

# **GUIDANCE ON USING PARENTING DAILY HASSLES SCALE**

## **Background**

This scale aims to assess the frequency and intensity/impact of 20 experiences that can be a 'hassle' to parents.

It has been used in a wide variety of research concerned with children and families. The research in which it has been used includes a parenting programme with families who had major difficulties in raising young children.

Parents/Caregivers enjoy completing the scale, because it touches on aspects of being a parent that are very familiar. It helps them express what it feels like to be a parent.

During piloting, social workers reported that it depicted concisely areas of pressure felt by the carer. This helped identify areas where assistance could be provided either by the social services department or other agencies. It is seen by parents as a way for them to express their needs for help with parenting.

## **The Scale**

The caregiver is asked to score each of the 20 potential **Hassles** in two different ways for frequency and intensity.

The frequency of each type of happening provides an 'objective' marker of how often it occurs. The intensity or impact score indicates the caregiver's 'subjective' appraisal of how much those events affect or 'hassle' them.

The time frame for this scale can be varied according to the focus of the assessment. For example, if a family is thought to have been under particular pressure in the last 2 months the parent can be asked to consider how matters have been during that period. However, if it is intended to assess progress, the same time frame should be used on each occasion. Periods of less than one month are probably too short to give a useful picture.

## **Use**

The caregiver should understand the aim of filling out the questionnaire, and how it will contribute to the overall assessment.

The scale is probably most useful with families that are not well-known. In piloting it was found to highlight areas for future discussion, and help prioritise which parenting issues should be addressed first. It can also be used to monitor change.

## **Administration**

It should be given to the parent/caregiver to fill out themselves.

It can be read out if necessary.

It takes about 10 minutes to complete.

The scale should always be used as a basis for discussion. In general this is best kept until the parent has finished, but there will be occasions when it is vital to acknowledge, or immediately follow up comments made while it is being filled out.

## **Scoring**

The scale can be used in two distinct ways: (a) the totals of the frequency and intensity scales can be obtained, or (b) scores for challenging behaviour and parenting tasks can be derived from the intensity scale.

To obtain frequency and intensity total scores

(a) The frequency scale is scored: rarely = 1, sometimes = 2, a lot = 3, and constantly = 4. If the parent says that an event never occurs, never = 0.

The range for this scale is 0–80. A score of 3 or 4 for any one event indicates that it occurs with above average frequency.

(b) The intensity scale is scored by adding the parents rating of 1–5 for each item. If a 0 has been scored for frequency on an item then it should be scored 0 for intensity. The range for this scale is 0–100. A score of 4 or 5 for any one event indicates that it is at least some problem to the parent.

## Scoring

(a) The challenging behaviour total score is obtained by adding the intensity scale scores for items: 2, 4, 8, 9, 11, 12, 16. Range: 0–35.

(b) The parenting tasks total score is obtained by adding the intensity scale scores for items: 1, 6, 7, 10, 13, 14, 17, 20. Range: 0–40.

There is no cut off for any of the scales but total scores above 50 on the frequency scale or above 70 on the intensity scale indicate on the one hand a high frequency of potentially hassling happenings, and on the other that the parent is experiencing significant pressure over parenting.

Events occurring with frequency 3 or 4, or intensity 4 or 5, particularly those where the parent rates high intensity or impact, should be discussed to clarify the extent of need.

The total score on the challenging behaviour and parenting tasks scales may be useful in indicating how the parent/caregiver sees the situation, whether difficulties lie in the troublesome behaviour of the children, or the burden of meeting the 'expected' or 'legitimate' needs of the children. The subscores may also be useful in monitoring change.

## References

Crnic KA & Greenberg MT (1990) Minor parenting stresses with young children. *Child Development*. **61**: 1628–1637

Crnic KA & Booth CL (1991) Mothers' and fathers' perceptions of daily hassles of parenting across early childhood. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*. **53**: 1043–1050.22