

AIDE MEMOIRE FOR HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE SERVICES

RISK CATEGORIES & FACTORS

First published in Morgan, S. (2013) *Risk Decision-Making: Working with risk and implementing positive risk-taking*. Pavilion Publishing & Media, Brighton.

[Adapted from *Promoting Quality Care* (2010) N. Ireland Risk Guidance and Morgan, S. (2007) *Working with Risk Practitioner Manual*, OLM-Pavilion, Brighton]

A GUIDE TO GOOD PRACTICE (not TICKING BOXES)

- ◆ The following categories and risk factors provide prompts to the many risks encountered in day-to-day practice (they are not an exhaustive list)
- ◆ The lists should be regularly consulted in relation to the use of any risk screening tools, risk assessment protocols, and for general awareness
- ◆ They should guide and support thoughtful reflective practice
- ◆ Only 'Risk of Harm to Self' and 'Risk of Harm to Others' categories have a research basis, the majority of evidence for working with risk is *practice based evidence*
- ◆ When documenting risk information use only the appropriate categories and factors identified, and be specific about the context for the individual person

RISK OF HARM TO SELF

- ◆ Previous history of suicide attempts
- ◆ Suicidal ideation/preoccupation
- ◆ Family history of suicide/recent loss
- ◆ Alcohol/substance misuse
- ◆ History of self harm or self injurious behaviour
- ◆ Reckless behaviour
- ◆ Impulsive behaviour
- ◆ Sexualised behaviour causing concern (e.g. promiscuity/exploitation)
- ◆ Expression of helplessness/hopelessness
- ◆ Considered/planned intent

RISK OF HARM TO OTHERS

- ◆ Previous history of violence, aggression or assault towards others
- ◆ Actual or suspected criminal history
- ◆ History of violent sexual offences/assaults
- ◆ Previous diagnosis of psychopathy or antisocial personality disorder
- ◆ Talking of threats to harm others
- ◆ Displaying elevated anger, hostility or threatening behaviour
- ◆ History of owning, carrying, using weapons
- ◆ History of property damage or arson
- ◆ Denial of previous dangerous behaviours
- ◆ Known personal triggers

RISK FROM OTHERS and VULNERABILITY

- ◆ Known history of abuse towards the person (e.g. physical, financial, sexual)
- ◆ History of being targeted/bullied
- ◆ History of being easily led and exploited by others
- ◆ Previous history of poor engagement with services/treatment
- ◆ Problems coping with severe stress (e.g. bereavement)
- ◆ History of severe self neglect, inadequate housing, poor nutrition, poor hygiene
- ◆ Difficulty communicating needs

PHYSICAL/MEDICAL RISK

- ◆ Complex physical health needs
- ◆ Specific co-morbid conditions (e.g. Epilepsy, Diabetes)
- ◆ At risk of accidental wandering/falls or harm inside the home
- ◆ Risks associated with nutrition, swallowing, aspiration
- ◆ Previous history of mental illness
- ◆ Previous history of challenging behaviours
- ◆ Medication effects or side effects
- ◆ Previous therapy for anger management
- ◆ Adequate management of end-of-life needs

<p>CHILDREN &/or VULNERABLE ADULTS AT RISK</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Previous concerns regarding access to children ◆ Service user has been linked to formal vulnerable adult processes ◆ Involvement of other services (e.g. family and child care, Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services, health visiting) ◆ Threats of previous harm to, or preying on any child/children or other person ◆ Emotional abuse or neglect of children ◆ History of family or domestic violence ◆ History of volatile personal relationships ◆ Subject to previous safeguarding arrangements 	<p>ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Suitability of the living environment (e.g. design, proximity to potential victims, access to intoxicants, surrounding area) ◆ Staffing levels ◆ Staff skills, attitudes and competencies ◆ Communication systems ◆ Lack of purpose and structure to day-to-day life ◆ Experiencing stigma associated with learning disability ◆ Experiencing hostility/harassment from others in the local community ◆ Inadequate access to appropriate transport ◆ Lack of consideration for cultural differences (e.g. spiritual, religious identity)
<p>OTHER POTENTIAL INDICATORS OF RISK</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Recent severe stress/loss ◆ Concerns expressed by others ◆ Impending stressors (e.g. court appearance) ◆ Lack of social or carer support system ◆ Difficulties managing or coping with social/personal relationships ◆ Nomadic lifestyle ◆ Housing problems (e.g. potential eviction) ◆ Severe financial difficulties ◆ History of compulsory hospital admission ◆ Social isolation ◆ Risks associated with daily living (e.g. road safety, fire safety) 	<p>HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Involving service users/carers (where appropriate) ◆ Consider person's own wishes ◆ Consider skills/strengths of the person ◆ Utilise least restrictive option ◆ Consider what is important 'to' the person ◆ Consider communication needs ◆ Facilitate understanding of the process ◆ Provision of accessible information ◆ Consider advocacy arrangements ◆ Consider issue of proportionality ◆ Proactive and preventative strategies
<p>POSITIVE RISK-TAKING (to be considered whenever possible)</p> <p><i>SOME EXAMPLE AREAS FOR POSITIVE RISK-TAKING:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Medication reduction, change or withdrawal ◆ Administering own medication ◆ Full or part-time work opportunities (paid or voluntary) ◆ College courses, vocational training, personal development, etc. ◆ Independent living ◆ Going away on a holiday ◆ Managing own finances ◆ Home treatment / keeping out of hospital ◆ Engaging in sexual relationships 	<p>PROTECTIVE FACTORS</p> <p><i>The following are examples, protective factors are specific to the individual:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Willingness to engage with learning disability services ◆ Compliance with medication/treatment ◆ Abstinence from alcohol/drugs ◆ Effective family/social support networks ◆ Faith/religion ◆ Financial security ◆ Having a job/constructive activity ◆ Ability to communicate needs and wishes ◆ Belief that change is possible ◆ Previous approaches used successfully to manage risk