

Cafcass Risk Factors

<p>1. Past, present, and/or likely future harm to child (including the unborn child) 1a Physical abuse 1b Emotional abuse 1c Sexual abuse 1d Neglect</p>
<p>2. Vulnerability factors of the child, which may increase risk (e.g. disability; not being a child of the family; behavioural difficulties; uncertain immigration status; family breakdown associated with high conflict where the child is 'unseen', 'unheard' or caught up in the adult battle; unborn child/ren)</p>
<p>3. The child putting self and/or others at risk (e.g. substance abuse; sexually harmful behaviour; past/present and /or likely future suicide threats/attempts; self-harm; involvement in community-based violence such as gang, group and knife crime)</p>
<p>4. Children in specific circumstances (e.g. sexual exploitation; child trafficking; faith-based concerns e.g. child possession; 'honour-based' violence; forced marriage (of the child))</p>
<p>5. Hazardous environment (e.g. unsupervised access to dangerous dogs, drugs, busy road)</p>
<p>6. Domestic violence 6a child witnessing the violence 6b with other partners (either in the past or currently) 6c pre-separation 6d post –separation 6e linked to contact 6f escalation 6g forced marriage (of the parents) 6h threats / fears of child abduction.</p>
<p>7. Vulnerability factors relating to the adults 7a Previous/ current mental health problems 7b Adult learning difficulties 7c Drug/alcohol abuse 7d Past, current and/or likely future suicide attempts/ threats / self-harm.</p>
<p>8. Other social exclusion factors (e.g. poverty, racism, homelessness, sudden change e.g. redundancy, bankruptcy)</p>
<p>9. Presence of a person within the family/household/immediate network who represents a risk to children.</p>
<p>10. Other – specify.</p>

Guidance – Static and Dynamic factors

(taken from Cafcass' Good Practice in Risk Assessment course)

Risk factors can be divided into two groups:

- **Static factors** – those which are based in the individual's past history and background demographics, and so are not amenable to change.
- **Dynamic factors** – those which are amenable to change through treatment, interventions or the passage of time. These include information about the person's current attitudes and beliefs gained from interview.

Static factors provide the backbone of any credible risk assessment. There is a danger of overrating impressions gained from the service user in interview and underrating information about the person's past history and behaviour. Abusers may:

- Fare well in psychological testing, often better than their victims.
- Convince others that they have 'learned their lesson' or 'put their past behind them', overstating the deterrence value of future punishment or other consequences.
- Be mild mannered and appear reasonable despite severe risk, or be noisy and intimidating with professionals despite presenting only moderate risk to their partner or child.

In contrast, victims may appear angry with services, emotionally dis-regulated and difficult to work with.

Past behaviour is the best predictor of future behaviour – especially if we take into account:

- **Timing** - the more recent an event or incident of harm to others, the higher the current risk. An assault by a parent upon a child this week indicates a higher risk for the present than the same incident 5 years ago.
- **Severity** - the more severe an event or incident the higher the current risk. In terms of violence the following is a helpful guide:
 - **Minimal** – results in no detectable injury (equivalent to common assault)
 - **Moderate** – results in bruising or abrasions or minor lacerations (equivalent to ABH)
 - **Serious** – results in major injuries including large lacerations, fractures, loss of consciousness and injuries requiring medical attention (equivalent to GBH).
- **Frequency** - the more frequent the events or incidents or harm to others, the higher the current risk. Persistent and repeated assaults on others are strong indicators.
- **Pattern** - is there a recurrent pattern to the type of incident or the context in which it occurs?
- **Escalation** – are the events or incidents increasing in frequency or severity?

The advice from research therefore is:

- First form a judgement of risk based on **static factors**.
- Then use **dynamic factors** to make modest adjustments to this estimate.