

STRENGTHS AND DIFFICULTIES QUESTIONNAIRE

HELPING TO UNDERSTAND A CHILD'S BEHAVIOURS AND SUPPORT NEEDS



ACT
Government
Community Services

In the ACT, *A Step Up for Our Kids* strives to create a therapeutic, trauma-informed care system that helps kids grow up strong, safe and connected. A system where everyone involved – service providers, carers and families – understands the impact trauma has on a child's behaviour, health and development. A system that builds positive, safe and healing relationships and practices because of its understanding of trauma, attachment and child development.



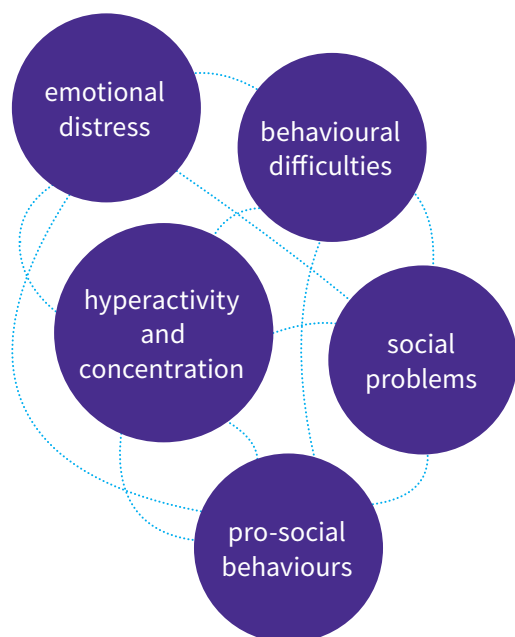
One way we do this is by using professional tools to assess a child's behaviour and identify challenges connected to their trauma experience. The tool we use is the **Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire**.

WHAT IS THE SDQ?

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) is a short survey often completed by children, parents, carers and teachers as part of a therapeutic assessment process.

It asks questions about what is going well in a child's life (strengths) and what challenges there may be (difficulties). Its results help assess a child's behaviour and mental wellbeing, which helps identify what supports could best help them.

The SDQ specifically looks at **behaviours** related to:



It also assesses the **impact** the behaviour is having in a particular situation.

WHY IS THE SDQ USED?

Research suggests complex trauma **alters** how a child's brain develops and this can result in significant social, emotional, cognitive and behavioural problems for the child as they grow.

The use of the SDQ as part of a therapeutic assessment process allows CYPS to **measure** the externalising behaviours often associated with complex trauma. Over time, as supports are put in place and more questionnaires completed for a child, results can be compared to see if their behaviours change and the supports have been effective.

The SDQ is commonly used around the world by professionals working with children. The CYPS Therapeutic Assessment and Planning team, who coordinates the therapeutic assessments, chooses to use it because it is **easy** to use, **quick** for participants to complete and provides **reliable** results.

As part of the assessment process, your assessor will likely get you, the child and others to complete a SDQ. The results from each will be analysed to help form a broader picture of the child's behaviour.

HOW IS IT COMPLETED?

There are different versions of the SDQ and your therapeutic assessor will provide you with the relevant one.

You can complete the questionnaire on your own, or if you prefer, your therapeutic assessor can work through it with you.

There are **no right or wrong answers**. You are simply asked to reflect on your observations of the child over the previous six months.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE?

A SDQ should take no more than 10 minutes to complete. All questions are multiple choice.

WHAT HAPPENS WITH THE RESULTS?

Once all the requested questionnaires have been completed, your therapeutic assessor will collate and score the answers to produce the results – these form a ‘baseline’ of how the child is managing.

The results are then used in conjunction with interviews, observations and other activities used in the therapeutic assessment process to help build an overall picture of the child and inform their Therapeutic Assessment Report.

When it comes time to review the child’s Therapeutic Assessment Review Report (usually 12 months later), the SDQ may be repeated and the two scores compared to analyse changes in the child’s strengths and difficulties over that time.

WHO SEES THE RESULTS?

Individual results will not be shared. The results as a whole, will be interpreted into a table and included in the child’s Therapeutic Assessment Report. The therapeutic assessor will analyse the results and when meeting with you and during the Care Team meeting, explain areas where the child may require more support.

WANT MORE INFORMATION?

You are also encouraged to read:

- > Initial carer consultations: Sharing information early to help carers get to know and support children in care
- > Therapeutic assessments: Identifying challenges and relevant supports early
- > Therapeutic Assessment Review Reports: Ensuring children continue to get the right support as time goes on
- > My Therapeutic Assessment Report (for young people)
- > Carer handbook: The go-to resource for kinship and foster carers in the ACT

CONTACT US!

For additional resources or to have a brief follow-up discussion, contact:

Therapeutic assessor:

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Phone:

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Email:

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Note: All case management queries are to be directed to your case manager.

