

Protocol on the Use of Psychometric Tests

I am available for intra-team referrals for psychometric assessment. The guidelines set out below provide an outline of my practice in relation to psychological assessment and set out some guidelines on what you might reasonable expect from such an assessment.

General Principles

Psychometric tests can be used in the initial screening, first interview and final interview stages, dependant on the questions being asked in the clinical context. At whatever stage the tests are used, practical considerations such as the time involved in administering, scoring and interpreting the tests, the cost of materials, and the provision of feedback to testees and families will need to be understood.

The professional task is to ensure that testing is in the best interests of the client. Ensuring confidentiality is therefore important.

Tests also need to be chosen so as not to discriminate unfairly on the basis of social class, culture, sex, race, age or religion. Additionally, psychometric tests should not be used in isolation as they cannot measure the entire individual.

I will:

- Ensure that test takers and families need to know that the test is optional.
- Ensure that the testee and family will have control over the disclosure of the data, ie. personality data will only be revealed to others with prior informed consent.
- Ensure test takers know that they shall have their results explained to them as soon as possible after taking the test in easily understood terms.
- Ensure that test takers understand that their results are confidential to the extent allowed by law and best practice.
- Inform test takers who shall have access to their results, and the conditions which scores shall be released.
- Use tests only when their use can be supported by available technical information.
- Administer, score and interpret tests in accordance with the instructions provided by the test distributor and to the standards defined by the British Psychological Society.
- Ensure test takers are aware of the procedures for making complaints or notifying problems.
- Ensure that where scores and other data from testing are stored, they will be accessible only by named persons who have been trained in the interpretation of the relevant tests. All family members will be informed where and for how long the data will be stored.

Testing Procedure

The underlying philosophy of assessment is based on a challenge to the modernist assumption that professionals are experts with special knowledge that allows us to observe, assess, diagnose, and treat thus privileging professional knowledge and potentially undermining the individual's own capacity to make sense of their lives and find solutions to their problems. The emphasis of assessment, therefore, will be on producing clinically-relevant knowledge that clients will possess and have control over, and that will be utilized as part of a therapeutic process, rather than producing "objective" knowledge about a patient that is used to increase the knowledge of a professional about that person without any necessary therapeutic potential. This style of assessment does not promote the idea that scientific certainty exists in the field of subjective human experience. It is instead committed to a side-by-side (being with rather than doing to), less hierarchical, therapeutic relationship that privileges the client's own abilities to locate fresh directions and solutions to their problems.

There is therefore less focus on what might be assumed to be abnormal or pathological and more on alternatives to the problem-saturated story through listening and responding to the client's own knowledge. Tests and assessment procedures should always be seen as a means by which clients can be helped and any potentially unhelpful or even damaging effects will need to be considered (eg. The negative potential of "labelling"). "How might this test/assessment be of potential benefit" needs to be asked in every case.

As part of the assessment process I will need to gather relevant background information on those taking the tests. Relevance is judged by the importance of such information in making accurate and meaningful interpretation of the test data.

Those taking the tests and family members will be told in advance about the nature of the assessment, why it is being used, the conditions under which it will take place and the nature of the feedback they can expect to receive. Their informed consent to take part in the process will be obtained. If a test taker declines to take the test they will not be coerced and their non-completion will not be viewed negatively in any decisions arising from the assessment process. It is understood that clients have a right to understand why the assessment is being conducted, what sorts of procedures are involved, and what sorts of feedback (and from whom) they can expect. Test data will not be used for purposes other than those to which the test taker has given their consent.

Confidentiality is important and the child or adolescent being tested and family members will be told that no information will be revealed to others without the permission and free consent of everyone concerned. All candidates will be informed as to who will see their personality data and/or reports written on the basis of these data. Test takers will be informed prior to testing about the purpose of the assessment, the nature of the test, to whom results will be reported and the planned use of results.

Face to face feedback will be given on the test results. Feedback is a dynamic, interactive process that is an aspect of the larger process of assessment, and this assessment often continues during what is called the feedback session or phase. There will hopefully be a thoughtful discussion with the client and family of what the results are, what they mean, and what they do not mean. Formal psychological assessment involving standardized tests often provides a client

and family members with information on which to base decisions about whether to undertake therapy and, if so, what kind. The feedback process can be essential to ensuring the client's right to informed consent to or informed refusal of various psychotherapeutic interventions. The clinician has the responsibility to ensure that the client not only understands this general lack of infallibility but also is aware of any specific reservations the clinician has about the validity, reliability, meaning, and implications of specific tests, findings, and so forth.

Tests and assessment can provide helpful information about client and family issues, stimulate insights, confirm working hypotheses, and provide possible directions for clients and families to consider. They can be valuable tools to assist the work of counselling and therapy. However, to be most helpful they need to be integrated into the therapy process and not seen as separate, "add-ons", used in an awkward and disjointed manner that might hinder rather than help the process. The routine administration of tests without appropriate follow up in a way that fails to actively involve all involved may lead to the potential value being lost.

Tests can be used to help individuals identify strengths, assets, and opportunities for growth. Weaknesses and deficiencies are recognised but our job is to help that person to build on available strengths and assets. There will be an emphasis on looking at what is right rather than what is wrong. This is based on a hygiological (health orientation) rather than pathological (disease orientation) perspective.

Any test reports will therefore not emphasise pathology and will instead focus on assets, constructive characteristics, and healthy mechanisms. These reports will serve to forecast useful and constructive potentials.

IQ Tests

Tests of personality functioning, affect management, defensive styles, coping strategies, and of family and emotional functioning will be used more frequently than ability tests in a CAMHS setting.

IQ testing should not be a standard procedure used to answer a general question about a child's IQ but is relevant where it is suspected that a specific deficit may be present. However, it is probably most appropriate for a child to be tested within the education system when a specific reading difficulty is suspected.

IQ and t scores will not be provided or considered. Instead, the child or teenager will be taken as their own norm (as opposed to being compared with the population norm) and scores outside of this norm will be considered for its significance for that individual.

Problems in the interpretation of ability tests because of problems of validity, consistency, cultural and class specificity will always be considered and discussed (see attached papers).