

Guidelines for professionals for assessing risk when working with substance using parents, (based on SCODA)

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| | PARENTAL SUBSTANCE USE/MISUSE |
| 1 | Is the substance use by the parent a. experimental? b. recreational? c. chaotic? d. dependent? |
| 2 | Does the substance user move between categories at different times? |
| 3 | Does the substance user combine non-prescribed drugs and alcohol? |
| 4 | Is there evidence of co-existence of mental health problems alongside the substance use? |
| 5 | Is there a substance misuse-free parent, supportive partner or relative? |
| | ACCOMMODATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT |
| 6 | Is the accommodation adequate for the children? |
| 7 | Are the parents ensuring that the rent and bills are paid? |
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| 8 | Does the family remain in one area or move frequently, if the latter, why? |
| 9 | Are there other substance using adults sharing the accommodation? |
| 10 | If the parents are using drugs or alcohol, do the children witness the taking of the drugs or alcohol? If so what are the effects on the children? |
| | PROVISION OF BASIC NEEDS |
| 11 | Is there adequate food, clothing and warmth for the children? |
| 12 | Are the children attending school regularly? |
| 13 | Are the children engaged in age-appropriate activities? |
| 14 | Are the children's emotional needs being adequately met? |
| 15 | 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)? |
| | PROCUREMENT OF DRUGS AND/OR ALCOHOL |
| 16 | Are the children left alone while parents are procuring alcohol or drugs? |
| 17 | How much are the drugs or alcohol estimated to cost? |

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| 18 | How may the costs be financed? |
| 19 | Is this causing financial problems? |
| 20 | Do the parents have any convictions for supplying drugs? |
| 21 | Is there evidence that the parents are allowing their premises to be used by other drug or alcohol users? |
| | HEALTH RISKS |
| 22 | If drugs and/or injecting equipment are kept on the premises, are they kept securely? |
| 23 | Are the children aware of the location? |
| 24 | <p>If the parents are intravenous drug users:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do they share injecting equipment? • Do they use a needle exchange scheme? • How do they dispose of syringes? • Are parents aware of the health risks associated with injecting or using drugs? • |
| 25 | <p>If parents are on a substitute prescribing programme, such as Methadone:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are parents aware of the dangers of children accessing this medication? • Do they take adequate precautions to ensure this does not happen? • |

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| 26 | Are parents aware of, and in touch with, local specialist agencies who can advise on such issues such as needle exchanges, substitute prescribing programmes, detox and rehabilitation facilities? If they are in touch with agencies how regular is their contact? |
| | FAMILY SOCIAL NETWORK AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS |
| 27 | Do parents and children associate primarily with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other drug or alcohol users? • Non-users? • Both? |
| 28 | Are relatives aware of the drug or alcohol use? Are they supportive? |
| 29 | Will parents accept help from the relatives and other professional or non-statutory agencies? |
| 30 | The degree of social isolation should be considered particularly for those parents living in remote or radically/culturally isolated areas where resources may not be available and they may experience social stigmatisation. |
| | PARENTS' PERCEPTION OF THE SITUATION |
| 31 | Do the parents see their drug or alcohol use as harmful to themselves or to their children? |
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| 32 | Do the parents place their own needs in detriment to the needs of their children? If so, how are the parental behaviours and negative child outcomes linked? |
| 33 | Are the parents aware of the legislative and procedural context applying to their circumstances (e.g. child protection procedures, statutory powers)? |
| 34 | Any other relevant information? |
| | SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION |