



Multi-agency Assessment Toolkit

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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 Practice Learning Reviews, Thematic Inspections and Multi-agency Audits 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 support, undertaking an assessment of the need and providing targeted services to address the needs of a child and their family. This puts the focus on activity to improve the outcomes for the child. If those needs turn to risks, then these 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 Assessment Toolkit?

These tools are available for any services, schools or organisations who work with children and families in Halton. 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 organisation 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 Halton Children and Young People Safeguarding Partnership (HCYPSP) 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 Service (CAMHS) and Commissioned Services.

The tools **MUST BE** used in the following:

- To support the commencement of a MAP (Multi Agency Plan) assessment.
- To step a case up to statutory services where a MAP is not having the desired outcomes for the child.
- To review progress of a MAP, CIN or Child Protection Plan to demonstrate the impact of an intervention and if the desired improvements are being achieved.
- When closing a case to demonstrate that needs are met or risk has reduced.

When an iCART referral is required, it is important to ensure that you provide sufficient, appropriate information to support with decision making. In order to assist with doing this, give consideration to completion of one or more of the assessment tools, when appropriate. Submitting an assessment tool with your referral would be useful to assist with the identification of level of need / allocation of appropriate support, and if not submitted on referral you may be asked to do so whilst the iCART screening is ongoing.

Child Protection/Safeguarding Statement

This tool complements, but does not replace, your own agencies safeguarding policy and procedures and the Pan Cheshire Multi-Agency Safeguarding Procedures. If you suspect that a child is at risk of significant harm consult with **iCART** on Tel: 0151 907 8305

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. 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 outcomes of interventions have had the desired impact for the child/ren. Seeking the views of the child will

ensure that there is not over reliance on parental accounts; this can also reduce the risk of disguised compliance.

HCYPSP have developed a Voice of Child Resource Booklet [Voice of The Child](#) which has a number of different tools to support professionals in capturing the views of children and young people.

Where unborn babies are involved and there is no voice of the child, the 'expected lived experience' of the unborn needs to be considered and documented.

Neglect Assessment Framework

Definition of Neglect

Neglect is 'The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during the pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to: provide adequate food, clothing or shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment); protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger, ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers); ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.' Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018

This [Neglect Assessment Framework](#) has been developed to:

- assist professionals in identifying and assessing neglect
- inform multi-agency planning when the needs of a child are being neglected
- set out multi-agency practice standards for use in Halton

The framework includes

- practice guidance
- practice standards
- the neglect screening tool
- the home conditions assessment tool
- the neglect assessment tool

Neglect Screening Tool

The [Neglect Screening Tool](#) is intended for use by any individual working with children and families as a means to quickly identify if their worry about a child/young person relates to neglect; it supports the practitioner to focus their thinking and potentially link a series of low level worries and identify a wider concern of neglect. The tool is straight forward and easy to use and you do not need to have accessed any bespoke training to use the tool effectively. It is designed to be applicable to all ages of children and should help you to identify:

- the signs of neglect at an early stage
- the need for further action
- Which agency/organisation/practitioner will progress further assessment/intervention if needed.

Home Conditions Assessment Tool

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 the Home Conditions Assessment Tool?

[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.

Neglect Assessment Tool

The [Neglect Assessment Tool](#) has been developed to assist professionals in identifying and assessing neglect, and to inform planning where there are concerns that the quality of the care of to a child or young person that suggests that their needs are being neglected. It is an assessment guide and does not require specific training in its use.

Pre-birth Supporting Information

When would you use the Pre-birth Assessment Screening Tool?

The purpose of the [Pre-birth Supporting Information](#) document is to support practitioners who are worried about an unborn baby to provide all relevant information when making a referral to Children's Social Care.

Trio of Vulnerabilities

What is the Trio of Vulnerabilities?

Research shows that the environment in which a child lives is crucial to his or her health, safety and well-being. Domestic abuse, mental ill-health and substance misuse are parental factors that impact that environment. The term 'Trio of Vulnerabilities' describes the co-existence of these factors.

Trio of Vulnerabilities factors have been identified as common features of families where harm to children has occurred and is a common theme in Serious Case Reviews and Domestic Homicide Reviews. Without support to address them, adults are also likely to experience significant impacts on their safety, health and wellbeing whether they are parents or not.

Audit activity identifies that the toxic trio features significantly for children in Halton who are, or have been subject of child in need and child protection planning and for those subject of care proceedings.

The following support tools are drawn from the Government and SafeLives Guidance on responding to Domestic Abuse, Substance Use and Mental Health; they include support tools for considering the risk / impact on children.

Domestic Abuse Tools

Risk Indicator Checklist (RIC or DASH/RIC)

What is the DASH Risk Indicator Checklist?

It is a UK-wide tool to measure and understand risk. DASH stands for Domestic Abuse, Stalking and 'Honour'-based violence. It is based on research about the indicators of high-risk domestic abuse. When someone is suffering domestic abuse, it's vital to make an accurate and fast assessment of risk.

Most behaviour will be about coercive control. Do not think it is any less serious if there has been no physical violence.

The more 'yes' answers you have, the higher the risk that the suspect could physically attack the victim at any time.

Who would use the Risk Indicator Checklist (RIC or DASH/RIC)?

The [DASH/RIC](#) can be used for all partner relationships, including LGBT+ relationships, and 'honour'-based violence and family violence.

When would you use it?

It can be used in ALL cases of stalking and harassment.

Note: Risk identification and assessment is not a predictive process and there is no existing accurate procedure to calculate or foresee which cases will result in homicide or further assault and harm.

What next?

If your client is at high risk (14+ ticks, three or more domestic abuse incidents in the last 12 months, professional concern) discuss the case with a manager and make a MARAC referral which can be found in the [MARAC Policy and Procedures](#)

The Referral Form should be sent to northern.ppu@cheshire.pnn.police.uk

In all cases undertake essential safety planning and signposting.

Visit www.openthedoorcheshire.org.uk for online resources, tips and tools as well as information relating to all specialist services offered across Cheshire.

You can also refer adult victims of domestic abuse to **Halton Domestic Abuse Service**.

Consent is good practice but not essential for victims in high risk cases. The service offers advice/information Tel: 0300 11 11 247

Impact on Children of Domestic Abuse

We know that domestic abuse does not happen in a vacuum and all household members will be affected by domestic abuse in the home.

[Assessing Impact on the Child of DA and Threshold Guidance](#)

The domestic abuse needs and risk assessment provides a set of questions that will help practitioners to identify risks and impact of domestic abuse on children.

It also provides some guidance on threshold when considering what level of support/intervention is required to safeguard the child.

Stalking Risk Indicator Checklist and Incident Diary

When would you use it?

To identify level of risk posed via stalking and harassment behaviours.

What is it?

[Risk Identification Checklist Stalking Cases](#)

For use by anyone experiencing stalking and harassment, these 11 questions can be used to help identify and understand risk.

It can be used if the stalker is known to the individual or not.

Where there is domestic abuse and stalking is identified at question 8 within the DASH/RIC

- Complete the additional 11 questions on the Stalking Dash (Risk Identification Checklist for Stalking Cases)
- Send it to northern.ppu@cheshire.pnn.police.uk
- In [MARAC](#) on page 29, also send the **Halton PPU Referral Form**

The context and detail of stalking and harassment and other behaviours are crucial to understanding the risks posed by a stalker.

Research shows that those who are at highest risk of assault are ex-partners or relatives who have been threatened.

The [Stalking and Harassment Incident Diary](#) enables individuals to keep a diary of when, where and what time incidents happen to provide evidence to assist police investigations and prosecutions.

Substance Misuse Tools

When would you use it?

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

For use by all professionals working with children and families

Assessing the impact on children of parental substance misuse

What is it?

[Assessing the impact on children of parental substance misuse](#)

This tool supports the practitioner to discuss with the parent how their substance use may impact on their child.

Adult Substance Dependence Questionnaire (Leeds Dependency Questions)

What is it?

[Adult Substance Dependence Questionnaire](#) (LDQ - Leeds Dependency Questions)

This tool supports the practitioner to discuss with a parent their level of dependence and to aid discussion about specialist support if required.

Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT)

What is it?

[Adult use Disorders Identification Test \(AUDIT\)](#)

This tool is a comprehensive 10 question alcohol harm screening tool. It was developed by the World Health Organisation (WHO), modified for use in the UK and has been used in a variety of health and social care settings.

For use by all professionals working with children and families, when there are indicators that parental alcohol use may be having an impact on family life.

The tool provides guidance to professionals about what advice to give following completion of the tool and indicates when referral to alcohol services needs to be considered.

When would you use it?

When assessment is required to identify if parental alcohol use may be having an impact on their health or family life.

Parental Mental Health Tool

When would you use this?

The parent has said that they feel low, tearful, lack energy or the practitioner is worried about the parents presentation they seem low in mood etc.

For use by all professionals working with children and families.

Assessing the Impact of Parental Mental Health on Children

Assessing the impact of Parental Mental Health on Children

This tool is to be used when considering the likelihood and severity of the impact of a parent/carers mental ill health on a child. It involves the practitioner thinking about the nature of risk and also the protective factors for the child so it brings into being the practitioner's professional judgement.

Short Breaks for Child or Young Person Referral Checklist

What is it?

Halton Disabled Children's Service Referral Checklist

This form is completed when you wish to make a referral for short-breaks for a child or young person via iCART

Pan Cheshire Contextual Safeguarding Tools

When would you use it?

"I feel this child may be at risk of exploitation as there are a number of indicators worrying me having read the Pan Cheshire CE Protocol".

What is it?

Cheshire Contextual Safeguarding Screening Tool

Where child exploitation, or the risk of it, is suspected, frontline practitioners should complete the screening tool and discuss the case with a manager or the designated member of staff for child protection within their own organisation.

The completed Screening Tool should then be sent to iCART where, after multiagency information sharing, the risk to the child will be graded Low to High.

If the risk is graded as LOW referrals to partner agencies will be completed if there are additional concerns and preventative work identified.

If the risk is graded as medium or high an assessment will be completed and a multi-agency strategy meeting considered.

If the child is an open case then a request would go to the lead professional to complete the Contextual Safeguarding Assessment Tool. If the child is not known a decision on the best placed practitioner to complete the risk assessment tool will be made.

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.

Contextual Safeguarding Operational Group Information Form

When practitioners have concerns that a child is linked to more than one perpetrator (persons of interest), is linked to other young people at risk of Child Exploitation or has concerns about a specific event, location or adult, a referral to the Contextual Safeguarding Operational Group operational group must also be completed and sent to **Halton PPU**

halton.ppu@cheshire.pnn.police.uk

Emotional Health and Wellbeing

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

When would you use it?

"I am concerned that a young person may have emotional or behavioural difficulties."

What is it?

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)

The SDQ is a brief emotional and behavioural screening questionnaire for children and young people. The tool can capture the perspective of children and young people, their parents and teachers.

The SDQ comprise 5 scales these are:

1. Emotional symptoms subscale
2. Conduct problems subscale
3. Hyperactivity/inattention subscale
4. Peer relationships problem subscale
5. Prosocial behaviour subscale

It can be used for various purposes, including clinical assessment, evaluation of outcomes, research and screening.

The SDQ can be completed by children and young people aged 11-17 years old. The parent and teacher versions can be completed by the parent or teacher of children and young people aged 2-17 years old.

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](#)

Additional information

[MindEd](#)

This is an open access online resource for any adult, professional or volunteer working with children and young people. The site provides free e-learning at varying levels of detail and complexity.

The resources are designed to support early intervention and help adults develop the skills to enable young people to develop healthy young minds. Working with children and young people can be complicated. When problems arise, adults need the information and confidence to act swiftly and make the right decisions for those in their care.

Early Help Support at Level 2

[Multi-Agency Plan \(MAP\)](#)

This a standardised approach to assessing a family's unmet needs and ensuring they access appropriate support. It aims to co-ordinate support around early help in order to prevent needs from escalating and requiring statutory intervention.

No single agency or organisation can ensure that these outcomes are achieved, it needs all agencies to work together to ensure that children, young people and their families receive services which are well co-ordinated, integrated, responsive and timely.

You may identify that a family would benefit from a MAP or you may be advised to do so, if you have made a referral to iCART. Team around the Family (TAF) can support lead professionals and offer advice on guidance to complete and manage the assessment.

When would you use a MAP?

- When you are concerned about how well a child (or unborn baby) or young person is progressing. You might be concerned about their health, welfare, behaviour, progress in learning or any other aspect of their well-being
- When the needs are unclear, or broader than your service can address
- When it would help identify the needs, and/or get other services to help meet them

Where can I find this assessment?

[Multi-Agency Plan \(MAP\)](#) you will find the link to a range of information which will support practitioners with their work and assessing the needs of the child/young person and family. The

MAP& Lead Professional Guidance offers context to the MAP and practitioner advice. There are a range of supplementary tools which, can help to inform the MAP process and focus on specific areas of need.

The voice of the child tools help practitioners to undertake direct work with children and document their views. These tools can be stored against the child's records within EIS.

Useful Links

[MECC – Making Every Contact Count](#)

Many long-term diseases in our population are closely linked to known behavioural risk factors. Around 40% of the UK's disability adjusted life years lost are attributable to tobacco, hypertension, alcohol, being overweight or physically inactive.

Making changes such as stopping smoking, improving diet, increasing physical activity, losing weight and reducing alcohol consumption can help people to reduce their risk of poor health significantly. Making every contact count (MECC) is an approach to behaviour change that utilises the millions of day to day interactions that organisations and people have with other people to encourage changes in behaviour that have a positive effect on the health and wellbeing of individuals, communities and populations.

Resources and information are available to support people and organisations implementing MECC and have been developed with multi-agency input at local, regional and national level. Development of this site and its content would not have been possible without the combined efforts of many partner organisations who have all agreed to share their work and contribute to a joined up approach to Making Every Contact Count.

[Harmful Sexual Behaviour support service](#)

SWGfL and [The Marie Collins Foundation](#) have a support service that is there to support professionals working with children and young people around tackling harmful sexual behaviour incidents, funded by the Home Office and in collaboration with the [Department for Education](#).

[The AIM Project](#)

The AIM Project (AIM) has been working in the field of children and adolescents with harmful sexual behaviours (HSB) for over 20 years and is one of the leading UK and international organisations in this area of work.

If you or your organisation is interested or struggling to find out more about how to work with HSB in your setting, or in relation to a specific child or young person, then AIM is a charity which offers training, consultancy and quality resources for practitioners and managers to educate, support and develop their practice

[Child to Parent Abuse](#)

Recognising the signs of Child to Parent Abuse can be difficult including for those services who are having contact with families impacted by CPA.

There may be some signs which concern you, in which case use this site to consider whether the family might be experiencing CPA

[CAMHS \(Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service\)](#)

Support children and young people up to age 18 with their emotional and mental health and wellbeing. Children who are worried about their mental health and wellbeing, can go along to the weekly HeadsUp Halton drop-ins in Runcorn and Widnes, where they can speak to a mental health professional.