

ADULT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE COPMI 'QUICK CARD'

This is a guide to support you to think about the needs of your client's children and the strengths and vulnerabilities of their family. It is divided into sections according to areas that will provide useful information about the needs of children and adolescents, how your client's mental health may be impacting on their parenting and relationships with their children, and protective factors that could improve resilience for kids.

Step one: Demographics (basic information I need to gather)

1. Is my client a parent?

2. If so, what are the names, dates of birth and ethnicities of their children
3. Do their children live with them?
4. If not, where do they live? How much care/contact does my client have with them?
5. What other adults have care of the children? Names, addresses, contact details

Step two: Information about Parenting

How does my client's mental health impact on their role as a parent? Ask about and look for things such as:

1. Parent's general level of functioning
2. How much are the children exposed to the *symptoms* of their MH condition, e.g., anxiety (checking, cleaning, hypervigilance), hearing and responding to voices, paranoid thoughts, expressing suicidal ideation, self-harming behaviour, increased anger/irritability etc.
3. How much is my client *aware* of the impact of their mental health on their children?
4. What about the *impact/side effects* of medication or other drugs or alcohol– does this impact on my client's ability to parent on a daily basis, e.g., excessive sleeping, no energy to take the kids to school, activities etc.
5. Are you worried about any *specific risks* to the children, such as neglect, emotional abuse, use of physical punishment etc.

Step three: Impact on the children

What are the children's experiences? Ask about and look for things like:

1. Does the child or young person have a role as *carer* in the family?
2. If so *what does this role involve?* For example, monitoring/administering medication, looking after younger children, chores beyond their age such as being responsible for meals etc. Does the parent describe their child as helping with their emotions when they are feeling sad, distressed?
3. *What do the children know* about their parent's mental health and treatment?
4. Do you or other professionals (e.g. teachers) have *any other concerns* about the child or young person's mental health or behaviour?

Step three: Information about the Relationships in the family

The quality of relationships in the family. Ask about and look for things like:

1. How would I describe the *nature of the relationship* between my client and their children?
2. How does my client communicate with their children about everyday issues such as homework, meals?
3. How would I describe the *interactions* in the family? Is there warmth, distance, anger, anxiety, hostility etc?

Step four: Protective factors

What protective factors are present in the children's lives?

1. What *other adults* can the children access for support (both within and outside the family)?
2. *Who else helps* with household chores and responsibilities; esp. when Mum / Dad unwell?
3. What *activities* are the children and young people engaged with outside home?