

**ASSESSMENT OF ABILITY TO PROTECT**

**IN RESPECT OF**

**IN RELATION TO**

**Assessor:**

**Dated:**

1. **Reason for Referral**

This section should include the following:

* Details of the person who the risk is in relation to i.e. the perpetrator/ alleged perpetrator
* Details of the sexual offence(s)/ allegation(s) (including details i.e. when did this happen/ was alleged to have happened, what has happened/ is alleged to have happened, if this is internet offending how many images were there, what category were the images etc.)
* Be clear on the victim’s age, gender, relationship to the perpetrator
* Dates of when any arrests have been made, and what actions are being taken by Police, and who is the officer in charge.

1. **Sources of Information**

This section should include:

* What documents have been viewed
* What agencies have provided information for the assessment (i.e. Sex Offender Manager, Police, Probation, and details of the lead person from that agency and their contact details etc.)
* What dates have assessment sessions taken place (including duration), and was anyone else present (i.e. colleague, Police etc.)

1. **Understanding of the Concerns**

This section should include:

* What do they know about the offence/ allegations?
* What has partner (or other person who offence/ allegations relate to) shared?
* Do they believe the allegations/concerns? (Remember belief is a spectrum i.e. sometimes someone may believe some of the information but not other parts, and they may swing between believing and not believing)
* Did they have any concerns/worries before they were told?
* How has this influenced their thinking about their relationship?
* What has their journey been since finding out about the concerns? How did they feel then, and now? Has their thinking changed since first hearing about it?
* What are their attitudes towards the victim/indecent images?
* What has been their response to safeguarding their child(ren)? Did they ask partner/ person of concern to leave? Have they allowed contact? Have they supervised contact? What has this supervision of contact looked like?
* Have they taken active interest i.e. do they want to speak to Police, attend Court etc. to find out what happened?
* What was their response when hearing about the offence – any indications of denial, minimisation (Remember that this is a normal and expected response, and when people are first told this information they are likely to be shocked and traumatised. Therefore, what is important is if they have moved from an initial response of not believing etc.)
* What are their wishes for the future i.e. how do they want contact to look? Do they want the person of concern to return to the family home?

1. **Family Background**

This section should include:

* Childhood background and culture in which they were raised
* Any history of abuse, trauma and victimisation (including sexual, physical, emotional abuse, domestic abuse, neglect)
* Ensure both the perpetrator and the non-abusing partner are spoken to where possible (and be clear in the assessment who has shared what information)

1. **Relationship History**

This section should include:

* Create a timeline of all relationships – what have these relationships looked like? Are there any patterns in their relationship history? How have relationships started/ended? Has there been any periods when they have not been in a relationship? Are there any periods when they have been on their own which could indicate they are able to be on their own etc, or do they need to be in a relationship etc.
* Any history of domestic abuse or dependency issues (i.e. How could domestic abuse or the need to be in a relationship impact on the person’s ability to protect? If someone feels the need to be in a relationship, or is being controlled by their partner etc. are they likely to be able to protect the children from them?)
* What have their sexual relationships been like in the past? Do they feel their sexual relationships have been consensual? Do they engage in any activities which may be pertinent to the assessment, e.g. use of pornography, any particular fetishes, sex work, sex with multiple partners. Is there any fetish, role play, use of pornography (what type of pornography). (This can help to one understand the sexual relationship between them and the alleged perpetrator – remember that someone may have a “normal” sexual relationship with an adult partner and still abuse children. This will also help to understand the non-abusing partners sexual boundaries, and how they view sex etc.)

1. **Relationship with alleged/ convicted person**

*Note: Be mindful about your attitude to the perpetrator/ alleged perpetrator, and take a non-judgemental approach*

This section should include:

* What is their relationship like with this person?
* What is it they love/ like about this person?
* If it is a romantic partner - what first attracted them to them? Where did they first meet? How did they first meet?
* If it is a romantic partner – what is their sexual relationship like? How would they describe their sexual relationship? Do they feel equal in their sexual relationship? Is there anything they feel uncomfortable with? Do they engage in any sexual activity that may be relevant to the assessment? E.g. use of pornography, fetish, role play, involving others in sex. Are there any issues of power, control, domestic abuse in the relationship?
* In what ways are they dependent on this person? Financially, physically, emotionally, practically?

1. **Relationship with child(ren)**

This section should include:

* How do they describe each of their children?
* How do they describe their relationships with each of the children?
* What roles do each of the parents take with the children? (e.g. personal care; practical care; playing; supporting)
* Where are the alliances within the family – is there a favourite child? Who gets on best with who? Who argues with who?
* Does anyone offer advice on sexual matters to the children? If so, who? What is covered?

1. **Sexual script in home**

*See appendices for how to explore the family’s sexual script.*

1. **Issues effecting parenting capacity**

This section should include:

* Mental health and self-esteem
* Substance and alcohol misuse
* Domestic abuse
* Physical health and disability
* Learning disability/ difficulty
* Education/ employment
* Cultural/ religious beliefs
* Knowledge of sexual abuse and understanding of consent
* Any experience of being sexualised as a child themselves?

1. **Support Networks**

This section should include:

* Who is in the support network?
* Who offers what support i.e. emotional, financial, child care etc.
* What do they know about the allegation/ offence?
* What part do they play in the Safety Plan?
* Who in the network has sexual offences/ allegations /concerns against them?

1. **History of Intervention**

This section should include:

* Have they engaged with previous Early Help/ Child In Need/ Child Protection Plans? Were there elements that they did not engage with and why?
* What is their history of engagement with other professionals/ agencies?
* What is their capacity to change?
* Are they likely to engage with any recommended interventions?

1. **Summary and Analysis**

What does the information gathered tell you about the parent/ carers’ ability to keep the child(ren) safe from child sexual abuse? If you have concerns about their ability to protect, what is their capacity for change and how is this evidenced?

1. **Recommendations**

What is being recommended and why? If further work is being identified what is this, and who will complete this?

1. **Bibliography/ References**

See appendices for recommended reading list

1. **Signatures**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Name** | **Signature** | **Date** |
| **Assessor** |  |  |  |
| **Team Manager** |  |  |  |

**Appendix 1 – Getting the Family Sexual Script (delete before finalising the assessment)**

**The family sexual script is the unwritten code by which the family understand what are acceptable and unacceptable ways of interacting with each other and those outside the family. It covers privacy, intimacy, and access to sexual information as well as sexual behaviours. This helps to understand the messages the child has been given about these different aspects.**

This information should be gathered separately from each adult member living within the household. This may highlight discrepancies in their views and help to identify who sets the rules and who enforces them and how.

One of the key things that workers need to do is to find ways to feel comfortable in talking about sexual things, otherwise it will be difficult for them to put others at ease. The following is guidance on how to talk to parents/carers about the sexual script in a sensitive way. The suggestions for how to put questions are examples only. The workers will need to find a way, which is comfortable for their own style.

**Talking with parents about the family sexual script**

Begin the session by acknowledging that talking about sexual things can be embarrassing, but it is going to be necessary in order to be able to help the child and family. Tell them, as a worker, you will try and ask the questions sensitively.

Tell them what you will cover. This will help their anxiety about what you might ask them, for example, “Today we would like you to help us understand your view and your family’s view about boundaries around issues like privacy, being intimate with people, for example, hugs, sexual language, knowledge and information and about sexual behaviours.”

Begin with Privacy as it is less embarrassing or threatening.

**Privacy**

Put an open question first: “Tell me about your view on what should be kept private in relation to children and adults’ bodies, space and belongings.”

If they are stuck, use examples and supplementary questions.

“Tell me your views about what age is it appropriate for children to stop bathing a) with adults, b) with other children.”

If they are still stuck draw a line on a piece of paper with different ages marked off on it, and say would it be 3 or 4 or between 4 and 5, etc. Some people work better visually.

“Tell me about your views about when it is appropriate for children to sleep a) with adults, b) with a child of the opposite sex, c) with an older child.

Again if stuck use the age line from above.

“Tell me your view about adults walking around naked in front of children or nudity at home.”

“Tell me about your views about personal space, should it be respected?”

If the answer is yes, then follow up with “how should it be respected, give me an example.”

If they are stuck ask them to stand up with you. Stand away from them, tell them you are going to walk slowly towards them and they should tell you to stop when they first feel uncomfortable about how close you are to them. Put a piece of paper on the floor to mark the spot. Ask them to think if this mark would be the same for a family member and is there any variance between family members.

“Tell me your views on privacy of belongings; do adults and children have a right to have things that are just theirs and that no one should touch, take or read without their consent?”

If the answer is yes – ask for an example relating to an adult and one relating to a child.

At the end of each section ask if everyone in the family would have the same view about this as them. If they do not, who would not and what would they say.

Ask them how the children in the family learn these ‘rules’ or boundaries. For example, are they written down, verbally told and reinforced with sanctions or shouting?

**Being intimate – physical touch, for example hugs/kisses ( not sex)**

“Tell me your view about intimate/physical touches between adults and other adults and between adults and children, when are they ok and when are they not ok; what makes them either ok or not ok?”

If this is too big a question, then try sub questions (you might already have these prepared on a sheet of A4):

Answer the following statements either yes or no:

In our family we hug each other yes no

In our family we kiss each other on the lips yes no

In our family we kiss each other on the cheek yes no

In our family we sit on each other’s knees yes no

In our family we rub/massage bits of each

others bodies yes no

You may be able to think of other relevant examples for the family

After answering each one, if they say yes, ask what makes it ok. If they say no, ask what makes it not ok.

Remember to ask about other family member’s views and how the children would know these rules.

**Sexual language, information/knowledge, materials**

“Tell me your views about adults/ children using sexual language.” If this is too big a question give a range of scenarios:

a) Is it ok for adults to use sexual language to other adults? yes no

b) Is it ok for adults to use sexual language to or around

children? yes no

c) Is it ok for children to use sexual language to adults? yes no

d) Is it ok for children to use sexual language to other

children? yes no

After answering each one, if they say yes, ask what makes it ok. If they say no, ask what makes it not ok?

“When do you think children should start learning about sex, what should they know, and does this change as they get older?”

If stuck use your age line again and ask them to mark on that.

“In your view, where do you think they should get their knowledge and information from?” (you could have this on your A4 sheet)

a) Parents yes no

b) Other family member ( specify who) yes no

c) School yes no

d) Other children/ young people yes no

e) Books, magazines, TV yes no

f) Pornographic magazines, DVDs yes no

g) Images on posters/calendars yes no

“Are there any limits on what the children can read, watch on TV/DVD or hear?”

Remember to ask about other family members’ views and how the children would know these rules.

**Sexual Behaviours**

“Other than actual sexual intercourse, there are some behaviours often referred to as ‘petting’ behaviours (or foreplay) for example, kissing, touching breasts/genitals over clothing; touching naked breasts/genitals; masturbation of self and others. With regard to these behaviours at what age do you think it is appropriate for children and young people to engage in them and why?”

Do the age line again and ask them to mark on that.

“At what age do you think it is appropriate for children and young people to engage in actual sexual intercourse or other sex acts, for example, oral sex or anal sex and why?”

Use the age line again and ask them to mark on that.

“In your view is it harmful or educational for children to see adults having sexual intercourse?” Ask why for either answer.

Remember to ask about other family members’ views and how the children would know these rules.

**Appendix 2 – Recommended Reading List/ Resources (delete before finalising the assessment)**

**Recommended reading:**

* Chaffin, M. (1996) ‘Working with unsupportive mothers in incest cases.’ 12th Annual Midwest Conference on Child Sexual Abuse and Incest, Madison, WI.
* Finkelhor, D. (1984). *Child sexual abuse: New theory and research*. New York: The Free Press
* Hill, A. (2001) ‘No-one else could understand’: Women’s experiences of a support group run by and for mothers of sexually abused children. The British Journal of Social Work, 31(3):385–397.
* Jones, D.P.H. and Ramchandani, P. (1999) Child Sexual Abuse: Informing Practice from Research. Abingdon: Radcliffe Medical Press
* Kim, K., Noll, J. G., Putnam, F. W., and Trickett, P. K. (2007) Psychosocial characteristics of non-offending mothers of sexually abused girls: findings from a prospective, multigenerational study. Child Maltreatment, 12(4), pp.338-35.1
* Plummer, C.A. and Eastin, J. A. (2007) The Effect of Child Sexual Abuse Allegations/ Investigations on the Mother/Child Relationship. Violence Against Women 13(10), pp. 1053-71.
* Still, J. (2016) Assessment and Intervention with Mothers and Partners Following Child Sexual Abuse: Empowering to protect. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
* Tuttle, A.R., Knudson-Martin, C., Levin, S., Taylor, B. and Andrews, J. (2007). Parents' Experiences in Child Protective Services: Analysis of a Dialogical Group Process. Family Process, Vol. 46 (3).

**Resources/ websites:**

* [www.parentsprotect.co.uk](http://www.parentsprotect.co.uk)
* <https://www.parentsprotect.co.uk/sexual-abuse-learning-programme.htm>
* <https://www.theupstreamproject.org.uk/>
* [www.stopitnow.org.uk](http://www.stopitnow.org.uk)
* <https://www.stopitnow.org.uk/signs-an-abuser-might-display.htm>
* [www.mosac.org.uk](http://www.mosac.org.uk)
* <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/coping-shock-intrafamilial-sexual-abuse-information-parents-and-caregivers>
* <https://www.dcp.wa.gov.au/ChildProtection/ChildAbuseAndNeglect/Documents/ChildDevelopmentAndTraumaGuide.pdf>
* <http://www.csacentre.org.uk/resources/blog/but-they-must-have-known-effectively-working-with-non-abusing-parents/>