

Shropshire Whole Family Assessment Guidance for Practitioners

The Whole Family Assessment is designed to provide Lead Professionals with a simple yet effective way of identifying a family's circumstances and needs and capturing any changes to their situation during the Early Help Episode.

The assessment process gives families the opportunity to reflect on family life and plan. It should never just be given to a family member to complete; this is a two-way process that needs to be supported. The assessment may be ongoing over a number of weeks dependant on the family, their circumstances and if other professionals need to be involved in the information gathering.

The Whole Family Assessment should be reviewed when there are substantial changes in the family's circumstances, if the Early Help Episode has been open for more than 6 months and at closure of the Early Help episode.

Risk and Protective Factors

Many parents and families can deal with the stresses of everyday life as well as the occasional larger problems that crop up; they have the resilience to 'bounce back' when things go wrong.

Protective Factors

Protective factors are the elements that support this resilience and could include:

- problem solving skills
- positive learnt behaviour
- and support networks (i.e., extended family, positive friendships or both).

Risk Factors

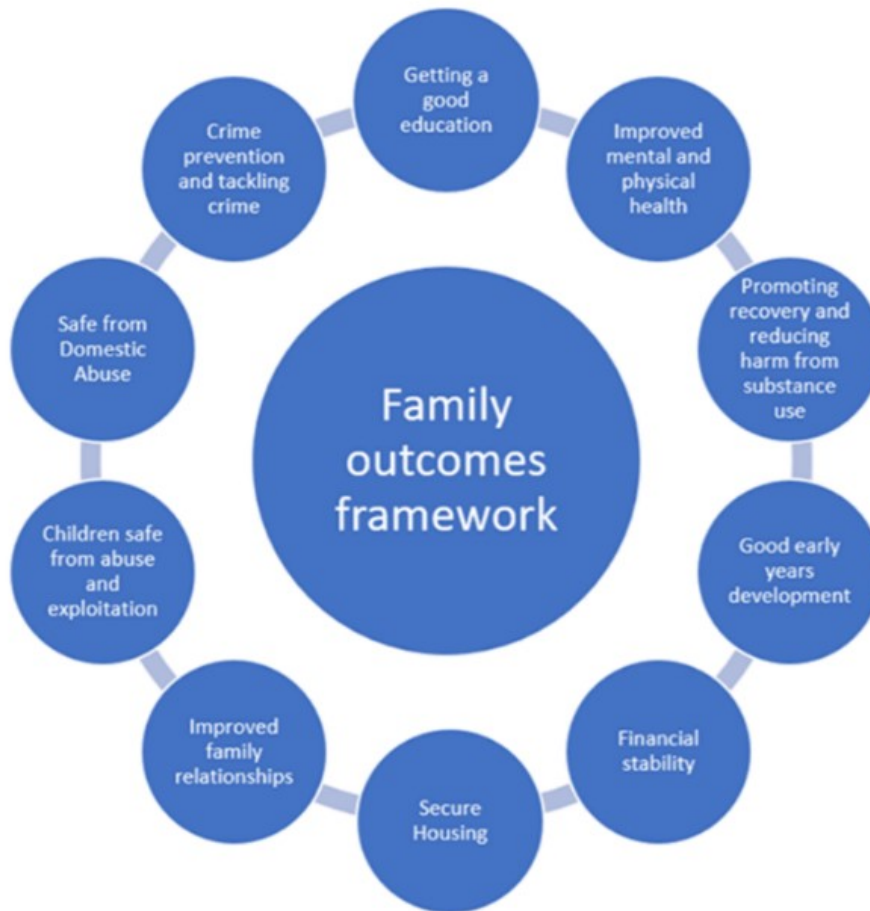
Risk factors are the multiple life stressors which may reduce the family's reliance:

- Homelessness
- Unemployment
- Debt
- Domestic violence
- Health problems.

The Whole Family Assessment enables a professional and the family to identify both Risk and Protective factors within and around the family unit. Allowing both identification of areas where families, parents, and children are functioning well, have no issues and are positive (protective) as well as the specific areas where things are not going so well and need attention (risk). This in turn enables the parent, carer, or family to develop a 'family centred' action plan which, with the Lead Professional's support, will reduce risk and increase resilience.

Strengthening Families Criteria.

There are 10 areas to consider when completing an assessment, many may not be applicable to the family and will require no information. Focus on the issues, capturing as much information as possible.



Completing the Whole Family Assessment

There are four elements to the assessment.

- What is going well? (What is our family good at? What strengths can we build on?)
- What are we worried about? (What has happened in the past and what are we concerned about now?)
- What support is currently in place? What support have you had? Do you have a support network?
- What needs to happen? (What needs to happen for our worries to be resolved? What is important for the family? What does success look like?)

All four should be completed to ensure there is an understanding of the family's needs. Each element is broken into three response areas;

- Child/ren/young person/people
- Parent(s)/Carer(s)
- Professionals

Wherever possible you should try to include the voice of all family members.

It is important that all the way through the assessment you encourage the family to identify both protective factors and possible risks. Use language that reflects what the family are saying. Use their names, not their role. Help them to find solutions – don't do it for them.

Remember this is a Whole Family Assessment and requires not just the professional view but also the parent/carer and children/young people's thoughts, feelings, opinions and wishes.

A good assessment conversation should:

- Not be too formal
- Build on existing information so the family do not need to keep repeating their story.
- Fully involve all members of the family
- Allow the family to explore and recognise their strengths and needs and where possible identify where they might seek help and support.
- Avoid professional jargon and acronyms.
- Empowering
- Developmental
- Transparent.
- Look beyond the surface.
- Solution focused
- Non-judgemental

Prompt questions have been developed to support you during the assessment. They are in the Appendix of this document.

Whole Family Assessment Appendix

Criteria	Prompt Questions
Getting a good education	<p>Do your children enjoy school? Are you involved with school – parents’ evenings etc.? Are your children attending school regularly? Have you ever been involved with EWO or had a fine for your children not attending school? What are the reasons why your children are not attending school? Do you know the level of attendance for your children? Have any of your children ever had a fixed term exclusion? Have any of your children ever been permanently excluded?</p> <p>Child/Young Person Tell me about when you are in school.? Who are your friends at school? What are the reasons why you are sometimes late/don’t attend school? What are the best/worst things about school?</p>
Good early years development	<p>Are you attending your appointments with the midwife? Are you eligible for Heathy Start? Have you applied for Healthy Start? Are your children up to date with their immunisations and health checks? Are your children meeting their developmental milestones? Is your two-year-old eligible for 15 hours free early years education? Have they taken up their free place? Does your three/four-year-old attend nursery – where do they go?</p>
Improved mental and physical health	<p>Would you say you lead a healthy lifestyle – exercise and diet? Do any of the family have any health/disability issues – are they accessing appropriate support? Do any of the household have mental health issues? If yes, are they receiving treatment or support for their condition? What impact does it have on the family?</p>
Promoting recovery and reducing harm from substance use	<p>Do you have concerns about any family members using drugs or alcohol? If so, does this impact on finances? Does this impact on the family? Do your children understand the risks associated with excessive alcohol use or using drugs?</p>
Improved family relationships	<p>How do you feel about being a parent? How do you find putting discipline and boundaries in place? Have you ever completed Understanding your Child? Where do you go for support? Does your current situation impact on your relationship with your partner? Are the arguments frequent, intense or poorly resolved? Do you feel the conflict between you and your partner impacts on the children? Are any of your children/young people violent or abusive to you or other members of the family? Do any of you children/young people help to support any members of the family?</p>

	<p>Children/Young people Tell me about family life Is there anyone in your family who needs extra support? Do you do anything to help them or look after them? Do you often think about or worry about your family when you are not with them?</p>
Children safe from abuse and exploitation	<p>Have any of your children/young people gone missing from home in the last 12 months? Did you call the police? Do you have any concerns about the safety of any of your children? Are you worried about providing for your children needs (emotional and physical). Children and young people Tell me about family life What makes you happy? What makes you sad?</p>
Crime prevention and tackling crime	<p>Do you have any experience of crime? Have you been a victim of crime or anti-social behaviour? Has anyone in your family committed a crime? Is anyone in your family at risk of being involved in crime or anti-social behaviour? Is anyone in your household or close family in prison, on probation or involved with the youth justice team?</p>
Families affected by Domestic Abuse	<p>How are relationships in the family? Is/Has anyone in the family experienced or is experiencing domestic or sexual violence or abuse? I If yes, who is the perpetrator? Do they still have concerns? Did/does the violence result in Police call outs or trips to A&E? Are the family receiving support? What impact is it/ has it had on the children? Do the children need support to deal with what they have witnessed?</p>
Secure housing	<p>Do you own or rent your property? If you rent, who is the landlord? Are there any issues with the condition of the house? Are you at risk of eviction/homelessness for any reason? Are you happy with where you live? Do you feel safe? Do you have a housing officer?</p>
Financial stability	<p>Have you been looking for work? If so, how long? Have you had any support? I would like to refer you to an Employment Advisor to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • check your benefits • see if there is a way to increase your oncome • support you to be work ready. Would you be happy for me to refer you to the Employment Advisor?</p>
Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service	<p>Shropshire Fire and Rescue can visit your family home to ensure you are aware of potential hazards and can take the right actions. Their aim is to keep you safe, not judge your lifestyle. Would you be happy for me to complete a referral? You can change your mind when they call.</p>