



Hounslow Brief Quality of Care Assessment Tool Guidance

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Please read this guidance before completing the tool

1) Guidance to using the tool

The Brief Quality of Care (QoC) tool is a condensed version of the QoC structured judgement tool used by Hounslow social workers and partner agencies in all cases where neglect is a primary concern. This brief tool was created specifically for partner agencies to use prior to making a referral, or to complement early help assessments, because social workers sometimes found neglect referrals vague. Additionally professionals such as teachers and health colleagues told us that they often found it difficult to:-

- Be specific about their concerns when they suspected child neglect
- Be clear about the seriousness of their concerns
- Decide the best approach in terms of thresholds for offering early help or making onward referrals for Child In Need (CIN) social work support or statutory child protection intervention

This Brief Tool offers a structure to help professionals who are worried about parental neglect in these ways:-

- Identify if there are gaps in parents' care and if so; to be precise about where the gaps are
- Be explicit about areas where parents are strong so that this can be built on
- Clarify the seriousness of any 'gaps' in the child's care
- Consider the possible impact on the child if their needs continue to be neglected

All of the above can enable improved decisions about:-

- The best course of action to follow if parents are not adequately meeting the needs of their children
- Specific planning to effect change in parenting whether you decide early help, CIN or child protection is appropriate
- The basis for referral to children's social care if you conclude the concerns meet the CIN or child protection threshold

Using the tool - When to use it and how it can help

Identifying concerns and strong areas of care

The tool is designed for situations where you are concerned about the quality of care being given to a child by their parents/carers. Basic common sense may raise concerns about aspects of care e.g. physical or health care, emotional warmth, safety, education, parent's behaviour. Using the tool may clarify that the concerns are only in one area and in other respects the child's care is good enough or it might reveal additional concerns. Using the tool can help to firm up your concerns

Considering the seriousness of concerns

If you do reveal concerns the tool asks you to grade how potentially harmful this might be to the child's welfare. It might be that the concerns are relatively minor but spread across the whole child's life, or, it might be that the child is generally well cared for but there is one very major concern, e.g. medical care of a serious condition that could cause life changing disability. This will HELP you make decisions about how best to intervene, but it's important to understand the tool is just that, a tool, it isn't intended to make the decision for professionals, it is there to support you to gather information and then to make sense of it.

The tool structure

The tool asks you to think about physical and health care, emotional warmth, safety, education, parent's behaviour and to grade the quality of care given to the child across this spectrum. The grades reflect the extent to which the parent 'holds their child in mind', promotes their child's welfare and meets their needs.

The different grades of care are colour coded as below. Each section of the tool gives suggestions about what the care of a child might look like ranging from good to inadequate. You should use these to firm up your view of the quality of care the child is receiving. It's highly unlikely the tool will give you an exact description, it offers a basic structure to build an overall picture identifying what you do know and areas to explore further if necessary. You can use the summary overview to grade the child's care on page 4 and/or write up your conclusions to discuss with the family and if appropriate attach to an onward referral to Children's Social Care.

| | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1. | Child focused care giving | The child's needs are appropriately prioritised |
| 2. | Adult focused care giving | Adult's needs sometimes get in the way of prioritising the child's needs |
| 3. | Child's needs secondary to adults | Adults prioritise their own needs, some indifference to child's needs |
| 4. | Child's needs not considered | Child's needs disregarded, level of indifference or hostility to advice |

Underlying causes of concern

Page 7 of the tool (report template) prompts you to think about the causes that underly neglectful care that you identify.

It might be that the parent has an acute problem such as a traumatic divorce or illness and their care is suffering as a result but with support in the mid-long term you expect this to change.

Or

This parent might have a chronic problem e.g. permanent learning disability or severe unmanaged psychotic illness or dependency on drugs or other substance such that their capacity to look after their child is severely compromised and this is unlikely to change even with support.

Or

This parent may have experienced severe neglect in their own childhood leaving them with poor abilities to manage the huge demands of parenting. They may be highly motivated to make use of support or they might be hostile to support

How to use the tool

There is no 'fixed' way to use this tool. You are free to develop your own ways to suit your workplace, your personal way of working and the families you work with. Once familiar with it, workers tend to refine how they use it. It can take a while to get used to it, most people find using it with one family is enough to develop 'the knack' and confidence to branch out with using it again. Below are recommended ways of using it and tips from workers who found it effective.

2) Top tips and recommended ways of using the tool

| DO'S | DON'T |
|---|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;">Be balanced</p> <p>Look for and acknowledge positives and strengths in parenting. Most parents do have them and it is far more helpful to struggling parents to be told where they are doing well in addition to the problem areas.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Focus only on negatives</p> <p>We are ethically and professionally obliged to be balanced. Having said that, if there are no positive areas it is important to be in a position to identify that as clearly as possible.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Use the overview to firm up initial concerns</p> <p>The overview on page 4 of the QoC tool below can be used to quickly clarify and make an initial decision about the level of your concerns. Some workers have found this exercise heightened their concerns enabling them to make an onward social work referral, with clearer information and analysis. Others found their concerns reduced making it clear that early help is appropriate and giving an initial idea of family needs.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Cut and paste the QoC prompts for your report/referral</p> <p>The areas of care each have descriptions about different possible grades of care ranging from good to very poor. The idea is to use these to clarify in your mind what level of care is being provided to the child you are concerned about. You might not need to refer to all of them if you are already clear but they can help to firm up your thinking if you are unclear or if professionals disagree. The prompts are highly unlikely to fit 'your' child and family so be specific in your referral or report about the description of the actual concerns.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Do it with a colleague if you can</p> <p>Particularly if you decide to pursue the assessment beyond the initial point above; use someone who ideally knows the family. Perhaps call a professional meeting or use in supervision or ask a colleague, a manager, designated lead. Workers have found this very helpful to share and discuss differing views of the family and get a broader more balanced view.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Spend ages 'filling it in'</p> <p>The tool is designed to assist you in gathering a lot of information fast, and then to make sense of it. Most professionals with concerns about child neglect will have some prior knowledge of a family, use the tool to help you to evaluate your concerns. If you don't know about every aspect of the child's care, then analyse the aspects you do know about. This may decrease your concerns or escalate them and this will help your decision making about the most appropriate response.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Consider how to share with family</p> <p>Think about how and when to share with the family. If you make an onward referral you will be sharing your concerns at that point but if you are using the tool to further assess for early help purposes, you need to think about when and how to share the assessment with the family. Some families have responded really positively to being shown the assessment; in some cases participating in grading of their own care. This won't work with all families but you will be the best judge of this.</p> | |

3) Summary Overview of the Quality of Care Assessment Tool

This page enables a comprehensive visual overview of parental care of children.

| Area of care Physical care | | | | Area of care Health | | Area of care Safety + supervision | | | | | Area of care Love + care | | | | | Area of care Adult behaviour | | | | Area of care Education + Stimulation | | | | | Change | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|---------|----------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------------|------------------------------|------------|-----------------|-------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|-----------------|------------|----------------------|-------------|-----------|-----------------|-------------|-------------------|--|
| AREA OF CARE | FOOD | HOUSING STABILITY | CHILDREN CLOTHING | HYGIENE | BABY SAFE SLEEPING | CO-SLEEP DRUGS + ALCOHOL | ANIMALS | SEEKING ADVICE | DISABILITY + ILLNESS | ATTITUDE DISABILITY + HEATH | SAFETY AWARENESS | TRAFFIC AWARENESS | SUPERVISION | OTHER CAREERS | ATTITUDE TO CHILD | WARMTH + CARE | BOUNDARIES | POSITIVE VALUES | GANGS | YOUNG CARING | ADULT ARGUMENTS + VIOLENCE | ADULT DEPRESSION | DRUGS + ALCOHOL | PRE-SCHOOL | DIVORCE + SEPARATION | STIMULATION | EDUCATION | SPORT & LEISURE | FRIENDSHIPS | CHANGE MOTIVATION | |
| | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 4 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

4) Summary Overview of the Quality of Care Assessment Tool

This is a suggested format for professionals write up their assessment.

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| Physical care |
| Food Housing Clothing Hygiene Baby safe sleeping Drugs/alcohol Animals |
| Overview of child's physical care. What are the strengths and any concerns. What is the impact on the child? |
| Health care |
| Seeking advice/treatment Care of disability/illness Attitude to disability/illness |
| Overview of child's health care. What are the strengths and any concerns. What is the impact on the child? |
| Safety + supervision |
| Safety awareness traffic awareness Supervision Care by others |
| Overview of child's safety and supervision. What are the strengths and any concerns. What is the impact on the child? |
| Love + care |
| Attitude to child Warmth and care Boundaries Positive values Gangs Young caring |
| Overview of child's love and care. What are the strengths and any concerns. What is the impact on the child? |
| Adult behaviour |
| Adult arguments Adult mental ill health Drugs/alcohol Divorce/separation |
| Overview of adult behaviour in relation the child's care. What are the strengths and any concerns. What is the impact on the child? |
| Stimulation and education |
| Stimulation Education Sport/leisure |

| | |
|---|--|
| Friends | |
| Overview of child's education and stimulation. What are the strengths and any concerns. What is the impact on the child? | |
| Parental motivation to change | |
| Overall parents attitude to parental responsibility and any change that might be needed. What are the strengths and any concerns? What is the impact on the child? | |
| ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS AND PROMPTS. THIS IS A CRITICAL AREA OF THE ASSESSMENT ASKING YOU TO CONSIDER THE UNDERLYING CAUSES OF NEGLECTFUL PARENTING. THIS AREA OF ANALYSIS WILL INFORM YOUR PLANNING. | |
| Describe the overall quality of care. If the quality of care is of concern, does this represent global neglect of the child's needs? Is the care of the child poor/unacceptable in all or most areas? | |
| What appear to be the underlying causal factors of neglectful care? | |
| Is the neglect of the child's needs intentional or unintended? Does the parent have an illness/condition or problem that renders them unable to provide adequate care? Or does the parent blame or hold the child responsible for their own deficits in parenting? | |
| Is the neglect of the child persistent and ongoing or is it acute? Is there evidence that it may be intergenerational? | |
| What is the impact of this poor or unacceptable quality of care from child's perspective? | |
| Is neglectful care creating/enabling other risks e.g. child going missing, sexual abuse or exploitation, gang involvement, exposure to extremism or radicalisation? | |

