



# COMMUNITY-BASED ASSESSMENT

**Living Springs Family Centre**

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## **Community- Based Parenting Assessment**

### **The accommodation we provide.**

Living Springs Family Centre is based in a large farmhouse, which can accommodate larger families; to the rear of the main house there are some converted barns, providing independent self-contained flats for small family groups. There is a large garden with climbing frame, play equipment and trampoline. Separate laundry facilities are provided.

### **The degree of supervision and professional input provided to parents and children whilst at Living Springs.**

Living Springs provides a 'Community-Based' Assessment and as such there are normally no staff on duty overnight. However, some initial overnight supervision can be provided for families resident in the main house, if required.

Staff are available to provide appropriate supervision, input and support to the family during the day time, as required. A support package can be arranged for an appropriate number of hours' input each day according to the level of identified need.

### **The timescale of Community-Based Assessments.**

It is normal for a Community-Based Assessment to require a minimum of 8 weeks, although this of course, would be dependent upon the progress the parents make and their ability to co-operate with staff and to work together towards improved and adequate parenting.

### **Accommodation and staff costs**

The cost for the accommodation is currently £125.00 per week. Parents are expected to pay a utility charge of £18.00 per week, which includes gas, electricity, television licence and council tax payment.

The cost for professional staff time is £42.95 per hour week days and £64.42 per hour at weekends.

## **Remit of Assessment**

Each family referred to Living Springs needs a package of assessment tailored to meet the requirements of their specific situation. They need a high level of structure, support and instruction in order to give them the best possible opportunity of making progress with parenting their children.

The model used by Living Springs for the assessment of parents is based upon the Department of Health Assessment Framework (D.O.H., 2000). Practical parenting skills are assessed as outlined in the dimension of Parenting Capacity and each individual element is assessed both independently and as part of the greater whole to form an accurate overall picture of parenting ability, suitability and sustainability.

The criteria relating to parenting capacity which are assessed, according to the age-appropriateness of the child will include:-

- Bottle and food preparation
- Feeding
- Bathing
- Nappy changing
- Hygiene Issues
- General Handling
- Planning and structure of time/routine
- Ability to maintain focus on tasks
- Discipline and boundaries
- Relationship/affection
- Ability to meet emotional needs
- Safety Issues
- Play/interaction

- Ability to meet physical needs
- Ability to learn from individual parent craft sessions
- Consistency of commitment to the parenting task
- General presentation and co-operation with professionals.
- Be ready in time to attend appointments
- Shop for appropriate food and items
- Plan and prepare appropriate meals
- Maintain the child/ren's routine throughout the day

In order to undertake the assessment it is imperative that a clear structure for each day is developed and maintained. To achieve this, initial discussions would need to be undertaken with the child/ren's current foster carer (when relevant), social worker and parents, in order to plan each day in line with the child/ren's current routine. From these discussions, a written day-plan would be developed and all parties and workers involved would be provided with a copy. Parents would be expected to adhere to this structure and to make the necessary preparation to engage in an appropriate manner with professionals.

Where considered to be appropriate, the Living Springs' worker would accompany the parents in taking the child out for walks, to attend clinic appointments or for shopping trips and thus provide opportunities for assessing their ability to use public transport and to safeguard the child when outside of the home and moving around to undertake necessary tasks within the local community.

## **Parent Craft Sessions**

Individual parent craft sessions are also used as part of the assessment process. These are used both in the demonstration and instruction of practical parenting tasks and to develop a clear understanding of these practical tasks, as well as discussions of less tangible issues such as attachment, problem solving and decision making.

Areas covered, as is relevant, include:

- Attachment – the importance of strong attachment, how this is affected by background, how bonds can be nurtured etc.
- Basic Care routines – bathing, sterilising, making feeds, basic cookery, the importance of keeping medical appointments, routine checks etc.
- Ensuring Safety – Safety in the home, toy safety, choosing appropriate baby-sitters, personal safety.
- Guidance and boundaries. – setting age appropriate boundaries, challenging inappropriate behaviour, age-appropriate sanctions.
- Maintaining a healthy lifestyle – Nutrition, exercise, food safety, hygiene etc.
- Organisational skills – daily routines, house work, shopping, finances etc

All parent craft sessions are recorded. These records will include areas covered, information offered, details of how well the parents engaged in the session and their perceived level of understanding. Questionnaires are used to provide evidence of understanding, and this information is included in the final report.

Research has clearly demonstrated that if life skill deficits are addressed as part of a teaching programme and support provided, then parenting skills can improve accordingly. (Reder et al., 2003). Developing self-confidence, self-esteem and assertiveness also has an impact on ability to parent. Therefore, when time allows, it is advisable that these, together with ability to transfer acquired skills and adapt to the changing needs of their child/ren are essential elements of the programme.

## **Life Skills**

The teaching of life skills would be part of an on-going process throughout the assessment and would include:-

Self Care

Personal safety

Personal hygiene

Handling laundry

Daily routine

Food hygiene and storage

Basic meal preparation

Budgeting

Handling money/keeping money safe

Sleep, exercise and rest

Perception of and recognizing time

Handling public transport

Shopping

Asking for help

Keeping appointments

Working with professionals

## **Wider issues**

If a full assessment is required, which covers the element of the Assessment Framework, '**Family and Environmental Factors**' then individual direct work sessions can be undertaken on the following issues, as required:-

Support Networks

Background/History

Individual Functioning

Relationship with Family or Partner (if relevant)

Family Dynamics

Situational Triggers

Local Authority Concerns

Finance

Drugs/alcohol/offending behaviour

Managing and Resolving Conflicts

Working with Professionals

Current Routine – planning for changes

Housing, Environment and Resources

## **Methods Employed**

Living Springs' workers are experienced in the use of several recognised appropriate social work methods in order to offer parents the best possible opportunity to develop their skills and achieve positive parenting for their children. (Clader and Hackett , 2003) These methods include:-

### **Task-Centred Approach**

This is a set of procedures for resolving explicit target problems as perceived and defined by the service user and professionals engaged in working with them. This model is present-assented, problem solving that follows a set, often time-limited structure. Tasks are allocated which state clearly and exactly what the user and the worker will do to work on the problem.

### **Problem Solving Approach**

This approach rests on the basic assumption that all human living is a problem-solving process. A person's inability to cope with a problem is seen as a lack of motivation, capacity or opportunity to work on the problem. New alternative problem-solving solutions are examined in the context of a helping relationship.

### **Psychosocial Approach**

This approach consists of helping the individual develop insight into the causes of his/her behaviour and its impact on others.

### **Parent Training**

The purpose of parent training or parent craft is to provide parents with insight into child development and behaviour and to develop child-rearing

skills. Approaches are varied in that they may be practical, discussion and learning of theory based techniques and interaction.

### Life-Skills Counselling

The goal of life-skills counselling is to provide cognitive and behavioural skills to help people cope with present problems and/or to anticipate and thereby prevent or reduce further problems. This intervention focuses on developing the service user's competences in dealing with stress and problem situations.

### Crisis Intervention

This intervention aims to assist an individual to cope with a critical incident/period by managing the emotional impact of the event and by strengthening the individual's coping efforts and mechanisms.

### References

**Calder, Martin C. and Hackett, Simon (2003) Assessment in Childcare: Using and developing frameworks for practice. Russell House Publishing: Lyme Regis.**

**Department of Health (2000) Framework for the Assessment of Children in Need and their Families HMSO: London**

**Reder et al. (2003) Studies in the Assessment of Parenting Brunner-Routledge: Hove**