

When to Start a Child and Family Assessment and the Five Questions

Everyone who works with children and their families have a responsibility to identify a child who may have needs for support or protection. *The Five Questions* are used to help decide if the *Child and Family Assessment* may be needed or if it is clear what additional support is needed. Where an assessment and plan are in place they can also be used to help consider if the support is working and what other actions may be needed.

The following questions are designed to help you decide what to do next when you think a child needs support.

Asking yourself these questions will help you make the decision about any action you need to take:

1. **What is getting in the way of this child's wellbeing?**
2. **Do I have all the information I need to help this child and their family?**
3. **What can I do now to help?**
4. **What can my agency, service or setting do to help this child?**
5. **What additional help, if any, may be needed from others?**

Once you have asked and answered these questions, you will be able to identify your next steps. This could be requesting the involvement of one other service or having a conversation with the family about support that may be offered through a child and family assessment and plan.

The *Child and Family Assessment* will often be started by a practitioner in universal and early intervention services, as it is recognised a child has emerging additional needs and;

- **their needs are broader than can be addressed by the service/setting alone**
- **or their needs are unclear and more information is needed**
- **or multi-agency support needs to be co-ordinated**

In the first instance, please contact the Early Help Co-ordinator to notify of your intention to begin a Child and Family Assessment, The co-ordinator will also be able to offer advice, support and guidance. Tel 449166.

In particular, professionals should be alert to the potential need for additional support for a child who:

- Is disabled and has specific additional needs
- Has special educational needs
- Is a young carer

- Is showing signs of engaging in anti-social/criminal behaviour
- Is in family circumstances presenting challenges for them such as substance abuse, adult mental health problems and domestic abuse
- Has previously been looked after by the Government of Jersey
- Is showing early signs of abuse and/or neglect

Where the child and their family are known to other services, those services can be asked to contribute to the assessment with the consent of the parent/carer and, dependent on the age and understanding of the child, their consent (if consent is required – see sharing information in the section above).

This should mean fewer children are referred to Children's Social Work Services without a *Child and Family Assessment and Plan* in place and that early intervention multi-agency support has been considered, offered and used to prevent needs from escalating. The *Child and Family Assessment and Plan* will move with the child and their family if they need social work support. This reduces duplication, promotes the effective sharing of information and demonstrates what has worked in supporting the child and their family previously and equally what hasn't.

If at any point in the process of undertaking the Child and Family Assessment there is concern the child may be or is at risk of harm, a MASH enquiry must be made and the information gathered within the Child and Family Assessment shared.