

What are Risk Factors?

A risk factor is a personal characteristic or circumstance that is linked to a negative event that either causes or facilitates the event to occur and can be categorised thus:

Static Risk Factors: These are unchangeable in that they cannot be influenced by new circumstances or interventions. They are mostly historic e.g. history of violence, previous experiences of abuse, age etc.

Dynamic Risk Factors: These change over time and can be aspects of the individual or their environment and social context such as parenting or social deprivation. Because they are changeable, these factors are more amenable to management.

The dynamic risk factors that are quite stable and change slowly are often referred to as *Stable* or *Chronic* risk factors. Those that change rapidly are known as *Acute Dynamic Risk Factors* or "*Triggers*" (Department of Health, 2007). Because these factors change rapidly, their influence on risk may be short lived but require a rapid response (Hart, et al., 2003).

The assessment of risk is the process of gathering information about people in order to make decisions regarding their risk of being victimised or perpetrators of abuse. That information needs to come from a variety of sources including perpetrator, victims, collateral sources such as friends and family, other service providers and records and reports (Hart, et al., 2003).