

01 Background:

Whilst there isn't one accepted definition of assessment, it can generally be regarded as the process for understanding what is happening to a child and his/her family which then informs decisions about action to be taken or services to be provided.

Assessment is a tricky business. It requires the worker to have an encounter – or a series of encounters – with other human beings and to make a judgement about the meaning and the importance of that in relation to what is happening in the person's life.

[Working Together \(2015\)](#) sets out the purpose, principles and parameters of a good assessment.

Why it matters:

Learning from Serious Case reviews tells us that assessment really does matter, that it underpins the planning process and that good assessments are critical for good outcomes. Significant decisions are made on the basis of practitioner and professional assessments that affect outcomes for children in both the short and the long term. Without good assessment, practice is likely to be unfocused; after all, it's impossible to make decisions about how best to manage a situation if there isn't a clear understanding of just what is happening. Without good assessment, subsequent decisions, plans and interventions will be flawed, with significant consequences for the child and family.

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Information:

High quality assessments:

- are child centred. Where there is a conflict of interest, decisions should be made in the child's best interests
- are rooted in child development and informed by evidence
- are focused on action and outcomes for children
- are holistic in approach, addressing the child's needs within their family and wider community;
- ensure equality of opportunity
- involve children and families
- build on strengths as well as identifying difficulties
- are integrated in approach
- are a continuing process not an event
- lead to action, including the provision of services
- review services provided on an ongoing basis
- are transparent and open to challenge.

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What to do?

[Use the Rochdale Risk Model](#)

Apply [Critical Thinking](#)

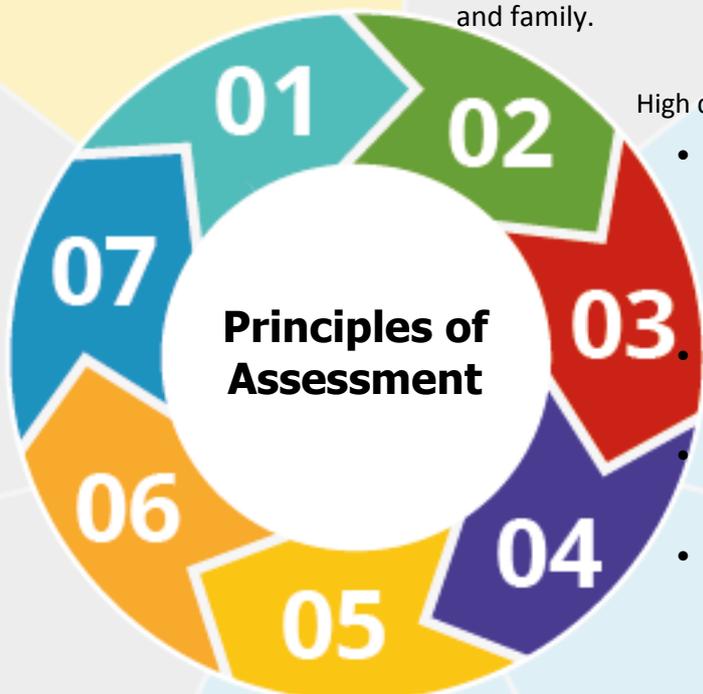
Maintain focus on the Child/ren

Ensure that you are familiar with the [Rochdale Children's Needs & Response Framework](#)

Understand [potential pitfalls](#) and how to avoid them

Questions:

- Is a chronology in place and up to date?
- Have assessment tools been used, e.g [Graded Care Profile?](#)
- Is the assessment evidence based?
- How have fathers or other males in the household been engaged/included?
- Have you considered the presenting issue in the context of the family's history?
- Are you remaining curious and inquisitive about what you are seeing, hearing and assessing?



Principles of Assessment

Information:

Assessment informs decision-making about:

- Whether to intervene
- The nature and scale of the intervention
- The urgency of the intervention
- Planning the detail of the intervention

Assessments provide the evidence needed to request interventions by other agencies or professionals, for example providing the clear rationale for a referral to children's social care and meeting the threshold for statutory intervention in family life.

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