

## SCODA: Risk Assessment with Parental Drug Use

The following checklist outlines seven key domains that can be used as part of risk assessment with parental drug use. These domains were developed by the Standing Conference on Drug Abuse (SCODA) and the Local Government Drugs Forum (LGDF) for use by non-specialist professionals in England, Scotland and Wales. Additions and changes are identified by use of *italics*.

The four scoring categories developed for the DrugNet site (<http://www.drugnet.bizland.com/assessment/checklis1.htm>) aim to broaden a 'yes/no' response and to identify evidence of positive parenting as well as potential child safety issues. The numerical system is a general guide only. Higher scores indicate increased risk and concern. Standardised or validated assessment of the sum totals of this checklist have NOT been developed. The comments section should be used to summarise the assessment from each of the domains.

Subsequent reassessments should provide both worker and parent(s) an opportunity to acknowledge progress. This tool should be used in conjunction with the ten drug management steps outlined in [Working with a Parent or Care-giver with an Alcohol or Other Drug Use Problem](#).

This checklist should be completed with the parent(s) where possible. Collateral information (e.g. from a neighbour or relative) may also be sought to validate or otherwise this information. (Note Confidentiality)

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### Parent / Care-Giver Drug Issues Checklist

#### Key to Scoring

Numbers are only intended to discriminate between protective factors, concerns and more serious issues which require immediate intervention.

- 1 = Positive** (positive - congratulate)
- 1 = Transitional** - (somewhat an issue)
- 2 = Problematic** - (requires immediate attention)
- ? = Unsure** - (further information required **(or N/A)**)

<b>The Pattern of Parental Drug Use</b>				
Is there a drug-free parent, supportive partner or relative?	-1	1	2	?
Is the drug use by the parent Experimental? Recreational? Chaotic? Dependent?	-1	1	2	?
Does the user move between categories at different times? Does the drug use also involve alcohol <i>or a combination of drugs</i> ?	-1	1	2	?
Are the levels of care different from when the parent is/was a non-user?	-1	1	2	?
Is there any evidence of coexistence of mental health problems alongside the drug use? If there is, do the drugs cause these problems, or have these problems led to the drug use?	-1	1	2	?
<b>Comments:</b>				
<b>Accommodation and Home Environment</b>				
Is accommodation adequate for children?	-1	1	2	?
Are parents ensuring that rent and bills are paid?	-1	1	2	?
Does the family remain in one area or move frequently. If the latter, why?	-1	1	2	?
Are other drug users sharing the accommodation? If they are, are relationships with them harmonious, or is there conflict?	-1	1	2	?
Is the family living in a drug using community?	-1	1	2	?
If parents are using drugs, do children witness the taking of the drugs, or other substances?	-1	1	2	?
Could other aspects of the drug use constitute a risk to children (eg. conflict with or between dealers, exposure to criminal activities related to drug use)?	-1	1	2	?
Does the alcohol or other drug use contribute to any domestic violence issues?	-1	1	2	?

<b>Comments:</b>				
<b>Provision of Basic Necessities</b>				
Is there adequate food, clothing and warmth for the children?	-1	1	2	?
Are the children attending school regularly?	-1	1	2	?
Are children engaged in age-appropriate activities?	-1	1	2	?
Are the children's emotional needs being adequately met?	-1	1	2	?
Are there any indications that any of the children are taking on a parenting role within the family (e.g. caring for other children, excessive household responsibilities, etc.)?	-1	1	2	?
<b>Comments:</b>				
<b>Procurement of Drugs</b>				
Are the children being left alone while their parents are procuring drugs?	-1	1	2	?
Because of their parent's drug use, are the children being taken to places where they could be "at risk"?	-1	1	2	?
How much are the drugs costing?	-1	1	2	?
How is the money obtained?	-1	1	2	?
Is this causing financial problems?	-1	1	2	?
Are the premises being used to sell drugs?	-1	1	2	?
Are the parents allowing their premises to be used by other drug users?	-1	1	2	?
<b>Comments:</b>				

<b>Health Risks</b>				
If drugs and/or injecting equipment are kept on the premises, are they kept securely?	-1	1	2	?
Are the children aware of where the drugs are kept?	-1	1	2	?
<p>If the parents are intravenous drug users:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Do they share injecting equipment?</li> <li>* Do they use a needle exchange scheme?</li> <li>* How do they dispose of syringes?</li> <li>* Are parents aware of the health risks of injecting or using drugs?</li> </ul>	-1	1	2	?
<p>If parents are on a substitute prescribing program, such as methadone:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Are parents aware of the dangers of children accessing this medication?</li> <li>* Do they take adequate precautions to ensure this does not happen?</li> </ul>	-1	1	2	?
Are parents aware of, and in touch with, local specialist agencies who can advise on issues such as needle exchanges, substitute prescribing programs, detox and rehabilitation facilities? If they are in touch with agencies, how regular is the contact?	-1	1	2	?
<b>Comments:</b>				
<b>Family's Social Network and Support Systems</b>				
<p>Do parents and children associate primarily with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Other drug users?</li> <li>* Non-users</li> <li>* Both?</li> </ul>	-1	1	2	?

Are relatives aware of the drug use? Are they supportive?	-1	1	2	?
Will the parents accept help from the relatives?	-1	1	2	?
Will the parents accept help from statutory/non-statutory agencies?	-1	1	2	?
<i>The degree of social isolation should be considered particularly for those parents living in remote areas where resources may not be available and they may experience social stigmatisation.</i>				
<b>Comments:</b>				
<b>The Parents' Perception of the Situation</b>				
Do the parents see their drug use as harmful to themselves or to their children?	-1	1	2	?
Do the parents place their own needs before the needs of their children?	-1	1	2	?
Are the parents aware of the legislative and procedural context applying to their circumstances (e.g. child protection procedures, statutory powers, other legal issues)?	-1	1	2	?
<b>Comments:</b>				
<b>Other Child Safety Issues</b>			<b>Other Positive Parenting Issues</b>	
<b>Overall summary of findings:</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>				

<p><b>Negotiated recommendations and goals:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Source (Parent / Care-Giver / Neighbour):</b></p> <p><b>Office / Case Worker:</b></p>	<p><b>Dated:</b></p> <p><b>Review Date:</b></p>
<p>This checklist is based on <i>"Guidelines for professionals for assessing risk when working with drug using parents"</i> published in (and available for purchase from:) <i>"Drug Using Parents: Policy Guidelines for Inter-Agency Working"</i> (1997) . Initially developed by the South East London Clinic Social Workers Group with the Standing Conference on Drug Abuse (<a href="#">SCODA</a>) and subsequently modified by SCODA and the Local Government Drugs Forum (LGDF) . First published in the SCODA Newsletter, Dec/Jan 1986/87.</p>	