

## EXTENDED COMMUNITY BASED RISK ASSESSMENT

### WillisPalmer

WillisPalmer is an independent organisation that provides services for those working with children and families. Established by Mark Willis and Andre Palmer, two qualified and experienced social workers, the company is committed to delivering quality services that are reliable and professional.

WillisPalmer provides independent assessments, therapy, training, consultancy and specialist interventions with children. Our organisation provides a network of qualified social workers, counsellors, psychologists and therapists who are committed to providing high quality independent services.

We accept referrals from local authorities, solicitors, voluntary agencies, health authorities, residential and educational establishments as well as other agencies or individuals.

All practitioners working for WillisPalmer are professionally recruited through a rigorous selection procedure. All are registered through their respective professional bodies and are publicly and professionally insured to carry out independent work.

### The Extended Assessment Framework

The *Extended Community Based Risk Assessment* (ECBRA) process involves observations of the parents(s) with the child; interviews of the parent(s) and extended family or other support networks, taking place over at least an eight week period. The observations are based upon the *Parent Assessment Manual* (PAM) (McGaw, Beckley, Connolly and Ball, 1998). The PAM provides a holistic functional assessment tool which assesses vulnerable parents and their children from birth to 19 years.

The PAM has been validated on populations of parents with learning disabilities, borderline learning disabilities and parents with no learning disabilities in the UK. Throughout the manual materials, pictures and terminology have been selected carefully to match the ability of parents with learning disabilities if this is required.



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The assessment will, in addition to the use of the PAM, address risk factors and associated concerns. Parents are interviewed regarding attachment related experiences using the framework of the *Adult Attachment Interview*. These interviews, together with extended observation, help us to assess the attachment relationship each parent has with their child(ren). Our **Independent Social Work Consultants** are also all highly experienced within child protection and are thus able to fully *assess risk* and if appropriate advise regarding risk management plans.

## Teaching and Guidance

We believe assessment should be a two-way process. Therefore the ECBA is **dynamic**; observations are combined with teaching of parenting skills. The importance of conducting the assessment within the parent's home is emphasised by research which constantly identifies the *home environment* as the optimum location for learning new parenting skills. Techniques used include highlighting, modelling, reinforcing, role taking and explaining new ideas in a therapeutic way. This approach allows us to form a view about the degree to which parents are able to learn and retain new skills.

In addition, we have, as part of our team **Chartered Psychologists** who are able to assess parents' cognitive functioning and advise on therapeutic needs and **Educational Psychologists** who advise on teaching programmes if appropriate.

## The Assessment Process

The main part of the assessment is undertaken by two social workers individually and together. All our social workers will have received specialist training on undertaking these types of assessments. Observations take place initially twice weekly, usually between 3-6 hours at different times of the day to assess the parent in a range of contexts. Dependent upon progress, we are able set up all day observations or support overnight stays as the assessment proceeds.

If the case is within the court arena we will liaise closely with the social worker and the Guardian throughout with regard to whether it is appropriate to extend the sessions as the assessment progresses. It is usually helpful to arrange a mid-point review meeting to discuss progress. A full consolidated report is provided at the end of the work.

## Why use this approach?

The ECBRA is designed in such a way as to enable us to assess parents or other carers in a way which optimises their potential. It's broad aim is to help empower parents to demonstrate positive and safe parenting in an environment that is not alien to them. This in our view provides the best possible evidence for decisions to be made regarding longer term parenting capacity.

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## **Make a Referral**

Due to the number of trained and experienced social work consultants and psychologists in our team we are able to assist within favourable timescales. Typically a report can be provided within 10 weeks from receipt of instructions.

If you would like to discuss your requirements please contact us on 01206 848431 or e-mail [enquiry@willispalmer.com](mailto:enquiry@willispalmer.com)

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