
When to appoint an expert

This tool can be used in supervision or for group training. There are no hard and fast rules on when to appoint an expert, but there is a need to reflect upon when an expert would provide further valuable evidence in a particular case. This may be about assessing when the level of expertise required in a specific area is 'clinical' or beyond the expertise of the social worker or colleagues in the local authority.

The local authority will make its own assessment – and the child's guardian will make an independent assessment in the interests of the child. Further assessments should only be commissioned if they can bring something important to the case that neither the local authority nor the guardian is able to bring.

A When experts are required:

- bones, brains and bruises
- suspected severe mental disorders
- severe learning disabilities
- potential to benefit from therapy
- major disability – parent or child
- risk assessment – serious sexual abuse and violent adults.

B When the social worker or guardian should be able to provide good evidence:

- attachment
- general assessments of child development
- parenting capacity
- parents' capacity/propensity to change
- risk assessments in general
- neglect.