

Adolescent wellbeing scale

Note: this document was first issued by the Department of Health but its format has been adapted by Cafcass.

Name of young person:
Date:

Adolescent wellbeing questionnaire

This form has been designed so that you can show how you have been feeling in the past few days.

Please read each item and circle the response which shows best how you are feeling or have been feeling in the last few days.

1	I look forward to things as much as I used to	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never
2	I sleep very well	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never
3	I feel like crying	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never
4	I like going out	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never

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ECMS number:

5	I feel like leaving home	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never
6	I get stomach-aches/cramps	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never
7	I have lots of energy	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never
8	I enjoy my food	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never
9	I can stick up for myself	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never
10	I think life isn't worth living	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never
11	I am good at things I do	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never
12	I enjoy the things I do as much as I used to	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never
13	I like talking to my friends and family	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never
14	I have horrible dreams	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never
15	I feel very lonely	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never

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ECMS number:

16	I am easily cheered up	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never
17	I feel so sad I can hardly bear it	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never
18	I feel very bored	Most of the time	Sometimes	Never

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ECMS number:

Scoring

- The responses to each question are scored 0, 1 or 2. How the responses are scored depends on the nature of the statement that is being responded to as well as the response. 0 means that the response indicates no concern, 1 possible concern and 2 that the young person is indicating unhappiness or low self-esteem with regard to that item.
- A score of 13 or more has been found to indicate the likelihood of a depressive disorder. Discussion with the young person and information from other sources will be necessary to make a definite diagnosis. There will be some who score high, but who on careful consideration are not judged to have a depressive disorder, and others who score low who do have one. **Consider signposting to GP and/or CAMHS. If child expresses suicide ideation or plans to harm themselves emergency action needs to be taken in line with Cafcass Child Protection Policy**
- In most instances the way a young person responds to the different questions will be as important and as valuable as any score, because they can give an insight into that particular young person's needs. The reply to only one question may give the opportunity to understand their point of view. **Use this tool to prompt discussion**

	Each question	0	1	2
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Reference

Birleson P (1980) The validity of Depressive Disorder in Childhood and the Development of a Self-Rating Scale; a Research Report. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*. 22: 73–88.

Adolescent wellbeing: guidance on using the scale

Background

1. How young people feel in themselves is a vital part of any assessment.
2. It is important to understand their worries and concerns, and whether they are depressed or even suicidal.
3. There is good evidence that the way a young person is feeling is often not recognised by their parents or caregivers. This makes it particularly important to have a way of helping them to express directly how they are feeling.
4. With very young children their reporting can fluctuate from day to day, or even hour to hour – they do not necessarily give a stable view of their situation. Evaluation of their perspective requires particular care, so questionnaires are not usually a good starting point
5. Older children and adolescents can give a more reliable report, which means that a questionnaire may be more helpful. As with some adults they often find it easier to respond to a questionnaire about feelings than face-to-face interviewing.

The scale

6. The Adolescent Wellbeing Scale was devised by Birleson to pick up possible depression in older children and

adolescents. It has been shown to be effective for this purpose.

7. The scale has 18 questions – each relating to different aspects of an adolescent's life, and how they feel about them. They are asked to indicate whether the statement applies to them most of the time, sometimes or never.
8. The scale can be used by children as young as 7 or 8, but as indicated above, responses are more reliable for those aged 11 or more

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Use

9. In piloting social workers found young people were pleased to have the opportunity to contribute to the assessment.
10. The questionnaire often helped them express their feelings. It gave 'an overall insight in a short time'. It presented a 'truer picture of the adolescent's state of mind'. 'It gave me insight into how sad and overwhelmed the young person felt'.
11. On occasions use of the scale pointed to particular issues that could be a focus for further work. It gave an opportunity for 'the young person to look at themselves'.
12. The scale has proved useful with adolescents at initial assessment, but also to monitor progress. For example it

helped 'clarify a young person's feeling about placement with their mother'.

13. During piloting over half the young people who filled out the questionnaire were above the cut-off score of 13 indicating a probable depressive disorder.

Administration

14. The young person needs to understand the aim of the questionnaire, and how it fits into any wider assessment.
15. Ideally it is completed by the adolescent themselves, but, if necessary, it can be administered verbally.
16. Discussion is usually best at the end, but there may be important areas that need to be picked up as the result of comments made while the questionnaire is being filled out. A number of adolescents talk as they are completing the scale, and this may provide a good opportunity to promote conversation, or establish rapport.
17. During piloting the scale took about 15 minutes to complete, ensuing discussion took longer.