

# What is a parenting assessment?

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 [grapefruit-chicory-py3l.squarespace.com/what-is-a-parenting-assessment](https://grapefruit-chicory-py3l.squarespace.com/what-is-a-parenting-assessment)



## What do we mean by parenting?

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Parenting means all of the things that are involved in looking after a baby or a child, and helping them get to adulthood safe and well.

- day to day basic care (keeping them clean, clothed and fed)
- ensuring safety (making sure they are not hurt by making sure you are always watching them when they are active, not letting dangerous, frightening or people to be around them, making sure that you do not leave them alone or with people who are not safe to care for them properly)
- love and affection (making your child feel special and cared for by you, by using kind tones and word, cuddles, kisses and closeness)
- play and talking (how you help your child learn and help their brain develop by showing them colours, toys, activities and by talking to them so that they learn to speak too)
- how you are with your baby and around your baby that will help them learn how to manage their feelings and behaviour so they can do well in life
- stability (giving your child a sense of safety by being the same sort of person with them all of the time, making sure that they feel secure in your care)

## What are we assessing?

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Orchard House are asked by the Court to assess (measure) your parenting. This means your skills in looking after a baby, your knowledge about what they need and your ability to give them what they need until they are grown up.

We are not looking for 'perfect' parents. The Court is thinking about your child's safety and the assessment is to see whether you are 'good enough' to keep your baby or child safe.

The NSPCC says that 'good enough' means:

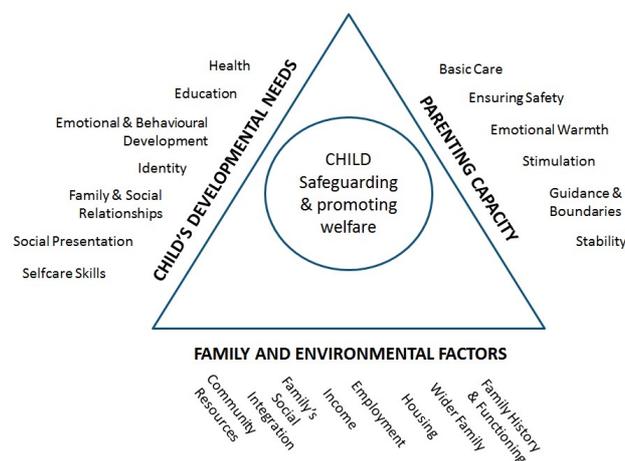
- meeting children's health and developmental needs
- putting children's needs first
- providing routine and consistent care
- acknowledging problems and engaging with support services.

Things that are not safe for children are:

- neglecting basic needs; putting adults' needs first
- chaos and lack of routine
- and an unwillingness to engage with support services

We know that domestic abuse, substance misuse, mental health problems and/or learning difficulties, or not having had good parenting yourself can make parenting particularly difficult so we will think about these things very carefully. You might also be asked to have a psychological assessment if these things are getting in the way of you looking after your baby.

A parenting assessment also looks at how your baby is and if there are any special needs (like medical problems, developmental or emotional difficulties) that they might have which would affect what they need from you as a parent. We also look at wider family, support, your home community and what might be available there for you.



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## How do we assess parenting?

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Whilst you are at Orchard House, we will work closely with you to build up the best picture we can of how you look after your baby. We will:

- talk to you and listen to you

- observe how you care for your baby at different times of the day or night, both in the house and out and about
- support you and help you put this into practice and check whether you are able to keep going with this on your own

Sometimes we will talk to people who know you well, like your extended family. We might also use drug and alcohol testing to find out about your use of substances.

All assessments are a little bit different, but they follow the same plan. We will make sure we meet with you every week at the very least to talk about how things are going, this is called your 'weekly progress meeting'.

Each four or six weeks, we will try to get everyone together (including your child's local authority social worker) to make sure there is a clear plan for the next part of the assessment. This is called the 'Signs of Safety review'.




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## Signs of Safety

We use the Signs of Safety model. This is something we do with you, not to you. It is about you and your family members working together, along with us and the local authority, to meet the needs of your children in the best way possible. It puts children, young people, their parents and families at the heart of your assessment.

Families play a key part in working alongside professionals, making it clear about the

worries and concerns that are identified for their child, (who is worried and why), identifying the things that are going well in the child's life (strengths), and agreeing what needs to be done (goals), to build on the strengths and reduce the worries. We aim to give very clear feedback about what you need to do to take your child home at the end of the assessment, and we set goals together about how you are going to achieve this. This is called your 'family focus'.

All of your weekly progress meetings will use the same model, so that when the review meetings happen, you will be used to it and understand it. They all follow the same format of:

“What do you think is going well?”

“What are you worried about?”

“What needs to change?”

There is more information about Signs of Safety [here](#).

Ofsted said:

*"Feedback to parents is delivered sensitively and respectfully by staff in a child-focused manner. The family centre continues to use the 'signs of safety' model and are leading innovators in this area of practice. Using this method helps families and to more easily understand why they are being assessed, what areas of parenting are being focused on and what changes need to happen. Clearly written information is made available regularly and parents are clear about what progress they have made and what aspects of their parenting need to improve."*

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## Privacy

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There are CCTV cameras and microphones in all shared areas, bedrooms and in the garden. There are no cameras in your en suite bathroom. There is one in the family bathroom and this can be switched off when there are no children in there.

We understand that this might be difficult for some people. We are always trying to find ways to make sure that we can balance making sure children are safe and that we can do the right assessment for them, and your privacy as a family. These are some of the ways we do this:

- You will have a key for your bedroom. Unless it is an emergency, we will always knock and wait to be asked into your room. We have a master key for emergencies.
- We encourage parents to have 'time out', either going out into town or having time in their room with the camera off, whilst your baby or child is cared for by staff.
- We keep all of your information safe in the office. Only staff are allowed in the office. If you need to keep any papers safe, please keep in your bedroom or ask these to be locked in the office.
- If you need to speak to your child's social worker or to your solicitor, we will make sure that you can use the Orchard House phone and we will make sure that you have

a private place with the cameras off to talk to them.

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## What are the 'rules' of Orchard House?

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We know that there are lots of different ways to parent and care for a baby. We respect your choices and how you want to do things. However, there are some guidelines provided by the NHS that we follow about bottle making, sterilising, weaning and safe sleeping. These can be found [here](#).

We also have a duty to make sure all the children and families we have here are safe. We need to you to agree to:

- not use any drugs or alcohol whilst living at Orchard House, even if you are away from the house. You cannot bring drugs or alcohol into the house.
- not care for or hold other parents' children
- not take photographs of other families, not talk about other families to people outside of Orchard House. You are welcome to facetime but please do not do this with other families around)
- keep tablets and medicines in a locked cupboard in the office unless agreed
- not smack your child or hurt them
- not be abusive or violent to anyone else

Because of the fire risk, we do not allow candles or chip pans at Orchard House. You are welcome to smoke in the garden and the smoking area but not in the house. This includes e-cigs. Unfortunately, you are not able to bring pets to Orchard House.

We will do room checks once a week to make sure that they are safe and clean for your child. Please change nappies in the privacy of your bedroom.