

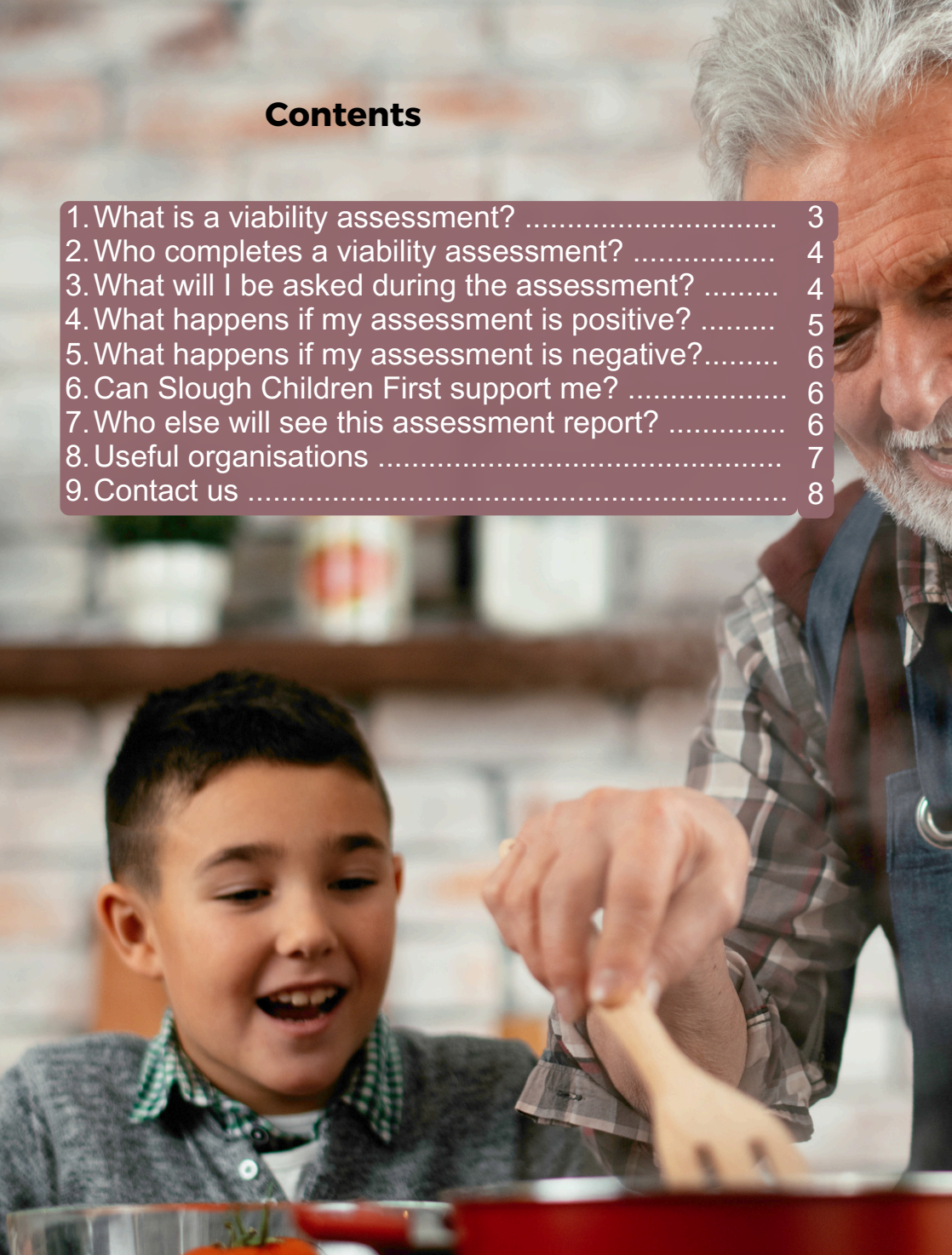


Slough Children First's Viability Assessment Guide



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1. What is a viability assessment?

An initial viability assessment is completed when local authorities are concerned for the welfare of a child and question whether they will be able to continue living with their parents.

The purpose of the viability assessment is to determine whether a child can be safely placed in the care of a family member or another connected person. To ensure the child's safety, a risk assessment is completed of the proposed carer.

An initial viability assessment is a short assessment completed to indicate whether a proposed placement is viable and whether the recommendation is likely to be positive or negative. This does not mean that everything is '*perfect*'; there may still be areas that require further exploration during a full assessment. A family or close friend can put themselves forward to be considered, or they can be nominated by the child's parents during court proceedings, or they may be identified during a family group conference.

At this stage, no final decisions have been made. The court will be considering all available options concurrently, which means parents have not been informed that they are unable to care for their child. If you are putting yourself forward as a potential carer, you need to consider whether you would be able to care for the child on a short or long-term basis, as this will form part of the assessment.

Participation in the initial viability assessment is voluntary; however, if you choose not to take part, you will not be considered as a potential carer for the child.

2. Who completes a viability assessment?

The viability assessment is completed by the child's allocated Social Worker, alongside a Social Worker from the Kinship team (who will complete the full assessments).

A viability assessment is usually completed in 1-2 visits face to face. The allocated Social Worker will send you a copy of the report once completed and inform you of the outcome.

3. What will I be asked during the assessment?

The assessment will ask you personal questions, and it is important to remember that all information requested is purposeful and relevant to the assessment.

During the assessment, the Social Workers will have a look around the family home and discuss the planned sleeping arrangements, or changes can be made to accommodate the child. They would also need to speak to anyone who stays in the family home overnight and any regular visitors. Checks are completed with your local authority, as well as police checks for everyone living in the family home.

During the viability assessment, you will be asked about your financial circumstances, how you would manage childcare and meet the child's needs, your employment status, experience in caring for children, understanding of safeguarding and the concerns as to why there is children services involvement. The assessment will also explore your relationships, health, and current caring responsibilities. You will need to discuss the practical implications of caring for the child, including what support you might require, if any.

Other areas for discussion include how you would promote attachment and ensure the child's safety, as well as how you would manage the relationship dynamics with the child's parents. If you have previously been involved with the local authority regarding your own children or have any criminal convictions, these will also be considered. The assessment will look at how your own children feel about the child living in your home, and how this impact will be managed.

Finally, you will be asked about your current relationship with the child, your reasons for wanting to care for them, and how you would handle any challenges that may arise.

4. What happens if my assessment is positive?

If the initial assessment is positive, you would proceed to a full assessment.

This is a comprehensive process that typically takes at least 12 weeks to complete. You will be expected to promptly complete a consent form to allow multi-agency checks to be carried out.

Please note that there are circumstances where you may not progress to a full assessment. These include situations where you decided to withdraw, where multiple assessments have been completed, and the local authority chooses to postpone, or if the court determines that a full assessment is no longer required. At this stage, you are entitled to seek independent legal advice.

5. What happens if my assessment is negative?

If the assessment outcome is negative, the local authority will not be able to proceed with a full assessment. However, you will have the opportunity to appeal this decision by challenging the recommendation within 14 days.

Please note that you must initiate this process yourself, and it may involve additional costs.

6. Can Slough Children First support me?

If the full assessment is positive, we cannot guarantee the level or type of support that may be provided.

Any support offered will be considered on a case-by-case basis and is subject to approval by the Access to Resource Panel, who review any recommendations of support. Please note that we cannot guarantee support with housing, finances or other areas in either the short or longer term. While we can signpost you to other agencies for additional support, we are unable to guarantee the outcome of these referrals.

7. Who else will see this assessment report?

If the child is subject to court proceedings, this report will be shared with the solicitors involved, as well as the judge and parents.

Within the local authority, it will also be shared with the relevant Social Workers and managers involved in decision making.

If there is any information that you would prefer not to be included in the report, you should discuss this with the Social Worker. They will determine whether the information is essential to the assessment and whether it influences the recommendation.

8. Useful organisations

• Kinship

A national charity organisation that champions the important role that friends and family carers have in a child's life. They provide various means of support and advice, including training.

Advice line: 0300 123 7015 – 9:30am-2pm Monday to Friday

Website:

<https://www.kinship.org.uk>

• Family Rights Group

Works with parents and family members of a child who is involved with children services. They can provide advice on your rights and options when a social worker or court makes decisions about a child's welfare.

Advice line: 0808 801 0366 – 9:30am-3pm, Monday to Friday

Website: <https://frg.org.uk>

• Coram Children's Legal Centres

Coram group of charities, promotes and protects the rights of children in the UK and internationally in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Website: <https://childrenslegalcentre.com>

Contact us

If you have questions about any of the information contained in this leaflet, or would like further information about Kinship, please contact your assessing social worker or the Team Manager of the Kinship Duties Team. You can also contact us on any of the following ways below.



kinshipduty@sloughchildrenfirst.co.uk



01753 690 690



<https://www.sloughchildrenfirst.co.uk/what-we-do/kinship>