



# Multi-Agency Assessment Toolkit

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

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# Multi-Agency Assessment Toolkit

## Introduction

It is vital that children and young people receive the right service at the right time and this is supported by the Working Together 2015. In order for this to happen, all professionals who have contact with children, young people and families have a duty of care to identify issues at the earliest opportunity and assess what intervention is required.

Assessment should be a dynamic process that identifies analyses and responds to the changing nature and level of need and/or risk faced by a child. A good assessment will enable practitioners to intervene at the right time with the right level of support and to monitor and record the impact of any services delivered to the child and family. Continuous assessment is crucial in ensuring that the help and support being delivered is having the intended impact.

This multi-agency assessment toolkit has been developed to support practitioners to undertake effective assessments that enable them to accurately identify appropriate cases in need of early help or onward referral to Children's Social Care. The tools included should also be used to review the effectiveness of the support plans that are in place and the outcomes for the child/ren.

Using the assessments early in intervention will hopefully support positive outcomes for children, meaning onward referral may not be required. However, should a case need referral, professionals will be expected to evidence why a threshold has been met despite appropriate intervention. The assessments included in the toolkit will provide a record of evidence for this purpose.

Completion of the relevant assessments and screening tools is therefore an important part of any referral to the Integrated Access and Referral Team (i-ART), Child and Adolescent Mental Health Team (CAMHS) and Commissioned Services.

## 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.

## Why is it needed?

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.

The 2015 Working Together guidance for England lists some of 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 (HM Government, 2015).

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

### Which tools are included?

- **Neglect**
  - Graded Care Profile
  - Home Conditions Assessment
- **Domestic Violence**
  - Risk Indicator Checklist
  - Incident Diary and Risk Identification Checklist for Stalking Cases
- **Harmful Sexual Behaviour**
  - Brook: sexual behaviours traffic light tool
- **Child Sexual Exploitation**
  - Child Sexual Exploitation Screening Tool
- **Parenting Capacity**
  - Model of Change Guidance, part A assessment, part B assessment
  - Parenting Under Pressure
- **Substance Misuse**
  - 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
- **Emotional Health and Wellbeing**
  - Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (emotional and behavioural problems)
- **Holistic Assessments**
  - Resilience and Vulnerability Matrix
  - Team Around the Family

### 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 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;
- Observation;
- Discussion with parents, family members, carers or agencies;
- Analysis of information held to consider what the impact might be on the child.

There are many tools and documents that can be used to support workers to gather this information and embedding this practice. The [Voice of the Child Guidance](#) has been developed to support practitioners.

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.

## Neglect Tools

### 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 Tools

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

#### When would you use it?

The Dash risk checklist can be used for all intimate partner relationships, including LGBT relationships, as well as for 'honour'-based violence and family violence. There is a specific police version of the risk checklist, which is used by most police forces in England and Wales.

#### What is it?

The Dash risk checklist is a tried and tested way to 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. The score provides evidence required to refer to the Domestic Abuse Family Safety Unit and the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) meeting in order to manage risk. Lower scores can be referred to i-ART.

Domestic abuse can happen to anyone. Women are more likely to be victims but men can also be the target of domestic abuse. Children can also be victims of domestic abuse – whether they live in a home with adult victims or are harmed directly themselves.

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.

Please 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.

#### 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](#)

## Incident Diary and Risk Identification Checklist for Stalking Cases

### 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 a set of 11 questions to help understand risk and can be used if the stalker is known to the individual or not. If stalking is identified 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 the behaviours are crucial to understanding the risks posed by a stalker. Research shows that those who are at highest risk of assault are ex-intimates 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 which can 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 Sexual Exploitation Tools

### Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Screening Tool

#### When would you use it?

“I feel this child may be at risk of sexual exploitation as there are a number of indicators worrying me having read the CSE practitioner guide”.

#### What is it?

Where child sexual exploitation, or the risk of it, is suspected, frontline practitioners should complete the [Pan Cheshire CSE 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 CSE, then the practitioner should seek parental consent before submitting the tool to the Integrated Access and Referral Team (i-ART). The team can be contacted on 0300 123 7047 for a case discussion if this is required.

If the outcome of the screening tool is that the child is identified as being at medium or high risk of CSE 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)

**All medium and high risk completed screening tools must be sent to i-ART and the police at [western.ppu@cheshire.pnn.police.uk](mailto:western.ppu@cheshire.pnn.police.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.

For perpetrators, groups and/or locations where this maybe occurring, the practitioner should complete a CSE operational group referral found on the LSCB website and submit to [western.ppu@cheshire.pnn.police.uk](mailto:western.ppu@cheshire.pnn.police.uk) for consideration.

#### Where is it?

The CSE practitioner guide, the CSE screening tool and guidance and the CSE operational group referral form are available on the [Cheshire West and Chester Local Safeguarding Board website](#).

## Parenting Capacity Tools

### Model of Change Guidance, part A assessment, part B assessment

#### 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](#)

## Parenting Under Pressure

### When would you use it?

“I’m working with a parent who is facing difficulties that are affecting their child. 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 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](#)

## 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](#)