CALDERDALE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD

Calderdale Practitioner's Multi-Agency Risk Indicator Tool

Updated January 2019

Background

Following the death of a 6 month old child in Calderdale in 2013 (Child K), Calderdale Safeguarding Children Board, commissioned a Serious Case Review[1] (SCR) to conduct "a rigorous, objective analysis of what happened and why, so that important lessons can be learnt and services improved to reduce the risk of future harm to children". One of the recommendations from the SCR was to 'develop a child focused risk assessment framework which considers the family (drawn from current child protection practice) for use in all assessments for children in levels 2-5'. This tool has been produced in response to the learning and recommendation from this SCR and is adapted from the Scottish Government 'National Risk Framework to Support the Assessment of Children and Young People' 2012. It was updated in January 2019 to incorporate specific reference to Adverse Childhood Experiences in response to a recommendation from a further SCR (Child N).

Purpose

The purpose of this tool is to assist Practitioners and their Managers to organise evidence about the child's circumstances and to consider those features of a family and their family circumstances that indicate potential risk to the child. Analysis of the information collected will therefore lead to a clearer child centred assessment and child focused interventions to address need and manage or reduce risk for children and families.

Using the Tool

The tool facilitates the organisation of information from a range of sources (family members and professionals) which should be tested for validity and accuracy where possible. Using the indicators as a prompt, the practitioner should consider each element in turn and record relevant evidence on the sheet.

The success of this process relies on the sharing and acquisition of relevant information, of agencies then working together to understand the meaning and significance for the child and the potential likelihood of an event or series of events reoccurring. Key questions include:

- What are the reasons for the current circumstances? What are the triggers? What is the history?
- What is the significance and impact of the circumstances on the child and others involved?
- How, if possible, may the unmet needs or risk factors be managed, minimised and resolved?

The process of analysis involves breaking down the information about what is known in order to acquire a better understanding of what is or is maybe going on for the

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[1]

child; what role the family play in this and how; as well as the services involved. Analysis relies on professional judgement, be it individual or collective and will need to draw on what is known about risk and need in these circumstances using research, learning from Serious Case Reviews and other learning events, to decide 'What is the information telling you?'

Application

The tool reflects the three domains of the Assessment Triangle which is used in the Single Assessment document (**Child Development** – How the child grows and develops; **Parenting Capacity** – What is needed from the people who look after the child; **Family and Environmental Factors** – The child's wider world)

Once the available information has been recorded, the sheets will highlight the specific areas of concern or risks in each of the domains. This should also highlight any differences between siblings.

Once the sheets have been completed, practitioners should consider each domain in turn to identify any specific issues or concerns and then form an overall assessment which takes into account the interaction between the child, parent/carer and the child's wider world. When answering the question, '**what is the information telling you about the level of concern?'** consideration needs to be given to issues of frequency, duration, severity, single event/cumulative concern (see section on Multiple Adversity Risks below) etc. Mapping this against the Continuum of Need framework will assist Practitioners and Managers to form a view about level of risk and need.

Any specific strengths that are identified also need to be considered in relation to how they will mitigate against the risk.

Multiple Adversity Risks[2]

Comparison of 5 Studies[i] of adverse childhood experiences (also known as ACE's) identified 8 factors that were common, namely:

- Poverty/Debt/Financial pressure
- Child Protection/Abuse
- Family violence/Domestic Abuse
- Parental illness/disability
- Parental substance abuse
- Parental Mental Health
- Family separation/bereavement/ imprisonment
- Parental offending/anti-social behaviour.

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[2] http://www.barnardos.org.uk/14796_ni_pp_briefing_paper_literature_review_lr.pdf

The studies indicate a correlation between the cumulative effect of the number of childhood adversities experienced and a wide range of negative outcomes (including ill-health) in adulthood. These factors are highlighted in **red** in the tool. However, it is important to note that not all families who experience multiple adversities have negative outcomes. Benard's study (2006) estimated that half of all children who experience multiple adversities will overcome them and achieve relatively good outcomes. This is often due to key protective factors such as positive relationships and is linked with [resilience](#).

The Risk Indicator Tool can therefore assist with the accurate identification of families in need or who at risk of adverse outcomes. By analysing the information gathered in each section, the inter-connectedness of multiple adversities and the interactions between the different factors that can influence behaviour should become apparent and will assist risk assessment. More importantly, the tool should inform a holistic 'family' assessment and identify when a coordinated response from services is needed so that interventions can target a number of aspects of risk at a time and more effectively respond to the needs of families experiencing multiple adversities.

[Effective responses](#) include:

- Early intervention
- Whole family approach
- Multi-agency team around the family
- Focus on resilience
- Clear and achievable goals
- Persistent support
- Robust and proven methods of intervention

Calderdale Risk Indicator Tool

Child Development Indicators	Child 1	Child 2	Child 3	Child 4	Evidence to support concerns or strengths
Premature birth/low weight					
Early prolonged separation at birth					
Baby born with substance withdrawal					
Very young – highly dependent (birth – 5 years)					
Cries frequently, difficult to comfort					
Difficulties feeding/toileting					
Periods of separation from parent/primary caregiver					
Adopted or step-child					
Fostered					
Child developmental delay					
Child mental health difficulties					
Child learning disabilities					
Child behavioural difficulties					
Unpredictable mood swings					
Health issues requiring ongoing medical treatment					

Engaging in self-harm					
Involved in substance misuse					
Anti-social behaviour/relationships					
Involved in offending					
Evidence of sexually inappropriate behaviour					
Poor relationships with parents					
Fearful of parent/caregiver					
Out of parental control					
Child not seen by or given chance to talk to workers					
Contested contact and residence issues					
Repeat victim					
Historical abuse of siblings by carers					
Direct or indirect exposure to domestic abuse					
Statutory or child protection measures in place					
Poor school attendance					
Young carer					
English is not first language of child					

More than 4 children in the family				
Other factors that isolate the child				

What is the information telling me in relation to child development? Summary of Concerns or Risk relating to how the child grows and develops)

	1 All Needs Met	2 Essential Needs Met	3 Some Essential Needs Unmet	4 Many Essential Needs Unmet	5 Most Or All Essential Needs Unmet
Child 1					
Child 2					
Child 3					
Child 4					

Risk Indicators particular to the parent/carer	Child 1	Child 2	Child 3	Child 4	Evidence to support concerns or strengths
Parent under 21 years					
Poor parenting skills					
Poor understanding of child's needs					
Lack of empathy					
Unrealistic expectations of child (age and stage)					
Unable and/or unwilling to meet child's needs					
Poor attachment					
Evidence of rejection towards the child					
Lack of interest in the child					
Threats/requests to have the child accommodated					
Child perceived as difficult and/or labelled by parent					
Prioritises adult needs over child's					
Inappropriate rigid attitudes towards child					
Partner is not biological parent of child					
New partner – background is unknown					
Parental resistance/limited engagement					

Refuses workers access to child					
Parents masking the reality of the situation					
No shared understanding of the concerns					
Child's account minimised/not believed by carer					
Physical illness or disability which impairs parenting ability					
Mental illness which impairs parenting ability					
Substance misuse which impairs parenting ability					
High stress levels such as poverty, isolation, loss					
Parents own experience of parenting was poor/abusive					
Low self-esteem					
Poor life-skills and problem solving abilities					
Poor impulse control					
Ability to learn and retain is impaired					
Difficulty with communication					
Lack of trust towards workers and others					
History of multiple relationships					
Carer continually defers to partner for response					

History of domestic violence					
History of violence in the community					
History of violence/aggression towards workers					
Parents in conflict over custody or residence					
Inability or unwillingness to make use of supports					
Breaches of legal orders/agreement – criminal/civil					

What is the information telling me in relation to parenting capacity? Summary of concerns or risk relating to what is needed from the person who looks after the child.

	1 All Needs Met	2 Essential Needs Met	3 Some Essential Needs Unmet	4 Many Essential Needs Unmet	5 Most Or All Essential Needs Unmet
Child 1					
Child 2					
Child 3					
Child 4					

Risk Indicators particular to the child's family and environmental factors	Child 1	Child 2	Child 3	Child 4	Evidence to support concerns or strengths
Family socially isolated e.g. due to language, culture, newly settled, anti-social behaviour etc					
Absence of social support/networks					
Problems within extended family					
Illness within extended family					
Conflict within extended family					
Substance misuse within extended family					
Frequent changes of address					
Home environment chaotic, unsafe					
Concerns about sleeping arrangements					
Family history of poor engagement with services					
Discriminated within community (victim or perpetrator)					
Culturally inappropriate behaviours					
Neighbourhood characterised by violence/offending					
Neighbourhood characterised by poverty					
Poor quality housing					

Lack of community services					

What is the information telling me in relation to family and environmental factors? Summary of concerns or risk relating to the child's wider world.

	1 All Needs Met	2 Essential Needs Met	3 Some Essential Needs Unmet	4 Many Essential Needs Unmet	5 Most Or All Essential Needs Unmet
Child 1					
Child 2					
Child 3					
Child 4					

What is the information telling me?

Consider the information gathered and identify the **key risk factors** for the child's development, parenting ability and family and environmental factors.

Risk Indicators for:	1 All Needs Met	2 Essential Needs Met	3 Some Essential Needs Unmet	4 Many Essential Needs Unmet	5 Most Or All Essential Needs Unmet
Child 1					
Child 2					
Child 3					
Child 4					
Parent/Carer					
Family and Wider World					

Practitioners (and Managers) then need to form a view as the level of risk for the child taking account of the interaction between the child, parent/carer and the child's wider world. What is the information telling you about the level of concern/risk?

What is the information telling me about the level of concern/risk? (Consider frequency, duration, severity, single or accumulative in nature – significance of factors in reaching a conclusion about the level of risk)					
	1 All Needs Met	2 Essential Needs Met	3 Some Essential Needs Unmet	4 Many Essential Needs Unmet	5 Most Or All Essential Needs Unmet
Child 1					
Child 2					
Child 3					
Child 4					

[i i] Rosengard et al (2007); Literature review for the Scottish Executive
Families and Children Study (Lyon et al 2006) and Social Exclusion Task Force (2007a)
Adverse Childhood Experiences Research (Felitti et al, 1998 Dube et al, 2003)
Department for Education (England 2012)
Sabates and Dex (2012) Prevalence Study Based on the Millennium Cohort Study