

Ability to assess a person's wider circumstances

The scope and extent of an assessment will vary depending on the context in which the person is being seen and the responsibilities of the assessor. However, the principles set out in this document are relevant to all settings.

An ability to gain an overview of a person's present life situation and history, including:

- current presenting problems
- specific stressors relevant to their current distress (e.g. bullying, relationship difficulties)
- any history of mental health problems, the help the person has received to manage these and their experience of this help
- developmental history (including any childhood sexual or physical abuse or neglect, significant losses or separations, exposure to trauma)
- the person's coping mechanisms (e.g. their capacity to tolerate stress) and usual level of functioning
- the person's belief system and the ways in which they construe and interpret their world
- the person's ability to reflect on (and be reasonably objective about) their circumstances

An ability to gain an overview of the person's interpersonal functioning, including:

- family and social history
- current interpersonal functioning, including social support available to them
- the quality of any current or past relationships with significant others
- the impact of current difficulties on their social and personal network

An ability to gain an overview of a person's occupational history (including their perception of any problems in engaging with or sustaining meaningful occupation)

Ability to identify coexisting problems

An ability to identify the presence and significance of coexisting problems that commonly occur in people who self-harm or are suicidal, for example:

- depression
- anxiety
- alcohol and drug misuse
- eating disorders
- trauma
- bullying
- relationship problems
- psychotic features, such as confusion, difficulty thinking, processing information, delusional or paranoid thoughts
- long-term physical health problems that have a significant impact on daily living

Ability to gauge the extent of any coexisting social problems that are causing distress (e.g. financial worries, redundancy, retirement, social isolation)

An ability to gauge the extent of any coexisting mental health problems and their implications, for example:

- whether they will need to be addressed alongside a focus on self-harm and/or suicide

whether concerns about self-harm and suicide need to be addressed directly and as a primary focus for intervention

Ability to assess the person's cultural and social context

Social

An ability to ask about potential protective factors in the person's social environment (e.g. social support, proximity to extended family, access to community resources)

An ability to ask about any potential stresses in a person's physical or social environment (e.g. overcrowding, poor housing, racism, neighbourhood harassment)

An ability to ask about a person's current and historical membership of peer groups

Cultural

An ability to draw on knowledge of a person's cultural, ethnic and religious background and the potential impact of this perspective on their views of the problems they are experiencing

An ability to understand the influence of a person's culture (e.g. on values and attitudes)