

There will be times when children need a statutory response from Children's Social Care to improve their health or wellbeing or protect them from harm. Robust assessments help us identify issues and inform future plans to reduce risk and prevent harm.

Single Assessment Framework (SAF) - The SAF is a shared inter-agency assessment and planning tool that is used to enable those working with a child or family to gain a holistic view of needs and bring together the right services to meet those needs. Key to the SAF process is that needs are understood prior to targeted and specialist agency involvement.

Why is it important?

Working Together 2018 tells us that no matter what legislation we are assessing the child under our purpose remains the same:

- To gather important information about all children living in the household and their family
- To analyse their needs and/or the nature and level of any risk and harm being suffered by the child
- To decide whether the child is a child in need (section 17) or is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm (section 47)
- To provide support to address those needs to improve the child's outcomes and welfare and where necessary to make them safe

A good quality SAF will:

- Pull together all the relevant information for the child, include the views and wishes of the child and family.
- Provide an analysis of the information that considers the impact of the identified strengths and risks for the child.

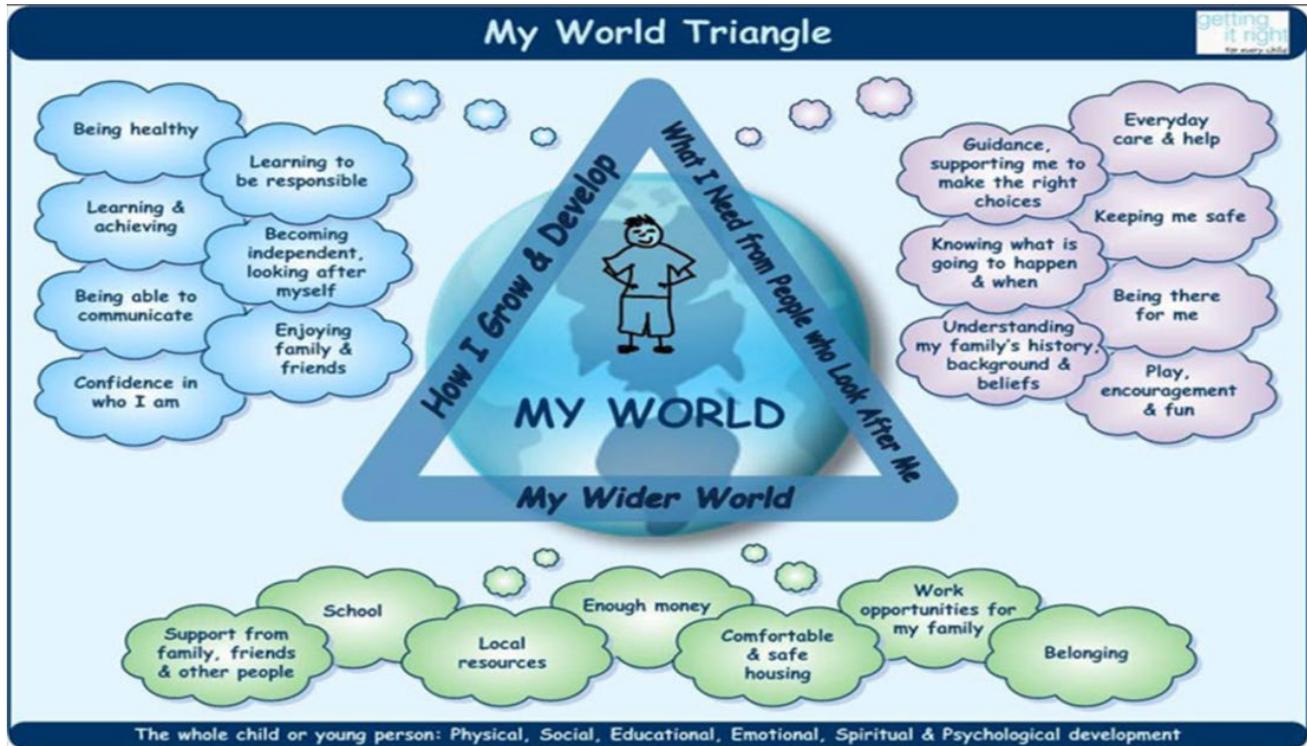
The Portsmouth Single Assessment Framework (SAF) offers a restorative approach to identifying, understanding and responding to the needs of vulnerable children and their families. It aims to bring a consistent approach to assessment and Team around the Child and Family working across services in Portsmouth.

How do we do it?

Working Together 2018 describes high quality assessments as:

- Child-centred. Where there is a conflict of interest, decisions should be made in the child's best interests, be rooted in child development, be age-appropriate and be informed by evidence
- Focused on action and outcomes for children
- Holistic in approach, addressing the child's needs within their family and any risks the child faces from within the wider community
- Ensure equality of opportunity
- Involve children, ensuring that their voice is heard and provide appropriate support to enable this where the child has specific communication needs
- Involving each parent to ensure their voices are evidenced in their children's assessments.
- Identifying risks to the safety and welfare of children
- Building on strengths as well as identifying difficulties
- Integrated in approach
- Multi-agency and multi-disciplinary
- A continuing process, not an event
- Lead to action, including the provision of services
- Reviewing services provided on an ongoing basis
- Transparent and open to challenge

In Portsmouth we use the My World triangle below as a guide for ensuring our assessments are holistic and that the child is at the centre of any planning:



Child's Views

Within the single assessment, professionals should take proactive steps to talk to each child/ren directly to gather an understanding of:

- What life is like for them in their household
- Ascertain their wishes and feelings about their life and what needs to change
- Where there are good observations of the child (especially very young children or children with communication difficulties) from other professionals, these should be included in the assessment.

Consent

A child and family must be informed that an assessment is being undertaken, unless a decision is taken on the basis that this may jeopardise a police investigation or place the child at risk of significant harm.

Consent should always be sought by the person or persons with Parental Responsibility for the child, including those who are not living in the family home, unless there is an identified risk. Practitioners need to be mindful of any learning disabilities or other needs of adults, children and young people that could affect their ability to give informed consent.

Practitioners from other parts of the local authority such as housing and those in health organisations have a duty to work with children's social care under section 27 of the Children Act 1989 and provide information for the assessment process.

Timeliness

New referrals into children's social care are overseen by a social worker who will make a decision about the next steps required within a 24-hour period.

Assessment timeliness ensures we do not delay in our response to children. Timescales for assessment should be agreed by the social worker and manager and should be determined by the



One Minute Guide Statutory Assessment under Section 17, Children Act 1989



needs of the child and consider any risk of harm. The maximum timeframe to an assessment is 45 working days from the point of referral.

Strategy discussion

Local authority children's social care should convene a strategy discussion to determine the child's welfare and plan rapid future action if there is reasonable cause to suspect the child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm. A local authority social worker, health practitioners and a police representative should, as a minimum, be involved in the strategy discussion. Other relevant practitioners will depend on the nature of the individual care but may include:

- The practitioner or agency which made the referral
- The child's school or nursery
- Any health or care services the child or family members are receiving.

All attendees should be sufficiently senior to make decisions on behalf of their organisations and agencies.