***Do you have concerns about any of the following in relation to the adults in the family?
Please give details.***

<i>Personal hygiene</i>	
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<i>Appearance</i>	
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<i>Communication</i>	
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<i>Reading/writing skills</i>	
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<i>Home environment</i>	
<i>Meal preparation</i>	
<i>Daily living skills</i>	
<i>Vulnerability</i>	
<i>Budgeting</i>	
<i>Money Skills</i>	
<i>Safety in the community</i>	
<i>Safety in the home</i>	

For completion by Learning Disability Team.

Date consultation request received.

Consultation to be forwarded to:

Name of learning disability professional involved in the consultation:

Details of advice given to health/social care professional requesting this consultation:

Agreed Action Plan and Date:

Outcomes / Conclusion: