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0-19 (25) HEAT Tool Guidance

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0 -19 (25) Home Environment Assessment Tool (HEAT) Guidance

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November 2023.

Background

The tool is intended to help 0-19 staff identify those families where there may be early signs of neglect so that prompt action can be taken to address and support families to improve home conditions and safety for their children. The practitioner will also use the tool to review and discuss home safety to prevent accidental injury to a child.

The HEAT should not be used in isolation and should form part of the overall assessment that is being undertaken.

The tool recognises that practitioners must make judgements about the safety, order, and cleanliness of the homes in which children live. The tool has been designed to help practitioners to be objective about their observations and evidence their concerns.

Working together with families

The assessment tool should be completed jointly with families; this creates greater openness and a common understanding of the areas that may cause concern. A strength-based approach will enable and support the co creation of any action plan and identify resilience and strengths to enable a family to identify risks and find solutions to address them. Consent should be obtained as part of this process.

The questions in the assessment tool have been worded in a positive way to minimise the risk of families feeling anxious about the assessment. The assessment should be delivered in an empathic style that gives families some reassurance that a supportive approach is being adopted.

If consent to complete the HEAT is not obtained then practitioners need to document this, analyse risk, and consider seeking further safeguarding advice.

When to use the tool

The HEAT assessment tool should be used as part of a wider holistic assessment of a family's needs to provide insight of the home environment. It is important that the practitioner has a clear picture of the home environment from the child's perspective e.g., a young baby who is at crawling stage will be more affected by dirt on the floor however an older child may be more affected by dental decay.

The tool.

- must be completed at least once in all active children's records, at first visits to a family home (Antenatal, New Birth Visit, Transfer- in, new Safeguarding issue or referral for additional support)
- only needs to be repeated where there is an indication such as a new risk identified or previously identified risks are being reviewed i.e., baby now sleeping in own room, house move, deterioration in home conditions at each Review Health Assessment for a Child in Care.
- must be completed on all children if one child is UPP within the family.
- should be scored based on what is observed.

Scoring guidance

Answer Yes if there are no issues and

Answer No if issues are evident.

If all answers are Yes or N/A the practitioner does not need to tick **ALL** the boxes on the tool sheet, they will record that Housing Adequate and HEAT completed (questions 1 and 2) on the HEAT questionnaire and on the Family Health Needs Template

Depending on the age of the children, different items may give concern, but in general the higher amount of 'No' responses, the greater the concern.

A single item may be enough to raise a significant concern.

Where there is a NO answer ALL the questions on MUST be completed. Specific details should be documented by the practitioner of what is seen to help develop specific actions to address improvements required.

The practitioner should use the tool to help gain an understanding of why difficulties are evident, so that appropriate and supportive actions can be identified to help the family make the required improvements.

If there are enough concerns that there is imminent safeguarding risk, staff leave the home but ring the police on 999. This allows police to take head cam footage of extremely poor home conditions, which supports any decision to remove the children under an EPO and helps with court evidence. The tool will help strengthen any safeguarding referral.

Unless an issue raises a concern that a child or a young person may be at risk of immediate or significant harm, practitioners should take appropriate supportive action to address the issues of concern with families.

Direct help and support should be provided to the family and a review of the agreed actions should be undertaken within a reasonable timescale.

Actions should be documented in the action plan section of the template after analysis.

Scoring

In Durham and North Yorkshire staff will need to score the questionnaire and follow the Local Safeguarding Partnership procedure.

Alyson Harker

Professional Lead

The Tool tips to completing.

1.0	Observation of interior and exterior of the home	Impact on child/ren Specific details required
1.1	Home is free from pet/animal hazards including faeces/vermin, excessive animal hair and there is no evidence of fleas/bedbugs.	
1.2	Home free from rubbish/clutter/hoarding which is likely to pose a safety risk to children.	Tip Consider stairs, landings and doorways. The front and back doors are useable exits in an emergency and for daily use.
1.3	Home is in good state of repair	Tip Consider obvious state of poor repair, such as doors missing, holes in walls, stair rails missing.
1.4	The garden/outside space is safe and free from rubbish, animal faeces	Tip Consider uncovered ponds/pools and broken play equipment.
1.5	There are adequate home furnishings.	Tip Consider has the child and other family members got a bed, storage that makes the bedroom safe, is there somewhere to sit, safe flooring.
1.6	There are adequate basic amenities including services to kitchen and bathroom.	Tip Consider does the family have a fridge, cooker/something to cook food with, clean running water, electricity/gas points, a toilet is working, sink in the kitchen for washing up, bath is free to be used for washing.
1.7	There are basic kitchen items and provisions appropriate to children and family (e.g., weaning) including adequate food in cupboards and fridge.	Tip Consider plates and cutlery, pot and pans.
1.8	The gas, electric and water are available and there is a working boiler.	Tip Consider if the gas/or electric is not on, how long has the water/gas/electric has been off, what are the reasons for this? What are parents/carers doing to try and get the amenities back on, what is the impact on the children.
2.0	Health and Safety Issues	Impact on child/ren Specific details. (if required)

2.1	The home environment is safe and clear of hazards and age-appropriate safety equipment present.	TIP Consider whether there is use of a chip pan and associated fire risk. Consider use of and access to stairgates, smoke alarm, fire guards, cupboard latches, safe blind cords.
2.2	There is no evidence of weapons within home or garden.	TIP Consider items such as baseball bats/ ceremonial swords etc.
2.3	The home is warm, well ventilated and has no unpleasant odour.	TIP Consider mould, is it black mould that is contributed to by overcrowding, lack of ventilation, hoarding, drying washing on radiators, lack of ventilation when bathing/ showering. Is there a smell of smoke/ cannabis? Is there a smell of urine? Consider children's enuresis, is it animal related.
2.4	There is no evidence of exposed needles/ drug paraphernalia /medicines/ alcohol in sight or reach of children.	TIP Consider types of medication taken by family members. Consider empty bottles/ cans in the recycling, consider empties within the home, prompts safe storage of alcohol. Is a locked box required?
2.5	There is evidence of animals in the home being well cared for and supervised around the child/ren. The animal is not considered dangerous and/or there is not a history of animal bites?	TIP Is there food for the animal. Is there evidence of fleas or sores that could impact on the children/family. Litter boxes are clear. Animals cages/fish tanks/crates are clean.
2.6	Smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms are present and in working order.	TIP Regulations for landlords – are there carbon monoxide alarms, gas, and electric certificates.
2.7	Where there are smokers in the household are they following advice of smoking around children?	TIP 7 steps guidance can be shared with family (smoking outside of the home, washing hands before handling babies). Consider using carbon monoxide testing monitor? Consider storage of cigarettes, E cigarettes and e solutions being safely stored.
3.0	Sleeping Arrangements	Impact on child/ren Specific details. (if required)
3.1	The children and family members have access to safe sleeping environment.	TIP Appropriate for age of baby – Moses basket or crib, cot, toddler bed. Consider safety of bunkbeds. Ask questions around where people sleep. Consider

		safe co-sleeping. Is anyone sleeping on a sofa? Refer to lullaby trust guidance https://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/safer-sleep-advice/ Where are animals sleeping.
3.2	The beds and furnishings are clean and in good state of repair.	TIP Does everyone have a bed/ somewhere to sleep? Consider management of conditions like enuresis, is this impacting on the children's mattress condition. Mattresses on the floor.
3.3	The mattress' are clean with sufficient bedclothes on children's bed.	TIP Consider are the pillows clean and mattresses free from mould, pillowcase and under sheets that can be washed, is the bedding appropriate for the season?
3.4	There are no locks/bolts or ties on the outside of the bedroom doors, children can freely get out of their bedrooms.	TIP Consider bolts, locks, chairs, are there marks around door handles that indicate that the door has been held shut. Are there handles on both sides of the door?
4.0	Care of babies and children	Impact on child/ren Specific details. (if required)
4.1	Is there sterilizing equipment, baby milk and nappies?	
4.2	Does the child have safe toys that are designed for their age?	TIP Consider guidance around walkers, jumparoos and toys that babies might be placed in for long periods of time, consider choking hazards, toys of older children that might cause injury to others, Is the child supported to play and develop their play.
4.3	Do babies and children have space and freedom to play safely?	
4.4	Is there age-appropriate supervision of the child (also consider age appropriate babysitters).	TIP https://www.rospea.com/school-college:safety/teaching-safety/whole-school:approach/babysitting Consider use of Signs of Safety.
4.5	The child has a toothbrush and uses it daily and has no pain or toothache. The child is registered with a dentist and visits regularly.	TIP Oral Hygiene has been requested as part of the heat tool by public health.

5.0	Any other issues or observations the practitioner or family member wishes to raise?	Impact on child/ren Specific details (if required)
5.1	Write in here issues you may have discovered undertaking the assessment not addressed in any of the above.	TIP Write in here the impact and details of the discovered issues.

Please see the attachment below.

Attachments

[📎 HEAT Tool Guidance updated Nov 23 V3.docx](#)

Approval Signatures

Step Description	Approver	Date
Policy Governance Team Review	Karen Cleminson: Administrative Assistant	27 Feb, 2024
Policy Governance Team Review	PGT Policy Governance Team [KK]	19 Feb, 2024
	Mark Hutchinson	18 Feb, 2024