

LECTURE 2: Approaches to Assessment



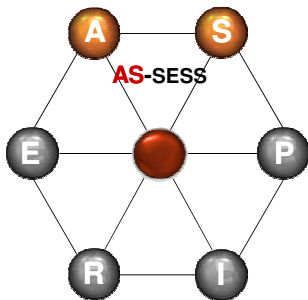
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Through this lecture and the seminar activities we will:

- Explore **definitions** of Assessment in Social Work
- Learn **why** and **how** to undertake Assessments
- Focus upon the **Service User** as the central factor
- Introduce **types** and **levels** of Assessment
- Identify what **constitutes** a “Good Assessment”
- Consider **Assessment Frameworks**

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AsPIRE



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Assessment in a Social Work Context

The social work profession **promotes social change**, **problem-solving** in human relationships and the **empowerment** and **liberation** of people to **enhance well-being**. Utilising **theories** of human behaviour and social systems, social work **intervenes** at the points where people **interact** with their **environments**. Principles of **human rights** and **social justice** are **fundamental** to social work .

(International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) 2000.
Definition of Social Work)

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The Values and Ethics of Assessment

Assessments should **consider** and **challenge** the effects of discrimination and oppression. It is important to **confront** and **challenge** assumptions made by other professionals in determining the best interests of the service user. The **promotion** of **self determination** and quality of life are key to good social work practice.

You must consider **your own thoughts** on working with drug users, alcoholics, prostitutes, criminals, etc. going into dirty and smelly houses. Working with people whose belief systems differ greatly from your own.

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Defining Assessment in Social Work

Assessment is the **analytical process** by which decisions are made.

Middleton;1997,p.5

Assessment is an **ongoing process**, in which the client participates, whose purpose is to **understand people in relation to their environment**; it is a **basis for planning** what needs to be done to maintain, improve or bring about **change** in the person, environment, or both.

Coulshed and Orme, 1998

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The nature of social problems faced by people and communities **varies widely** according to type, severity, duration, circumstance and urgency.

As social workers then we need to know **a great deal** about social problems and the effectiveness of programs, practices and policies intended to solve them. In addition, we must possess **truly advanced knowledge and expertise** in processes needed to help others define, address and resolve social problems.

We need **competence** and **judgement** to select or construct relevant change strategies and the necessary **skills** to apply them in practice.

Cournoyer (2004)

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Defining Assessment in Social Work

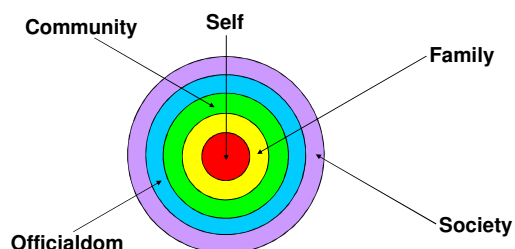
Assessment is the process by which judgements are made about an individual or family and their **environment** in deciding what their needs are.

The scope of the social work assessment is wide covering **many dimensions** of a person's life, such as state of mind, family relationships, physical capabilities, housing conditions, and income in relationship to basic needs – involves too many complex variables for diagnostic certainty to be achievable.

Taken from: Collins Dictionary of Social Work (2002)

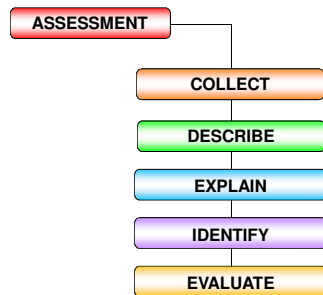
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A Systems Approach to Assessment



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A Five Element Construct of the Assessment Process:



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● COLLECT

The information/data upon which to base the assessment.

● DESCRIBE

The Service User's living conditions, behaviour or the nature of family relationships.

● EXPLAIN

Suggesting possible causes of any problems and probable consequences of unmet needs.

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● IDENTIFY

Problems to be resolved and the individual's or family's strengths or weaknesses in solving those problems.

● EVALUATE

How a person's needs might most effectively be met.

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3 Modes of Assessment

- **The Procedural (Process) Model**

This refers to the format of the standardised tool that a particular agency uses to gather information.

- **The Questioning Model of Assessment**

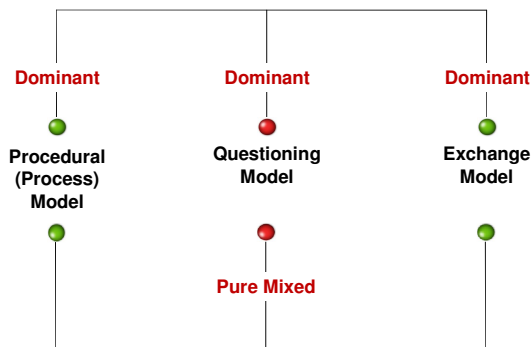
This model, similar to the Procedural model, is one where questions are a one-way process from worker to service user.

- **The Exchange Model of Assessment**

This is a much more open flow of information and clarification between worker and user.

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3 Modes of Assessment



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Assessment as an Ongoing, fluid and dynamic process

- **Single Event Assessment:**

Separation between assessment and commissioning of services

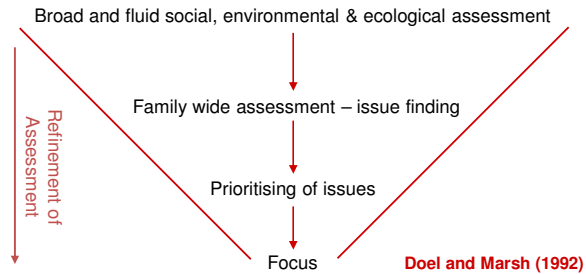
and

- **Time specific formulations of assessment**

Linked to production of court report case conf report etc.

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Levels of Assessment



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Frameworks for Undertaking Assessment

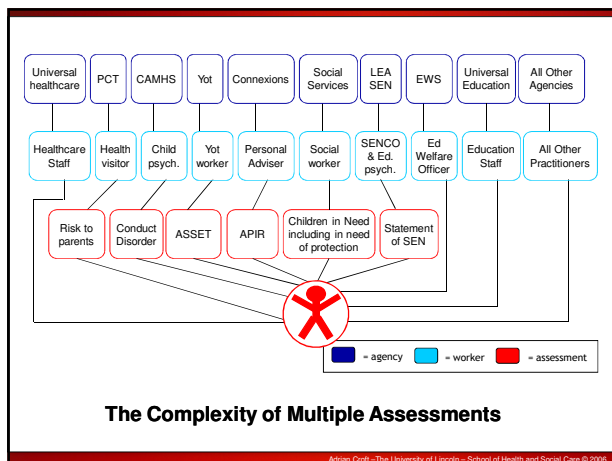
- Assessment with Children and Families
- Assessment with Adults
- Assessment of Mental Ill Health

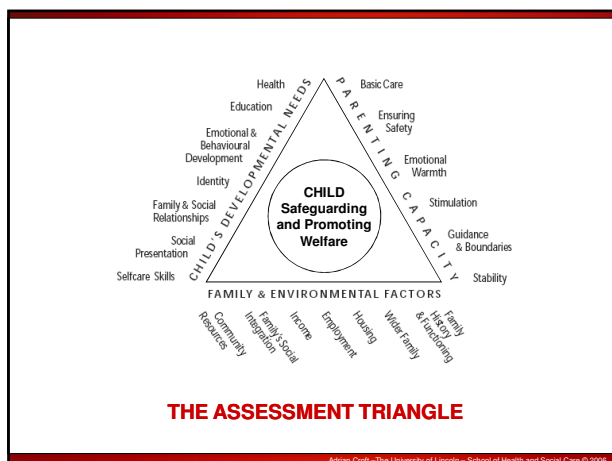
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Not the Single Assessment Process...



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Social Work Processes

Required Reading for Lecture 3

In preparation for Lecture 3 you should **read** and **understand** Chapter 2 "**Tools and Diagrammatic Aids to Assessment**" in Parker and Bradley (2007) **Social Work Practice: Assessment, Planning, Intervention and Review** 2nd Ed, Exeter, Learning Matters.

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