

## **The New Directions Team Assessment (Chaos Index)**

### Background

The New Directions Team in the London Borough of Merton is one of twelve pilots from the Adults Facing Chronic Exclusion (ACE) national programme. The ACE Programme aims to ensure collective responsibility for inclusive services by taking an integrated approach to addressing services for adults facing chronic exclusion<sup>1</sup>. This national programme is a partnership across the departments of Work and Pensions, Health, Communities and Local Government, and the Home Office.

The aim of the New Directions Team is to provide an early intervention for residents from the London Borough of Merton who are not engaging with frontline services, resulting in multiple exclusion, chaotic lifestyles and negative social outcomes for themselves, families and communities. The development of an agreed local 'chaos index' to identify individuals or groups to target for the New Directions Team was an outcome of the development of the new service.

### Chaos Index

The development of the Chaos Index began by asking partners from the multi-agency steering group, who had been actively involved in the development of bidding to become a pilot site, for case studies of individuals whom they thought the New Directions Team (NDT) would be serving. It was important from the start to understand the different perspectives of the multi-agency steering group members and who they considered the new team would actually be serving based on real case studies from local services. Members of the steering group included Primary Care, Social Services, Mental Health Services, Housing, Youth Inclusion services, the Police, Drug and Alcohol services, Jobcentre Plus, the Learning & Skills Council and the volunteer bureau.

Early discussions with the steering group combined with a review of the research evidence<sup>2</sup> about people with chaotic lives who have multiple needs showed that a high proportion tend to have mental health problems, often in combination with substance use or personality disorder. Whilst the local case studies were being developed a brief review of the literature of people who did not engage or were rejected by mental health services was undertaken to identify key individual characteristics.

The multi-agency steering group were keen that the Chaos Index focused on behaviours. The local case studies were analysed to ascertain consistent behaviours across the case studies and to understand the level of impact of these behaviours.

The first draft of the Chaos Index simply listed the behavioural criteria and anchor points. Feedback from the multi-agency steering group consisted of several semantic changes, the want to tier the Index so 'engagement with front line services' was the key to eligibility and to load the scoring for the two criteria for 'risk to others' and 'risk from others'. To ensure both reliability and consistency in assessment it was agreed that when the NDT became operational the team manager would carry out all the Chaos Index assessments of referrals to the NDT team.

### Piloting

The Chaos Index was piloted across several of the agencies from the multi-agency steering group: the Police, mental health services, alcohol/drug services and the Youth Inclusion Services (for example, anti social behaviour team, youth justice team, 16+ team). Each agency carried out the piloting as a desktop exercise based on existing knowledge of clients and considered clients they thought should be eligible for the NDT and people they thought would not. Agencies were also asked to comment on how easy it was to use, how understandable it was, whether there were criteria that were missing and whether the anchor points on the index were correct and the distance between them understandable/sensible. A key aim of the piloting was to try and

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<sup>1</sup> HM Government (2006) *Reaching Out: An Action Plan for Social Exclusion*. London: Cabinet Office.

<sup>2</sup> Schneider, J. (2007) *Better Outcomes for the most excluded*. Nottingham University.

establish a threshold from the Chaos Index for eligibility to the NDT. Interestingly, the Youth Inclusion Services looked at the piloting for both the young person but also separately for the parents.

The piloting identified that the Chaos Index was both easy to use and understandable however, there were concerns about people who were potentially marginal especially clients whom services considered the scoring of the individual could change in a short period of time. For example, there was a concern that whilst a person might be leading a chaotic lifestyles resulting in current negative social outcomes they were scoring 2 on the 'engagement with frontline services' criterion which would not make them eligible to continue the assessment therefore not making them eligible for the NDT however, agencies thought that this could change and the person moves to scoring 3 or 4 within a short period of time thus making the individual potentially eligible for the service – this will be addressed through ways of working between the NDT and other agencies. Through the piloting exercise there were several consistently high scoring criteria across agencies: risk to others, risk from others and drug/alcohol abuse. In addition, members of the multi-agency steering group and several of the agencies who piloted the index suggested the name of the index should be changed to a less pejorative term. The name of the assessment has now been changed to the New Directions Team Assessment – nobody wanted an individual who had been assessment under the Chaos Index to see this as a 'badge of honour'!

#### Outcome

Through discussion of the piloting exercise at the multi-agency steering group a threshold for eligibility to the NDT has been set. The eligibility threshold will be reviewed over the next 6 months as referrals from local services and assessments are carried out to check that the threshold is correct and the team are targeting people who are not engaging with frontline services, resulting in multiple exclusion, chaotic lifestyles and negative social outcomes for themselves, families and communities.

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**April 2008**

## **New Directions Team Assessment**

### Instructions

The New Directions Team assessment is used in assessing whether someone referred to the New Directions Team is appropriate for the service. The assessment will not be the only criterion to be used in determining service eligibility, and certain vulnerable groups of people will be given priority:

- care leavers, particularly those with multiple risk factors e.g. school exclusion
- young offenders
- prisoners facing release from HMP Wandsworth
- repeat offenders or former prisoners with drug/alcohol problems
- people with particularly pronounced housing difficulties

The items in the assessment are rated on a 5-point response format with 0 being a low score and 4 being the highest score, there are two criterion where 0 is the lowest score and 8 is the highest. There are 10 criterions in total each with 5 anchor points. Criterion 1, engagement with frontline services, tests the basic eligibility for New Direction team, if a score of 0 - 2 is achieved then the person is not eligible to complete the assessment or be considered for the team.

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Client Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: HOME: \_\_\_\_\_ MOBILE: \_\_\_\_\_

Referrers name, organisation and contact details: \_\_\_\_\_

Person carrying out assessment: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Select **ONE** statement that best applies to the person being assessed. Base all scores on the past **one month**.

### **1. Engagement with frontline services**

- 0 = Rarely misses appointments or routine activities; always complies with reasonable requests; actively engaged in tenancy/treatment
- 1 = Usually keeps appointments and routine activities; usually complies with reasonable requests; involved in tenancy/treatment
- 2 = Follows through some of the time with daily routines or other activities; usually complies with reasonable requests; is minimally involved in tenancy/treatment
- 3 = Non-compliant with routine activities or reasonable requests; does not follow daily routine, though may keep some appointments.
- 4 = Does not engage at all or keep appointments

**If score for 'co-operation with frontline services' is 0 – 2 please stop, end of assessment**

**If score is 3 or 4 please continue**

## **2. Intentional self harm**

- 0 = No concerns about risk of deliberate self-harm or suicide attempt
- 1 = Minor concerns about risk of deliberate self-harm or suicide attempt
- 2 = Definite indicators of risk of deliberate self-harm or suicide attempt
- 3 = High risk to physical safety as a result of deliberate self-harm or suicide attempt
- 4 = Immediate risk to physical safety as a result of deliberate self-harm or suicide attempt

## **3. Unintentional self harm**

- 0 = No concerns about unintentional risk to physical safety
- 1 = Minor concerns about unintentional risk to physical safety
- 2 = Definite indicators of unintentional risk to physical safety
- 3 = High risk to physical safety as a result of self-neglect, unsafe behaviour or inability to maintain a safe environment
- 4 = Immediate risk to physical safety as a result of self-neglect, unsafe behaviour or inability to maintain a safe environment

## **4. Risk to others**

- 0 = No concerns about risk to physical safety or property of others
- 2 = Minor antisocial behaviour
- 4 = Risk to property and/or minor risk to physical safety of others
- 6 = High risk to physical safety of others as a result of dangerous behaviour or offending/criminal behaviour
- 8 = Immediate risk to physical safety of others as a result of dangerous behaviour or offending/criminal behaviour

## **5. Risk from others**

- 0 = No concerns about risk of abuse or exploitation from other individuals or society
- 2 = Minor concerns about risk of abuse or exploitation from other individuals or society
- 4 = Definite risk of abuse or exploitation from other individuals or society
- 6 = Probably occurrence of abuse or exploitation from other individuals or society
- 8 = Evidence of abuse or exploitation from other individuals or society

## **6. Stress and anxiety**

- 0 = Normal response to stressors
- 1 = Somewhat reactive to stress, has some coping skills, responsive to limited intervention
- 2 = Moderately reactive to stress; needs support in order to cope
- 3 = Obvious reactivity; very limited problem solving in response to stress; becomes hostile and aggressive to others
- 4 = Severe reactivity to stressors, self-destructive, antisocial, or have other outward manifestations

## **7. Social Effectiveness**

- 0 = Social skills are within the normal range
- 1 = Is generally able to carry out social interactions with minor deficits, can generally engage in give-and-take conversation with only minor disruption
- 2 = Marginal social skills, sometimes creates interpersonal friction; sometimes inappropriate
- 3 = Uses only minimal social skills, cannot engage in give-and-take of instrumental or social conversations; limited response to social cues; inappropriate
- 4 = Lacking in almost any social skills; inappropriate response to social cues; aggressive

## **8. Alcohol / Drug Abuse<sup>3</sup>**

- 0 = Abstinence; no use of alcohol or drugs during rating period
- 1 = Occasional use of alcohol or abuse of drugs without impairment
- 2 = Some use of alcohol or abuse of drugs with some effect on functioning; sometimes inappropriate to others
- 3 = Recurrent use of alcohol or abuse of drugs which causes significant effect on functioning; aggressive behaviour to others
- 4 = Drug/alcohol dependence; daily abuse of alcohol or drugs which causes severe impairment of functioning; inability to function in community secondary to alcohol/drug abuse; aggressive behaviour to others; criminal activity to support alcohol or drug use

## **9. Impulse control**

- 0 = No noteworthy incidents
- 1 = Maybe one or two lapses of impulse control; minor temper outbursts/aggressive actions, such as attention-seeking behaviour which is not threatening or dangerous
- 2 = Some temper outbursts/aggressive behaviour; moderate severity; at least one episode of behaviour that is dangerous or threatening
- 3 = Impulsive acts which are fairly often and/or of moderate severity
- 4 = Frequent and/or severe outbursts/aggressive behaviour, e.g., behaviours which could lead to criminal charges / Anti Social Behaviour Orders / risk to or from others / property

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<sup>3</sup> Drugs include illegal street drugs as well as abuse of over-the-counter and prescribed medications.

## 10. Housing

- 0 = Settled accommodation; very low housing support needs
- 1 = Settled accommodation; low to medium housing support needs
- 2 = Living in short-term / temporary accommodation; medium to high housing support needs
- 3 = Immediate risk of loss of accommodation; living in short-term / temporary accommodation; high housing support needs
- 4 = Rough sleeping / "sofa surfing"
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## Scoring

Please insert the assessed score against each criterion point and add up the total score.

<u>Criterion</u>	<u>Score</u>
1. Engagement with frontline services	_____
2. Intentional self harm	_____
3. Unintentional self harm	_____
4. Risk to others	_____
5. Risk from others	_____
6. Stress and anxiety	_____
7. Social Effectiveness	_____
8. Alcohol / Drug Abuse	_____
9. Impulse control	_____
10. Housing	_____
<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>	<b><u><u> / 48</u></u></b>

## Outcome

Referral accepted: YES / NO

If not accepted what advice guidance has been given to referrer? \_\_\_\_\_

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