

Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) Guidance Notes

In Warwickshire, the Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) is a widely used measure of the child's / young person's emotional health and wellbeing. It is integrated as part of the health assessment although it is the responsibility of the social worker to ensure it has been completed and to chase this up with the carer where it has not been completed.

Interpretation of scores.

The SDQ has a total of **25 questions** and measures strength as well as difficulties. The scores are divided between:

- **The SDQ score** which has a maximum score of **40** (20 questions). It is a measure of the level of a child's emotional difficulty (the higher the score, the greater the difficulty).
The **threshold** is generally regarded as **16 although a recent CQC report has highlighted 14**.
- **The Prosocial score** which has a maximum score of **10** (5 questions). This is a strength based measure (the higher the score, the greater a child's social skills).

The SDQ scores are recorded on the child's Health Plan in the health assessment.

In Warwickshire, the carer is asked to complete a questionnaire for a child from 4 years at the statutory health assessment. This has been agreed locally as national guidance states this is a social care responsibility. Young people aged 11-18 years are also asked to complete a questionnaire at the same time.

Practitioners scoring the assessments are asked to measure up to 4 scores. These are:

For children 4 years and over:

1. The SDQ score from the carer's questionnaire
2. The pro social score from the carer's questionnaire

For young people 11 and over - The above 2 scores are required plus:

3. The SDQ core from the young people's questionnaire
4. The pro social score from the young people's questionnaire

Health practitioners record these measures separately so that the social worker can:

- Judge the strengths as well as the difficulties.

- Clearly see where there are marked differences between the score by the carer and that by the young person. Where there are notable discrepancies, the social worker should consider reasons for this such as the sensitivity of the carer to the young person's experience, or the young person's perception of their difficulty compared what the carer is noticing.
- Social workers should go back to the original questionnaires to unpick if there are particular areas of difficulty for a child / young person.
Scores of over 14 (CQC threshold) should raise a question for the social worker about possible referral to emotional support services. However, lower scores should not be ignored as there may be key areas of difficulty which the social worker should consider.

Please see: ‘Guidance on data collection on the emotional health of looked after children’

For the purposes of obtaining information to provide data that will inform this indicator (NI58), **using the parent/carers questionnaire is sufficient** (Appendix B).

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/253566/ssda903_sdq_guidance_2012-13_version1-0.pdf

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