



Multi-Agency Assessment Toolkit

Improving Practice, Improving Lives



Cheshire West and Chester
Safeguarding Children
Partnership



Cheshire West
and Chester



Thinkchild
Thinkadult
Thinkfamily

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Multi-Agency Assessment Toolkit

Introduction

Everyone who works with children has a responsibility for keeping them safe. No single practitioner can have a full picture of a child's needs and circumstances and, if children and families are to receive the right help at the right time, everyone who comes into contact with them has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action (Working Together 2018).

We all know that providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life.

Learning from Serious Case Review Findings, Local Practice Reviews and Thematic Inspections frequently highlight missed opportunities as a consequence of poor quality assessments. Too many assessments do not include the views of children, and are found to be too focused on the adults' needs.

Working Together 2018 lists the following as features of a high quality assessment:

- they are child-centred and informed by the views of the child
- decisions are made in the best interests of the child
- they are rooted in child development and informed by evidence
- they build on strengths as well as identifying difficulties
- they ensure equality of opportunity and a respect for diversity including family structures, culture, religion and ethnic origin
- ***and they are a continuing process, not a single event.***

These principles should be applied when completing any of the assessments within this toolkit.

Effective early help relies upon local organisations and agencies working together to identify children and families who would benefit from early help, undertaking an assessment of the need for early help and providing targeted early help services to address the assessed needs of a child and their family which focuses on activity to improve the outcomes for the child. If those needs turn to risks, then these assessment tools can also help to demonstrate the need for statutory intervention when early support has not improved outcomes for the child. ,

This multi-agency assessment toolkit has been developed to support those working with children and families to more easily and effectively identify specific needs/risks so that targeted interventions can follow.

Who should use the toolkit?

These tools are available for any services, schools or organisations who work with children and families in Cheshire West and Chester. All professionals need to be familiar with the tools provided and know when and how to use them. Managers should facilitate practitioner's attendance at relevant training events to support the use of these tools and seek assurance in supervision that they are completed where appropriate.

How should the toolkit be used?

This toolkit has been populated with National Evidence Based tools and locally developed multi and single-agency documents. It is not a definitive list and we recognise that some organisations have highly specialised assessments that they will need to continue to utilise. The tools here are intended to support professionals to work through concerns and to provide the rationale and evidence for subsequent decision-making. The tools have been endorsed by the SCP and regular updates are provided to seek assurance that they are being utilised across the partnership.

The tools can be used in the following ways:

1. To support reflective practice and aid case discussions during supervision
2. To help professionals process their thinking when considering needs of a child
3. When making a referral to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Team (CAMHS) and Commissioned Services.

The tools MUST BE used in the following:

1. To support the commencement of an Early Help Assessment
2. To step a case up to statutory services where a TaF is not having the desired outcomes for the child
3. To review progress of a TaF, CiN or Child Protection Plan to demonstrate the impact of an intervention and if the desired improvements are being achieved.
4. When closing a case to demonstrate that needs are met or risk has reduced.

A decision was endorsed at the SCP that 'from 1st October 2018 in the absence of a referral supported by the use of an assessment tool, contacts will not be accepted into iART (with the exception of those that clearly meet threshold for statutory social work intervention).

Capturing the voice of the child

The principle of good practice is to ensure that children and young people's views are heard and recognised throughout any assessment process. Professionals need to ensure the voice of the child runs through everything we do and that the child perspective is clearly visible throughout any assessment that affects them and taken into account no matter what their age or ability to communicate directly.

This can be done by:

- Direct engagement – talking to the child;
- Observation, particularly for young or non-verbal children;
- Discussion with parents, family members, carers or agencies (but don't let this be your only perspective);
- Analysis of information held to consider what the impact might be on the child (test this out with the child).

The voice of child is of paramount importance in testing out whether the apparent outcomes of interventions are having the desired impact for the child/ren. Seeking the views of the child will ensure that there is not over reliance on parental accounts which can therefore minimise the risk of disguised compliance.

The SCP have developed a corresponding [Voice of the Child](#) toolkit to support professionals in capturing the views of children and young people.

Graded Care Profile

When would you use it?

"I feel this family is struggling to meet the needs of their children and I have concerns in a number of different areas."

What is it?

The Graded Care Profile is a universal model that can be used by professionals during assessment, intervention or pre-referral to other agencies including Children and Young People's services. It includes strengths and weaknesses and facilitates targeted interventions. It is a detailed tool that grades a range of statements that may indicate the presence of neglect against a standardised framework. This enables the different aspects of the "quality of care" to be separately assessed against predetermined criteria.

Being a universal model it facilitates common language across agencies and helps in relation to clearer thresholds and reducing subjectivity. It can focus on specific facets of neglect that concern professionals. The indicators include physical care (e.g. nutrition), safety (e.g. traffic and suitability of carers); responsiveness to the child (e.g. sensitivity and communication); and esteem (e.g. stimulations and acceptance).

Where is it?

The Graded Care Profile guidance and assessment tool are available on the Cheshire West and Chester Local Safeguarding Children Board's (SCP) website, accessible via the following links:

[Graded Care Profile Guidance](#)

[Graded Care Profile](#)

Home Conditions Assessment

When would you use it?

“The home conditions are poor and I am concerned that this is having a negative effect on the children.”

What is it?

The home conditions assessment tool is a short assessment of the physical aspects of the home conditions and the impact this can have on the children who live there. These impacts will differ depending on the age and development of the child. For example, a badly soiled floor will have a different impact on a child who is crawling, when compared to an older child. Particular home conditions may prompt actions (e.g. clearing of rubbish in the home by the parents) which can inform plans.

The home conditions form can be completed in partnership with parents/carers, provides a total score and also identifies those areas flagged for attention. The tool concludes with decisions, tasks, actions and consent issues. Subsequent reviews should establish whether the home conditions have improved or deteriorated. A separate sheet to track progress over time is provided.

Where is it?

The home conditions assessment tool is available on the Cheshire West and Chester Local Safeguarding Children Board’s (SCP) website, accessible via the following link:

[Home conditions assessment tool](#)

The review form is a helpful document to assist practitioners in tracking progress or lack of it against actions:

[Home conditions review form](#)

Strengths and difficulties questionnaire

When would you use it?

“I am concerned that a young person may have a significant emotional or behavioural problem.”

What is it?

The strengths and difficulties questionnaires are a widely used instrument to screen for emotional and behavioural problems in children and adolescents. The strengths and difficulties questionnaire’s wording is designed to focus on a child’s emotional and behavioural strengths as well as difficulties.

The actual questionnaire incorporates five scales: pro-social, hyperactivity, emotional problems, conduct (behavioural) problems, and peer problems. In the pack, there are versions of the scale to be completed by adult caregivers, or teachers for children from age 3 to 16, and young people between the ages of 11—16. These questionnaires have been used with disabled children and their teachers and carers. The questionnaires are of value in both assessments and for evaluating progress.

Part of the [Department of Health Family Pack of Questionnaires and Scales](#) released with the [Framework for Assessment of Children in Need and their Families](#)

Where is it?

The strengths and difficulties questionnaire is accessible via the following link:
[Strengths and difficulties questionnaire](#)

Resilience and vulnerability matrix

When would you use it?

“I am concerned that there are a number of factors in this young person’s life which are interacting to contribute to their current vulnerability or resilience.”

What is it?

This tool is for use by all professionals working with children and families. The resilience and vulnerability tool will support analysis and decision making, without replacing professional judgement. This tool has been developed from the matrix to assist professionals across Cheshire West and Chester in determining the right course of action. It supports professionals to focus upon the impact of identified factors upon the child.

This tool is intended to support consistent professional decision making based on evidence. If at any time practitioners have information that leads them to believe that a child is at immediate risk of significant harm, they should take action according to Cheshire West and Chester safeguarding procedures.

Where is it?

The resilience and vulnerability matrix is accessible via the following link:

[Resilience and vulnerability matrix](#)

Brook: sexual behaviours traffic light tool – UNDER REVIEW

The Brook Traffic Light Tool has been updated to address the more digital-focused age. Furthermore, as the tool was outdated, and in many cases being used without the training (due to its availability online), Brook, found that the tool was being used incorrectly and potentially dangerously.

This almost led to a severe safeguarding issue from an external organisation using the old tool. As a result of this, Brook took the decision to only allow professionals to access the tool if they had been on the updated training.

We are therefore requesting that old versions of this tool are no longer used until further notice.

Cheshire West SCP are in the process of exploring alternatives assessment tools with the possibility of additional training for staff in the updated Traffic Light Tool.

Child Exploitation (CE) screening tool

PLEASE NOTE THIS REPLACES THE CSE SCREENING TOOL

When would you use it?

“I feel this child may be at risk of exploitation (criminal or sexual) as there are a number of indicators worrying me having read the Pan Cheshire CE Protocol ”.

What is it?

Where child exploitation, or the risk of it, is suspected, frontline practitioners should complete the [Pan Cheshire Child Exploitation Screening Tool](#) (accessed via the SCP website to ensure use of the most recent version) and discuss the case with a manager or the designated member of staff for child protection within their own organisation.

If the screening tool identifies the child as being at low risk of CE, then the practitioner should seek parental consent and contact the Integrated Access and Referral Team (i-ART) on 0300 123 7047 for a case discussion.

If the outcome of the screening tool is that the child is identified as being at medium or high risk of CE then the practitioner should aim to seek parental consent and contact the i-ART team for a case discussion. However, the absence of consent should not prevent the contact being made. For out of hours please contact the Emergency Duty Team on **01244 977 277**. It is likely that there will then be a requirement for the practitioner to complete the [Multi-Agency Referral Form \(MARF\)](#). Practitioners should also forward the screening tool via secure email to the i-ART mailbox on: i-ART@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Where the threat is immediate it may be appropriate to inform Cheshire Police on telephone number 101 or if necessary through the emergency number 999.

When practitioners have concerns that a child is linked to more than one perpetrator, is linked to other young people at risk of CSE or has concerns about a specific event, location or adult, a referral to the CSE operational group must also be completed and sent to the safeguarding and quality assurance unit.

[CSE Operational Group Referral \(Word, 1MB\)](#)

Team Around the Family (TAF)

When would you use it?

"I am concerned that a child/young person or family needs some additional coordinated support."

What is it?

The Team around the Family (TAF) is our approach to conducting an assessment of a family's additional needs (including the needs of the children) and deciding how those needs should be met. It should be used by practitioners across children's services in West Cheshire.

The TAF will promote more effective, earlier identification of additional needs, particularly in universal services, but also across the continuum of need. It is intended to provide a simple process for an assessment of a family's needs and strengths, taking account of the role of parents, carers and environmental factors on children's development. Practitioners will then be better placed to agree, with the child and family, about what support is appropriate. The TAF will also help to improve integrated working by promoting coordinated service provision and ensure better information sharing.

Where is it?

The Team around the Family is available on the Cheshire West and Chester website, accessible via the following link:

[Team Around the Family](#)

Risk Indicator Checklist (RIC or DASH/RIC)

When would you use it?

“A woman seems to be being stalked by her ex-partner. It appears he has been harassing her and there are domestic abuse concerns – does he pose a risk to her?”

What is it?

The purpose of the Dash risk checklist is to give a consistent and simple tool for practitioners who work with adult victims of domestic abuse in order to help them identify those who are at high risk of harm and whose cases should be referred to a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) meeting in order to manage their risk. The score provides evidence required to refer to Domestic Abuse Family Safety Unit (DAFSU). Lower scores can be referred to victim support.

Whilst domestic abuse is most often perpetrated by men towards women in an intimate relationship such as boyfriend/girlfriend, husband/wife, this checklist can also be used for lesbian, gay, bisexual relationships and for situations of ‘honour’-based violence or family violence.

If you are concerned about risk to a child or children, you should make a referral to ensure that a full assessment of their safety and welfare is made.

Where is it?

The Risk Indicator Checklist is available on the Cheshire West and Chester Council website, accessible via the following link:

[Risk Indicator Checklist](#)

Parenting under pressure

When would you use it?

What is it?

These questions are designed to help practitioners support parents when children may be affected by the difficulties their parents face.

It is recognised that many parents go to great lengths to protect and care for their children even when they are under great pressure themselves.

Sometimes extra support is needed, which may involve safeguarding services, all workers and parents – have a responsibility to keep children safe always.

Tool used with permission from *Safelives* - developed by CAADA, Action on Addiction and Place2be

Where is it?

The Parenting Under Pressure questionnaire is accessible via the following link:

[Parenting Under Pressure](#)

Incident Diary and Risk Identification Checklist for Stalking Cases

When would you use it?

“A woman believes she is at risk of stalking and harassment. She wants to understand what the potential risk might be.”

What is it?

For use by anyone who wants to understand potential risk if they believe they are at risk of stalking and harassment.

The Risk Identification Checklist for Stalking Cases is a set of 11 questions to help understand risk. The checklist can be used if the stalker is known to the individual or not.

The Stalking and Harassment Incident Diary enables individuals to keep a diary of when, where and what time incidents happen to help evidence what is going on. The evidence collection will help the police too.

Where is it?

Both documents are accessible via the following link:

[Risk identification checklist stalking cases](#)

[Stalking and harassment incident diary](#)

Model of Change

When would you use it?

“A parent has not been meeting their child’s health/emotional needs but I think they want to work with us – can they make the changes that are needed?”

What is it?

For use by all professionals working with children, families and vulnerable adults the model of change can be used with a wide range of issues including parenting concerns, individuals experiencing domestic abuse and perpetrators of domestic abuse, substance misuse or alcohol problems.

It provides a means of assessing an individual’s level of motivation to change and ability to change and a way of monitoring the process of change.

The document has an explanation of the change model and how to use it with a set of three assessment tools to measure motivation and monitor change. Once completed it provides a direct referral route and also type of support. It can be used by professionals in supporting individuals to change and tracking the change as it progresses.

Where is it?

The Model of Change is in three parts, accessible via the following links:

- [guidance](#)
- [part A assessment](#)
- [part B assessment](#)

Checklist of factors that elevate or lower risks to children when parental or carer substance misuse exists

When would you use it?

“This parent has admitted to using drugs, how can I tell whether this is causing a risk to the children?”

What is it?

For use by all professionals working with children and families

It is a set of four quick checklists which balances the factors that affect risk to the child.

Can be used to assess the level of risk posed by parental substance misuse and provide guidance on referral route and future action planning for the family.

Where is it?

The checklist is accessible via the following link:

[Checklist of factors that elevate or lower risks to children when parental or carer substance misuse exists](#)

Young Person's Substance Misuse Care Pathway and Screening Tool

When would you use it?

"I am concerned about a young person misusing substances. I want to understand more about the pathways and referral for the most appropriate support."

What is it?

A screening tool for use by professionals. The tool assists you to take the most appropriate action on behalf of a young person to support with substance misuse. It is important professionals engaging with young people utilise the tool to increase knowledge of screening and referring on as appropriate.

Where is it?

The tool is available via the following link:

[Young person's substance misuse care pathway and screening tool](#)