

10 Tips for Developing or Choosing a Risk Assessment Tool

When developing or valuating a Risk Assessment Protocol the following questions need to be taken into consideration

- 1. Does the procedure gather information concerning multiple domains of the subjects functioning?** Those involved in Trafficking and Modern slavery, be they perpetrators, targets or facilitators, are not a heterogeneous group. Furthermore, trafficking and all forms of modern slavery is a complex and multi-faceted problem.
- 2. Does the Procedure use multiple methods to gather information?** Any single method information gathering is inevitably prone to a degree of inherent weakness. Over reliance on any single method e.g. interview, questionnaire, case history, makes an assessment vulnerable to incomplete data and bias.
- 3. Does the procedure gather information from multiple sources?** People typically minimise or deny types of violence that they have inflicted or been subjected to. Triangulation of information (use of direct interviews / observation with collateral sources of information) also reduces the risk of bias due to over-reliance on single sources.
- 4. Does the procedure allow users to evaluate explicitly the accuracy of information gathered?** Risk assessment in the context of Modern Slavery and Exploitation are likely to be conducted for the purposes of safeguarding potential or actual victims and evaluating perpetrator behaviour / threat assessment. It may also be in the context of identifying vulnerable groups or communities or the functioning of Organised Crime Groups. The procedure should allow assessors / investigators to evaluate and make judgements about the provenance and credibility of various sources of information, reconcile contradictory information and determine whether the information base is sufficiently comprehensive to permit a valid and defensible decision.
- 5. Does the procedure gather information concerning both static and dynamic risk factors?** Static risk factors are those that are stable/fixed/historical - they are not subject to influence or change. These

factors in general have the strongest empirical support with regard to prediction of future offending and harm. Static risk factors are the predisposing or distal factors that make offending behaviour or victimisation more likely but not inevitable. Dynamic risk factors are short term fluctuations that aggravate the historic factors and increase the likelihood or imminence of offending and victimisation (e.g. the intersection between suitable target and motivated offender) Acute dynamic risk factors are essentially the triggers for the abuse, offence, exploitation to occur.

- 6. Does the procedure allow re-assessments to evaluate changes in risk over time?** The status of risk factors, as well as the overall vulnerability of a person or group or the threat posed by a person or group, may fluctuate over time. These fluctuations can occur rapidly therefore reassessment should occur at regular intervals whenever there is a change in the status of a case.
- 7. Is the procedure comprehensive?** The procedure should consider all the major risk factors as well as allowing case specific risk and protective factors (e.g. a target's resilience and availability of effective guardians).
- 8. Is the Procedure Valid and Useful?** Is it informed by state of the art knowledge in the field, empirical data and is it comprehensible to users and decision makers? Does it do what users need it to do?
- 9. Can Assessors and Investigators be trained to use the procedure in a consistent fashion?** It should be possible to develop programmes to train assessors and investigators to use the procedure that are effective and do not require unreasonable amounts of time, effort and expense to implement.
- 10. Does implementation of the procedure result in reduction of abuse and exploitation in the context of Trafficking and Modern Slavery?** The goal of risk assessment is primarily prevention. Assessments must go beyond making static predictions and assist decision making with respect to identification, investigation, protection, prosecution and planning for recovery.

Adapted from (Hart, Randall Kropp, & D., 2003) and the SIPPS for CSE Training Programme (Barlow, Evaluation of the Adapted SIPPS Project in a South London Borough, 2016) and The Family Risk and Safety Assessment (FRaSA) Practitioner Handbook (Barlow, 2015).

References

Barlow, C. (2016). *Evaluation of the Adapted SIPPS Project in a South London Borough*. Milton Keynes: Craig Barlow Consultancy & Training Ltd.

Barlow, C. (2015). *The Family Risk and Safety Assessment Practitioner Handbook*. Milton Keynes, United Kingdom: Craig Barlow Consultancy & Training Ltd.

Hart, S. D., Randall Kropp, P., & D., R. L. (2003). *The Risk of Sexual Violence Protocol (RSVP)*. Pacific Psychological Assessment Corp. and the British Columbia Institute Against Family Violence.

