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What is the SDQ?

The SDQ is a brief emotional and behavioural screening tool. There are 3 types:

1. a **carer SDQ** *this is the main type
2. a self-rated SDQ for 11–17-year-olds
3. a teacher SDQ - used in some circumstances for triangulation with other SDQs if potential problems are identified

All versions of the SDQ ask about 25 attributes. These 25 items are divided between 5 scales:

1. emotional symptoms
2. conduct problems
3. hyperactivity/inattention
4. peer relationship problems
5. pro-social behaviour

SDQs for CfC

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Local authorities are required to use the **carer SDQ** to assess the emotional wellbeing of individual CfC aged 4-17. Understanding the emotional and behavioural needs of CfC is important so that the relevant support can be put in place and children are given the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

The number of **carer SDQs** completed by the local authority for CfC is reported to the Department for Education annually to demonstrate that Social Workers and professionals working with CfC are considering emotional and behavioural strengths and difficulties.

07 Partnership working

It's important that we work in partnership to assess and promote the emotional wellbeing of our CfC. Emotional wellbeing is a key factor to our CfC being happy, healthy and achieving fulfilling lives. Therefore, prompts have been built into the statutory review meeting templates and PEP reviews for Sefton CfC, to help ensure that SDQs have been completed and arrangements are in place for CAMHS to share SDQs with the Sefton Health Team when Social Worker consultation has occurred.

Who arranges for the carer to complete the SDQ in Sefton?

For children who are new into care and for all children living outside the Sefton borough, the allocated Social Worker arranges for the **carer SDQ** to be completed. This includes the annual SDQs for CfC living outside of Sefton. The Social Worker arranges for the SDQ to be inputted on the children's local authority records. For children who have been in care for over a year and who are living in the borough of Sefton, the Sefton Children in Care Health Team (Mersey Care NHS Foundation NHS Trust) arrange for the **carer SDQ** to be completed at the same time as the children's statutory review health assessments. The Health Team input these **SDQs** into the children's local authority records.

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQs) for Cared for Children (CfC)

When is the SDQ completed?

For CfC who are new into care the **carer SDQ** should be completed by a carer who has established a relationship with them, about 2-3 months after the care episode has started. If the child is subject to a Care Order but living with a parent the completion may be earlier. From then on, an annual **carer SDQ** is completed for all CfC aged 4-17 years of age.

Why should carers complete SDQs?

It is important to routinely assess the emotional wellbeing of CfC as:

- Because of their experiences both before and during care, CfC are at much greater risk of poor mental health than their peers
- Half of all CfC meet the criteria for a possible mental health disorder, compared with 1 in 10 of children not in care
- Young people leaving care in the UK are more likely to die by suicide than their peers

How is the SDQ used?

The completed SDQ can be used in the following ways:

- To inform statutory health assessments completed by NHS staff
- To inform if the child/young person needs a referral into emotional wellbeing or specialist CAMHS
- To use as a benchmark and to then evaluate progress against emotional wellbeing outcomes
- Giving commissioners of services a better understanding of the emotional wellbeing needs of the Sefton CfC population

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