



Practitioners Quick Guide

Using the Family Drug and Alcohol Screening Tool

The **Substance Misuse Family Matrix (Appendix A)** is designed to help Practitioners assess any risk to the child where substance misuse is present within the family home. The tool is in two parts; the first assesses drug and alcohol use, the second part identifies any other areas of vulnerability or protective factors that may keep the child safe. The information gathered through the tool will help the Practitioner assess the level of risk to the child and inform the next steps. Practitioners should use their professional judgement to determine the level of risk and follow the appropriate course of action for the family (Appendix B).

The tool can be used in any setting and should be completed with the parent/carer.

The Practitioner does not need to observe the child, or the home environment to undertake the assessment, it is the behavior's connected to drug and alcohol use and the impact it has on the child's life experience that is under assessment. The tool can also be used as a guide for managing the needs of an unborn child.

If the Practitioner has concerns of safeguarding on completion of the assessment, the [local safeguarding procedure](#) should be followed.

Once it has been ascertained drug and alcohol use is at a level that requires specialist input the Practitioner should establish with the parent/carer if they are in specialist treatment.

Treatment is a protective factor, the Practitioner should request consent to contact the key worker, subject to the information sharing guidelines, to support joint working with the family. If the service user is active in treatment they will have a dedicated keyworker and care plan in place. The Practitioner should promote the benefits of joint working with the service user to support the information sharing process.

If there is no current treatment intervention in place, the Practitioner should encourage the service user to refer themselves into Shropshire Recovery Partnership, for a full

comprehensive assessment. The referral can be made by phone or dropping into the nearest treatment hub.

A third party referral can be made to Shropshire Recovery Partnership. The Practitioner should seek consent from the service user prior to making the referral. On receipt of referral the parent/carer will be contacted by the service and offered an appointment for assessment.

If the service user declines service following a third party referral SRP will notify the referrer. This must be done **within 24 hours of the service refusal**. Any delay in this may be detrimental to the needs of the child.

Where appropriate, services should work together to undertake joint assessments and agree with the family a support plan which meets all needs.

In the interests of working together, the Practitioner should establish with the parent if they are already involved in any other services, identify who they are and promote information sharing.

If drug and alcohol treatment forms part of any plan (Child Protection/Child In Need/Early Help) any non-attendance at an agreed appointment at Shropshire Recovery partnership must be reported to the dedicated children's practitioner within **24 hours of non-attendance by the SRP allocated case worker**.

Drug and alcohol misuse may contribute to, or intensify where there is domestic abuse within a relationship. It is therefore imperative that any drug or alcohol misuse is viewed in the context of family functioning, and not purely as a predictor or indicator of child abuse and neglect.

Where parents do not wish to engage in treatment and their drug or alcohol use is assessed as low risk this should be recorded on the case notes of the child and monitored by the child's practitioner.

In circumstances where it is not the parent but an unrelated partner, sibling or other's use that is impacting on the child, then the practitioner should assess the capacity of the parent to protect the child.

Any change in the family circumstances will require the **Substance Misuse Family Matrix** to be revisited to ensure the child needs are still being met.

Where no immediate needs are identified take no further action, please note this on the case records detailing the decision taken.

Due to the complexity of drug and alcohol, national guidance anticipates the majority of children who are affected by drug and alcohol misuse will have some form of presenting support needs. [Early Help can offer a range of support to children, young people and families.](#)

If a child is assessed at risk of significant harm Safeguarding Procedures **must** be followed and a referral made directly to Children's Social Care via the **First Point of Contact (FPOC) 0345 678 9021**. Please specify you want to make a 'child protection' referral. Further guidance can be found in the [West Midlands Safeguarding Procedures](#).

If there is no immediate risk to the child but advice is needed on the child or family circumstance, practitioners can contact **FPOC on 0345 678 9021**.

