

### **Appointment of Experts – Quick Reference Guide**

When appointing any expert in Care proceedings the following are matters to be considered.

- The Social Worker and Guardian are expert witnesses and other experts should only be appointed where there are relevant and decisive issues beyond their expertise.
- Is it necessary to have an expert assessment / diagnosis / prognosis or is the identified and evidenced behaviour and impact on the children sufficiently analysed within a Social Worker / Guardian report?
- Will an appointment cause delay? Delay is prejudicial to children and should be avoided. Experts may be able to report within timescales but further questions and hearings requiring their availability can impact on the timetable.
- Can assessment tools be used by the Social Worker or Guardian to focus a particular area of their report such as the 'Mental Health Thinking Tool'?
- Are there other factors beyond the expertise of the proposed expert that would impact on the care of the child(ren)? For example, is a psychological assessment going to progress matters when drug/alcohol addiction remain a concern?
- Think about duration of the issues identified, severity and the pattern of engagement. Should an assessment indicate a programme of change, how likely is it to be successful within the child's timescales, and how will delay impact on that child's lived experience and outcomes?
- Consider the added value of an Independent Social Worker (ISW) and whether it is necessary in light of the independence of the Children's Guardian and the relationship the social worker has with the family. Do they bring anything beyond the expertise of the Social Worker and Guardian.
- Will the results of drug or alcohol testing be definitive in determining the outcomes for the child(ren)? Consider the substance, pattern of use, and impact this has on the child in question.
- Are there other professionals already working with the family that can assist, such as from the community mental health team or drug advisory service?
- Is a residential assessment likely to provide recommendations relevant to independent living? Are the issues to be addressed about unknown parenting capacity or capacity to change? If the latter, think about the factors that influence change in dynamic risk, or whether the critical risk factors are static and therefore will remain.
- Has this family been assessed in previous proceedings? Are there indicators that anything has changed?
- Ensure letters of instruction are specific to the risks in the family that impact on the child's experience of being cared for.