Adult Care Strengths-based Assessment - Knowledge and Skills Guide

The Golden Rules

Introduction

This guide has been created by based on the 'Golden Rules of Assessment', initially developed by practitioners. The guidance has been adapted to ensure it reflects strengths-based assessment practice in addition to getting the basics right.

Assessment

The assessment and eligibility process is a key element of the care and support system. It is one of the most important interactions between a local authority, the person we assess and those around them.

We should not underestimate the extent to which the conversations we have, the outlook and approaches we adopt, how we frame our role around supporting independence and identifying strengths and assets in individuals and their surrounding networks, can improve outcomes and the lives of people we support.

Ensuring that the person is at the centre of the assessment and given every support possible to engage as fully as possible and 'own' the assessment process is not just best practice, it is a statutory requirement. As is our requirement to ensure that assessments are carried out by skilled and competent and knowledgeable practitioners.

The Care Act sets out in law our requirement to adopt:

1) A strengths-based approach – Our starting position is **not** what services people need to manage deficits. It **is** how we can prevent, reduce and delay the need for services by ensuring we understand the person, what is and has been important to them, the networks they have had or are at risk of losing, and the opportunity to enable existing and new support networks to meet outcomes.

   More information about Strengths based practice can be found in the Adult Care Strengths-based practice guide.

2) A whole family approach – You cannot be strengths based without understanding someone's support networks. Our assessments should address the impact of care and support needs on those around the customer, the opportunities to better sustain families and individuals where the needs of the whole family are understood, their wellbeing is safeguarded and capacity to care is supported where necessary.

Statutory duties in assessment

Practitioners should understand and feel confident in explaining the statutory duties they are performing to both our customers and partners.

- You are fulfilling a statutory duty to undertake an assessment of the person's needs under section 9 of the Care Act 2014

- The person should be at the heart of the assessment and engage fully in the assessment process

- Where someone appears to lacks capacity to be involved, Mental Capacity Assessment and Best Interest processes should be followed

- Where someone will have substantial difficulty engaging, you have a duty to identify someone appropriate and independent to support and represent the person. This may include specialist interpreters or communicators

- You have a duty to ensure that independent advocacy is provided in all cases where:

    - if not for the provision of an independent advocate, the person would have substantial difficulty being involved in the assessment, support planning and review process
    - there is no appropriate individual available to support and represent the person's wishes who is not paid or professionally engaged in providing care or treatment to the person or their carer

- You should consider whether additional expertise is required to carry out the assessment; ensuring appropriate knowledge of particular conditions or circumstances informs your assessment.

The Golden Rules

Your preparation – be **inquisitive**:

- Ensure you understand as much as possible about the person's circumstances before visiting

- Establish case history: check the person's records, especially to identify any warnings of hazards, relationships and to view records of related people, again checking for hazards

- Confirm whether any previous Consent and Capacity forms are on file or whether you obtain recorded consent for this activity

- Any suggestion of safeguarding issues or complex risks should trigger a thorough review of case history and consideration of whether paper files stored off site should be recalled.

- Talk to the customer, the referrer, or where appropriate to the customers or supporting relatives, to clarify the issues giving rise to the assessment

- Before visiting, identify any cultural or communication needs you may need to take into account

- Be aware of any potential issues in relation to ordinary residence or whether the person has any recourse to public funds

- Establish if the circumstances do actually warrant an assessment visit, or if the person can be signposted to a more relevant agency directly.

- Customer's preparation

- Provide information to the customer or relatives about the assessment process, what to expect, to help them prepare for their assessment visit.

- Customers should be directed to the assessment area of Lincolnshire County Council's Adult Care website, or provided with a copy of the Care and Support in Lincolnshire factsheet and a copy of the Supported Self-Assessment form if they are not able to access the website for themselves

- Agree with the customer how they want the assessment to happen – do they want to prepare notes beforehand or have a supported self- assessment where they have completed elements of a blank assessment prior to your visit

- Encourage the person to say who they think should contribute more information to the assessment

Professionalism

- Be on time:

  - check you know where the property is. Make sure you have a contact number with you so you can call the customer or family if you are going to be late

- Introductions:

  - ensure you introduce yourself by name and job title, explain what you do and how you come to be there

- Identify yourself:

  - always show official County Council identification, allow the customer to see it and satisfy them self that you are who they are expecting

  - when visiting in hospital wards or care homes, ensure the relevant staff members also know who you are and why you are there

- Be polite and respectful:

  - establish how the person wishes to be addressed. Never call someone by their first name unless you are asked to

  - wait to be invited to sit down

  - be sensitive and diplomatic if the environment is not helpful to undertaking a visit

  - respect a person’s dignity, e.g. if they are in bed, establish that they are covered and comfortable to see you in their bedroom

Explain and make clear

- Ensure the customer and their representatives understand what your role is, what Adult Care does, and what you hope to achieve on your visit

- Establish that the person understands what you are there for and provide reassurance;

- Start with what you know about to show the customer they can be confident you have some knowledge of their situation. Talk through the referral, source, cause for concern etc.

- Indicate how long you expect to take and ensure the person is given opportunity to contribute as fully as possible

- Explain the importance of being able to talk with the customer alone for some of the visit

Consent and Capacity

- Assume the customer has capacity to understand the purpose of your visit, and establish as soon as possible if you are concerned that they do not have capacity to understand the assessment process
- Complete the consent and capacity form where one is not on file for this episode of involvement
- Ensure you are happy and justified in your decision to continue the assessment in the persons best interests where concerns about capacity exist. Ensure your rationale is recorded
- See Mental Capacity, Consent and Capacity section of the procedures manual for more information.
- Assessment skills

Key things to remember are:

- Position yourself so the customer is able to see and hear you

- Be skilful in the way you ask questions; use open questions and develop questions best suited to the situation to support the completion of the assessment. This will help to inform what is recorded

- Be self-aware and reflective; consider what the customer must think of you asking these questions and how you would respond, if you were the customer, to what you are doing

- Adapt language and communication styles to the situation; use aids and equipment to help ensure the customer can engage as fully as possible

- Be assertive about how you interact with the person and their environment to produce the best possible assessment

- Show me, don't tell me. Be dynamic; encourage movement around the property, ask to be shown how tasks are undertaken, ask to be shown other rooms, a tour of the house

- Be professionally inquisitive and alert to triggers which may indicate risks or concerns

- Do not be afraid to ask awkward questions, but do it sensitively and appropriately to the relationship you have created with the person

Manage expectations

- The primary focus of your assessment is not to arrange services, it is to build an understanding of the customer's needs, what they want to achieve in relation to their needs, their strengths, support networks and informal resources available

- Demonstrate expertise is support people to value and make use of the resources and support networks available to them or where new support networks might be formed.

- Whilst our assessment may identify eligible care and support needs, it is only the duty of the local authority to meet those eligible needs that cannot be sustainably met by the informal support available and those informal support options need to be explored fully before decisions are made about Adult Care meeting needs.

- Be clear from the outset about the potential financial implications of receiving a personal budget, and be able to clearly explain the purpose of Financial Assessments and Lincolnshire's Contributions Policy

Clear conclusion

- Recap; at the end of the assessment summarise your discussion by clarifying the action points and who will be responsible for each point. Ensure the customer and representatives are clear and understand the outcome

- Encourage questions; answer them where you can and endeavour to find answers for the customers, as an agreed action

- Leave contact details to ensure you can be reached either by phone or email. If there is no ongoing involvement, leave the phone number for the Customer Service Centre and explain the referral process

- Follow up promised actions; if you have agreed to carry out certain tasks or update people on progress, do it. Not returning calls will only result in additional work for you, your colleagues and cause the customer and their family to be unhappy with the service

- The person should be given a copy of their assessment providing a clear statement of their needs and eligibility irrespective of the outcome of the assessment

Reflective Practice

After each assessment take a few minutes to reflect and ask yourself:

- Did I do that well?

- Did the person engage as fully as they could – could I have done things differently?

- Did I leave them with an understanding of what just happened and why, and what happens next?

- Was I proportionate? – did we focus on the things that were important and causing concern?

- Have you all got the best possible understanding of the person's situation, where they are needing care and support, what outcomes they want to achieve?

- Did we explore the person's strengths, assets, family and community networks and what is important to them within their networks? and started to explore ways for improving the situation

- Did we use the time effectively to make a positive difference?

- If it was you or a member of your family being assessed – would you be satisfied with what has just taken place?