

417

ASSESS INDIVIDUALS' MENTAL HEALTH AND RELATED NEEDS

Unit overview

Elements of competence

- 417a Determine the appropriateness and priority of referrals
- 417b Agree the nature and purpose of assessments with individuals
- 417c Assess the nature and extent of individuals' mental health and related needs in accordance with relevant legislation
- 417d Agree courses of action with individuals following assessment

About this unit

For this unit you need to assess individuals' mental health and related needs. This involves evaluating referrals for their appropriateness to the practitioner and the services offered by the organisation or team. The evaluation will include determining the urgency of the individual's needs and the overall caseload of the practitioner, and making the necessary arrangements for the assessment to take place. Once the decision has been made to see the individual, then the nature and purpose of the assessment is agreed with the individual and significant others and an understanding of their needs obtained from them. This is followed by undertaking the assessment to determine the nature and extent of the individual's needs and subsequently, agreeing courses of action with them.

This unit is based on the premise that, for effective assessment to take place, you need to have an adequate understanding of the individual's personal, cultural and social situation and the holistic nature of health and social well-being. You must be able to communicate effectively with individuals and significant others and balance the information they provide about their own needs with the other information gained during the assessment. As the assessment process often acts as a gateway to services, there is also a particular need to monitor the pattern of referrals and evaluate the extent to which services are meeting the needs of the broad community they serve. You are expected to be proactive and alert your employing organisation and, if necessary your professional body, when inappropriate patterns of referral or service delivery arise. While this is effectively a quality assurance issue and dealt with accordingly within other management standards, it needs to be borne in mind in this context and followed through with a reflective attitude.

Scope

The scope is here to give you guidance on possible areas to be covered in this unit. The terms in this section give you a list of options linked with items in the performance criteria. You need to provide evidence for any option related to your work area.

Appropriate action: provision of information and guidance to the practitioner or agency concerned; passed on for management action through appropriate paths; information passed on for action to a professional body.

Appropriate explanation in relation to the following factors: the individual's current state of mental health; their personal beliefs and preferences; their age and level of understanding; their cultural and social background; their awareness and understanding of their condition.

Appropriateness: whether the individual has given their consent (or where statutory powers to intervene without the individual's consent apply); applicability of identified need to services offered; comprehensiveness of the information provided.

Unit overview (continued)

Arrangements: appointment time; duration of appointment; location; others who need to be present; any necessary physical and/or safety arrangements within the environment.

Communication: speech and language, including the use of an interpreter or signer as necessary; actions, gestures and body language; space and position; written.

Complete in relation to: signed; dated; contain all the relevant information obtained on the individual's needs.

Confirmed in relation to: the individual's identity; the identity of any significant other accompanying the individual; the role which the individual wishes their significant other to have and the information they should receive; the identity and roles of the practitioners present.

Consent from: the individual; a suitable person who is acting in the best interests of the individual when the individual is unable to make the decision for themselves.

Environment: the environment in which the programme of care is usually delivered (eg hospital, clinic); the individual's home; other environment, eg A & E Department, police station.

Evaluate in relation to the following factors: local policies and protocols; organisational priorities; your own area of expertise; contract requirements; timeliness.

Inappropriate patterns: those who refer for services which are not provided or are not the most appropriate use of the services; those who consistently provide inadequate referral information.

Inappropriately referred in relation to: the target group for services; the nature of the service and your own area of expertise; the optimum use of the service; contract requirements; timeliness.

Inherent risks for: the individual; their carers; others involved with the individual.

Interests of the individual in relation to: confidentiality; successful outcome.

Level of risk in relation to: the nature of any subsequent intervention; the individual and carer and their health and well-being; evidence from past practice and the success of the interventions concerned; the settings in which interventions will take place; the practitioners involved.

Modifications in relation to: reasoning processes (eg clinical); the individual's wishes; safety of the individual and others involved in the assessment.

Other relevant factors: costs; availability of resources; organisational commitments and contracts; national commitments and priorities.

Particular requirements: the individual's personal beliefs and preferences; the individual's age, sex and physical condition; communication; physical support and access; emotional and psychological support; advocacy; location; transport; time (convenience); the physical environment.

Preparation of the work area: the environment: ventilation, lighting, heating, level of noise, safety, privacy.

Unit overview (continued)

Priorities in relation to: the target groups for that service; the level of need for an individual to qualify for the service; organisational commitments and contracts; national commitments and priorities.

Priority: the severity of the individual's needs; the likelihood of the individual's condition deteriorating; potential risks to those caring for the individual; the risks inherent in the setting in which the individual is currently living.

Records: paper-based; electronic; diagrams and charts.

Referral criteria in relation to: the target group for services; the nature of the service; the optimum use of the service; contractual obligations.

Referral information from: the individual whose needs are being assessed; significant others; the general public; mental health practitioners who work in the same agency; mental health practitioners who work in another agency; practitioners in other sectors, eg health care, social care, custodial care.

Resources include: human; financial; material; technological; settings.

Selected in relation to: predicted outcome; referral information; prior data collection; the environment in which the assessment takes place; the approach and manner of the individual; local service standards; type of assessment to be undertaken.

Subsequent action: no further action – discharge; change the assessment setting; further assessment; referral; intervention.

Support: verbal explanation; written information; by accompanying the individual or arranging for this to happen.

Unavoidable delays: incomplete or unclear referral information; other individuals whose needs have priority; staffing and workload issues; resourcing; location difficulties.

Understanding: their expectations of the outcomes of the assessment and any subsequent interventions; care arrangements; the equipment and materials to be used; their involvement.

ASSESS INDIVIDUALS' MENTAL HEALTH AND RELATED NEEDS

Key words and concepts

This section provides explanations and definitions of the key words and concepts used in this unit. In occupational standards it is quite common to find words or phrases used which you will be familiar with, but which, in the detail of the standards, may be used in a very particular way.

Therefore, we would encourage you to read this section carefully before you begin working with the standards and to refer back to this section as required.

Significant others	Is used here to mean any person whom the individual wishes to involve in their assessment. This includes a partner, carer, relatives and/or friends but may be other member of the community or other workers such as volunteers, other care practitioners, advocate, interpreter, lawyer, religious representative, police or prison officer
Consent	Need not be given directly by the individual in some cases, but can be confirmed as present by reference to others (eg in the case of children and young people) or as a result of legal imperatives under the provisions of the Mental Health Act
Individual's particular requirements	May be in relation to the individual's personal beliefs and preferences, the individual's age, sex and physical condition, communication needs, physical support and access, emotional and psychological support, advocacy, location, transport, time (convenience), the physical environment

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ASSESS INDIVIDUALS' MENTAL HEALTH AND RELATED NEEDS

417a Determine the appropriateness and priority of referrals

Performance criteria

You need to show that:

- 1 You evaluate referral information for its appropriateness to the nature of the service you provide
- 2 You seek further information where the referral information is insufficient to allow an effective assessment to take place
- 3 You take effective action to minimise potential damage where the individual has been inappropriately referred to the service for assessment and to maintain the individual's goodwill
- 4 You effectively monitor referrals to identify inappropriate patterns of referrals and initiate the appropriate action to help solve the problem
- 5 You evaluate referral information to determine the priority of the individual's needs
- 6 You identify the particular requirements of the individual in relation to the assessment as accurately as possible from the available information
- 7 You make arrangements for the assessment consistent with the individual's priority, their particular requirements and other relevant factors and confirm these with individuals in an appropriate manner
- 8 You clearly explain unavoidable delays between referral and assessment to the individual and significant others prior to the assessment taking place
- 9 You make full and accurate records of the arrangements consistent with the organisation's system

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417b Agree the nature and purpose of assessments with individuals

Performance criteria

You need to show that:

- 1 You ensure that the environment in which the assessment is to take place is appropriate for the individual and their needs as identified in the referral information
- 2 You effectively prepare equipment, materials, the surrounding work area and yourself for the assessment to take place
- 3 You provide the individual with as much prior information as possible in order to ensure that they know what to expect at assessment and can be prepared
- 4 You evaluate the individual's initial approach and manner to determine any further particular requirements which were not identified in the referral information and to provide any indicators as to their mental health and related needs
- 5 You introduce individuals and significant others to all those present and confirm everyone's role in the assessment process
- 6 The way in which you communicate throughout the process is designed to emphasise its two way nature and the role of the individual as an informed equal partner in the process
- 7 You inform individuals and significant others of the nature and duration of the assessment, the type of information that will be entered in records and who will have the right of access to these, including discussion of the boundaries of confidentiality
- 8 You confirm the individual's and significant other's understanding of the assessment process and any related interventions
- 9 You encourage individuals and significant others to ask questions, seek advice and express any concerns about the assessment
- 10 You begin assessments only when consent has been confirmed

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417c Assess the nature and extent of individuals' mental health and related needs in accordance with relevant legislation

Performance criteria

You need to show that:

- 1 Throughout the assessment, you respect individuals' privacy and dignity and minimise any unnecessary discomfort within the constraints imposed by the assessment method and the environment in which the assessment is taking place
- 2 You encourage and support individuals and significant others to make an assessment of the individual's needs and use this to inform the assessment process
- 3 You obtain appropriate and necessary background information to allow the assessment to proceed effectively
- 4 You encourage any significant others to give the appropriate support to the individual in a manner which is consistent with the individual's wishes and does not affect the outcomes of the assessment
- 5 You conduct the assessment in a manner which encourages the effective participation of the individual and is consistent with their particular requirements
- 6 You select assessment methods that are safe for the individual, appropriate to their identified needs and consistent with indicators as to their overall health and social well-being
- 7 You use assessment methods correctly and in a way which would achieve similar outcomes if used by other practitioners
- 8 Throughout the assessment process, you balance additional information against the overall picture of the individual's needs to confirm or deny developing hypotheses
- 9 You use reasoning processes that are capable of justification given the available information at the time and are likely to result in the optimum outcome
- 10 Any modifications you make to assessment methods are necessary and capable of justification
- 11 You clearly and accurately record any deviations to standardised assessment methods
- 12 You seek advice and support from an appropriate source when the needs of the individual and the complexity of the case are beyond your role and capability
- 13 You halt assessments at the request of the individual or when the information obtained means that it is unsafe to proceed
- 14 You consider all of the information available on the individual's needs as a whole and you use this directly to inform the subsequent action
- 15 You make complete and accurate records of the assessment, structured in a way which allows other practitioners to use them easily

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417d Agree courses of action with individuals following assessment

Performance criteria

You need to show that:

- 1 You communicate with individuals in a manner which emphasises an active dialogue, with the individual as an informed equal partner in the process
- 2 You explain the outcomes of the assessment to individuals and significant others in an appropriate manner, level and pace
- 3 You base decisions on the subsequent action to be taken on:
 - the consent and wishes of the individual
 - the information gained from assessments of the individuals' needs
 - an evaluation at the level of risk inherent in each option
 - the resources available to meet those needs
 - the priorities of the service
- 4 You make appropriate arrangements for further assessment and interventions when the assessment outcome reveals that this will be necessary
- 5 Where the decision is made to refer on to another practitioner, you agree this course of action with the individual and give them the appropriate support
- 6 Your referrals to other practitioners are consistent with agreed referral criteria, contain all necessary information and are presented clearly
- 7 You inform individuals of the decision not to recommend intervention or referral in an appropriate manner, level and pace when individuals have needs which are not suitable for any form of intervention or referral at this stage, and give them any other necessary advice
- 8 You make accurate, legible and complete records of agreements reached with individuals and the resulting actions taken
- 9 You establish and agree when the action plan will be reviewed and how it will be evaluated
- 10 You promptly communicate written information on the agreed action plan to all parties involved, including the individual
- 11 The information you communicate to others on the outcome of the assessment and the agreements reached achieve the best balance between the interests of the individual, any inherent risks and legal duty of care

Knowledge specification for the whole of this unit

Competent practice is a combination of the application of skills and knowledge informed by values and ethics. This specification details the knowledge and understanding required to carry out competent practice in the performance described in this unit. When using this specification **it is important to read the knowledge requirements in relation to expectations and requirements of your job role.**

Values

- 1 How to show respect for the individual's privacy and dignity and minimise any unnecessary discomfort given the nature of the assessment method to be used
- 2 How to enable individuals to manage and make their own decisions if they are given conflicting professional advice

Legislation and organisational policy and procedures

- 3 Local policies on consent, including any specific requirements under contractual agreements
- 4 The system which your employing organisation has for recording referral and assessment arrangements, the information which must be contained within the organisation's system and your role in this
- 5 The impact of a range of organisational and national factors on whether referrals can be accepted and the timing and conduct of assessments
- 6 The roles, structure and functions of the different agencies to whom referrals may be made
- 7 The information systems which different agencies use and how this affects the information to be sent
- 8 How strategies for dealing with inappropriate referrals may vary according to the agency concerned and the nature of the problem
- 9 Auditing systems which the department or organisation uses to evaluate the information supplied and how these may be used to support your work
- 10 Organisational policies on consent, including any specific requirements under contractual agreements
- 11 The system which your employing agency has for monitoring referrals which are made on to other practitioners and agencies

Theory and practice

Evaluating referrals

- 12 The different sources from which referrals are received
- 13 The roles, structure and functions of the different agencies who make referrals
- 14 The information systems which different agencies use and how to obtain information from them
- 15 The different factors which have to be taken into account when evaluating referrals
- 16 How to use problem solving, reasoning and knowledge of self to balance all of these different factors in deciding the action to be taken
- 17 How to evaluate the referral information for its quality and sufficiency and determine whether it provides sufficient basis from which to move forward
- 18 How to determine whether the referral appears to be one which is appropriate for your services in relation to your own role, the role of the team, and the your own expertise and limitations

Knowledge specification for the whole of this unit (continued)

- 19 The rights of practitioners to refuse referrals and the reasons why this might be done (eg contract requirements, the assessment may put the individuals at risk or not be for their benefit, insufficient resources, to manage waiting lists)
- 20 The different types of unavoidable delays which may occur and the impact of these on the individuals concerned
- 21 The different conflicts and tensions which have to be balanced when evaluating referrals ie contractual obligations and limitations, your commitments and concerns (such as rationing and quality of the service provided), your own locus of interest and the aims of the service
- 22 What actions should be taken when referral information is insufficient or inadequate and the purpose of taking these actions
- 23 The reasons for inappropriate referral patterns occurring
- 24 Long and short term strategies for dealing with inappropriate referral patterns following organisational guidance and personal supervision
- 25 The most appropriate person to refer to when the information is beyond your competence to deal with
- 26 The need for on-going supervision of clinical and operational issues to ensure objectivity, best practice and uniformity across the service
- 27 How to balance the arrangements which need to be made for the assessment in relation to the individual's particular requirements; the priority of the individual and other relevant factors which may impact on when and how the assessment can be conducted, to get the best possible outcome
- 28 Methods of, and reasons for, maintaining the individual's goodwill and their confidence in the service as a whole if they have been inappropriately referred or they cannot be offered an assessment
- 29 The conflicting advice which individuals may receive from different practitioners

Consent

- 30 Current debates around the issue of consent, how the meaning of consent may differ between different practitioner groups and the nature of interventions which they make
- 31 The meaning of informed individual consent and the guidance given by your professional body on this, particularly in relation to where there is a need for written consent
- 32 Methods of obtaining informed consent and how to confirm that the individual has been given sufficient information on which to base their judgement
- 33 Who holds responsibility for gaining consent and when should this be done
- 34 Methods of obtaining informed consent from individuals who are unable to give the consent themselves, who has the right to give this consent and the measures which need to be taken to confirm that the agreements reached are likely to be in the individual's best interest
- 35 The meaning of implied consent and the circumstances when this may be used (eg life and death situations)

Preparing for the assessment of individuals' needs

- 36 The different environments in which assessment of individuals' needs can take place
- 37 How to make the environments appropriate for the individual, their particular needs and the requirements of the particular assessment method
- 38 The equipment, materials and personal protective measures which will be necessary for the assessment
- 39 How to prepare equipment, materials, work area and yourself for the assessment process

Knowledge specification for the whole of this unit (continued)

- 40 The purpose of assessing the individual's initial approach and manner and the indicators of their needs which this may provide
- 41 How to interpret the individual's initial approach and manner
- 42 The purpose of introducing everyone present and confirming their role within the assessment process
- 43 The purpose of informing individuals and significant others of the nature and duration of the assessment and the type of information which may be entered on the records
- 44 The purpose of identifying individuals' and their significant others' understanding of the assessment process and related interventions and ways of doing this effectively
- 45 The purpose of encouraging individuals and their significant others to ask questions, seek advice and express any concerns
- 46 How to be supportive to individuals and their significant others whilst recognising that this may bring other pressures to bear, such as the number of individuals who can be seen in one period of time

Assessing individuals' needs

- 47 How to encourage individuals and their significant others to assess their own needs and the reasons for doing this
- 48 How to interpret the information provided by individuals and their significant others and feed this into the assessment process
- 49 How to structure an assessment and the different models which may be applied
- 50 The range of assessment methods which may be applicable for assessing the individual's needs and evidence for their effectiveness
- 51 How to select the most appropriate assessment methods for particular individuals and the range of different factors which need to be taken into account
- 52 How to use the range of assessment methods effectively and correctly
- 53 How to adapt and modify assessment methods to meet the needs of individuals and situations which prevail at the time (eg balancing the number of individuals who need to be seen)
- 54 The amount of time which each assessment method is likely to take to gain sufficient information on the individual's needs
- 55 Assessment as a process involving the identification of needs, action planning and evaluation
- 56 How to encourage significant others to support the individual
- 57 How the nature of the relationship between the significant other and the individual may alter the extent to which you ask them to be involved or the individual would wish their support
- 58 How to interpret signs from the individual as to their wishes although they may not make these explicit
- 59 Methods of encouraging the effective involvement of the individual in the assessment and how this may differ given the methods being used
- 60 Methods of assessing your own competence in the use of different assessment methods and the relationship of this to the updating of knowledge and skills
- 61 Reasoning processes (eg clinical) during assessment and how to make initial assessments of the individual's needs and yet continually re-evaluate and hold these open to question as further information is obtained
- 62 The information which would confirm or deny initial hypotheses and the reasons for this in particular cases
- 63 The purpose of recording deviations from standardised assessment methods and the information which would need to be logged
- 64 When it is safe to halt particular assessment methods and when it is unsafe to proceed

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Knowledge specification for the whole of this unit (continued)

- 65 How to integrate and synthesise all of the information obtained on an individual so that it can be considered as a whole and what to do with pieces of information which seem inconsistent with the rest
- 66 Methods of judging the subsequent action which may be necessary given different outcomes
- 67 How to structure assessment records so that they contain all of the necessary information and are suitable for others to use
- 68 The background information which it is necessary to obtain for the assessment to proceed effectively
- 69 Who has the right of access to information held on records

Courses of action following assessment:

- 70 Methods of explaining clearly to individuals and their significant others the outcomes of the assessment
- 71 The different fears and concerns which individuals and their significant others will have about the assessment and its outcomes and how to recognise and respect these while at the same time being honest and open with those concerned
- 72 The risks which there may be in various courses of action for the individual and how to assess these realistically
- 73 The resources which are available within your service to meet the individual's needs
- 74 The priorities of services for different groups and how these affect the services which you are able to provide
- 75 How to determine whether the individual's needs should be met even if the resourcing of the service makes this difficult and what to do in these situations
- 76 Reasoning processes around balancing risks, the assessment of individuals' needs, resource availability and service priorities
- 77 The arrangements which may need to be put in place for further assessment or interventions and the capacity of the service to provide these
- 78 The purpose of agreeing with individuals if there is a referral on to another practitioner and how to provide them with sufficient and relevant information for them to give their informed consent
- 79 Methods of maintaining the individual's goodwill when they are not in need of services or it is not possible to provide services for them
- 80 The purpose of recording agreements reached with individuals and how to do this effectively
- 81 Methods of communicating assessment information to others balancing the duty of confidentiality, any agreements made with the individuals, risks and duty of care

Making referrals

- 82 The different factors which have to be taken into account when making referrals and how to use problem solving, reasoning (eg clinical) and knowledge of self to balance all of these different factors in deciding the action to be taken
- 83 The quality, quantity and type of information which needs to be provided when making referrals to make the system effective
- 84 How to determine whether the referral is appropriate to the services of the practitioner concerned

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Evidence requirements for this unit

- Prior to commencing the unit you should agree a plan with your assessor regarding the types of evidence to be used.
- You must provide your assessor with evidence for ALL the performance criteria and ALL the knowledge specifications.
- All evidence should relate to real work activities.
- Direct observation by your assessor and/or expert witness is required for some of the performance criteria for every element in this unit.
- In order to meet the evidence requirements, it is likely that a candidate would need to gather evidence from work in relation to more than one individual and over a series of interactions with them.
- The evidence must, at all times, reflect, the policies and procedures of the workplace as linked to current legislation and the values and principles for best practice within the Health and Social Care Sector. This will include National Service Standards for your area of work or client group.

Competence can be demonstrated using a variety of different types of evidence from the following:

- **Work products:** these can be any record that you would normally use within your normal role eg minutes of staff meetings, review meetings, care plans, records and reports.
- **Reflective account:** you describe your actions in a particular situation(s) and reflect on the reason(s) for you practicing in that way, probably in relation to the individuals you work with and their day to day progress.
- **Assignment/project:** you may have already completed an assignment or project (for example during an HNC, NC, VRQ or BTec course).
- **Questioning:** you and your assessor may agree on questions to demonstrate your knowledge, to supplement the knowledge demonstrated through observations and reflective accounts. These can be oral or written but evidence of this must be recorded.

NB Confidential records do not require to be included in your portfolio of evidence. These can remain where they are normally stored and checked by your assessor and internal verifier. If included, they must be anonymised.