

Check List For Evaluating A Child's Circumstances

The purpose of this check list is to provide some guidance for staff who have concerns for safeguarding and promoting a particular child's welfare. It is not possible to substitute a quantitative analysis for well informed and competent professional judgement. However, the use of quantitative information can be used to inform the decision making process.

The process of gathering the quantitative information requires that all professionals take responsibility for gathering and sharing knowledge about each child in their working ambit. This means that the quantitative information for any one child in a family belongs to that child alone. Concerns for other children need to be separately evaluated.

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2006) page 36 says:

“There are no absolute criteria on which to rely when judging what constitutes significant harm. Consideration of the severity of ill-treatment may include the degree and the extent of physical harm, the duration and frequency of abuse and neglect, the extent of premeditation and the presence or degree of threat and coercion, sadism, and bizarre or unusual elements....

To understand and establish significant harm, it is necessary to consider:

- The nature of harm in terms of ill-treatment or failure to provide adequate care;
- The impact on the child's health and development
- The child's development within the context of their family and wider environment;
- Any special needs such as a medical condition, communication impairment or disability that may affect the child's development and care within the family;
- The capacity of parents to meet adequately the child's needs
- The wider and environmental family context”

It is important always to take account of the child's reactions, and his or her perceptions, according to the child's age and understanding.

In considering the above it is necessary to evaluate the circumstances at the time of harm being caused.

This evaluation needs to take account of immediate circumstances such as the significance of the roles of family members in safeguarding the child, the impact of professionally targeted help and the wider community circumstances in which the child and the family are living.

The evaluation also needs to consider the longer term factors which affect the child and the family such as: the experience of loss, abuse, racism and social isolation; the learned responses of the child and the family to combat these experiences and the innate skills and resilience of the child and the family to overcome the negative aspects. The following pages provide a tool for reaching such an evaluation of a child's circumstances

Past history.

<p>Is there evidence of a history of circumstances which have caused significant harm to the child? If so what are they?</p> <p>Are these concerns still true despite professional intervention or other significant family or community changes?</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Is there any behaviour by the parents or carers that suggests they are preparing to, or are intending to, cause significant harm? What is the evidence for this?</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Are there historical factors that indicate that significant harm may be caused to the child in an unintentional way? Explain what these are.</p> <p>Has offering some additional support to the family in relation to their health, educational and/or social needs failed to change this situation? Explain what has happened.</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>

Current risk indicators

<p>In cases where there has been previous significant harm, do any of the following apply?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Denial of causing the harm when there is evidence to the contrary • Denial of the consequences for the child of continuing harm • Justification of harm • Indifference to the child's experience of harm • Hostility towards the child <p>Explain how it is known that these apply</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Is there reason to believe that the child or the family are multiply disadvantaged and are facing a combination of two or more of the following: poverty, social isolation, racism, poor housing, high crime rate, inadequate child care facilities, transport deficiencies: Please specify.</p> <p>Has the situation failed to respond to the provision of appropriate services?</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Is there reason to believe that Domestic Violence is part of the child's experience of current day to day living?</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>If there is evidence that a child's social and emotional development are being impaired, or that the child is suffering from neglect as a result of the mental health or physical health of a parent or carer. Does this impairment for the child continue despite the provision of services to the child and the family?</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Is there evidence that a child's social and emotional development are being impaired, or that the child is suffering from neglect as a result of drug or alcohol misuse or the withdrawal effects from such substances experienced by a parent or carer? Does this impairment for the child continue despite the provision of services to the child and the family?</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Is there evidence that a child's social and emotional development are being impaired, or that the child is suffering from neglect as a result of the learning disability of a parent or carer? Does this impairment for the child continue, despite the provision of services to the child and the family?</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>

Other relevant factors

<p>Do discriminatory attitudes by a parent or carer persist towards the child despite the provision of services?</p> <p>How are these made manifest?</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Is a parent or carer driven by a desire to change the child's behaviour by causing significant harm? (Note that this may be physical, emotional or sexual harm)</p> <p>What is the evidence for this?</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Is a parent or carer driven by a fantasy which involves harming the child? (Note that this may be a sexual, physical, emotional harm or neglect.</p> <p>What is the evidence for this?</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Does a parent or carer hold the belief that some forms of harm are acceptable despite efforts by professionals to correct this view?</p> <p>What is the evidence for this?</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Does a parent or carer believe that a child is in need of experiencing harm or deserves the harm that is being caused?</p> <p>What is the evidence for this?</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Is there any evidence that the current situation in relation to the child is made worse by premeditated harm being caused?</p> <p>If so what is the evidence</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Is there any evidence that there is some adult co-operation to cause harm to the child or that there is a network in place which is causing harm to the child?</p> <p>What is the evidence for this?</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Have there been significant concerns expressed by other family members, other children, wider family members or neighbours and friends which are not responding to, or can not be dealt with by provision of additional support.</p> <p>What are these concerns?</p>	<p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p>

Scoring

Please remember that the gathering of quantitative data can not, in itself, provide a guarantee of the need for a particular response to the child or the family.

When considering the boxes above any box which attracts a “No” answer indicates that either the areas of concern within the box do not apply, or, that there is a need to consider how professional help can be co-ordinated to meet the perceived need. Reference should be made to the Integrated Working Practice Guidelines.

Any box which attracts a “Yes” answer indicates that it is appropriate to discuss the child and the circumstances with colleagues in your own setting, designated as to be consulted under child protection procedures.

Clearly the more boxes there are attracting a “Yes” response the more likely the need for statutory safeguarding intervention. However it is important to be clear about the evidence for your concerns and to communicate this clearly to the designated person.