Assessing the needs of children and families

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Introduction

- Engaging families in the assessment process
- The promotion-prevention-protection continuum: concepts of family wellness
- Needs versus risks
- An ecological framework for assessing the needs of children and families
- The Assessment Framework
- A focus on analysis
- Case example- Tom
A participative approach

Get into groups of 3 and for 5 minutes think about:

if someone was coming to your house to undertake an assessment because you were experiencing difficulties what would be most important to you in relation to:

- The skills of the person doing the assessment
- Their capacity to engage you in the assessment process
- The areas of your family life which would be evaluated
Safeguarding and promoting welfare within a family wellness model

- **Preventing** impairment of children’s health or development
- **Protecting** children from maltreatment
- Ensuring children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and
- Undertaking that role so as to enable those children to have optimum life chances and successful childhood and adulthood- **promoting** welfare
A continuum of families who may need help

- Families who function well
- Families who have some difficulties
- Families at risk of child maltreatment
- Families receiving child protection services
- Families reported to services
At first referral, instead of asking the question
« Has this child been abused? «
Ask
« What are the needs of this child which cannot be met without the provision of services? »

Pauline Hardiker
## Assessing needs v assessing risk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Concern</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Expected role</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Climate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Risk</td>
<td>Security</td>
<td>Protection against harm and poor care</td>
<td>Rescuer</td>
<td>•Decision</td>
<td>• Conflict</td>
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<td>• Corroboration</td>
<td>• social Control</td>
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<td>• Case opening</td>
<td>• social</td>
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<td>• Service priorities, placement</td>
<td>Coercion</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• avoid danger</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need</td>
<td>• Development • Security</td>
<td>Protection and support</td>
<td>Helper</td>
<td>• Understand (causality)</td>
<td>• Collaboration</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Assessment of functioning</td>
<td>• Participation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Confidence</td>
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Limits of a risk focus

- Working essentially with crises
- Often these are not single incidents but serious and chronic problems in relationships
- We don’t really address the developmental consequences of the harm done to the children;
- We do not work sufficiently on the multiple factors which cause the vicious circle of violence and neglect
- Children do not have enough opportunities to grow up healthily and to their full potential
Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Model

- Individual: knowledge, attitude, skills
- Interpersonal: social network
- Organizational: environment, ethos
- Community: cultural values, norms
- Public Policy
The child’s ‘village’ = context

- Health and social services
- Early years services
- Education services
- Child protection services
- Other partners
- Religious organisations
- Employment services
- Cultural organisations
- Legal services
- Municipal services
- Housing organisations
- Community organisations

Child’s parents and his wider social resources: extended family, friends, neighbours
The principles underpinning the assessment

- Are child centred
- Are based on child development
- Take an ecological approach
- Are based on equal opportunities
- Require work with the child and the family
- Draw on the child’s strengths as well as identified difficulties
- Are multi-disciplinary in approach
- Are a process and not a single event
- Take place in parallel with the provision of other services
- Are supported by knowledge based on evidence
The Assessment Framework

CHILD Safeguarding & promoting welfare

PARENTING CAPACITY

Basic Care
Ensuring Safety
Emotional Warmth
Stimulation
Guidance & Boundaries
Stability

FAMILY & ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

FAMILY & SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

Selfcare Skills
Social Presentation
Family & Social Relationships
Identity
Emotional & Behavioural Development
Education
Health

CHILD'S DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS

Community Resources
Family History & Functioning
Wider Family
Housing
Employment
Income
Social
Integration
Family’s

The triangle represents the child's development, with the core focused on safeguarding and promoting welfare. The three sides of the triangle correspond to parenting capacity, family & environmental factors, and child's developmental needs.
Theoretical and conceptual base

Literature on child development

Attachment: how does this show in the child

Factors of risk, protection and resilience

Child’s view

Parental capacities

Parents view

Attachment

Family history and functioning

Strength based approach to family

Theory and myth about individuals and society

Ecological approach – transactional approach of child development – living conditions and social integration

Approach centred on the development of the power of people and communities to act (empowerment)
Positive effects for partners: improvements in partnership working and service effectiveness

- Provides:
  - A common language
  - Clear reference points on child development
  - The same parameters for identifying the needs of children and parents

- Supports information-sharing
- Recognises the contribution of each partner
- Provides concrete support in delivering the action plan and services
- Supports sharing responsibilities
Analysis = Exploring the interdependence of systems:

How is the child? How well is he doing? What are his needs?

How well are his family and others close to him responding to his needs?

To what extent are the child and his family supported by the community?

To what extent do the functioning of the adults around the child influence the child’s development and their capacity to meet his needs?

What links can be made between these systems which make up the child’s situation?
Example: the case of Tom

- Tom is 18 months old. He doesn’t walk and has no language at all. He struggles to hold small objects. He likes to be in his mother’s arms and is very affectionate. Miriam, his mother has mild learning difficulties. The accommodation is small but very clean and tidy.

- During a visit to the home, the social worker notices that Tom’s father shows very little interest in him. She learns that his work takes him away from the family for what can be days at a time. He doesn’t play much with his son but willingly buys clothes and toys for him.

- Since her sister moved away, Miriam can no longer count on her support: her sister gave her advice about how to look after and stimulate Tom. She often looked after him. Miriam is open to the idea of enrolling her son in a nursery.

- At the moment the nursery does not have a place for Tom.
Exploring the interdependence of the domains and dimensions

**Emotional and behavioural development**
- F: Tom is confident and affectionate with his Mother

**Self care skills**
- F: Tom wears clothes that are clean and appropriate for his age

**Health**
- Tom’s need: learn to walk

**Education**
- Tom’s need: learn to speak some words

**Income and employment**
- C: Tom’s Dad’s work hours prevent him from being there for him
- R: Income enables them to buy toys and clothes

**Housing**
- R: Housing small and clean

**Resources and services in the community**
- C: Lack of nursery place
- R: Have a social worker
- C: Don’t use local services, ex: OC famille

**Basic care**
- F: Miriam good at keeping Tom and his clothes clean

**Stimulation**
- D: Key people unable to provide stimulation
- F: Tom has toys
- F: Mother open to nursery place

**Love**
- D: Little interest from his father
- F: Good emotional bonds with Mother

**Family history and current functioning**
- Miriam’s (mild) learning difficulties
- Wider family
  - C: loss of aunt’s help
The need for action in the face of complex problems

Fragmented action offers limited opportunities ....

But each actor has his own levers for action ...

The aim is to overcome fragmented activity to build more solid interventions.

This requires training and skills

Partnership working can help because it helps to ....

Widen the sources of information in the face of uncertainty

Widen the strategies for action in the face of complexity
A range of services (for who, when and how,?)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Society</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Universal</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Training Programme: sexual abuse</td>
<td>Parent training</td>
<td>Group support programme 1,2,3 go!</td>
<td>Public education on child abuse</td>
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<tr>
<td>Programme for boys who have been sexually abused</td>
<td>Home visiting</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Targeted</strong></td>
<td>Skills training for high risk parents</td>
<td>Group support for high risk families: Syracuse Family Development project.</td>
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<td>Old’s prenatal/early infancy project.- Family Nurse Partnership</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Specialist</strong></td>
<td>Parental skills training for parents already known to CP services.- Family Therapy</td>
<td>Parents anonymous Project 12-ways</td>
<td>Multiagency protocol for identifying sexual abuse</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
International implementation of the framework
« Getting together is the start,  
Staying together is progress 
Working together is success »

Henry Ford
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