



# Multi-Agency Assessment Toolkit

**Improving** Practice, **Improving** Lives



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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 support, undertaking an assessment of the need and providing targeted services to address the needs of a child and their family. This put the focus 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 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 LSCB 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 LSCB that 'from 1<sup>st</sup> 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 LSCB have developed a corresponding [Voice of the Child](#) toolkit to support professionals in capturing the views of children and young people.

## Neglect Tools

### Neglect Screening Tool

#### 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

#### Purpose of Tool

This tool is designed to encourage anyone working with children or families to "consider" the potential for neglect by supporting practitioners to:

- identify signs of neglect at an early stage,
- alert the need for further action
- Identify which agency/organisation/practitioner will progress further assessment/intervention as needed

#### Child Protection / Safeguarding Statement

This screening 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 **iART** on Tel: 0300 123 7047

#### Using the tool

The tool is intended for use by any individual working with children and families as a means to quickly identify areas of concern which may indicate a child/young person is being neglected. It is intended to complement existing assessment tools e.g. Team around the Family (TAF), Child Exploitation Tool (CE), Children and Families Assessment etc. and should be used accordingly. The tool is designed to be applicable to all ages of children and should help you "consider" Neglect and associated factors. In circumstances where those "considerations" about Neglect are reinforced by using this screening tool and you "suspect" Neglect is occurring, more detailed assessments using tools such as Team around Family, Graded Care Profile and Home Conditions Tool will be required if not already completed.

In order to complete this tool it is essential that you are able to evidence the reasons why you have highlighted concerns for any of the factors indicated (please include this in the right hand column). If you are unsure about completing the assessment seek help from a safeguarding lead within your organisation. It is essential that, where you have highlighted in the assessment you are **frequently or sometimes concerned**, you provide further information to evidence these concerns.

#### [Neglect Screening Tool](#)

For more information visit; [www.cheshirewestlscb.org.uk/professionals/neglect/](http://www.cheshirewestlscb.org.uk/professionals/neglect/)

## 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 (LSCB) 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 (LSCB) 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](#)

## Domestic Violence and Abuse Tools

### Risk Indicator Checklist (RIC or DASH/RIC)

#### What is it?

The DASH risk indicator checklist 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 Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment Risk Indicator Checklist can be used for all partner relationships, including LGBT+ relationships, and 'honour'-based violence and family violence.

#### When would you use it?

This risk identification checklist 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 using the referral form on page on the DASH RIC pages 1 and 2. In all cases undertake essential safety planning and signposting go to <https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/documents/crime-prevention-and-emergencies/domestic-abuse/getting-help/personal-safety-plan-july-09.pdf> for Personal Safety Planning leaflet.

If you are unsure, ring 0300 123 7047 (Option 2) to discuss. If your client is at medium risk undertake refer to the Integrated Access and Referral Team (i-ART) 0300 123 7047.

#### 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](#) Support information is also available at <https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/crime-prevention/domestic-abuse/getting-help.aspx>

*Note: if stalking is identified complete the 11 question stalking and harassment risk indicator checklist*



## **Additional Supporting materials**

If you are concerned about risk to a child or children, you should make a referral to ensure a full assessment of their safety and welfare is made. There are other tools that can support this such as the [Parenting under pressure](#) tool to help practitioners to support parents who are experiencing domestic abuse, substance misuse and or mental health issues.

The following support tools are drawn from government and Safelives guidance on responding to DVA and support tools for considering the risk / impact on children.

[Questions to consider risks to and impact of domestic violence and abuse on children](#)

[Level of need escalation and de-escalation guidance](#)

## 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?

For use by anyone experiencing stalking and harassment, the Stalking Risk Identification Checklist is 11 questions 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 these additional 11 questions on the Stalking Dash and send it with the [MARAC 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

### Where is it?

Both documents are accessible via the following link:

[Risk Identification Checklist Stalking Cases](#)

[Stalking and Harassment Incident Diary](#)

## Harmful Sexual Behaviour Tools

### Brook sexual behaviours traffic light tool

#### When would you use it?

“I am concerned about a child displaying sexual behaviors that are inappropriate or potentially harmful and therefore in need of assessment.”

#### What is it?

This innovative resource helps professionals who work with children and young people to identify assess and respond appropriately to sexual behaviours. It uses a 'traffic light tool' to categorise sexual behaviours, to increase understanding of healthy sexual development and distinguish this from harmful behaviour.

By identifying sexual behaviours as green, amber or red, professionals across different agencies can work to the same criteria when making decisions and protect children and young people with a unified approach.

This resource has been designed to help professionals think through their decisions and does not replace organisational procedures or assessment frameworks.

#### Where is it?

Brook: sexual behaviours traffic light tool is available on the Brook website accessible via the following link:  
[Brook: sexual behaviours traffic light tool](#)

## Child Exploitation Tools

### 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 LSCB 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](mailto: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 \(Word, 1MB\)](#)

## Parenting Capacity Tools

### 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](#)
- [part C assessment](#)

## Parenting Under Pressure

### When would you use it?

“I’m working with a parent who is facing difficulties that are affecting their child, such as domestic abuse, substance misuse and or mental health issues. The parent needs extra support to help keep their child safe.”

### 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](#)

## Substance Misuse Tools

### Checklist of factors that elevate/lower risks to children when parental/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](#)



## Emotional Health and Wellbeing Tools

### 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?

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (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

The SDQ 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](#)

#### Where is it?

The strengths and difficulties questionnaire is accessible via the following links:

[Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire](#)

#### Additional information

MindEd is an open access online resource for any adult, professional or volunteer working with children and young people – [www.minded.org.uk](http://www.minded.org.uk) 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.

Alternative version of the strength and difficulties form [Child Outcomes and Research Consortium Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire](#)<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Full over view of the SDQ with links to templates and additional information

## Holistic Assessment Tools

### 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](#)

## Team Around the Family (TAF)

Team Around the Family (TAF) aims to focus on interventions primarily at the partnership plus level of the [continuum of need](#), reducing the demand on statutory social care services and delivering a more effective early help service to children and their families. The multi-agency toolkit can help to inform the TAF process.

### 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](#)